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"Faitis Alone In Christ Alone"

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"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"

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IS JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE?

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Justification by faith alone, according to Gerhard Forde, is “the article by which the church stands or falls.”¹ He insists that “where the church no longer speaks this word, it has lost its reason for being.”² That is a powerful claim.

The famous cry of the Reformers was *by faith alone* (*sola fide* in Latin). The Reformers were combating the prevailing view of the gospel in their day, which was that people are justified by faith plus works, not by faith alone.

Unfortunately, many Christians today are uncertain of the precise meaning of basic theological terms such as *justification*, *sanctification*, and *propitiation*. It might be good, then, to begin with a definition of forensic justification. Kenneth Allen writes:

What does it mean to be justified? It means to be declared righteous; to be accounted righteous. It is not a work done within the sinner, but a work done on behalf of the sinner. It is a legal term (or more precisely, in relation to salvation, a legal fact) by which the believing sinner is declared righteous before God while still being himself unrighteous.³

It is comments like this which led Roman Catholic scholar Joseph Plevnik to suggest that “Protestants are still allergic” to “the anthropological aspect of justification, dealing with the person’s cooperation with grace . . . insisting usually on *sola gratia* [by grace alone].”⁴ While from a Catholic perspective that may seem true of all Protestants, it is sadly far from true today.

¹ Gerhard Forde, “Justification by Faith Alone. The Article by which the Church Stands or Falls?” *Dialog* 27 (Fall 1988): 260-67.

² *Ibid.*, 262.

³ Kenneth Allen, “Justification by Faith,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (April-June 1978): 112.

⁴ Joseph Plevnik, “Recent Developments in the Discussion Concerning Justification by Faith,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 2 (Spring 1986): 58.

The Reformation didn't eliminate Roman Catholicism, and it didn't insure that Catholic thinking on justification wouldn't invade Protestantism. Many who are called *Protestants* hold an essentially Roman Catholic view of justification.

In January of this year I debated a Protestant minister on the issue of justification by faith alone. My opponent argued that justification is by faith, but not by faith *alone*. He argued that salvation was by faith plus works. His argument was based in part on the fact that the only time in Scripture that the word *alone* is put in conjunction with *faith* is in Jas 2:24, and there it specifically says that justification is "by works, and not by faith alone" (NASB). That Protestant minister was in no way "allergic" to "the anthropological aspect of justification, dealing with the person's cooperation with grace."

Similarly, in the book *What Is Christianity?* Protestant pastor Walter Lowrie argued that justification is by faith, but that it is not by faith alone.⁵ One of his principle arguments is this:

St. Paul never said "faith alone," and the contention that he *meant* this is not plausible in view of the fact that, having many opportunities of saying it, he didn't.⁶

In this article we will consider Protestant challenges to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. We will consider this question under the following three headings: 1) An Evaluation of the Argument from Silence, 2) An Evaluation of Major Passages Cited to Disprove Justification by Faith Alone, and 3) An Evaluation of Major Passages Cited to Prove Justification by Faith Alone.

I. An Evaluation of the Argument from Silence

Lowrie's argument above is an argument from silence. Arguments from silence are at best one piece of evidence in any interpretation. To base one's case on an argument from silence is futile. Two examples show this plainly.

The word *trinity* never occurs anywhere in the Bible. Based on Lowrie's reasoning, the concept of the trinity must be false, since God had so many opportunities to use the word and never did. Clearly, while

⁵ Walter Lowrie, *What is Christianity?* (New York, NY: Pantheon Publishing Co., 1953), 91-112.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

God is but one in essence, yet there are three persons in the Godhead. Theologians have coined the expression *the trinity*⁷ to describe this. The fact that this word occurs nowhere in Scripture in no way subverts the truth it conveys.

The same point can be made concerning the expression *born again*, which occurs only in the Gospels and in Peter's writings (1 Pet 1:23). The apostle Paul never refers to being born again. By Lowrie's reasoning, Paul must not have believed in being born again, or else he would have said so. Yet this is an obviously absurd conclusion to draw. Paul spoke of being born of the Spirit (Gal 4:29) and of living by the Spirit (Gal 5:25). He spoke of the "old man" and the "new man" (Eph 4:22, 25). While he didn't use the exact expression *born again*, it is clear he believed in it. So, too, while James never mentioned the exact expression, he clearly showed that he believed in being born again when he said that God "brought us forth" (Jas 1:18). That can refer to nothing else but regeneration.

Therefore, the fact that the Scriptures never specifically put the two words *faith* and *alone* together when speaking of forensic justification in no way disproves the doctrine. At best it should cause us to look carefully at the evidence for and against the doctrine. This we shall now do, starting with the evidence mustered *against* the doctrine.

II. An Evaluation of Major Passages Cited to Disprove Justification by Faith Alone

A. James 2:24

As mentioned above, a man I debated cited this verse as proof that justification is not by faith alone. He pointed out that this is the only passage in the Bible where those two terms come together and it says that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone" (NASB).

First, careful attention to the context of Jas 2:24 shows that James is not talking about forensic justification by God, the act whereby He declares a sinner to be righteous. Rather, he is talking about *a demonstration of righteousness before men*. Verses 21-24 form a unit dealing with Abraham. These verses concern the time when Abraham was about to offer up his only son Isaac on the altar (v 21). That is when Abraham was "justified by works" (v 24).

According to v 23, Abraham was justified by faith long before Isaac was even born! Verse 23 is a citation of Gen 15:6. Verse 24 concerns a

⁷ Our word is from the early Christian Latin word *trinitas*.

time over 20 years after the time Abraham was born again (Genesis 22). Isaac was born ten years after Gen 15:6. Thirteen years later Abraham ascended Mount Moriah to offer up Isaac.

There can be no question but that the justification of Jas 2:23 concerns God's declaration of Abraham's right standing with Him and that v 24 concerns a different type of justification altogether—justification before men by works.

Abraham's justification *before men by works* "fulfilled" the possibility inherent in his justification *before God by faith* years before. That is, God declared Abraham righteous, and he *was* righteous in his position. That was a legal and binding act. However, it in no way guaranteed that Abraham would do what few men in all of recorded history would have done. When Abraham offered up Isaac, he was living in his *experience* in a manner consistent with his *position*.

Second, anyone who understands v 24 to be talking about *forensic* (legal) justification has an insurmountable problem. Paul, also citing Gen 15:6 and talking about Abraham's justification, unequivocally indicated that forensic justification before God is *not* by works:

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works . . ." (Rom 4:3-6).

Paul speaks of "him who does not work" and of those being justified as "the ungodly."

Unless Scripture contradicts itself—which it doesn't, since it is God's inerrant Word—James cannot be talking about forensic justification before God in Jas 2:24.

Third, my opponent didn't quote Jas 2:24 properly—at least not from the KJV, the venerable version he had been using in the rest of the debate. For Jas 2:24, he silently switched to and cited from the New American Standard translation. He failed to mention the KJV, or even that he was changing to a different version.

I'm convinced he did this because we were debating justification by faith alone. By using a different translation he was able to make the point that the only time in Scripture where justification by faith alone appears, the text says that a man is not justified by faith alone.

The KJV reads: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” As you can see, the word *alone* doesn’t appear in the text of the KJV. Nor does it appear in NKJV. The Greek word translated *only* here is *monon*, an adverb. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They do not modify nouns. Adjectives modify nouns. We know this is an adverb and not an adjective since Greek has a different form for this word as an adverb (*monon*) and as an adjective (*monēs*). Hodges makes this comment concerning *monon* here:

The Greek adverb “only” (*monon*) . . . does not qualify (i.e., modify) the word *faith*, since the form would then have been *monēs*. As an adverb, however, it modifies the verb *justified* implied in the second clause [“and not only justified by faith”]. James is saying that a by-faith justification is not the *only* kind of justification there is. There is also a by-works justification. The former type is *before God*; the latter type is *before men*.⁸

Thus we might paraphrase the sense of Jas 2:24 in this way: “You see then that a man is justified before men by works, and not only justified before God by faith.” Hodges has made the helpful observation that this same distinction is found in Paul’s writings in Rom 4:2, which reads: “If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.” Paul clearly is suggesting that there is such a thing as justification by works—yet that such a justification is not before *God*. Hodges comments:

The phrase, “but not before God,” strongly suggests that the Apostle can conceive of a sense in which men *are* justified by works. But, he insists, that is not the way men are justified *before God*. That is, it does not establish their legal standing before Him.⁹

James 2:24 does not deny justification by faith alone before God. Rather, it asserts it (see esp. v 23!).

B. Romans 2:13

This verse is a famous crux text in Romans: “For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.”

⁸ Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistle of James: Proven Character Through Testing* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1994), 71, italics his.

⁹ Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension*, Second Edition (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1992), 34.

This verse appears to teach justification by works. Faith isn't even mentioned here. This verse doesn't teach justification by faith *plus* works, but merely justification by works. And, it should be noted that this verse is talking about justification "in the sight of God." It is *not* talking about justification before men.

This verse has long perplexed commentators, since it appears to contradict Paul's point in the very next chapter of Romans! There he writes: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:28). And again in chapter 4, as already noted, he writes, "To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5).

What is going on here?

The solution is easily seen if we examine the context. We realize then whom Paul was addressing and what his subject was in Romans 2. He was talking to self-righteous Jewish legalists who thought that they could be justified before God by keeping the Law of Moses. In chapter 2 he showed them that this is impossible. Verse 13 asserts that it isn't enough to simply be a *hearer* of the law. To be saved by works one would have to be a *doer* of the law. *This, of course, no one can do*—as Paul directly asserts in chapters 3 and 4!

C. E. B. Cranfield concurs: "In its context in Romans this sentence can hardly be intended to imply that there are some who are doers of the law in the sense that they so fulfill it as to earn God's justification."¹⁰ So, too, does Anders Nygren:

Far from being safe because he knows the law, the Jew will stand under the judgment of the law. It is the law, in which he reposes his confidence, which is the power which condemns him and turns him over to the wrath of God. His knowledge of the law takes away from him all excuse for his sin. The law cannot save him from his doom.

"For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (vs. 13).¹¹

¹⁰ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC series, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 1:155. N.B.: Cranfield concurs on what Rom 2:13 *doesn't* mean. However, he disagrees on what it *does* mean. Cranfield continues, "Rather is Paul thinking of that beginning of grateful obedience to be found in those who believe in Christ, which though very weak and faltering and in no way deserving God's favour, is, as the expression of humble trust in God, well-pleasing in His sight."

¹¹ Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), 121.

Paul is speaking hypothetically in v 13, just as the Lord Jesus did with the rich young ruler. Jesus used the Law to show him that he was a sinner in need of the Savior (see Luke 18:18-27). Mark notes in his account of this exchange that Jesus told the disciples, "How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:24b). The rich young ruler thought his works were good enough to justify him before God. He felt that his riches proved that he was good. Many Jewish people of that day felt that riches were a sign that one had right standing before God.¹²

When this man asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus pointed him to the Law, not because he could be saved by keeping it, but because he needed to realize that no one could be justified by keeping that Law, himself included.

Thus Rom 2:13 actually shows the *impossibility* of justification by works before God since *no one* is a doer of the Law (except the Law-giver Himself, the Lord Jesus).

C. Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

To some people this passage sounds like it's denying justification by faith alone. After all, Jesus does say that the only one who will enter the kingdom of heaven is "he who does the will of My Father."

However, that view of the passage is impossible when put under careful scrutiny. In v 22 the people who call Jesus *Lord* and yet are excluded from the kingdom are further identified. They are people who claim the right to enter the kingdom on the basis of having prophesied, cast out demons, and done many wonders—all in Jesus' name.

Jesus' point here is that no one can expect kingdom entrance on the basis of his or her works, or deeds. Far from contradicting justification by faith alone, He is proving it.

¹² A similar idea grew up in New England in the late 1600s that prosperity was a sign that one was among the elect. This helped the Puritan evolve into the *Yankee*, in the old, narrow meaning of a "shrewd" businessman or farmer. Ed.

The only way anyone can enter the kingdom is by doing God's will. In context this is clearly not meant to refer to doing good deeds. The false professors *had done* good deeds! What they lacked is the one thing that can gain anyone entrance into the kingdom.

All of the following verses show that the will of the Father concerning salvation is that we believe in His Son: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). "He who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47). "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16b). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph 2:8-9).

In answer to the question, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:28-29). The only "work," the only action, we can perform which will please God in terms of salvation is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone for eternal life.

D. Matthew 13:44-46

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

It is not uncommon for pastors and teachers to use these two parables to teach that we must *buy* eternal salvation. For example, one Protestant clergyman devotes an entire chapter to these parables in an effort to prove this very point. He writes:

Both parables make the same point: a sinner who understands the priceless riches of the kingdom will gladly yield everything else he cherishes in order to obtain it. The corresponding truth is also clear by implication: those who cling to their earthly treasures forfeit the far greater wealth of the kingdom . . .

That is the kind of response the Lord Jesus called for: wholehearted commitment. A desire for him at any cost. Unconditional surrender. A full exchange of self for the Savior. It is the only response that will open the gates of the kingdom. Seen through the eyes of this world, it is as high a price as anyone can pay. But from a kingdom perspective, it is really no sacrifice at all.¹³

¹³ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 142, 148.

There are a number of problems with this interpretation, to say the least.

First, since the subject of the preceding and following parables is the Lord Jesus *Himself*, as well as His representatives, it's likely that He is the subject of these parables as well.

The subject of the previous parable, the Parable of the Tares, is explicitly the Lord Jesus Himself: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man" (v 37). In addition, the subjects of the following parable, the Parable of the Dragnet, are *angels*, not human beings: "The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire" (vv 49b-50a). Angels don't act on their own initiative. Angels are sent by God. Thus the ultimate subject of the following parable is the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are only four parables which are given after the explanation of vv 34-35. The fact that the first and the last have the Lord Jesus or His representatives as their subjects strongly suggests that He is the subject of the intervening parables as well. The man who buys the treasure and the pearl is most logically the Lord Jesus, not helpless, unregenerate sinners.

Second, other Scriptures make it clear that the Lord Jesus is the One who has bought our salvation. The following passages use the same Greek word (*agorazō*, translated *buys* and *bought* in Matt 13:44-46):

"You were bought at a price" (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23). The verb is passive voice here. The person being saved doesn't do the buying. God does.

"Denying the Lord who bought them" (2 Pet 2:1). Here the verb is active and the subject is the Lord.

"For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood" (Rev 5:9). Again, the Lord Jesus is the One who has bought us, not we ourselves.

There is no usage of any form of the verb *agorazō* in the Bible which speaks of unsaved people buying their own salvation. Not one.

There is a related Greek verb which adds a prepositional prefix to *agorazō*. The verb is *exagorazō*. It's used to refer to the Lord Jesus buying our salvation too, and not to us buying our own salvation:

"Christ has redeemed us" (Gal 3:13).

"God sent forth His Son . . . to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:5).

Since every other use of *agorazō* and *exagorazō* has the Lord Jesus as the one buying our salvation, it's inconceivable that these two parables teach that we buy our own salvation.

Third, it is theologically impossible for an unsaved person to buy his own salvation. Eternal salvation is often called a “gift” and something we receive “freely” in Scripture: “If you knew the gift of God” (John 4:10). “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). “Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17). “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24).

Something we purchase for ourselves is not a gift; it’s a purchase. Something someone else purchases for us is a gift.

It’s absurd to speak of a free gift which “in a sense” costs you everything. Logically that’s just as impossible as a round square or a one-sided triangle.

Fourth, the interpretation that we buy our own salvation is not only exegetically and theologically impossible, it is also practically impossible.

Look at the discussion above of the so-called price we must pay to buy our own salvation. What is that price specifically? The author doesn’t say. He gives some vague generalities about “gladly yield[ing] everything else he cherishes,” “wholehearted commitment,” and “unconditional surrender.” He doesn’t state the specific price. Why? The most likely reason is because it’s impossible to do so and claim the Bible as our guide. The Bible simply doesn’t tell us what we must pay to buy our salvation. Of course, this should suggest that this interpretation of the parables must be wrong.

What if we tried to solve this practical dilemma? What might we tell people the purchase price is for their eternal salvation?

How about money and possessions? If so, *how much* money and *how many* possessions? How about 100%? A typical person in many Western nations today has a car, furniture, lots of clothes, stereos, TVs, computers, golf clubs, tennis rackets, etc. A genuine 100% surrender would mean that people must give it all away. All he and she would have left would be the clothes on their backs.

Now, let’s assume that a person has done this to buy his or her salvation. What then? Can he or she then begin to accumulate a new fortune and keep that?

Or, maybe the price is continual rejection of all material possessions. If so, how long should one set of clothes be retained before a new set can be bought? Where should one live? Is homelessness what the Lord is driving at here? What about food? Can one eat more than is necessary merely to survive?

Or, does the price include lifestyle issues? Must one give up things like drunkenness, theft, lying, cheating, immorality, and swearing? What about haughtiness, envy, jealousy, strife, covetousness, and gossip? And, must one begin doing things like praying, giving, attending church, reading the Bible, confessing Christ, etc.?

What if a person has trouble giving up something someone has told him he needs to give up in order to buy his salvation? Is trying good enough? What if a person finds he still struggles with jealousy or covetousness?

What if a person is having trouble doing the things she is supposed to do? What if she finds she's only reading the Bible and praying for fifteen minutes a day? Is that enough? What if she only attends church once a week? Is that enough? What if she only witnesses to one person a week? Is that enough?

These are exactly the types of questions with which a brilliant man like Martin Luther struggled. How long did he need to pray each day? How much devotion did he need? This type of question plagued him until he realized that justification is by faith alone.

I personally went through that type of experience too. I spent years striving to be good enough to merit salvation, yet I had the nagging doubt that I would *never* be good enough. Many of our readers can identify with the confusion that results from being told that we must buy our own salvation.

I raise all these issues to show how impossible the "we-buy-our-own-salvation" interpretation is in a practical sense. No one could ever know if he had paid the price, since the Bible never tells us to buy our salvation and hence never tells us the price *we* must pay.

Of course, the Bible does state the purchase price. It is the blood of Christ. He paid it all. *He* is the One who bought the field and the pearl.¹⁴ *He* bought the kingdom and *He* gives it away. There is nothing left for us to pay.

E. Conclusion

We have considered a number of passages often cited to prove that justification is not merely by faith alone. We saw that none of them actually refutes justification by faith alone.

¹⁴Some suggest that the field in this parable represents Israel and the pearl represents the Church. See Charles C. Bing, "Lordship Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation and Response," an unpublished Th.D. Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, May 1991, 151-54.

Now let's look at passages which are often cited to prove that justification really is by faith alone.

II. An Evaluation of Major Passages Cited to Prove Justification by Faith Alone

A. Luke 18:9-14

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Two men enter the temple to pray. One is a religious person, probably highly regarded by all in the community. The other is a tax collector (or publican), looked down upon by the whole Jewish community. Earle notes:

As a class, the tax collectors were hated by their fellow Jews. This was almost inevitable. They represented the foreign domination of Rome. Their methods were necessarily inquisitorial. That they often over-charged people and pocketed the surplus is almost certain. In the rabbinical writings they are classified with robbers.¹⁵

The Lord Jesus evaluates the prayers and the spiritual condition of these two men. We might expect that He would be pleased with the prayer of the pious man and displeased with the prayer of the social outcast. Actually, the story has a surprising turn. Jesus commends the publican and says that he went away *justified*, whereas the religious man did not!

The ungodly man didn't do anything to make himself righteous. He didn't amend his life. He didn't even promise to do so. He didn't do any good deeds. He merely humbled himself before God and asked God to be merciful to Him.

¹⁵R. Earle, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol 5, s. v. "Tax Collector," ed. by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House 1976), 606.

Some people mistakenly think that Jesus was here teaching that people could be saved without coming to Him. They find credence here for the idea that all that is needed is a humble crying out to God. Thus some think that Buddhists, Hindus, and animists who cry out to God to be merciful to them are saved even without ever having believed in Christ.

While I believe that all who in genuine humility cry out to God to be merciful to them will ultimately hear the Gospel, believe it, and hence be saved, that is not the point here. This man went away justified that very day.

Elsewhere Jesus taught that “no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6) and that “he who does not believe [in Him] is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Thus the tax collector’s cry must have been set against the backdrop of Messianic expectation. In fact, Kenneth Bailey suggests that this prayer took place during the temple service when the atoning sacrifices were being offered.¹⁶ The publican must have recognized that Jesus is the Messiah, the One who is the ultimate atoning sacrifice (cf. Heb 10:1ff). The Samaritans of Sychar were able to make this connection (John 4:42). This man must have done so as well, or else he wouldn’t have gone away that day justified.

The moral of this parable is clear. Justification is not by our works. Those who “trust in themselves that they [are] righteous, and [who] despise others” (v 9) need to humble themselves. If they don’t, then they will never be justified and they will spend eternity separated from God and His kingdom, eternally humbled.

It’s human nature to think I am justified because I am a good person in comparison to lots of other people. Even if I’m not ahead of the curve morally, it is easy to rationalize that I am. After all, if I’m the ultimate judge, then I will be justified.

However, we aren’t the judge. God is. The person who is justified by God is the one who recognizes that he is a sinner and who looks to God to be merciful to him in light of the finished work of the Messiah.

While it is true that the words *faith alone* don’t occur in this parable, it is clear that this is precisely what the Lord was talking about. The man was justified not because of any works on his part. He was justified solely because he trusted in God through the Messiah.

¹⁶ Kenneth Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*, Combined Edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 146ff.

Bailey's comments are helpful:

The original self-righteous audience is pressed to reconsider how righteousness is achieved. Jesus proclaims that righteousness is a gift of God made possible by means of the atonement sacrifice, which is received by those who, in humility, approach as sinners trusting in God's grace and not their own righteousness. As Jeremiah has succinctly observed, "Our passage shows . . . that the Pauline doctrine of justification has its roots in the teachings of Jesus (Jeremias, *Parables*, 114).¹⁷

B. Romans 3:21-25

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus

(Rom 3:21-26).

Paul here indicates that a person is justified "freely" (Gk.: *dōrean*). Bauer, Gingrich, and Danker say of this word in this verse, "justified, declared upright, as a gift."¹⁸ Being justified by God freely is something which Paul explicitly says is "apart from the law" (v 21). Men can't be justified before God by their works "for all have sinned [perfect tense] and fall short [present tense] of the glory of God" (v 23).

Robert Govett comments on Rom 3:24,

This righteousness comes to us "freely"—that is, by way of gift. We thus learn how it becomes ours "without law." Law demands *payment* in full of us. But so we can never attain righteousness. Therefore righteousness becomes ours, aye, "the righteousness of God," by our receiving another's work on our behalf. The principle of law is: "The *man* that *doeth* shall live." But here are *gift* and *grace*. We add nothing to this completed righteousness of Christ.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 156.

¹⁸ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 210.

¹⁹ Robert Govett, *Govett on Romans* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1981), 52, italics original.

Some might object that Paul doesn't specifically say here that justification is by faith *alone*. Yet that argument from silence is nonsensical here. There is no doubt as to Paul's meaning. Paul is clearly saying that faith in Christ is the sole condition of justification before God. It is the only condition he mentions. This is in keeping with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself: "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Paul continues his defense of justification by faith alone in Romans 4. We now turn to consider three powerful verses, Rom 4:3-5, which show that justification is by faith alone and is not by faith plus works.

C. Romans 4:3-5

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace, but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

When you complete two weeks of work and your employer gives you a paycheck, you've earned it. It isn't a gift. It's something the company owes you. A debt.

That is *not* the case with justification before God. God is not a debtor to us. He doesn't owe us a thing. We haven't done anything that merits a legal declaration of us as righteous. In fact, as Paul said in v 5, God "justifies the ungodly." It's unrighteous people that God declares righteous!

God can declare the unrighteous to be righteous because, as Paul explained in Rom 3:24-26, the Lord Jesus shed His blood for us. Our sins are imputed to Jesus' account and His righteousness to our account: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21).

Anders Nygren's comments on these verses are so helpful that I will give an extended quotation:

Abraham may have something of which to boast before men; "but not before God." Before God there cannot be any boasting at all. Paul can deny the conclusion, because he denies the premise on which it rests. For by its very nature Abraham's righteousness was not by the law or by works, but by faith. Not only does Paul say so, but Scripture testifies to that. Paul has "the law and the prophets" on his side in what they have to say about Abraham and his righteousness. "For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned

to him as righteousness.” In the passage cited (Gen 15:6), nothing is said about Abraham’s works; only his faith is noted... “Reckon” means the same as to “reckon because of grace.” Therefore Paul continues, “Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.”

With that Paul has reached a point which is of utmost importance in his interpretation. Here he can tolerate no mistiness. He must insist on clear and precise characterization. He tolerates no indecision between faith and works. He sets forth either—or. *Either* it depends on works—and then boasting may continue, since it is not by grace but by his own merit that man is judged righteous. *Or* it depends on faith—and then all else is excluded, works, merit, wages, boasting; and then it is indeed the justification of the sinner. In other words, it is no longer a matter of *our* works, but of *God’s*. Faith always has the action of God as its correlative.²⁰

Now there’s an excellent presentation of Paul’s point!

Justification is by faith, apart from works. Another way of saying this is that justification is by faith *alone*.

D. John 4:1-42 (the Salvation of a Sinful Woman)

How would you witness to a person you knew was “living in sin”? Would you tell them that they had to stop living with the person before they could be saved? Would they have to commit to be willing to do that? The Lord Jesus faced this very situation with a Samaritan woman He met at a well outside the village of Sychar.

The Lord told her that eternal life is a gift: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water” (v 10). He also pointed out her sinfulness: “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly” (v 18).

This led her to perceive that He was a prophet (v 19) and to wonder if He might not be the Messiah (v 25). When Jesus acknowledged that He really was the Messiah, she left her waterpot, perhaps a symbol of her old religion (compare John 2:1-11), and went to tell the men of Sychar that she had found the Messiah (vv 29, 39).

Here was a woman of ill repute. She wasn’t even Jewish. She was a hated Samaritan. On top of that, she was living in immorality. Surely here was a person who was *not* a candidate for salvation!

²⁰ Nygren, *Romans*, 169-70.

Yet this woman comes to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and gets saved.

Jesus never told her she would have to give up her immoral lifestyle to have eternal life. He never told her she'd have to *promise* to give it up. He showed her that she was a sinner in need of the Savior. She responded by believing in Him. Zane Hodges agrees: "There had been no special conditions attached to that offer, no demands for the reformation of her twisted life, nothing in fact but the simple offer of a wondrous gift."²¹

While the word *justify* does not appear in John 4, justification by faith alone is clearly in view in this passage. This woman gained eternal life by faith alone. She had no works to commend her. God accepted her as righteous in His sight because she trusted in His Son for eternal life. Eric Gritsch points out that the words *justification* and *righteousness* need not occur in a passage for those themes to be under discussion:

The message of justification by faith and of salvation by grace is a basic theme of Scripture. *Even when the terms "righteousness" and "justification" are not used, this theme is prominent.* At its center is the message of salvation in Christ.²²

E. Conclusion

Justification before God is by faith alone. God justifies the ungodly, not the godly. He does so freely, not out of any debt that He might owe.

God declares sinners to be righteous because the Lord Jesus paid the full and complete payment for all our sins. He lived a sinless life. By His shed blood He did all that was necessary for our justification. This justification is either received as a gift, or it is not received at all. Those who think that they are righteous by their works can't be justified. Justification is for those who believe in Christ and Him alone for it.

IV. Yes, Justification Is by Faith Alone!

Justification by faith alone is a central tenet of Christianity. Without it, Christianity really loses its *raison d'être*. We who believe in the Free Grace Gospel are, humanly speaking, guardians of the greatest treasure on earth.

²¹ Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 128.

²² Eric Gritsch, "Justification by Faith and Ecclesial Communion: Pointers from the Lutheran-Catholic Dialog," Chapter 6 in *Church and Theology: Essays in Memory of Carl J. Peter* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 164, italics supplied.

Peter Sedgwick was right when he said,

It has been frequently pointed out with much conviction that this doctrine is not, at the end of the day, an academic issue. It concerns how people live, pray and deal with their own sinfulness.²³

If justification is not by faith alone, then *no one* can be sure he has eternal life. Assurance by works means no assurance at all since our works are imperfect. Doubt, fear, and guilt are the order of the day for people confused about forensic justification. They have no way of “dealing with their own sinfulness” since there is no other effective way to deal with our sinfulness than by looking solely to the finished work of Christ on the cross.

The message of justification by faith alone is not subject to modification. We must stand firmly on this ground. All other ground is sinking sand.

²³ Peter Sedgwick, “‘Justification by Faith’: One Doctrine, Many Debates?” *Theology* 93 (January/February 1990): 6-7.

LEGALISM: THE REAL THING¹

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Legalism is not a very nice word. No one wants to be accused of it anymore than one would want to be accused of despising motherhood or apple pie. In ecclesiastical circles, to call someone a *legalist* is to hurl an insult of the first magnitude. If someone says, "You're a legalist," the instinctive reply would be, "Them's fighting words!"

But legalism is more than just a nasty religious word. It is also a widely misused word. In the ordinary jargon of Evangelicalism, legalism has come to mean an undue emphasis on rules—particularly rules of a negative kind. But on this basis the apostle Paul, whose epistles contain a plethora of negative commands, would himself be called a legalist! This is an absurd designation for the great Apostle of Grace.

I. What Legalism Is Not

When I did my undergraduate work at Wheaton College, like all other Wheaton students, I signed the famous Wheaton pledge. The pledge, of course, bound me to abstain from things like drinking, smoking, dancing, card playing, and going to movies. To many people today, that kind of restrictive policy smacks of a very bad case of legalism. Yet I am happy to report that I never had a problem with the Wheaton pledge at all. Not only did I abstain from all these things while a student there, but I was actually glad the pledge existed.

In my humble opinion, the Wheaton pledge was a good idea for a Christian school and was in no small degree responsible for creating a good atmosphere on campus. Many students, like myself, were away from home for the first time in their lives. There is no telling what we might have experimented with had it not been for the pledge. Of course, as we all knew, some students broke the pledge on the q.t., but most of us were not brave enough to do that. So I concentrated on getting a good education, for which Wheaton had earned a well-deserved reputation. My hat is off to my old alma mater and to the pledge it so wisely enforced.

Naturally there were some people, even in those days, who thought the Wheaton pledge was a par excellence example of rigid funda-

¹ This article was adapted from a paper presented on March 8, 1988 at a GES Seminar held in Dallas, Texas.

mentalism with its so-called legalistic mentality. This accusation, however, was false. First of all, if you didn't like the idea of a pledge you could go to another school. Anyone who enrolled at Wheaton knew perfectly well what the rules of the game were. It was a fault much worse than the pledge, to enroll and sign it, and then go out and break it in the name of Christian liberty. Those who did so only revealed their lack of Christian integrity and character.

But in the second place, the Wheaton pledge was *not* an expression of legalism properly perceived from a *biblical* point of view. If anything, the Wheaton pledge impinged on the NT teaching about doubtful things. Paul had a good bit to say on that subject and if I read his words correctly he was highly sympathetic to the idea of giving up doubtful things if they caused offense to his Christian brothers. I am impressed by his words in 1 Cor 8:13 where he writes: "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." I am not at all sure I could pull that off!

My experience in Evangelicalism suggests that not very many Christians today share these sentiments of Paul's. For the most part, Evangelicals are not very eager to surrender practices they regard as their right to engage in, in the interest of a brother who may be spiritually hurt by their activity. It is not uncommon to hear scruples against so-called doubtful things labeled as "legalism." This kind of characterization then offers an excuse for ignoring other people's scruples, in the alleged interest of maintaining Christian freedom against unbiblical legalism.

To all of this I say, "Stuff and nonsense!" People's conscientious scruples against activities not explicitly condemned in Scripture is *not*—I repeat, *not*—legalism. Of course, when a word is used widely in a certain way, it comes to have that meaning. But I am not talking about the semantic history of the word *legalism*. I am talking about the NT concept of legalism.

From a NT vantage point, a preoccupation with a lot of negative rules which are not explicit in the Bible is not legalism at all. It may, in fact, reflect the weak conscience Paul talks about. But Paul never condemns a "weak conscience" as some sort of perverse adherence to the law, but rather as a sign of spiritual immaturity. And Paul was nothing if he wasn't solicitous for the well-being of the spiritually immature. He believed firmly in the principle that, "We . . . who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom 15:1). And for Paul that meant giving up his own rights if need be.

We need more of that in the Christian world today. Instead of hurling thunderbolts about "legalism" at our more scrupulous brothers, let's try

making a few personal sacrifices here and there. After all, as Paul points out in the passage just quoted above, we ought to do this “even as Christ pleased not Himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me’” (Rom 15:3).

So that’s what legalism is *not*.

II. What Legalism Is

But if so, what *is* legalism? Is there such a thing? And the answer must be straightforward: *There sure is!* In fact, I would suggest that there is more real legalism in the Church today than there was back when I took the pledge at Wheaton College. Let’s discuss it.

In his widely known and widely used *Systematic Theology*, Louis Berkhof² listed the so-called three uses of the law. The first use of the law has to do with the restraining function of God’s law in the world. The second use of the law has to do with the convicting and educating use of the law. I am not concerned here with either of these two uses since I think a good biblical case can be made for them. It’s the so-called third use of the law that I am particularly interested in for the purposes of this discussion.

Let me quote Berkhof directly on this point. He designates this use by the Latin words, *usus didacticus* or *normativus*, and then he writes as follows: “This is the so-called *tertius usus legis*, the third use of the law. The law is a rule of life for believers, reminding them of their duties and leading them in the way of life and salvation. This third use of the law is denied by the Antinomians.”³

A. The Antinomian Rabbit Trail

Uh, oh! Here’s another of those nasty theological words—*antinomianism!*

According to Berkhof the denial of the third use of the law is a mark of the antinomians. But if the word *legalism* is wrapped in obscurity these days, the term *antinomianism* is enveloped in Stygian darkness!

For instance, my copy of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* has only one definition for this word, which it designates as its meaning in theology. Listen to this: “antinomian n. Theology. A member of a Christian sect holding that faith alone is

²Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957).

³*Ibid.*, 615.

necessary for salvation.”⁴ Well, how about that! If that’s all we’re talking about under the term *antinomian*, I cheerfully confess to being one. And so, I imagine, would every member of GES, since that’s the doctrine articulated in our doctrinal confession. But I take great comfort in the fact that under the *American Heritage* definition, the apostle Paul himself should be classified as an unreconstructed antinomian!

I wish it were all as simple as that. But of course it isn’t. I said before we were talking about a muddy, muddy word here, and we certainly are. You see the term *antinomian* has a complicated theological history.

Martin Luther is thought to have been the first to utilize the term, in his controversy with Johann Agricola. Agricola is said to have denied the relevance of the moral law in bringing a sinner to repentance. On the other hand, some who have accepted this second, or pedagogic, use of the law, have still been called antinomians. For example, Hugh Blair writes that they (the antinomians) “insist that the moral law has no place in the life of the believer, who is not under law but under grace, and so not bound by the law as a rule of life for Christian living.”⁵ As you can see, this articulation of things is close to Berkhof’s third use of the law. The main difference is that Blair specifies “the moral law” and Berkhof mentions simply “the law.” Obviously we have opened a can of worms.

A reading of all the documents in the second edition of David D. Hall’s, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*⁶ reveals that the nature of this controversy has been repeatedly misrepresented both in the theological classroom and in theological literature. The controversy was not at all about the need for holy living—all sides agreed to this. Thus Anne Hutchinson, the famous villainess of the controversy, “was not a ‘libertine’ who advocated sexual license.”⁷ In fact, the controversy was not about sanctification per se but about assurance of salvation. So Hall writes: “I argued in 1968, and would argue again, that assurance of salvation was the central issue in the controversy.”⁸

⁴*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 57.

⁵Hugh Blair, s. v. “Antinomianism” in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Revised edition. Edited by: J. D. Douglas, Earle E. Cairns, and James E. Ruark. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 48.

⁶David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990).

⁷*Ibid.*, xiii.

⁸*Ibid.*, xiv.

I would like to suggest that today the term *antinomian* is largely what you make it. That's unfortunate, but I'm afraid it's true. But of course the root derivation of the word simply means "opposed to law." Not necessarily to the law of Moses per se, but simply to law as such. It would be nice if all parties in the current debate over the Gospel could agree to confine the term to those who are opposed to all forms of law in the Christian life. That is to say, an antinomian would then be one who held that there are no laws governing Christian behavior so that the Christian is entirely free from commandments and binding obligations. That kind of definition would clarify things a lot.

For one thing, under that definition, Paul was certainly *not* an antinomian. After all, it was Paul who said (1 Cor 9:21) that in seeking to win to Christ those who were "without law," he became "as without law"—but he hastens to add, "not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ." In another place he can say, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). Regardless of the precise meaning of this text, it certainly shows that Paul could think in terms of Christian law. In addition, the NT everywhere asserts that our Lord left commandments that are binding on His followers today.

So you see what I mean. If we could confine the designation *antinomian* to those who will not acknowledge any such thing as a Christian law, we would clarify the situation greatly. But don't hold your breath waiting for this to happen. *Antinomian* is too good a Christian "cuss-word" to retreat easily to the fringes of theological debate in the way I am suggesting. It just happens to be a very convenient cudgel with which to bludgeon theological opponents whose attributes and theology offend us. I regret to say that Christian polemicists do not readily retire their most useful brickbats, anymore than the nuclear powers easily discard their nuclear arsenals. It's nice to have something with which to blow your opponents off the face of the map, and antinomianism serves very well for that purpose in some theological circles.

So how about my own nuclear arsenal? What theological word is *my* big bomb? All right. I'm going to admit it. My own nuclear riposte is wrapped up in one word: *legalism*.

B. On the Trail of Real Legalism

Like all theological debaters, I have an excuse for not giving this weapon away. I happen to think that the term *legalism* can be used in a legitimate and biblical sense. It is a charge that will truly stick in specific cases.

So, for that matter, is *antinomianism*, if I may return to that word for a brief moment. You see, Paul apparently knew some real, live antinomians in his day. Or at least, there were those who thought *he* was antinomian, because Paul writes (in Rom 3:8), “And why not say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come’?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say.” To which he adds, “Their condemnation is just.” Such a view is beneath contempt for Paul and he will not even debate it. But unless I miss my guess, Paul has in mind some who were using his legitimate teaching as a perverted excuse for licentious living. If *antinomian* were used in that sense it would have a biblical counterpart.

But I would equally insist that Paul confronted various forms of thought that can legitimately be described as legalism. In fact, if I read my NT correctly, Paul had a lot more trouble with legalists than he did with antinomians.

For a long time I have felt that Acts 15 is a highly instructive text in terms of the nature and content of the legalistic thought which Paul vigorously opposed. For example, in Acts 15:1 we are told this: “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” Naturally, it is unlikely that this means that these Judean teachers asked for circumcision and nothing more. The subsequent debate at Jerusalem suggests that the larger issue was the keeping of the Mosaic law, in the keeping of which circumcision was simply the first step.

But clearly these Judean teachers mixed their commands into the conditions for final salvation from hell. We should not leap to the conclusion, however, that they denied the necessity of faith in Christ. In all likelihood they affirmed it, since they got a good hearing at Antioch—so much so that the congregation there dispatched Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to settle this issue once and for all. But, of course, everyone at Antioch knew that the Jerusalem church proclaimed faith in Christ, so that it is unlikely that the Judeans denied this. Nevertheless, the Judeans *did* deny the necessity of faith in Christ *alone* for salvation, since they held that salvation was impossible apart from observance of the law.

I don’t need to tell you, do I, that this view of things is widely held today? In the case of many who adopt the so-called third use of the law, this use has inevitable soteriological consequences. To use Berkhof’s words again, “The law is a rule of life for believers . . . leading them in a way of life and salvation.” It is only a short distance from this concept

to the conclusion that if one does not follow this rule of life there is no salvation. But such a view is a transparent return to the position of the Judaizers of Acts 15:1.

I say it is “transparent,” but obviously it is not always transparent to those who espouse it. Indeed, there has arisen in contemporary discussion a fairly vigorous debate about what exactly Paul meant when he condemned *works of the law* as a basis for justification. The answer given by some is that Paul was mainly referring to things like circumcision and food laws.

Ironically, others maintain that by *works of the law* Paul was referring to legalism(!)—by which they mean the attempt to establish one’s own righteousness through completion of the law. By defining *works of the law* to mean only the legalistic attempt to achieve righteousness before God, the door is opened to the *right kind* of obedience to the law! Indeed, on this view, such an obedience actually springs from *faith*! Thus some today hold that obedience to the law, on the principle of faith, is a necessity for final salvation.

Perhaps one of the more extreme expressions of this view is the one found in Daniel P. Fuller’s book, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?*⁹ As one might guess from the title, Fuller believes gospel and law comprise a continuum. Let me quote a revealing passage from Fuller:

I realized that if the law is, indeed, a law of faith, enjoining only the obedience of faith and the works that proceed therefrom . . . , then there could no longer be any antithesis in biblical theology between the law and the gospel. I then had to accept the very drastic conclusion that the gospel established by Luther, Calvin, and the covenant theologians could no longer stand up under the scrutiny of biblical theology.¹⁰

Well, I can at least agree with Fuller about one thing. I can agree that his conclusion is “drastic”! With it, Fuller bids farewell to the Protestant Reformation and is smugly embarked on a pilgrimage back to Rome. As we all know, the synergism between faith and works is a truly Roman Catholic conception.

But Fuller is not wrong because he veers away from Reformation thought. He is wrong because he misreads the Bible and misreads the apostle Paul in particular. Let me recommend to you that you read the

⁹Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, ix.

excellent study by Douglas J. Moo in the *Westminster Theological Journal* entitled, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and 'Legalism' in Paul."¹¹ Interacting with the literature on this subject, Moo makes an effective case that by *works of the law* Paul simply meant "actions performed in obedience to the law, works which are commanded by the law."¹² To put it plainly, the notion that by *works of the law* Paul meant wrongly motivated works—or something similar—is a theological fiction. It simply will not wash with the biblical texts.

But my point is this. The very fact that contemporary theologians have found ways to say, "Unless you observe the law of Moses, at least the moral law of Moses, you can't be saved," is positive proof that the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 did not rid the Church once and for all of legalistic soteriology.

No indeed! Legalistic soteriology is alive and well and living in today's church!

But let me return again to Acts 15. The issue raised by the Judean legalists at Antioch was soteriological. But by the time the council convened, I think the soteriological issue had dropped into the background. The reason I say this is because of Acts 15:5, where we read: "But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.'" It should be carefully observed that these converted Pharisees do not really repeat the contention of the Judeans who had come to Antioch. There is nothing in their words that suggests that salvation was impossible apart from the Mosaic law. In a church which had long been under the direct teaching of the original apostles, it is not very likely that there was a faction that believed the law to be necessary for eternal salvation. I feel confident that the apostles had made themselves quite clear on *that* point!

But the apostles had evidently not disturbed converted Jews who wished to pursue their ancestral lifestyle under the Mosaic system. They were free to do so if they desired, and—as we learn from Acts 21:15-25—there were many of them who so desired. In fact, according to Acts 21:21, what really offended these converted Jews was that they heard that Paul was teaching his Jewish converts to give up their observance of the law. But Paul was not teaching that at all. On the contrary, he

¹¹Douglas J. Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 73-100.

¹²*Ibid.*, 92.

taught that the law should not be imposed on *Gentile* converts. But for the believing Jews in Jerusalem, who were free to go on in the Mosaic ways to which they were accustomed, this issue must have been clouded around the edges with obscurity.

In fact, it is not a very hard step to take to conclude that what I do freely out of devotion to God really *ought* to be done by others if they want the best possible spiritual experience. How many people are there, for example, who rise early in the morning to have their quiet time, and who think that every Christian ought to do the same? And if they had a chance to legislate it for the whole church, they would be severely tempted to do so!

So when the believing Pharisees of Acts 15:5 said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses," that does *not* mean that they thought of this as a soteriological necessity. More likely they thought that this was the only lifestyle fully acceptable to God. Hence, they would naturally feel that even Gentile Christians definitely needed the law as their rule of life.

Now let me suggest this: These converted Pharisees would have concurred with Berkhof's third use of the law, *minus any soteriological overtones*. In short, using Berkhof's words again, they probably held that "the law is a rule of life for believers . . . leading them in the way of life and salvation." Mind you, not leading them in the way *to* salvation, but leading them in the way *of* salvation. This too is a biblical form of *legalism* and, along with its soteriological cousin, it is rejected by the Jerusalem Council.

C. The New Covenant Relationship

One of the significant points raised by Douglas Moo, in the article referred to earlier, is that the Pauline usage of the term *law* does not really yield itself to a neat distinction between the moral and ceremonial law. In fact, Moo writes as follows:

As has been often pointed out, the threefold distinction of moral, ceremonial, and civil law as separate categories with varying degrees of applicability is simply unknown in the Judaism of the first century, and there is little evidence that Jesus or Paul introduced such a distinction.¹³

¹³Ibid., 85

Later on, in discussing the Pauline assertion that the believer is not under the law but under grace, Moo writes as follows:

If...*nomos* in Rom. 6:14, 15 is a reference to the *Mosaic economy* (contrasted with the Christian economy, referred to by one of its chief characteristics, grace), then believers could very well be freed from obligation to *nomos* while being required to observe the “commandments” (now mediated through Christ and the apostles).¹⁴

I like that. Unless I miss my guess, this is the position of most of the members of GES. We hold that the law—by which we mean the Mosaic economy as a whole—is no longer in force for Christians. Not only does it have no soteriological role to play for us, but it most certainly is *not* our rule of life. To put it another way, we are not under the Old Covenant, we are under the New Covenant.

Moreover, we are introduced into this New Covenant relationship with God by an act of grace. The new heart of which Hebrews 8 speaks is imparted to us by a supernatural work of regeneration, and our standing in this covenant is thus permanent and unconditional. Nevertheless, God’s gracious act, by which we come under the New Covenant, carries with it many obligations and responsibilities. The failure to perform these does not nullify the covenantal relationship itself, but—as the author of Hebrews makes clear—this failure can expose us to severe divine sanctions.

To put this matter in another way, born-again Christians today are responsible to keep the commandments left to us by our Lord Jesus Christ and by His apostles. This new array of commands is quite distinct from the Mosaic economy and should never be confused with it. Though we are not under the law of Moses in any sense, we can still say with Paul that we are “under law toward Christ” (1 Cor 9:21). But under the New Covenant this law is inscribed on our hearts (Heb 8:10) and every act of obedience is the natural outworking of what we are inwardly. That is why James can call it “the law of liberty” (Jas 1:25; 2:12), because it is the free expression of what we are by nature as God’s children. The redeemed self (=our “new man”) “was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24). Were it not for the “counter-programming” of sin that dwells in our flesh, obedience would be spontaneous for all of God’s children (Rom 7:21-25).

¹⁴Ibid., 85.

Please don't misunderstand. Obviously I'm *not* saying that obedience to the New Covenant law is *inevitable*. But I *am* saying that it is *natural*. Of course, there is a significant difference between something that is inevitable and something that is natural. Neither am I saying that obedience to the New Covenant law of liberty is always *easy*. It is not. Romans 7 shows that!

On the other hand, through the personal ministry and help of the Holy Spirit the Christian life can be so lived that we can realize the truth of our Lord's words, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt 11:30). Our victory can be such that we can keep God's commandments out of love for Him, so that John states: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). If the Christian life is perceived by an individual as an enormous burden, that person has yet to understand the real nature of life under the New Covenant. His personal freedom from the Old Covenant law is not yet a reality in his experience. For as Peter so succinctly put it at the Jerusalem Council, the Mosaic law was a "yoke . . . which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10).

Of course, the statements I have just made deserve an article entirely devoted to the issues they raise. But that is not my purpose here. That must wait for another time, if the Lord wills it.

III. Conclusion

My purpose in this article has been mainly this: to point out that the so-called third use of the law is what we really ought to refer to when we talk about *legalism* in the Church today. The Mosaic law perceived as a rule of life for believers—whether or not that has soteriological overtones—is *true legalism*! That, in my view, is the real thing.

But I hope you have also concluded from this discussion that for a believer to reject the third use of the law is not to become, ipso facto, an antinomian. That charge is an ungracious and inconsiderate canard. I am tempted to say that it is a violation of the royal law of Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Jas 2:8)—a law, by the way, repeated under the New Covenant and applicable to all believers. I say I was tempted to say that—but I guess I already have. But I have to agree with Moo again, who writes

And, as one implication, the fallacy of castigating someone as "antinomian" because he argues that believers are not under the

Mosaic law should at least be obvious. Such a charge would “stick” only if it were demonstrated that the Mosaic law contains the *complete* and *sole* revelation of God’s will for man.¹⁵

That’s a good statement, I think. The Mosaic economy was indeed a revelation from God and, because it was, we can still learn immensely profitable truths from it. But the touchstone for our lifestyle today, is not the *old* revelation—marvelous as it was—but the *new*, more marvelous one, which has been made in and through Jesus Christ our Lord. And we who live in these last days should be able to appreciate the profoundness of the opening words of Hebrews:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son . . .

And it is to that revelation that we are profoundly responsible—all the more so since it has fully superseded the Mosaic revelation. We are thus Christians who live on this side of the Cross and we are under a new law—the law of the New Covenant, that is, the law of liberty. If I were to deny the authority of *this* law over my life, I would then be truly an antinomian. But if I thought the *Mosaic law* had authority over me—even though Paul tells me plainly I am not under it—in that case I would be a legalist. And my legalism would be *the real thing!*

¹⁵Ibid., 90.

DOES PHILIPPIANS 1:6 GUARANTEE PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION?

Part 2

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I. Introduction

In Part 1 of this article, an investigation was begun regarding the nature of the declaration in Phil 1:6 that, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."¹ It was observed that the most widespread perspective was to view this verse as addressing the salvation/sanctification of the Philippians, and Christians in general. Nevertheless, many scholars object to this interpretation, opining that such exegesis imposes foreign ideas on the text. As an alternative, they suggest that the verse and its context speak of the Philippians' financial partnership with Paul in the advance of the Gospel.

The context preceding 1:6 was seen to agree most readily with this latter approach. The epistolary introduction in Philippians (1:3-11), as in other epistles, anticipates themes developed in the body of the letter. To be specific, Phil 1:3-7 is best understood as preparing for Paul's gift motif developed in 4:10-20. In fact, the unusual harmony of 1:3-7 with 4:10-20 compels the exegete to perceive 1:6 from the vantage point of the Philippians' gift to Paul. We also discovered that *koinōnia* ("partnership") in v 5, taken with the following preposition *eis* ("in, toward"), stresses the partnership the Philippians had with Paul in spreading the Gospel, not a partnership in salvation/sanctification. The details of 1:6 must now be examined.

¹ Unless noted otherwise, English translations will be taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.

II. Exegetical Considerations in Verse 6

A. The "Good Work"²

1. The Relationship of 1:6 to 1:5

What has been implied in Part 1 is that the *koinōnia* of 1:5 and the *synkoinōnos* ("co-partners") of 1:7 delimit the meaning of "good work" in 1:6.³ Hawthorne analyzes the problem in approaching 1:6 by warning that the phrase "good work"

cannot be shaken loose from its immediate context and be interpreted primarily in terms of "God's redeeming and renewing" in the lives of the Philippians (Martin, 1959; see also Barth, Caird, Hendriksen, Jones,

² Judith M. Gundry Volf, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying In and Falling Away* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 33, calls this term the *crux interpretum* to the meaning of 1:6.

³ Of all the commentators I have studied who take the traditional view of 1:6, only Lenski is consistent in interpreting 1:5-7 as a unit with all three verses portraying the Philippians' "fellowship" in faith and adherence to the Gospel (salvation); R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1937), 708-715. He reluctantly admits on p. 715 that the gift is in the background of the unit, but the *koinōnia* would be fully possible without the gift. Peter T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 22-23, 45; and Paul Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings* (Berlin: A. Topelmann, 1939), 78, conceive of the unit as moving from the specific to the general (1:3, the gift; 1:5, the broad cooperation in advancing the Gospel; 1:6, eschatological salvation). Other commentators understand Paul to be moving from the Philippians' partnership (1:5) to God's gift of salvation (1:6) back to the Philippians' partnership (1:7). Cf. William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), 51; Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 60-62; Volf, *Perseverance*, 37-38; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 90. Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Kenneth Barker (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 51, goes so far as to interpret 1:6 as a contrast with 1:5 rather than a continuation. As will be seen below, this is contextually and exegetically unlikely, if not impossible.

Müller). Rather *ergon agathon* finds its explanation in the fact that the Philippians were partners with Paul in the gospel (v 5), and shared their resources with him to make the proclamation of the gospel possible. This “sharing in the gospel” is the good work referred to here (cf. 2 Cor 8:6) [*italics original*].⁴

This restricted meaning of 1:6⁵ is confirmed by the interrelationship between the “good work” and the preceding phrase in v 5, “the first day until now.”⁶ The “good work” is what God began among them (v 6),

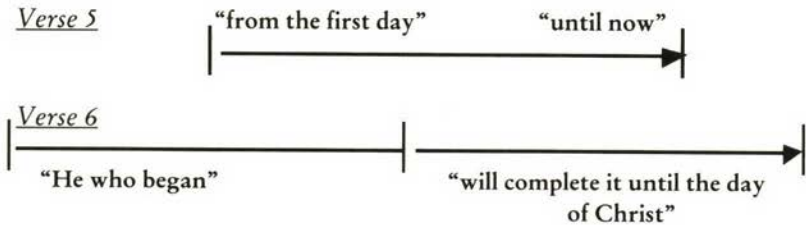
⁴ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1983), 21. Timothy Dwight also equates the “good work” with the *koinōnia* of v 5: H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon*, 4th ed., translated by John C. Moore, rev. and ed. by Wm. P. Dickson, preface and supplementary notes by Timothy Dwight (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889), 48.

⁵ “By *ergon agathon* [“good work”] is not meant vaguely and generally a work of faith and love . . . but that special good work, that *koinōnia*, which the apostle has just particularized”; John A. Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, ed. W. Young, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 11.

⁶ Volf, *Perseverance*, 37, objects to this interconnection between vv 5 and 6: “The text offers no compelling reasons to identify *koinōnia hymōn eis to euangelion* with *ergon agathon*. Rather, a differentiation between the two seems more apparent.” She adds later (*ibid.*, 40), “the difference in time spans of the activities (*achri tou nun*, ‘until now’ v. 5, but *achri hēmeras Christou Iēsou*, ‘until the day of Christ Jesus,’ v. 6) also speaks for a differentiation between the phrases.” But contrary to Volf, the difference in time spans in vv 5 and 6 does not require that the activities be distinct. Even Lenski, *Philippians*, 709, who interprets both verses to relate to salvation, believes that “He who began” (1:6) picks up the phrase “from the first day.” Also in agreement with the identity of these phrases in vv 5 and 6 are Fee, *Philippians*, 85–86, nn. 64, 88; George Panikulam, *Koinōnia in the New Testament: A Dynamic Expression of Christian Life* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 84–85; L. A. Wiesinger, *Biblical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistles to the Philippians, to Titus, and the First to Timothy*, Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, trans. by John Fulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1851), 31.

Even seeing some distinction between vv 5 and 6 does not preclude taking v 6 as a reference to the Philippians’ financial assistance. Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension*, rev. and enlarged ed. (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1992); 95, implies 1:5 refers to all of the Philippians’ previous gifts, but 1:6 speaks only of their most recent gift. He understands the singular *ergon agathon* (“good work”) as a reference to one specific gift. We must admit this possibility. Even if this is accepted, “good work” becomes a collective or

i.e. from “the first day.” The concept of completing the good work in v 6 carries the process on from the “now” (v 5) to the “day of Christ” (v 6). This can be diagrammed as follows:



2. The Relationship of 1:6 to 2:12-13

One line of support for the thought that “good work” should be regarded as a reference to salvation is Paul’s uses of a verbal compound of *ergon* (“work”) in 2:13: “for it is God *who is at work* (*ho energōn*) in you, both to will and to work (*to energein*) for His good pleasure.” It is further argued that immediately preceding v 12 Paul addresses the Philippians to “work out your [own] salvation” (*tēn heautōn sōtērian katēgazethe*). Here Paul conjoins “salvation” (*sōtēria*) with another compound of *ergon*. By this or similar exegesis, Silva feels able to draw

corporate response of numerous good deeds (gifts) of individuals in the congregation.

On the other hand, the singular *ergon agathon* may be collective, viewing the Philippians’ gifts as a whole in a united partnership. The use of the Greek phrase (in the singular) elsewhere in the NT is ambiguous. Excluding Phil 1:6, it only occurs ten times. All but two references employ a construction with *pan* (“every good work”), a construction that cannot be equally compared with Phil 1:6. However, the exceptions (Rom 2:7; 13:3) could be considered collective. Another collective construction using *kalon ergon* is found in 1 Tim 3:1, where the whole ministry of an elder is summed up with the singular, “good work.”

But the fact that “good work” (v 6) can be equated with “partnership” (v 5) is enhanced by the following consideration. In Part 1 of this article (see fn 68 there), the phrase “the first day until now” (1:5) was seen to parallel 4:15, “at the first preaching of the gospel,” lit. “in the beginning (*archē*) of the gospel.” The phrase in 4:15 describes the time in Paul’s ministry after leaving Macedonia when the Philippians gave their recent gift. Cf. Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 191, n. 42. The parallel between 1:5 and 4:15 may help confirm the interconnection of v 5 with v 6 since *archē* (“beginning”) in 4:15 is etymologically related to *enarchomai* (“begin”) in v 6.

from 2:12-13 the theological categories of human responsibility (2:12) and divine sovereignty (2:13) and to apply them to 1:5 and 1:6 respectively.⁷

But the use of 2:12-13 to assist in the traditional (salvation) interpretation of 1:6 can be challenged on the following grounds: First, this approach employs the unsound exegetical and hermeneutical method of indiscriminately cross-referencing *ergon* or its cognates and compounds. Other compounds of *ergon* in Philippians demonstrate that *energeō* (2:13, “to work”) and *katergazomai* (2:12, “to accomplish, work out”)⁸ do not necessarily correspond with the “good work” of 1:6 or a salvation view of the verse. Clearly, the focus of *ergon* in the remainder of the letter is on the work of advancing the Gospel, not soteriological concerns.⁹

⁷ Silva, *Philippians*, 51. For a similar linking of 2:12-13 with 1:6, cf. Hendriksen, *Philippians*, 54; Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 8; and by allusion, Ben Witherington III, *Friendship and Finances In Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 38.

⁸ Interpreting 2:12 as a soteriological concern is highly dependent on the nuance of the English translation of *katergazomai* as “work out.” This, however, is not a translation ever used elsewhere for this Greek verb (found 22 times in the NT) in such versions as the KJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, or NIV. The more natural translation is simply, “accomplish” or “produce.” William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. from Walter Bauer, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. “*katergazomai*,” 421 (hereafter referred to as BAGD), while translating the verb, “work out” in Phil 2:12, places the verse under the heading, “bring about, produce, create.” But unless *sōtēria* (“salvation”) refers to a deliverance other than from eternal condemnation, translating the 2:12 phrase as “accomplish your salvation” presents formidable problems for a soteriological approach to the verse. The Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible boldly renders the phrase, “work for your salvation.” Similarly, the Good News translates, “keep working to complete your salvation.” These translations are not incorrect if one approaches *sōtēria* in a non-soteriological manner.

⁹ For example, cf. 1:22, *karpos ergou* (“fruitful labor”) and 2:30, *to ergon Christou* (“the work of Christ”). Most of the other cognates have a similar focal point: 2:25, *synergōn* (“fellow worker”); 3:2, *tous kakous ergatas* (“the evil workers”); 4:3, *synergōn mou* (“my fellow workers”). The one remaining compound is more general: 3:21, *tēn energeian* (“the exertion [of the power that He has]”).

Second, the “salvation” (*sōtēria*) in 2:12 is best taken as a “deliverance” other than a rescue from eternal damnation. Hawthorne translates, “Obediently work at achieving *spiritual health* [*sōtēria*]” (italics added), referring to the church’s corporate experience.¹⁰ While wanting to maintain a distance from a purely sociological understanding of “salvation” in 2:12, Fee nevertheless expresses a similar opinion: “The context makes it clear that this is not a soteriological text per se, dealing with ‘people getting saved’ or ‘saved people persevering.’”¹¹ On the other hand, Silva argues against a non-soteriological or non-eschatological sense of *sōtēria* in 2:12: “Perhaps the strongest objection to the new interpretation is that it lends itself so . . . to a remarkably weakened reading of a remarkably potent text.”¹² Silva’s “strongest objection” begs the question, and can stand only if the reader assumes what Silva hopes to prove. Why can’t Phil 2:12-13 be “a remarkably potent text” about a “salvation” other than a salvation from hell?¹³

3. The Relationship of 1:6 to Galatians 3:3 and Second Corinthians 8-9

Supporters of the traditional (salvation) approach to 1:6 often feel that they have evidence for their view in the fact that *enarchomai* (“begin”) and *epiteleō* (“complete”) appear in combination together in Gal 3:3 and that this verse is the only other place where *enarchomai* appears in the

¹⁰ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 96. His defense is found on pp. 97-100. Cf. also Martin, *Philippians*, TNTC, 110-13; *ibid.*, *Philippians*, New Century Bible (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1976), 102-104; Robert C. Swift, “The Theme and Structure of Philippians,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (July-September 1984): 245. A slightly preferable slant on “salvation” (*sōtēria*) in 2:12 is that of Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, 96-99. He proposes that the “deliverance” is realized in honoring Christ in the midst of suffering. This nuance receives support in Paul’s parallel explanatory statement that his own “salvation” (*sōtēria*) could be accomplished as Christ was exalted in his body, in life or in death (1:20). But this “salvation” also depended on the Philippians’ prayers for him (1:18).

¹¹ Fee, *Philippians*, 235.

¹² Silva, *Philippians*, 137.

¹³ Even if 2:12-13 has reference to eternal salvation, the clause, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for [His] good pleasure” (v 13), can’t imply divine sovereignty or support a doctrine of perseverance. Otherwise, God must be blamed every time a Christian sins. In other words, if this perseverance doctrine is biblical, any sin in the Christian must mean that at that point God stopped His work of sovereignly moving the Christian to will and to act according to the divine pleasure.

NT.¹⁴ But severe problems arise in using Gal 3:3 in this manner as a parallel with Phil 1:6. First, Gal 3:3 seems to prove the very opposite of how the traditional (salvation) view interprets Phil 1:6. The Galatians were *not* persevering in godliness, even though Paul knows that they have “begun by the Spirit” (3:3) and were born again.¹⁵ Second, God is not technically the subject of the beginning or completion. The Galatians are.¹⁶ The NIV reads, “After beginning [*enarxamenoi*] with the Spirit,

¹⁴ Alvin L. Baker, “Eternal Security Rightly Understood,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (September 1984): 20; Silva, *Philippians*, 52; Homer A. Kent, Jr., “Philippians,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 11:107; Fee, *Philippians*, 86, n. 63; O’Brien, *Thanksgiving*, 26.

¹⁵ It is at this very point that the perseverance doctrine enters various contradictions. Silva, *Philippians*, 52, reasons that the evidence in the Galatians was so small that “Paul could not presume on the genuineness of their faith so as to exclude the possibility of their perdition (4:11, 20; 5:4).” On the other hand, Paul’s “assurance that the Philippians will persevere to the end arises from the external, visible evidence that their lives provided.” Yet, contrary to Silva, Paul addresses the Galatians as “brothers” nine times (1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18), mentions that God “called” them (cf. Rom 8:30; to be called is to be justified and eventually glorified), and reminds them that their genuine beginning as true Christians (3:3) was confirmed by the miraculous activities of the Spirit among them (3:5). Paul certainly feared his labors among the Galatians might be in vain (Gal 4:11). But the potential for his labors being in vain among the Philippians also existed (Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* [Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1967], 107) should they fail to hold fast (not “hold out,” NIV) the word of life (2:16). Also, perseverance theology can view Phil 1:6 as Paul’s absolute confidence about the enduring quality of the faith of the Philippians, yet view 3:11-12 as Paul’s doubts about his own perseverance and final redemption (Silva, *Philippians*, 192-93).

¹⁶ Volf wants to avoid any implications for Phil 1:6 from the use of human subjects in Gal 3:3. She holds that *enarchomai* (“begin”) and *epiteleō* (“complete”) in Galatians are intransitive, but in Philippians they are transitive. She adds: “The beginning and completion (of the Christian life) in Gal 3:3 is attributed not to the readers’ activity but to the activity of the Spirit or the flesh, as the instrumental datives *pneumati* and *sarki* indicate . . .” (*Perseverance*, 40, n. 195). But it is surely the “readers’ activity” to which Paul refers when he asks, “are you now being perfected by the flesh?” Even if the datives are taken as instrumental, the subject of the activity in both verbs is the Galatians themselves.

are *you* now trying to attain your goal [*epiteleisthe*] by human effort?" (italics added).¹⁷

A more impressive parallel with Phil 1:6 is the use of the two words in 2 Cor 8:6, 10-11. Although the compound *proenarchomai* ("begin [beforehand]"¹⁸) is used with *epiteleō*, the reference is crucial since it is the only other place in the NT where the two words come together. Silva admits that the 2 Corinthians passage is intriguing because of the double conjunction of these two Greek words, and because the contexts of both books where the words occur highlight a financial contribution.¹⁹ In comparing 2 Cor 8-9 with Phil 1:3-7, our attention is immediately captivated by the fact that the Macedonians (Philippians) are the repeated

¹⁷ BAGD, s.v. *epiteleō*, 302, translates, "*you* have begun in the Spirit; will *you* now end in the flesh [italics added]?"

¹⁸ Ibid., s.v. *proenarchomai*, 705.

¹⁹ Silva, *Philippians*, 52, n. 18, however, rejects this meaning in Phil 1:6, objecting that Gal 3:3 is a "closer parallel" than 2 Corinthians 8, and "Paul can hardly mean that the Philippians must raise yet another offering for the Last Day." Volf also objects: "But to what activity which the *Philippians* had begun and were certain to finish could Paul be referring here? Not a financial contribution, for Paul had just received a gift from the Philippians and can now say, 'I have everything and abound, I have been filled' (4:18)" *Perseverance*, 40. Kent's reasoning is similar:

"Paul would not have hinted that their gift was only a beginning, and that more should follow" ("Philippians," 105). However, that a financial understanding of 1:6 must imply that Paul is asking for additional gifts is a *non sequitur*. For example, Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992), 206, views the completion of the "good work" as the multiplied fruit in the lives of others through the Philippians' financial partnership in Paul's defense of the Gospel. Yet he rejects the implication that Paul is teaching that the Philippians' contributions should continue until Christ returns.

Viewed from another perspective, Paul may be hinting that the Philippians should continue their partnership with sacrificial giving until the Lord returns. He told them, "Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account" (4:17, NIV). What faithful pastor would not encourage his congregation to give sacrificially in order to promote the Gospel, and to believe that God will richly reward their giving at Christ's return? Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 8-9 for the very reason of motivating the Corinthians to give financially.

object for discussion in the 2 Corinthians unit.²⁰ This alone should cause us to give greater notice to 2 Corinthians over Galatians 3.

In examining these parallels, we discover that 2 Cor 8-9, the largest NT passage on giving, contains all the major concepts surrounding Phil 1:6. First, 2 Corinthians brings together (*pro*)*enarchomai* ("begin beforehand") with *epiteleō* ("complete") twice. It may be that *enarchomai* in Phil 1:6 carries sacrificial overtones.²¹ This would be in keeping with Paul's priestly imagery of the Philippians' gifts in the remainder of his letter.²² Second, this context uses *koinōnia* twice with

²⁰ Some commentators see 2 Corinthians 9 as a separate letter from chap. 8. E.g., Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1986), 249-50; Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*, ed. George W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 27-36. On the contrary, the two chapters are to be handled as a unit of thought. In defense of the unity of chaps. 8-9, see Charles H. Talbert, "Money Management in Early Mediterranean Christianity: 2 Corinthians 8-9," *Review and Expositor* 86 (1989): 359-61; Stanley K. Stowers, "PERI MEN GAR and the Integrity of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9," *Novum Testamentum* 32 (1990): 340-48; Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1984), 429-33.

²¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), 84; William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, reprint ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 16; James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), s.v. *enarchomai*, 211; H. C. G. Moule, *Philippian Studies: Lessons in Faith and Love* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), 26. Denying the ritual sense in the word, see J. Hugh Michael, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1928), 12; Gerhard Delling, s.v. *telos*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 8:62, n. 5 (hereafter TDNT).

²² The words *thysia* ("offering," 2:17; 4:18) and *leitourgia* ("service," 2:17, 30) are common sacrificial terms Paul employs in Philippians to describe the giving of money to his needs. Philippians 4:18 and Heb 13:16 are perhaps the clearest verses to show that sacrificial giving is a priestly activity accomplished by the NT believer-priest. (Cf. also *leitourgia*, "service," in 2 Cor 9:12 and *leitourgeō*, "to serve," in Rom 15:27, both in financial contexts. The latter verse also employs the verb *koinōneō*.)

reference to financial giving.²³ Third, 2 Corinthians specifically mentions *charis* (“grace”) in connection with the sacrificial giving of the Macedonians (8:1) and the financial contributions of others (8:6, 7, 19;

²³ The collection project discussed in 2 Corinthians 8-9 has as its purpose the unity of the Jewish and Gentile churches. Paul S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1971), 5; C. Thomas Rhyne, “II Corinthians 8:8-15,” *Interpretation* 41 (October 1987): 408; Talbert, “2 Corinthians 8-9,” 360; Richard R. Melick, Jr., “The Collection for the Saints: 2 Corinthians 8-9,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (1989): 99, 102-103. In a similar way, Paul viewed the financial gift of the Philippians as a tangible sign of their unity with one another and with his mission. It is widely recognized that Paul’s letter was written to correct disunity in the church at Philippi. The specific disunity centered around two women (4:2). We suggest that the gifts given to Paul were bound up in the disunity in the church and between these two women. Having been directly and publicly named in the letter is significant in itself, highlighting the problem they had. Further, “their feud [must have been] particularly disruptive for Paul to name them specifically” David E. Garland, “The Composition and Unity of Philippians,” *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985): 172. Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, translated by Melancthon Williams Jacobus, John M. Trout, et al., reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1953), 1:530 is right in stipulating that the problem among these two women must have been congregational, not personal. Paul describes these two women as those who have “struggled together” (*synathleō*) with him and were “fellow workers” (*synergos*) (4:3). These appellations cannot mean that they traveled together with the apostle in his missionary endeavors. The word *synathleō* appears in the NT only in 4:3 and 1:27. In 1:27 the whole congregation is challenged to “struggle together” for the faith of the Gospel. The word *synergos* is applied to Epaphroditus (2:25), but not in the sense that he worked side by side with Paul in evangelism during Paul’s imprisonment. The word appears in the verse with *apostolos* (“messenger”) and *leitourgos* (“minister”). For the significance of the latter word in financial concerns, see *leitourgeō* (“to serve”) and *leitourgia* (“service”) in n. 22 above. As Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 63, notes, the former word (*apostolos*) is used of the delegates who conveyed the Gentile collection to Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:23). Clement is also called a *synergos* (“co-worker,” 4:3), but did not seem to have traveled with Paul. Garland, “Unity of Philippians,” 151, n. 36; cf. also Colin O. Buchanan, “Epaphroditus’ Sickness and the Letter to the Philippians,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 36 (1964): 159.

It is possible that these women (1) hosted Paul as Lydia did during one of his visits to Philippi; or (2) had significant ministries among other women or among widows (cf. Dorcas, Acts 9:39). They could not be among the elders or

cf. 9:8, 14).²⁴ It is fascinating to note that apart from the use of *charis* in the salutation and the benediction of Philippians (1:2; 4:23), 1:7 is the

deacons of the church (1:1) since Paul did not allow women to hold these offices (1 Tim 3:2, 8; Titus 1:6; however, there may be a role of deaconess in 1 Tim 3:11). But more probable is that these two women were known to have made substantial contributions to Paul's ministry. Francis X. Malinowski, "The Brave Women of Philippi," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15 (April 1985): 61, adds, "From what we see in Acts 16 and in the letter to the Philippians and the two references to Macedonian churches (2 Cor 8-9 and Rom 15:25-29) we are compelled to keep in the foreground that financial actions were important to the Philippians and Paul, and constituted a vivid proof of their mutual admiration and love. And this Philippian financial generosity began with women. Its unusual continuance we can confidently suppose was due to such female influence." It is apparent that the first convert to the faith in Philippi, Lydia, was a woman of apparent wealth. This is derived from the fact that Lydia (1) was a "dealer in purple cloth" (Acts 16:14, NIV) and purple cloth was a symbol of wealth (Melick, "Collection for the Saints," 106, n. 34); (2) may have had servants (Acts 16:15); (3) was originally from Asia Minor (Acts 16:14) and may have traveled in her business; and (4) was financially able to host Paul (Acts 16:15, 40). Melick, in the same place, also suggests there were influential Romans in the early Philippian church because the city was a Roman colony and because of the reference to Caesar's household (Phil 4:22). Some of these could have been wealthy women (cf. Luke 8:3). Lydia was one who from the first gave freely to Paul (cf. Acts 16:15). This congregation as a whole was composed of those who were experiencing deep poverty (2 Cor 8:2). So, we may conjecture that if Euodia and Syntyche were affluent and contemplated discontinuing their financial contributions to Paul because of some rivalry, others may have lost motivation to give. Perhaps they thought that their gifts would be too insignificant without the assistance of a few who were wealthy.

²⁴ The grace (*charis*) of the Lord Jesus is mentioned in 2 Cor 8:9. In analyzing this verse, nearly every commentator mentions Phil 2:6-11 as the closest parallel in thought; John Reumann, "Contribution of the Philippian Community to Paul, and to Earliest Christianity," *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993): 452. Melick, "Collection for the Saints," 102, believes the *kenōsis* passage lies behind Paul's thoughts in 2 Cor 8:9. Cf. also Rhyne, "II Corinthians 8:8-15," 411-12; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 263; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 417; Panikulam, *Koinōnia*, 51-52; Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 62; C. K. Barrett, *The Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, gen. ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973), 218. Surely Paul saw the generosity of the Philippian church in financial matters as a kind of "self-emptying" (Phil 2:7-8) similar to that of Christ (Malinowski, "Brave

only use of the noun in the whole letter.²⁵ Fourth, in 2 Cor 9:8 material gifts are categorized as an *ergon agathon* (“good deed”), as verse 9 implies.

The following chart lists these parallels and several others of importance.

Parallels Between Philippians 1 and 2 Corinthians 8-9

Philippians 1:3-7

1:3 “*I thank My God*
[*eucharistō tō Theō*]”

1:5 “your *participation*
[*tē koinōnia*] in the gospel”

1:6 “For I am *confident*
[*pepoithōs*]”

2 Corinthians 8-9

9:12 “the ministry of this service is...
overflowing through many *thanksgivings*
to God [*eucharistiōn tō Theō*]”

8:4 “*the favor of participation* [*tēn charin*
kai tēn koinōnian] in the support of the
saints”

9:13 “your generosity *in sharing* [*tēs*
koinōnias] with them”

8:22 “because of his great *confidence*
[*pepoithēsei*] in you”

Women,” 61). As 2 Cor 8:5 speaks of it, “they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” Christ’s example in both passages forms the motivation for humble, sacrificial giving of every kind—my money or myself to God and others. But Volf, *Perseverance*, 37-38, 43, goes too far in her view that Paul intentionally portrayed salvation in 2 Cor 8:9 as a “good work” parallel to almsgiving and parallel to the *ergon agathon* of 2 Cor 9:8. This is a major support for her opinion that Paul moves from the Philippians’ “good work” of giving financial aid for Paul (Phil 1:5) to the “good work” of God in which he gives salvation to them (1:6). The telltale absence of the phrase *ergon agathon* as a reference to salvation in 2 Cor 8:9 makes this exegesis rather strained. In addition, the “good work” in 2 Cor 9:8 is too far removed contextually from 8:9 (a whole chapter) to read the phrase or concept into 8:9 without clear verbal clues.

²⁵ The verb *charizomai* is used in 1:29 and 2:9.

1:6 “He who *began* [*ho enarxamenos*] a good work in you will *perfect* [*epiteleseī*]”

1:6 “that He who began a *good work* [*ergon agathon*] in you”

1:6 “He who began a good work *in you* [*en hymin*]”

1:6 “*perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus* [*epiteleseī achri hēmeras Christou Iēsou*]”

1:7 “you all are partakers of *grace* [*tēs charitos*] with me”

8:6 “as he [Titus] had *previously made a beginning* [*proenērxato*], so he would also *complete* [*epitelesē*] in you this gracious work”

8:10-11 “[you] were the *first to begin* [*proenērxasthe*] . . . to do this, . . . But now *finish* [*epitelesate*] doing it also, that . . . there may be also the *completion* [*to epitelesai*] of it”

9:8-9 “you may have an abundance for every *good deed* [*ergon agathon*]; as it is written ‘. . . HE GAVE TO THE POOR.’”²⁶

8:1 “the grace of God which has been given *in the churches* [*en tais ekklesiāis*] of Macedonia”

8:6 “he would also complete *in you* [*eis hymas*] this gracious work”

9:9 “. . . HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ABIDES FOREVER [*hē dikaiosynē autou menei eis ton aiōna*]”
 9:10 “He . . . [will] increase the *harvest of your righteousness* [*ta genēmata tēs dikaiosynēs hymōn*]”²⁷

8:1 “*the grace* [*tēn charin*] of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia”

8:6 “complete in you this *gracious work* [*tēn charin tautēn*]”

8:7 “see that you abound in this *gracious work* [*en tautē tē chariti*]”

See also 2 Cor 8:4, 19; 9:8, 14

²⁶ The good deeds in this verse “have a yet narrower religious sense and refer to charitable deeds, especially material aid (cf. v. 9 and the larger context)” (Volf, *Perseverance*, 33-34). She argues that the Corinthians’ beginning and completing of their contribution to the Jerusalem collection is therefore considered contextually to be a good work in the technical sense. *Ibid.*, 43, n. 211.

²⁷ “Righteousness” in 2 Cor 9:9-10, since it is in an OT quotation, should be read in light of the Jewish concept of righteousness as almsgiving and good works to be rewarded by God in the future life (Panikulam, *Koinōnia*, 55; Volf, *Perseverance*, 43).

4. Conclusion

Taking “good work” in Phil 1:6 in a similar fashion to the same phrase in 2 Cor 9 is quite appropriate. In fact, in the NT, *ergon agathon* (“good deed”)²⁸ always has humans as the primary agent of the action and never God.²⁹ If the “good work” in Phil 1:6 is salvation, God alone becomes

²⁸ While understanding “good work” as referring to salvation, Volf, *Perseverance*, 34, 46, acknowledges that Paul never used the Greek phrase elsewhere with God as the subject. In fact, in all of Jewish and Christian literature, she is able to find only one reference to the Greek phrase with God as subject (*1 Clement* 31:7). Even in this reference, God’s “good work” is not salvation but his handiwork in physical creation. Additionally, *1 Clement* 33:1 uses the phrase, “let us be zealous to accomplish every good work” (*pan ergon agathon epitelein*)—an interesting verbal parallel to Phil 1:6. But Volf, *ibid.*, 40, n. 194, contends that the absence of the companion verb *enarxomai* makes the parallel insignificant. This objection is not persuasive (cf. again, *1 Clement* 33:7, “With good works [*en ergois agathois*] all the righteous have been adorned.”) The remaining arguments to support her view focus on passages and texts that view God as altruistic—feeding the poor, healing the sick, etc. In conclusion, she believes that Paul “could also have used a technical term [‘good work(s)’] from this [Jewish/Christian] tradition to characterize a divine work” (*ibid.*, 36). What is meant is that Paul could have used a technical term used exclusively for human charity and adopted it for God’s generosity in giving salvation. This is an enormous exegetical leap.

²⁹ The word *ergon* (“work, deed”) modified by *agathos* (“good”) occurs 14 times in the NT (Acts 9:36; Rom 2:7; 13:3; 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 2:10; Phil 1:6; Col 1:10; 2 Thess 2:17; 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Titus 1:16; 3:1). It never refers to “salvation.” In each NT use the focus is on believers meeting the practical, earthly needs of others. Occasionally the phrase contains obvious overtones of financial or material giving (Acts 9:36; 2 Cor 9:8; and perhaps 1 Tim 5:10). Cf. also the verbal form, *agathoergein* (“to do good”) in 1 Tim 6:18, where material sharing is in view and the word *koinōnikos* (“generous”) occurs. The other occurrence of this compound verb is used with God as the subject, but not of salvation (“*he did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons,*” Acts 14:19). Theologically, we may refer to our salvation as a “good work” effected by God, but there are no grounds for this exegetically in the Greek phraseology of Phil 1:6.

Even synonymous constructions cannot produce an example of the phrase “good work” as describing God’s redemptive plan or employing God as the subject of the work. Phrases with *ergon + agathos* are probably synonymous with *ergon + the adjective kalos* (“good, beautiful”) as seems evident from 1 Tim 5:10 (cf. also 6:18). All 16 uses of the latter construction speak of deeds of human

the agent of *ergon agathon* ("good deed"),³⁰ excluding the Philippians as actively participating, since salvation is apart from good works (Rom 4:5). But if the "good deed" is the Philippians' participation with Paul

kindness (Matt 5:6; 26:10; Mark 14:6; John 10:32, 33 [used of our Lord's earthly ministry]; 1 Tim 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14; Heb 10:24; Jas 3:13; 1 Pet 2:12). All other uses of synonymous constructions are restricted to human action: *agathopoios* ("doing good," 1 Pet 2:14); *agathopoiia* ("doing good," 1 Pet 4:19); *agathopoiō* ("do good," Mark 3:4 [Majority Text]; Luke 6:9, 33 [twice], 35; 1 Pet 2:15, 20; 3:6, 17; 3 John 11); *poiō + agathon* as a substantival direct object ("to do good," Rom 7:19; 13:3; Eph 6:8; 1 Pet 3:11); and *poiō + kalon* as a substantival direct object ("to do good," Rom 7:21).

The only appearances of *ergon* modified by *agathos* in the LXX are found in Job 21:16 and Sirach 39:33. In Job, God is not the agent and the subject is not salvation. The phrase (translated "prosperity" in the NASB, NIV, NKJV, NRSV) is not helpful otherwise. Sirach uses *agathos* as a predicate adjective: "All the works of the Lord are good" (NRSV). The works belong to God, but the reference to good is generic.

³⁰ Lenski, *Philippians*, 709-10, holds that the lack of an anaphoric article (or article of previous reference) with "good work" (1:6) confirms the fact that this phrase cannot refer back to *koinōnia* in 1:5. Volf, *Perseverance*, 40, insists that the lack of the demonstrative adjective ("this good work") confirms the same thing. In answer to these arguments, it should be noted that (1) when the anaphoric article is employed to address that which is known from the previous passage, the identical noun is repeated. For example, *chariti* ("grace," Eph 2:5) with *tē chariti* ("by [the] grace," Eph 2:8); *Damaskon*, ("Damascus," Acts 9:2) with *tē Damaskō* ("to [the] Damascus," Acts 9:3). The use of an anaphoric article in 1:6 would only be appropriate if Paul employed *tēn koinōnian* ("the partnership") in v 6. On the anaphoric article, see F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, trans. by R. W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §25 and §258 (hereafter BDF). (2) The repetition of the demonstrative adjective would be awkward in this verse: "confident of this (*toutou*) very thing, that he who began this (*toutou*) good work." (3) The absence of the article alone cannot negate the possibility that a conceptual link exists between "partnership" (1:5) and "good work" (1:6). The contextual and exegetical clues mentioned throughout this article are what support the identification of these phrases. The link is conceptual, not grammatical. (4) It can be argued that the absence of the article with *ergon agathon* ("good deed") is less harmonious with the traditional view. Moule, *Philippian Studies*, 26, n. 2, seems to observe the incongruous nature of the anarthrous construction for the traditional view. He reasons that the article must be supplied in English since "the reference is to the work of works" (italics

financially in the advance of the Gospel, then their own actions could have begun the “good deed” that God empowered and stimulated.³¹

If this view of “good work” is correct, the phrase *en hymin* (“in/by/ among you [plural]”) takes on a more corporate impact.³² The preposition *en* could denote the instrument (“by means of you”),³³ a close association (“among you”), or the locality (“within you”). Any of these options can be harmonized well with the conception of the “good deed” already presented.³⁴ However, the *en hymin* construction is used two other times in Phil (2:5, 13) and both references yield a better

original). But if salvation is behind Paul’s thinking, why did he not write, “*the* good work” (*to agathon ergon*), rather than, “a good work,” since salvation is the acme of all God’s good works for mankind? The anarthrous construction in 1:6 is best suited to the view that “good work” points to the missionary partnership of the believers in Philippi. Translating the phrase as “a good work” leaves open the possibility of other good deeds that God had begun or will begin (and complete) in the Philippians.

³¹ The “good work” is “that of advancing the Gospel *by* human means, and in this instance *by* the Philippian church” (italics original), but it “was not a human accomplishment in which they could take personal pride or credit. God had initiated a divine work (‘began,’ 1:6);” Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 21.

³² The word *enarchomai* means “to make a beginning.” The prepositional prefix in the word does not require the idea of “in” or “within.” The use of the verb in Gal 3:3 demonstrates this fact; *ibid.*

³³ Hawthorne adopts the instrumental use (“by means of”), reasoning that the work of God in creation lies behind Paul’s thoughts (*ibid.*). As God created *by* his Word, he has now begun another good work *by* the Philippians, his human agents. Cf. O’Brien, *Thanksgiving*, 27, who sees in the “good work” of 1:6 the new creation that alludes to and parallels God as Creator in the OT. We agree with Silva, *Philippians*, 51-52, that such an allusion to creation is very indirect, if even existent. Also, the LXX of Genesis consistently uses *kalos* (“good, beautiful”) rather than *agathos* (“good”) for God’s work of creation. “Why would Paul have used the synonym *agathon* if he meant to refer to the Genesis description of God’s good work?” (*ibid.*, 51).

³⁴ Even to argue that *en hymin* must mean “in each of you individually” does not contradict the conclusion that the good work is the Philippians’ partnership with Paul. Every good deed done by the Christian first takes place in the heart by faith. But nothing in the text demands that the Philippians will persevere in their heart response that led to their gift to Paul’s mission.

sense when understood corporately.³⁵ So if we must choose, the use of the phrase elsewhere in the book tips the scales to the translation, “among you.”³⁶ Paul then would be explaining how God began a good deed among them as a congregation, stressing the unity he desires to continue among them. The absence of *en hymin* after *epiteleō* (“complete”) may then imply that the carrying on and completion³⁷ of the good work is accomplished through others, and not through the Philippians themselves.³⁸

B. Day of Christ³⁹

An apparent exegetical difficulty with our interpretation of 1:6 confronts us at the climax of v 6. As expressed by Volf, the phrase “until the day of Christ”

poses an additional problem for the interpretation of *ergon agathon* as an ongoing human activity. For the death of individual Christians

³⁵ Silva, *ibid.*, 107, translates 2:5, “Adopt [then] this frame of mind *in your community . . .*” (italics added). On the other hand, he resists this approach in 2:13. But Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 96, 100-101, is more in keeping with the context to translate 2:13, “For the one who effectively works *among you* creating both the desire and the drive to promote good will is God” [italics added].

³⁶ Also favoring this translation: NRSV; Delling, s.v. *telos*, TDNT, 8:62. Second Corinthians 8:1, referring to the Philippians’ generosity, is a parallel: “the grace of God which has been given *in the churches [en tais ekklesiáis]* of Macedonia.”

³⁷ Volf, *Perseverance*, 40-41, is probably correct to argue that *epiteleō* must have a telic significance (“finish”) when used with *enarchomai* (“begin”). But the following temporal reference *achri hēmeras Christou Iēsou* (“until the day of Christ Jesus”) requires an ongoing process that goes uncompleted in this life. Therefore, *epiteleō* is best translated as a progressive future, “carry on to completion” (cf. the NIV). If the “good work” speaks of the participation in the Gospel, especially by means of giving, a harmony exists with Paul’s metaphor for Christian giving (2 Cor 9:6, 10; Gal 6:7-8) as a sowing (beginning) and reaping (finishing).

³⁸ I am indebted to Zane Hodges for this suggestion.

³⁹ This phrase (1:10; 2:16) carries the thought of the testing and evaluation of the believer’s works (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10; 1 Cor 3:12-15); cf. Michael, *Philippians*, 13; Volf, *Perseverance*, 41, n. 201; Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 84; Kent, *Philippians*, 105-106, 108. Kent is correct in making some distinctions between “the day of Christ” and the “day of the Lord” (*ibid.*).

puts a stop to their good works whereas Phil 1:6 portrays the good work as continuing until its completion at the Day of Christ Jesus, i.e., his parousia.⁴⁰

This argument also works *against* Volf. Calvin noted the identical problem for any view of progressive sanctification supported from v 6. That is, the death of the individual Christian puts a stop to progressive sanctification whereas Phil 1:6 portrays the good work as continuing until its completion at the parousia. Calvin's answer was that "there will be no absurdity of speaking of them [Christians] in progress, inasmuch as they . . . do not yet enjoy the felicity and glory which they have hoped for."⁴¹ However, it is questionable whether this adequately answers the objection he himself raises.

Dillow, holding that "good work" refers to the Philippians' financial partnership, notes three options concerning the completion of the good work at the day of Christ:

The "completion" of this "good work" would then be either (1) its continuation; (2) its consummation in being rewarded at the day of Christ; or (3) its achievement of its final aim . . . multiplied fruit in the lives of others through Paul's defense and confirmation of the gospel. Indeed, Paul tells them that as a result of their contribution they have become partners with him in this defense and confirmation (v. 6). It is easy to see how this latter kind of "completion" could be carried on until the day of Christ . . . In other words, like many missionaries who followed, Paul is assuring his supporters that the good work of giving which they began will be completed by God with significant impact for Christ through Paul's ministry to others.⁴²

As noted above, the construction in 1:6 may not require the good work to continue as an ongoing human activity by the Philippians themselves.⁴³

⁴⁰ Volf, *Perseverance*, 41.

⁴¹ John Calvin, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 229-30.

⁴² Dillow, *Reign of Servant Kings*, 206.

⁴³ While the absence of *en hymin* ("among you") in the last clause of 1:6 could imply that the good work is completed through others, I could not find a similar construction that demonstrates this possibility. On the other hand, it is natural to imply that where no change is made, *en hymin* is to be understood. Philippians 2:13 provides a parallel: "For it is God who works among you [*en hymin*] to will and to act [implied, *en hymin*] for mutual goodwill" (author's translation). Cf. also, Luke 22:26, "Instead, the greatest among you [*en hymin*] should be like the youngest [implied, *en hymin*], and the one who rules [implied, *en hymin*] like the one who serves [implied, *en hymin*]."

If their gifts and participation with Paul are carried on by the Lord Himself in the lives of others (Dillow's third option), Volf's objection does not hold. In this interpretation, there is a literal sense in which God continues to carry on their partnership until the parousia.⁴⁴ As individuals come to faith in Christ through the believers' financial support of the Gospel, and these new believers in turn carry on the message of salvation to others down through the ages, those sacrificial gifts continue to be perfected.⁴⁵

If Dillow's first or second option⁴⁶ is adopted, Paul's confidence (*pepoithōs*)⁴⁷ in God's work among them could be construed as a pastoral

⁴⁴ Hodges explains how this truth relates to the book of Philippians itself. "In fact, this very epistle can be seen as part of the fruit which that 'good work' produced, since the Philippians' gift occasioned the letter. Whatever spiritual impact Paul's letter has had on the Church down through the centuries (who can calculate it?) is therefore part of the 'interest' which has accumulated on this simple material investment in the cause of Christ" (*The Gospel Under Siege*, 95).

⁴⁵ White, *Form*, 78, generalizes that the Philippians' lack of confidence was in the progress of the Gospel itself. So Paul clarifies in 1:6 his certainty in the ultimate success of the Gospel (*ibid.*, 64-65).

⁴⁶ Swift, "Theme and Structure," 237-38, combining these two options, explains how the Philippians' partnership can be regarded as being perfected until the day of Christ. "When the first half of verse 6 is taken as suggested, then the rest of the verse ('perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus') should be seen as a reference to the outcome at the judgment seat of Christ, an interpretation fully in harmony with the eschatological reference in verses 10-11 . . . All the rest of the letter [after 1:1-11] is concerned with their development as *koinōnoi* so that they may be blessed with a temporally fruitful, eternally rewardable partnership in the gospel."

⁴⁷ The participle is not causal as some suggest (O'Brien, *Thanksgivings*, 25; Schubert, *Form*, 78), but an attendant circumstance to *eucharistō* ("I thank") in 1:3; Meyer, *Philippians*, 18; Dwight's notes in *ibid.*, 48; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 20; Fee, *Philippians*, 85, n. 61; Eadie, *Philippians*, 11 (who defines the function of the participle as auxiliary with a slight causal force). Since 1:5 and 6 (and v 7) are a unit, there is only one expressed cause for thanksgiving (i.e., in 1:5), not two. Paul's normal pattern is to express just one ground for thanksgiving in his epistolary introductions. Volf, *Perseverance*, 39, n. 171, wishes to counter this objection, citing 1 Thess 1:3, 4 as evidence of multiple reasons for thanksgiving in Paul. But the Thessalonians' "work" (*ergon*), "labor" (*kepos*), and "endurance" (*hypomonē*) seem more like common elements in one unified cause than three separate causes for thanksgiving.

anticipation and optimism about the future partnership of the Philippians, i.e., an expectancy rather than an infallible certainty. An examination of *peithō* (perfect, “to be confident”) in the book (1:14, 25; 2:24; 3:3-4) could suggest this. For example, in 1:25 Paul expresses a confidence (*peithō*) that he will soon be released from prison for the benefit of the Philippians. Swift observes that, in mentioning his confidence here, the apostle was exemplifying the ability to “discern what is best” (1:10).⁴⁸ Along similar lines, Kent remarks that the confidence in 1:25 “represents [Paul’s] personal conviction based on what seemed to be probable in the light of all the factors.”⁴⁹ The same conception may be true for 1:6. Paul’s statement about his confidence—using Kent’s words—“represents his personal conviction based on what seemed to be probable in the light of all the factors” concerning the Philippians’ past and current (“until now,” 1:5) faithfulness in partnership.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Swift, “Theme and Structure,” 242.

⁴⁹ Kent, *Philippians*, 116; cf. also David E. Garland, “Philippians 1:1-26: The Defense and Confirmation of the Gospel,” *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 329.

⁵⁰ Elsewhere in the NT, *peithō* and *pepoithēsis* are often used to express a pastoral heart in thinking the best of a congregation or individual without indicating the absolute certainty of the future. E.g., Gal 5:10, “I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view.” Cf. also 2 Tim 1:5; Heb 6:9; 2 Cor 1:15; 2:3; 8:22 (see the chart above on parallels between Philippians 1 and 2 Corinthians 8-9); Rom 15:14; Acts 26:26; 2 Thess 3:4; Philemon 21. Rudolf Bultmann, s.v. *peithō*, TDNT, 7:6, equates confidence in someone with confidence in the Lord.

“Hereby a certain limit is set on confidence . . . Materially, then, it does not differ from the confidence in God expressed in Phil 1:6.” At least, one must conclude that the paraenetic nature of the rest of the letter (e.g., 1:25, 27; 2:14-16) works against a view that Paul had an absolute confidence in the progressive sanctification of the Philippians. “The ground of Paul’s confidence in their perseverance is the belief that it was God’s grace which began the good work [of advancing the Gospel] in them, and, *not being resisted* (as was obvious by their enthusiasm for good), He would complete what He had begun” (italics added). Alfred Barry, *Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, ed. C. J. Ellicott (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n. d.), 8:66. Cf. also Meyer, *Philippians*, 14: “The idea of resistance to this grace, as a human possibility, is not thereby excluded.” Cf. the resistance of the Corinthians to the grace of giving in 2 Corinthians 8-9.

If the confidence in 1:6 is a pastoral confidence, it is designed with several didactic or corrective thrusts. First, some within the congregation may have

II. Exegetical Considerations from Verse 7

Paul's confidence expressed in 1:6 does not seem to be placed solely in the work of God's sovereignty.⁵¹ Verse 7 adds the human side to the "good work" God began among the Philippians.⁵² Here Paul states "the

doubted that God could "bring to completion" their participation in the Gospel since Paul was now in prison (cf. 1:12-14). To the contrary, Paul affirmed that God would continue to advance the Gospel. Those who join in furthering the Gospel with a firm confidence in the Lord (1:14) will find their good work carried on to completion. Second, Zahn, *Introduction*, 1:526-8 (cf. also Lenski, *Philippians*, 74), suggests that the Philippians believed Paul thought disparagingly of their progress and the church became dissatisfied with their partnership and gifts to him (4:10). Philippians 1:6 was written to reaffirm his positive view of their past and future cooperation in the Gospel. Third, there is a hint in the epistle that the error of perfectionism had influenced some of the Philippians. Martin, *Philippians*, TNTC, 41, and Garland, "Defense," 330, contend that in this letter Paul is combating a view of the Christian life in which one can "arrive" spiritually and resist pressing on for the prize (cf. 3:3-16). Paul even follows his introductory thanksgiving with a prayer for their spiritual well-being (1:9-11). Garland, "Defense," 330, finds that this prayer for more love corresponds to 1:6, and together they gently hint at the need for continued progress. Fee, *Philippians*, 88, is probably right in holding that the Philippian congregation began to neglect an eschatological expectation that helps orient a proper Christian walk (1:10-11, 23; 2:9-11, 16; 3:12-14, 20-21; 4:5, 17). The apostle was concerned about the Philippians' accountability at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Philippians 1:6 helps correct this neglect. While perfection in their good work cannot be attained in this life, they must still strive for the prize (3:13-14).

⁵¹ Meyer, *Philippians*, 13-14, *contra* Fee, *Philippians*, 86: "This confidence has very little to do with them and everything to do with God . . ."

⁵² Several interpreters (Donald Guthrie, *Epistles from Prison: Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, Bible Guides, ed. William Barclay and F. F. Bruce [New York: Abingdon Press, 1964], 32; Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, translated by James W. Leitch [Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962], 16; Kenneth Grayston, *The Epistles to the Galatians and to the Philippians* [London: Epworth Press, 1957], 81; Lenski, *Philippians*, 711) want v. 7 to reach back to vv 3-5 and skip over v 6. But *kathōs* ("just as") and *touto phronein* ("to think this") most naturally relate back to the confidence (*pepoithōs*) Paul expressed in v 6, not to his joy in prayer (v 4). Vincent, *Philippians*, 8, remarks, "*kathōs* is a nearer definition of *pepoithōs*, stating its ground in the affectionate relation between Paul and his readers." Later, he adds "The reference to *phronein* here is to *pepoithōs*, not to supplication (v 4)" (*ibid.*, 9). Meyer, *Philippians*, 14, draws attention to the fact that *phronein* cannot return to 1:4 because the word

ground of his hoping well of them.”⁵³ In other words, v 7 supplies the subjective rationale for Paul’s confidence.⁵⁴ Here he brings to the forefront the dual subject behind v 6:⁵⁵ “it is only right for me to think this *about all of you*” (*hyper pantōn hymōn*). Paul is not contradicting the divine origin of the “good work.” God is indeed the source of all the believer’s good deeds. But Paul brings to the surface the human side of this action as well.⁵⁶

The apostle also notes in v 7 the cause of his optimistic thoughts about the future ministry of God among them in carrying on their joint partnership with Paul in his missionary labors. It is “because (*dia to*) you hold me in your heart”⁵⁷ (NRSV). Most versions and commentators translate this phrase as Paul’s love for the Philippians rather than their

reflects the feelings of Paul for the Philippians, not his prayers. Volf, *Perseverance*, 47, n. 231, agrees that v 7 supplies Paul’s subjective justification but not the grounds for his confidence in v 6. In her view, Paul’s confidence is in a sovereign God who guarantees perseverance, but “vv 7, 8 express why Paul can *apply* this conviction to the *Philippian Christians* . . . [italics original].” In answer to this theological perspective, see n. 15 and n. 50.

⁵³ Calvin, *Philippians*, 230.

⁵⁴ Swift, “Theme and Structure,” 238.

⁵⁵ Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 84; Zahn, *Introduction*, 1:192; Eadie, *Philippians*, 13-14. Volf, *Perseverance*, 39, concedes what we believe we have already proved: “But could a dual subject, though not explicit, be implied? Only if *ergon agathon* is identified with some clearly human activity in the context. For example, if *koinōnia hymōn eis to euangelion* at 1:5, which denotes a human activity, can be identified with *ergon agathon* at 1:6, we could conclude that the *koinōnia* which Paul describes as the Philippians’ doing is shown ultimately to be God’s work.” Georg Bertram, s.v. *ergon*, TDNT, 2:643, holds a view similar to what we are presenting: “Even the most secular action in the interest of the Christian work of mission may be regarded as *ergon kyriou* [“the work of the Lord”], and it is thus understandable that in the active expression of faith, Paul can see both work for the Lord and the work of the Lord.”

⁵⁶ Second Corinthians 8:1-3 is an excellent parallel in addressing the dual subject behind the Philippians’ giving. The divine element is mentioned in v 1: “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the *grace of God which has been given* in the churches of Macedonia.” The human side is mentioned in v 3: “For I testify that . . . *they gave* of their own accord.” (All italics added.)

⁵⁷ Since *kardia* (“heart”) is singular, it carries a corporate sense in this phrase. This is an established exegetical possibility in Pauline epistles (Rom 1:21; 2 Cor 3:15; 6:11; Eph 1:18; 4:18; 5:19; 6:5; 1 Thess 2:17; 2 Tim 2:22).

love for him. But there are valid reasons syntactically, contextually⁵⁸ and grammatically⁵⁹ to find here another expression of the Philippians' love and gift. Because of their love for him, i.e., their partnership with him in the Gospel, Paul is able to anticipate what God will do among them in the future.

⁵⁸ Syntactically, *hymas* ("you") is thrust to the end of the clause for emphasis. (See BDF, §473, for a discussion on how words and phrases, when removed from their natural elements, carry special emphasis.) The question is whether Paul desires to say, "I have affection toward you—especially you," or "You—especially you—have affection toward me." Five advantages weigh in favor of the latter option. (1) The former solution smacks of favoritism. Paul had deep affection for other churches besides the one at Philippi. (2) The latter solution is in harmony with the statement in 4:15 that the Philippian congregation was unique in its sacrificial (affectionate) gift to Paul. (3) Contextually, 1:7 gives the rationale for 1:5-6. Verses 5-6 have described Paul's optimism about the Philippians' future participation with him based on their past prolonged affection for and participation with him and his ministry. Paul's love is an insufficient subjective grounds for the apostle to anticipate so noble a future for any congregation. (4) If the first option is adopted, v 8 becomes an unnecessary repetition about Paul's affection for the Philippians. Philippians 1:8 is best explained on the grounds that Paul's affection for the Philippians arises from their generosity to him. This is harmonious with 2 Cor 9:14, where Paul argues that if the Corinthians give sacrificially to the Jerusalem saints "their hearts will go out to you because of the surpassing grace God has given to you" (NIV). (5) A structural parallel exists between the clause under discussion and the final clause of the sentence. In the final clause, the subject ("all of you") is also emphatically placed at the climax of the clause:

1:7a *dia to echein me en tē kardia hymas*
because to have me in the heart *you* [subject]

1:7b *synkoinōnous mou tēs charitos pantas hymas ontas*
joint-partners with me of the grace *all of you* [subject] *being*.

⁵⁹ Commentators and translators divide as to whether *dia to echein me en tē kardia hymas* is describing Paul's affection for the Philippians ("since I have you in my heart," NIV; also NASB, RSV, JB, TEV) or to the Philippians' affection for Paul (Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 23; Wuest, *Philippians*, 33; NRSV, NEB; RSV margin; cf. Amplified). Some have determined that the word order favors *me* ("I/me") as the subject (Kent, "Philippians," 107; Michael, *Philippians*, 15; Vincent, *Philippians*, 9; Lenski, *Philippians*, 711-12). Greek grammarian, A. T. Robertson (*Paul's Joy in Christ: Studies in Philippians* [New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1917], 64), holds that the Greek phrase could be either. Two recent studies have examined the grammar of this Greek phrase: Jeffrey T. Reed, "The Infinitive with Two Substantival Accusatives: An Ambiguous Construction?"

One could hardly claim that the Philippians' "good work" of missionary partnership was a result of self-righteousness. On the contrary, like Paul, they had participated in grace (*charis*, 1:7). In this context *grace* cannot be soteriological or redemptive grace.⁶⁰ Taking the "grace" as redemptive grace forces the interpreter to ignore the parallel between v 5 and v 7.⁶¹ In addition, the experience of this grace as outlined

Novum Testamentum 33 (1991): 1-27; Stanley E. Porter, "Word Order and Clause Structure in New Testament Greek: An Unexplored Area of Greek Linguistics Using Philippians as a Test Case," *Filologia neotestamentaria* 6 (1993): 177-206. Reed has analyzed the infinitive with two accusative substantives and has shown that in about 90% of the occurrences, the first of the two accusatives will be the subject. Porter (ibid., 196-97), drawing heavily on Reed's research, notes that in the three other appearances of the same infinitive construction in Philippians, the subject always precedes the complement. But neither author isolates and examines the infinitive *echein* (and compounds) with two accusatives. In every other occurrence of *echein* (or *parechein* in Luke 18:5) with two substantival accusatives (Luke 18:5; 1 Cor 5:1; 1 Thess 1:8; Heb 8:3; 10:2), the subject follows the complement. In two cases (Luke 18:5; Heb 10:2), the construction involves *dia to + echein*—the same phraseology as in Phil 1:7. Of these five verses, Reed, "Infinitive," 4-5, cites only Luke 18:5. But in this verse he argues for taking the first accusative as the subject, resulting in the translation, "yet because *trouble* [first accusative] brings me this *woman* [second accusative], I will see that she gets justice." This is meant to be superior to taking the second accusative as the subject and translating, "yet because this *woman* [second accusative] causes *trouble* [first accusative] for me . . ." Contextually, this translation is highly questionable. The woman's troubles brought her to the judge at the very first, so why does the judge give her justice now? Also, grammatically, by choosing his translation of Luke 18:5, Reed admittedly sets aside the fact that *parechein kopon* occurs four other times as an idiom for "to cause trouble" (ibid., 4; Mark 14:6; Luke 11:7; Matt 26:10; Gal 6:17). The infinitive *echein* + a double accusative appears in Heb 10:34 in the critical text and is cited by Reed (ibid., 10). If the critical text is accepted, the verse helps confirm Reed's grammatical rule. But if the Majority Text is read, in every infinitive construction with *echein* or *parechein* + two related accusatives, the object is written first. Therefore, we contend that there are good grammatical grounds for the translation we have chosen. The infinitive *echein* apparently falls within the 10% of occurrences that do not follow Reed's rule.

⁶⁰ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 23. Those who interpret "grace" soteriologically in 1:7 include among others Kent, "Philippians," 106; Lenski, *Philippians*, 713; J. A. Motyer, *Philippian Studies: The Richness of Christ* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1966), 21.

⁶¹ Silva, *Philippians*, 53.

in v 7 is specifically related to Paul's recent imprisonment, in which he is fulfilling his appointment as an apostle to defend and confirm the truth of the Gospel (cf. 1:16-17).

Some conclude that the grace in 1:7 is the enabling sufficiency that both Paul and the Philippians experienced in order to promote the Gospel, even in suffering.⁶² This is thought to be supported by the verbal form *charizomai* ("to give, grant") in 1:29. But as Barry observes, "It is true that in verse [29 and] 30, he [Paul] speaks of the Philippians as having themselves to undergo 'the same conflict' as his own; but the expression 'in my bonds, &c.,' can hardly be satisfied simply by this kind of fellowship."⁶³ Paul is in chains, the Philippians are not. They have shared with him (*synkoinōnēsantes*) in *his* afflictions (4:14). In other words, the focus in 1:7 (and 4:14) is surely on Paul's sufferings, not on the Philippians'.

Another possibility is that "grace" defines Paul's apostolic gift and the accompanying privileges and/or hardships (Eph 3:8; Rom 1:5; 15:15-16; Gal 2:9).⁶⁴ As a result, the Philippians participate in Paul's suffering and proclamation in an ideal, rather than a real sense.⁶⁵ The text could then be read as in the KJV, "partakers of my grace," making the grace more exclusively Paul's.⁶⁶

But in light of previous conclusions in this article, it is quite appropriate to draw interpretive help from the only other passage where

⁶² Swift, "Theme and Structure," 238; Meyer, *Philippians*, 16, 48-49; Grayston, *Philippians*, 82; Vincent, *Philippians*, 10; Fee, *Philippians*, 91-93.

⁶³ Barry, *Commentary*, 66. Because of the same limiting phrase ("in my chains, etc."), Eadie, *Philippians*, 15, comments: "Nor can we understand the term [grace] simply and broadly of the grace of the gospel."

⁶⁴ Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 66; Lenski, *Philippians*, 713; Martin, *Philippians*, TNTC, 63-64; Silva, *Philippians*, 53-54. Vincent, *Philippians*, 9, denies this possibility in light of the standard wording Paul consistently used to speak of his apostleship, i.e., "grace was given to me" (Rom 12:3; 15:15; 1 Cor 3:10; 15:10; Gal 2:9). This seems an unnecessary restriction on how Paul identified his apostolic calling in grace (cf. Rom 1:5).

⁶⁵ Barth, *Philippians*, 19; Vincent, *Philippians*, 9; Michael, *Philippians*, 15; Wiesinger, *Philippians*, 32.

⁶⁶ Calvin, *Philippians*, 230 (although his comments are brief); Panikulam, *Koinōnia*, 84; F. W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1959), 53.

charis is mentioned as experienced by the Philippians: 2 Cor 8:1-5.⁶⁷ It is here that Paul brings together *koinōnia* and *charis*⁶⁸ (2 Cor 8:4)⁶⁹ in a similar way to that in Phil 1:5-7. In 2 Cor 8, the grace given in the Macedonian church was the “grace of giving” (2 Cor 8:7, NIV).⁷⁰ It seems reasonable, then, to conclude that the experience of grace for Paul involved his call to defend the Gospel as the apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Rom 1:5). But the grace experienced by the Philippians was the grace of sacrificial giving to meet Paul’s needs and to advance the cause of the Gospel he defended.⁷¹ In both cases, the experience of grace was real, not merely ideal.

IV. Conclusion

Of all of Paul’s congregations, he was especially thankful to the Philippians. Their partnership (*koinōnia*) with him began early in the history of their church when Philippian believers sent financial help to

⁶⁷ The word *grace* (*charis*) appears 12 times in 2 Cor 8-9. The repetition shows the prominence of the concept in Pauline thinking about giving (Melick, “Collection for the Saints,” 100). An *inclusio* is formed with the word in 8:1 with 9:14, and 8:1 with 8:5 (Panikulam, *Koinōnia*, 46). Cf. also Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 218. Of the 12 uses of *charis*, 5 refer specifically to material giving (8:1, 4, 6, 7, 19).

⁶⁸ In 2 Cor 9:8, Paul demonstrates the relationship between “grace” (*charis*) and “good work” (*ergon agathon*). As an aside, note that in 2 Cor 8:2 Paul also brings together with these two words another significant thematic concept found in Phil 1:4 and throughout the book—*chara* (“joy”).

⁶⁹ The Greek phrase in 2 Cor 8:4, “begging us with much entreaty for *tēn charin kai tēn koinōnian* (‘the grace and partnership’) in the support of the saints,” may be either hendiadys or exegetical. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 46, and Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 401, favor hendiadys. Panikulam, *Koinōnia*, 49, views either option as acceptable. Regardless of the choice, the two words are clearly joined in a special relationship.

⁷⁰ At its very core *grace* involves generosity (Barrett, *Second Corinthians*, 218). In this context and others it carries the richness of generosity in giving materially (Panikulam, *Koinōnia*, 49). Therefore, it becomes a technical term for the gift given toward the Jerusalem collection (H. H. Esser, s.v. “Grace,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976], 2:119).

⁷¹ For a similar view, see Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, NIV Application Commentary Series, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 40.

Paul. They were concerned for his personal needs. But they also cared about spreading the Gospel. So they joined in partnership with Paul—including a recent gift to him in prison. Up to now, they had maintained this joint missionary endeavor.

While disunity threatened to undermine their own progress in the faith (1:27; 2:2-4, 14; 4:3-4) and to destroy the “good work” of their partnership, the apostle was confident in the Lord that either 1) they would respond to his exhortations, or 2) God would carry on the good work through others. If they continued to obey as in the past (2:12), God would also bring to completion at the day of Christ the gifts and partnership that he himself initially inspired among them. Their good work would result in a full reward at the Bema, the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 John 8).

Nothing in the details surrounding Phil 1:6 or in the terms of the verse itself can be adduced to substantiate the claim that sanctification is guaranteed to the Christian. In reality, the verse says nothing about the specific nature of salvation or the process of sanctification, precisely because such subjects are far removed from the actual intent of the passage. Eadie has stated well a similar conclusion:

Those who maintain the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, take proof from this verse, though certainly without undisputed warrant, and it must be in the form of development; for it refers to a particular action, and is not in itself a general statement of a principle . . .⁷²

Phil 1:6 is not a text on which to build a doctrine of salvation or deterministic sanctification. Instead, it is a rich text for advancing a theology of stewardship and missions. Sacrificial financial investments to promote the cause of Christ—made by faithful believers who are motivated by God Himself—will reap rich spiritual dividends in this life⁷³ and eternal rewards in the next. Paul was eager for the profit that

⁷² Eadie, *Philippians*, 12. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 22, believes that applying 1:6 to the work of grace in all believers must be given a secondary status and not a primary one. Similarly, T. Dwight (in Meyer, *Philippians*, 48) doubts that 1:5-6 “can be regarded as, in themselves establishing the doctrine of the perseverance of all Christians . . . This must find its main subject elsewhere.”

⁷³ The Philippians questioned how God could use their gift to advance the Gospel (1:12). Paul reminded them that despite earthly circumstances, God would see to it that the Gospel would prosper. Therefore, their good work of giving to promote the Gospel was not in vain.

was accruing to the Philippians' heavenly account (4:17). J. B. Phillips' rendering of v 17 is very helpful: "It isn't the value of the gift that I am keen on, it is the reward that will come to you because of these gifts that you made."⁷⁴

We should be no less eager for the same profit to come to ourselves and others.

⁷⁴ J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960) 417.

A Voice from the Past:

GRACE REIGNS¹

SIR ROBERT ANDERSON²

“The Gospel of the glory of the blessed God!”³

“Please, show me Your glory,” was the prayer of Moses; and God answered, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”⁴ God’s highest glory displays itself in sovereign grace, therefore it is that the Gospel of His grace is the Gospel of His glory.

¹ This article is Chapter II, 8-19, of *The Gospel and Its Ministry*. The original chapter title, simply “Grace,” has been made more specific in light of Sir Robert’s words in all capitals on p. 68.

² Colorful and competent barrister, writer, and lay preacher, Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) deserves to be better known among Bible Christians. Born of devout parents in Dublin, he was educated there at Trinity College. He was skillful in dealing with Irish and Irish-American plots against the British government. Though he retired from the Home Office in 1877, he was called back to service in 1880. At Scotland Yard, in 1888, the year of the notorious “Jack the Ripper” murders in gaslit London, he became head of the C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department). One modern British TV special even suggested Sir Robert as a possible “Ripper” suspect! In light of his life and career, this shows the depths to which anti-Christian bias in the Western media can sink. Anderson preached widely for 50 years in churches and Gospel Halls, and was associated with many Christian societies, such as the Mildmay Conferences, the Evangelical Alliance, and the Prophecy Investigation Society. He was a staunch conservative, and an enemy of “higher criticism.” Such classics as *The Coming Prince*, *Daniel in the Critics’ Den*, and *The Gospel and Its Ministry* are the products of his pen. Several of Sir Robert’s books are still in print, and all are worth procuring. Ed.

³ First Timothy 1:11; *not* “the glorious gospel.” (Sir Robert’s preferred translation [English Revised Version, 1885] is more literal, but the traditional is not wrong. Elsewhere we have replaced the ERV by the NKJV [1982] for today’s readers. Ed.)

⁴ Exodus 33:18-19.

Let us take heed then that we preach grace. *He who preaches a mixed gospel robs God of His glory, and the sinner of his hope.*⁵ They for whom these pages are intended, need not be told that salvation is only by the blood; but many there are who preach the blood of Christ, without ever rising to the truth of grace. Dispensational truth, as it is commonly called, is deliberately rejected by not a few; and yet without understanding the change the death of Christ has made in God's relationships with men, grace cannot be apprehended.

It is not that God can ever change, or that the righteous ground of blessing can ever alter, but that the standard of man's responsibility depends on the measure and character of the revelation God has given of Himself. God's judgments are according to pure equity. They must have strange thoughts of Him who think it could be otherwise. In the Epistle to the Romans we have the great principle of His dealings with mankind. "[He] will render to each one according to his deeds; eternal life to those who by patience continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God."⁶

But is the standard of well-doing the same for all? Shall the same fruit be looked for from the wild olive as from the cultured tree? from the mountain side, in its native barrenness, as from the vineyard on the fruitful hill? Far from it. The first two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans are unmistakable in this respect. The Gentile will be judged according to the light of nature and of conscience, neglected and resisted; the Jew, by the revelation of God entrusted to him. St. Paul's sermon in Athens is no less clear as regards the condition of the heathen. As he said at Lystra,⁷ they were not left without a witness, in that God did good, and gave rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food

⁵ Italics supplied. Ed.

⁶ Romans 2:6-11; see also John 5:29. Editor's note: Romans 2:6ff. concern the impossibility of justification by works. Compare 2:13 and 4:5. In Romans 2 Paul is confronting the self-righteous legalist who thinks he will be justified by *hearing* the law. Yet Paul insists only a perfect *doer* of the law will be justified (2:13; cf. Gal 3:10). Only by faith in Christ can the ungodly be justified (Rom 4:5).

⁷ Acts 14:8-18.

and gladness. By such things, he declares again in another place,⁸ God's eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, so that they are without excuse. And so here,⁹ God left the heathen to themselves, not that they should forget Him, but that they should seek Him, even though it were in utter darkness, so that they should need to grope for Him—"to feel after Him, and find Him." And, though there was ignorance of God, He could overlook the ignorance and give blessing notwithstanding, for "He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."¹⁰ Moreover, this is still the case of all whom the witness of the Holy Ghost has not yet reached. If it be asked whether any have, in fact, been saved thus, I turn from the question, though I have no doubt as to the answer.¹¹ There is no profit in speculations about the fate of the heathen; their judgment is with God. But there is profit and blessing untold in searching into His ways and thoughts towards men, that we may be brought in adoration to exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"¹²

But to resume: "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness."¹³ And the change depends on this, that God has now revealed Himself in Christ, and therefore, ignorance of Him is a sin that shuts men up to judgment. See the Lord's sad utterance in John 15:24, as a kindred truth. Indeed, the whole Gospel of St. John is a commentary on it. Darkness had reigned, but God did not hold men accountable for darkness; it was their misfortune, not their fault. But He did hold them accountable to value and obey the little light they had, "the candle set up within them," and the stars above their head—those gleams of heavenly light, which, though they failed to illumine the way, might at least suffice to direct their course. But now, a new era dawned upon the world, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."¹⁴ The Light had entered in; the darkness was past, the true Light was shining. To turn now to conscience or to law, was like men who, with the sun in the zenith, nurse their scanty rushlight,

⁸ Romans 1:20.

⁹ Acts 17:22-31.

¹⁰ Hebrews 11:6.

¹¹ See Acts 10:34-35.

¹² Romans 11:33.

¹³ Acts 17:30-31a.

¹⁴ John 1:14.

with shutters barred and curtains drawn; like men who cast their anchor because the daylight has eclipsed the stars. The principles of God's dealings was the same, but the measure of man's conduct was entirely changed. It was no longer a question of conscience or of law, but of the Only-begotten in their midst. It was no quirk or quibble, but the solemn, earnest truth, by which the blessed Lord Himself replied to the inquiry, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'¹⁵ The question was a right one, and the answer enforced the same unchanging principle, that the light they had was the measure of their responsibility. The same great truth is no less plainly stated in the Nicodemus sermon.¹⁶ This was the condemnation, not that men's deeds were evil, though for these too there shall be wrath in the day of wrath, but that, because their deeds were evil, they had brought on themselves a still direr doom; light had come into the world, but they had turned from it and *loved* the darkness.¹⁷

But this is not all; even yet, the reign of grace had not begun. Grace was there truly, for "grace came by Jesus Christ,"¹⁸ but, like Himself, it was in humiliation; it had yet to be enthroned. Grace was there. No adverse principle came in to influence His ways and words; but though pure and unmixed, as it must ever be, it was restrained. He had a baptism to be baptized with, and how He was distressed till it was accomplished!¹⁹ While there was a single claim outstanding, a single tie unbroken, grace was hindered, though it could not be alloyed.

But now was about to come the world's great crisis—the most stupendous event in the history of man, the only event in the history of God! He had laid aside His glory, and come down into the scene. At His own door²⁰ He had stood and knocked, but only to find it shut in His face. Turning thence, He had wandered an outcast into the world His power had made, but wandered there unknown. "His own did not

¹⁵ John 6:28-29.

¹⁶ John 3:1-21.

¹⁷ John 3:19.

¹⁸ John 1:17.

¹⁹ Luke 12:50.

²⁰ John 1:11, "He came to His own" (*eis ta idia elthen*) can scarcely be expressed in English. The French idiom is more apt: "Il est venu chez soi, et les siens ne l'ont point reçu."

receive Him;²¹ “the world did not know Him.”²² As He had laid aside His glory, He now restrained His power, and yielded Himself to their guilty will. In return for pity, He earned but scorn. Sowing kindnesses and benefits with a lavish hand, He reaped but cruelty and outrage. Manifesting grace, He was given up to impious law without show of mercy or pretence of justice. Unfolding the boundless love of the mighty heart of God, He gained no response but bitterest hate from the hearts of men.

The Son of God has died by the hands of men! This astounding fact is the moral center of all things. A by-gone eternity knew no other future:²³ an eternity to come shall know no other past. That death was this world’s crisis.²⁴ For long ages, despite conscience outraged, the light of nature quenched, law broken, promises despised, and prophets cast out and slain, the world had been on terms with God.²⁵ But now a mighty change ensued. Once for all, the world had taken sides. In the midst stood that cross in its lonely majesty: God on one side, with averted face; on the other, Satan, exulting in his triumph. The world took sides with Satan: “[His] precious life [was in] the power of the dog,”²⁶ and there was none to help, none to pity.

There, we see every claim which the creature had on God forever forfeited, every tie forever broken. Promises there had been, and covenants; but Christ was to be the fulfiller of them all. If a single blessing now descends on the ancient people of His choice, it must come to them in grace.²⁷ Life, and breath, and fruitful seasons freely given, had testified of the great Giver’s hand, and declared His goodness; but if “seedtime, and harvest, and the changing year, come on in sweet succession” still, in a world bloodstained by the murder of the Son, it is no longer now

²¹ John 1:11.

²² John 1:10.

²³ See 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8.

²⁴ John 12:31, “Now is the judgment of this world” (*Nyn krisis esti tou kosmou toutou*).

²⁵ Editor’s note: It is not clear what is meant here. Based on the next paragraph, it may refer to temporal blessings upon the saved and the lost. In any case, before the cross, as after it, the way was narrow that led to life and few found it (Matt 7:14). Those who did not believe in the coming Messiah for eternal life—which was most people—were lost.

²⁶ Psalm 22:20.

²⁷ Romans 11 leaves no room to question whether Israel will in fact be blessed hereafter; but even their national blessings they will owe to grace.

to creation claims we owe it, nor yet to Noah's covenant,²⁸ but wholly to the grace of God in Christ.

In proof of this I might cite prophecies and parables, and appeal to the great principles of God that are the basis of Gospel doctrine, as above both parable and prophecy. Nay, I might leave it to men themselves, as Christ did, to decide between themselves and God. But I rather turn again to that solemn utterance of the Lord, in view of His lifting up upon the tree: "Now is the judgment of this world."²⁹

"[These things the] angels desire to look into."³⁰ And if angels were our judges, what would be our doom! For ages they had both witnessed and ministered the goodness of God to men. But yesterday the heavens had rung with their songs of praise, as they heralded the Savior's birth in Bethlehem: "On earth peace, goodwill toward men."³¹ Goodwill! And this was what had come of it! Peace! And this was what men turned it to! What thoughts were theirs as, terror-struck, they beheld that scene on Calvary! Crucified amid heartless jeers, and cruel taunts, and shouts of mingled hate and triumph! Buried in silence and by stealth; buried in sorrow, but in silence. He who hears in secret, heard the stifled cry from the broken hearts of Mary and the rest, and the smothered sobs that tore the breasts of strong men bowed with grief—the last sad tribute of love from the little flock now scattered. But as for the world, no man's lamentation, no woman's wail was heard! They had cried, "Away with Him, away with Him!"³² and now they had made good their cry: the world was rid of Him, and that was all they wanted.

Angels were witnesses to these things. They pondered the awful mystery of those hours when death held fast the Prince of Life. The forty days wherein He lingered in the scenes of His rejection and His death—was it not to make provision for the little company that owned His name, to gather them into some ark of refuge from the judgment-fire, so soon to engulf this ruined world? And now, the gates lift up their heads, the everlasting doors are lifted up, and with all the majesty of God, the King of Glory enters in.³³ The Crucified of Calvary has come to fill the vacant throne, the Nazarene has been proclaimed the Lord of Hosts!

²⁸ Genesis 9:11-17.

²⁹ John 12:31.

³⁰ 1 Peter 1:12.

³¹ Luke 2:14.

³² John 19:15.

³³ Psalm 24:7-10.

But, mystery on mystery! The greatest mystery of all is now the mystery of grace. *That throne is vacant still.* Those gates and doors that lifted up their heads for Him are standing open wide. Judgment waits. That sea of fire that one day shall close in upon this world to wipe out its memory forever, is tided back by the word of Him who sits upon the Father's throne in grace. When the Son of Man returns for judgment, "then He will sit on the throne of His glory."³⁴ When that day comes, how terrible shall be the judgment! Half measures are impossible in view of the cross of Christ. The day is past when God could plead with men about their *sins*.³⁵ The controversy now is not about a broken law, but a rejected Christ. If judgment, therefore, be the sinner's portion, it must be measured by God's estimate of the murder of His Son; a cup of vengeance, brimful, unmixed, from the treading of the "winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."³⁶

But if grace be on the throne, what limits can be set to it? If that sin committed upon Calvary has not shut the door of mercy, all other sins together shall not avail to close it. If God can bless in spite of the death of Christ, who may not be blest? Innocence lost, conscience disobeyed and stifled, covenants and promises despised and forfeited, law trampled under foot, prophets persecuted, and last and unutterably terrible, the Only-begotten slain. And yet there is mercy still! What a Gospel that would be!

³⁴ Matthew 25:31; cf. Rev 3:21.

³⁵ For the believer, the question of sin was settled at the cross; for the unbeliever, it is postponed to the day of judgment. "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet 2:24). "The Lord knows how to . . . reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Pet 2:9).

The distinction between judgment and punishment is important. The criminal is judged before he leaves the courthouse for the prison, but his punishment has yet to come—it is a consequence of judgment, not a part of it. All unbelievers are precisely on a level as regards judgment. "He who believes in Him is not condemned [the word is *krinō*], but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Here the moral and the immoral, the religious and the profane, stand together, and share the same doom. But when judgment, in the sense of punishment (condemnation), is in question, there can be no equality; every sentence shall be apportioned to the guilt of each by the righteous and omniscient Judge. See Rev 20:13; Matt 12:36; Luke 12:47-48; Jude 15; and 2 Pet 2:9, already quoted.

³⁶ Revelation 19:15.

But “the gospel of the glory of the blessed God” is something infinitely higher still. *It is not that Calvary has failed to quench the love of God to men, but that it is the proof and measure of that love. Not that the death of Christ has failed to shut heaven against the sinner, but that heaven is open to the sinner by virtue of that death.*³⁷ The everlasting doors that lifted up their heads for Him are open for the guiltiest of Adam’s race, and the blood by which the Lord of glory entered there is their title to approach. The way to heaven is as free as the way to hell. In hell there is an accuser, but in heaven there is no condemner. The only being in the universe of God who has a right to judge the sinner is exalted to be a Savior now.³⁸ Amid the wonders and terrors of that throne, He is a Savior, and He is sitting there in grace. The Savior shall yet become the Judge; but judgment waits on grace. Sin has reigned, and death can boast its victories: shall grace not have its triumphs too? As surely as the sin of man brought death, the grace of God shall bring eternal life to every sinner who believes. *One sin brought death, but grace masters all sin.* If sin abounded, grace abounds far more. Grace is conqueror. GRACE REIGNS. Not at the expense of righteousness, but in virtue of it. Not that righteousness requires the sinner’s death, and yet grace has intervened to give him life. Righteousness itself has set grace upon the throne in order that the sinner might have life: “That as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”³⁹ Such is the triumph of the cross. It has made it possible for God to bless us in perfect harmony with everything He is, and everything He has ever declared Himself to be; and in spite of all that we are, and all that He has ever said we ought to be.

I have already referred to St. Paul’s allusion to the ancient military triumphs, when writing to the Corinthians.⁴⁰ The word there used occurs

³⁷ Italics supplied. Ed.

³⁸ “The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22)! “I judge no one,” the Lord says again in another place (8:15). “If anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (12:47). The day of grace must end before the day of judgment can begin. “The acceptable year of the Lord” must run its course before the advent of “the day of vengeance.” Compare Isa 61:1-2 with Luke 4:16, 20, and notice the precise point at which the Lord “closed the book.”

³⁹ Romans 5:21. Read from v 12. I have sought to epitomize the argument of the passage.

⁴⁰ This is in chapter I of Anderson’s book. Ed.

again in his Epistle to the Colossians. Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, "leading them in triumph in Him."⁴¹ In the hour of His weakness, our enemies became His own, and fastened upon Him to drag Him down to death; but, leading captivity captive, He chained them to the chariot-wheels of His triumph, and made a public show of them. Just as Israel stood on the wilderness side of the sea, and saw Pharaoh and his hosts in death upon the shore, it is ours to gaze upon the triumphs of the cross. God there has mastered sin, abolished death, and destroyed him who had the power of death.

God has become our Savior. Our trust is not in His mercy, but in Himself. Not in divine attributes, but in the living God. "GOD is for us;" the Father is for us; the Son is for us; the Holy Spirit is for us. It is God who justifies; it is Christ that died; and the Holy Spirit has come down to be a witness to us of the work of Christ, and of the place that work has given us as sons in the Father's house.

"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation."⁴²

Rejoice, rejoice, my soul,
Rejoice in sin forgiven;
The blood of Christ hath made thee whole,
For thee His life was given.

For thee His blood was shed,
On Him thy sins were laid;
To bear thy guilt He bowed His head,
And now thy peace is mine.

Rejoice in peace made sure,
No judgment now for thee;
Thy conscience purged, thy life secure,
More safe thou cannot be.

Thy Savior is the Lord,
Who died to set thee free;
Thy trust is in His faithful word,
He liveth now for thee.

Rejoice in joys to come,
The hope of glory near;
He'll soon return to take thee home,
No cause for thee to fear!

⁴¹ Colossians 2:15.

⁴² Isaiah 12:2.

Now, by the Spirit sealed,
Rejoice in God the Lord;
The mighty God is now thy shield,
And He thy great reward.
Thy song of triumph raise;
Exult with heart and voice;
Oh shout aloud His glorious praise!
Rejoice, my soul, rejoice!⁴³

⁴³ Sir Robert gives no author for this poem and he doesn't label it "anonymous." Could it be that this Scotland Yard man, like some of the fictional detectives (Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey and P. D. James's Adam Dalgliesh, for example), had a literary flair? Ed.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Message: New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs. By Eugene H. Peterson. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1995. Pp. 940. Paper, \$17.00.

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The author—I feel “translator” would be a misnomer—says that the NT was written in “street language—not a refined language that appeals to our aspirations after the best but a rough and earthy language that reveals God’s presence and action where we least expect it” (p. 9). The Rev. Peterson’s goal is “to convert the tone, the rhythm, the events, the ideas, into the way *we* actually *think* and *speak*” (italics added).

As a Bible translator and editor myself, I must disagree. Yes, God did use the *koinē* or *common* Greek dialect of the first century. However, it was written by men whose minds were saturated with the truth and beauty of the OT Scriptures. Also, who would say that the Sermon on the Mount, the Upper Room Discourse, Romans 8, First Corinthians 13, the Book of Hebrews, or Revelation 5—to choose a few famous texts—are in “street language”?

Since I have personally been vilified in print for my work on the NKJV as (among other things) a communist, a “practical atheist,” and a “fundamentalist apostate,” I don’t wish to impugn the motives of the Presbyterian minister who wrote this book. I believe he wants to reach the masses, and so uses colorful, racy, and slang-peppered language. A Christian friend who works in prison ministries asked me to “check out” Hebrews, since she felt parts were, to use her word, “blasphemous.” That’s going too far, but the samples I have chosen, I think, will illustrate that this book is often *inaccurate*, overly *idiosyncratic*, and even *irreverent* in places.

Regarding *inaccuracy*: “They ditch their parents when they get in the way” seems pretty strong for “disobedient to parents,” p. 362, first full paragraph. (No verse numbers exist in the text, so it’s hard to find things.)

The aorist passive participle in Rom 5:1 (“being,” or better “having been justified by faith”) turns out “what God has *always wanted to do* for us—set us right with Him . . .” (italics added). This reviewer says: It’s done!

I have read that Peterson is a poet. Here is how he begins his Psalter:

How well God must like you—
 you don't hang out at Sin Saloon,
 you don't slink along Dead-End Road,
 you don't go to Smart-Mouth College (p. 648, top).

I believe neither the human nor the Divine author of Ps 1:1 would claim this as inspired poetry or *God's* message.

As to *idiosyncratic*, the "one-man" motif really shows in *The Message*. A penchant for racy, slangy lingo (often colorful and communicating, granted), is everywhere. From Romans 1, p. 362, top: "godless and loveless wretches" [the "gays"], "all hell broke loose," "mean-spirited, venomous, fork-tongued God-bashers! Stupid, slimy . . . they're spitting in God's face."

As to *irreverent* (bordering on vulgar in my opinion) Proverbs 30, pp. 936, bottom and 937, top:

Here's how a prostitute operates:
 she has sex with her client,
 Takes a bath,
 then asks, "Who's next?"

FOUR INTOLERABLES

Three things are too much for even the earth to bear,
 yes, four things shake its foundations—
 when the janitor becomes the boss,
 when a fool gets rich,
 when a whore is voted "woman of the year,"
 when a "girlfriend" replaces a faithful wife.

More appropriately, here's a sample of our Lord's condemnation of the Pharisees:

"Instead of giving you God's law as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn't think of lifting a finger to help. Their lives are perpetual fashion shows, embroidered prayer shawls one day and flowery prayers the next. They love to sit at the head table at church dinners, basking in the most prominent positions, preening in the radiance of public flattery, receiving honorary degrees, and getting called 'Doctor' and 'Reverend'" (Matthew 23, p. 69, middle).

This is creative and vivid, and since no doctrine is at stake, probably acceptable to most believers.

But is it right to read back into the text (not just to put into *sermons*, which all preachers do!) “church dinners” before there was a Church (pre-Pentecost) and “honorary degrees” and “Reverend” in the first century?

The constituency of *JOTGES* cares especially about clear Gospel verses. Peterson’s Eph 2:8 (p. 478, top) largely gets high marks: “Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish! We don’t play the major role. If we did, we’d probably go around bragging that we’d done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving.”

However, what does the writer (not the apostle Paul!) mean by “we don’t play the *major* role” (italics added)?

John 3:16 fares not as well: “This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a *whole* and *lasting* life” (italics added).

“*Eternal* life” (Greek and most translations) and “a *whole and lasting* life” (*The Message*, p. 225) sound like the difference between theology and psychology!

John 5:24, a classic grace verse, reads: “It’s urgent that you listen carefully to this: Anyone here who believes what I am saying right now and aligns himself with the Father, who has in fact put me in charge, has at this very moment the real, lasting life and is no longer condemned to be an outsider.” Unfortunately, the next line reads “this person *has taken a giant step* from the world of the dead to the world of the living” (pp. 231-32, italics added).

On the streets of Yonkers and Washington, D. C., *one* “giant step” wouldn’t get us kids “home” in the sidewalk game of “Giant Steps.”

Acts 16:31 is a great Gospel of grace text which has helped garner numberless converts into the fold. I don’t think *The Message’s* spin on this is even *near* the mark:

“He led them out of the jail and asked, ‘Sirs, what do I have to do to be saved, *to really live*?’ They said, ‘Put your *entire* trust in the Master Jesus. Then *you’ll live as you were meant to live*—and everyone in your house included!’” (p. 325, middle, italics added).

Another feature that conservatives will not like is that Lord and LORD are changed to God and GOD, as in the Inclusivist Bible reviewed on the next page.

I predict *The Message* will sell very well and be much praised by the avant garde and by those not familiar with or deeply concerned about the original or of standard versions such as the KJV, NKJV, NASB, or NIV. I also fear *The Message* is not close enough to the original to be called the Word of God.

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version. Ed. by Gold, Hoyt, Ringe, Thistlethwaite, Throckmorton, and Withers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 55 pp. Cloth, \$14.95.

Since this book is a further revision of the NRSV in the interest of even more inclusive language than was there allowed, perhaps it would be germane to mention that half of the editors are men (numbers one, two, and five) and half are women (three, four, and six).

A detailed review of the NRSV by the present reviewer will be found in the Autumn 1990 issue of *JOTGES*. The strong and weak points of that version are present here, but with a more radical attempt to demasculinize the Father and the Son.

A sample of how our Lord might have sounded had He gone along with the inclusivist "editing" of this version occurs after the [bracketed] adulterous woman passage: "Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father-Mother who sent me. In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. I testify on my own behalf, and the Father-Mother who sent me testifies on my behalf.' Then they said to him,

'Where is your Father-Mother?' Jesus answered, 'You know neither me nor my Father-Mother. If you knew me, you would know my Father-Mother also'" (John 8:16-19). Notice how even Jesus' enemies are politically correct enough to use inclusive language in asking Him, "Where is your Father-Mother?" (italics supplied).

In the Psalms, the desire to reject the dangerously masculine words *Lord* and *LORD* (=Yahweh or Jehovah) and the proper pronouns that go with these words, produces one *GOD* and four *Gods* in three verses: "GOD is my shepherd, I shall not want. God makes me lie down in green pastures, and leads me beside still waters; God restores my soul. God

leads me in paths of righteousness for the sake of God's name" (Ps 23:1-3). Unfortunately, the Hebrew text has nary a one, just *The LORD* (23:1).

Most of our readers are committed to a clear-cut presentation of the Gospel of grace. While the Gospel itself is still there in John 3:16, the strict avoidance of *Son*, He, His, and Him, makes it unlikely that many Bible-memory groups will adopt the following: "No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Human One. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Human One be lifted up, that whoever believes in that One may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that God gave God's only Child, so that everyone who believes in that Child may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Child into the world to condemn the world, but in order that through the Child the world might be saved. Those who believe in the Child are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Child of God" (John 3:13-18).

Although this reviewer's beloved kindergarten teacher at P.S. 21 wisely taught me to use scissors with the right hand, I must confess I am a southpaw. In spite of this, reading the Bible regularly since the age of seven never made me feel like an abused minority. Therefore this book's change of "right hand" to "powerful hand" and "at the right hand" to "beside" or "near" seems needlessly hysterical to at least one southpaw.

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

The Parable of Joy: Reflections on the Wisdom of the Book of John. By Michael Card. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995. Pp. 259. Cloth, \$19.99.

Especially after reviewing the emasculated "Inclusive" Oxford variant of the NRSV and the loose and racy *Message*, I find musician Card's book reverent, artistic, and accurate.

His work is a fresh translation of John's Gospel with helpful notes and short story-like sections scattered through the text.

Mr. Card chose C. S. Lewis's stepson, Douglas Gresham (so beautifully portrayed as a boy in the film "Shadowlands") to write the foreword. He writes (from Ireland): "The real excitement in studying John with the insight that this book provides is that as we achieve a closer feeling of being *there* and *then*, we also achieve a closer feeling of Him being *here* and *now*" (p. xiii).

The historically researched (and unSunday-school-pink-and-blue-bathrobe-school-of-biblical pictures) black and white art by Keith Mueller is a real addition to the book.

The translation is modern but close to the original text, even using Jesus' words "Amen, amen" rather than "Truly, truly," etc. Card's version of John 5:24 clearly presents the Gospel of grace: "AMEN AMEN, I say to you, the person who hears My word and believes the One who sent Me has life eternal and does not come into judgment, but has moved out of death into life" (p. 68). This reviewer appreciates the reverential capitals of pronouns for Deity (albeit considered "religiously incorrect" in many quarters).

The note on the adulterous woman passage (John 7:53-8:11) is surprisingly good in light of the translator's apparent acceptance of the usual line that it's not in the right place: "In the brief span of eleven verses we have a crystalline picture of the forgiving love of Jesus. When we come to the end of the story, we feel as if we have read an entire book about the love of God" (p. 104). I would like to add that this "crystalline picture" is in over 1,000 Greek manuscripts right here in John (majority of manuscripts).

In the section retelling chapter 6, Mr. Card—who goes to Christ Community Church (Presbyterian) in Franklin, Tennessee—*sounds* as if he believes in transubstantiation, a Roman Catholic dogma that has always horrified the Reformed, and certainly standard Evangelicals: "The bread is alive, Jesus tells them. It is His own flesh. Jesus' scandalous words reach our ears, having been filtered down through two thousand years of church history. But these first hearers belonged to a community that observed some of the most strict dietary laws the world has ever seen. They did not even eat pork! Now Jesus, this One they had hoped for as a king, was talking about cannibalism!

"If ever an explanation was called for from Jesus is it now. A few words might have calmed them down and helped them understand His horrific statement. This was a time to choose His words with the utmost care.

"And Jesus did. He selected words designed to have the most explosive effect. Not only are the people told that they must eat His flesh, He then

goes on to say they must also drink His blood! *To the few who might have been holding out hope for a metaphorical interpretation*, Jesus says, "My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink," (italics added).

Perhaps noting the context—a Jewish synagogue (v 59) before there was a Church or holy communion, and noting v 63 would have clarified things: "*The flesh* does not count for anything. The words I speak to you are *Spirit* and Life" (pp. 86-87, Card's translation, italics added). Sounds like a metaphor to me!

This book is worth getting, or at least reading. The translation is good, the historical notes are generally helpful, the tone is one of faith, and the format is attractive.

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, TX

Living Water: The Gospel of John—Logos 21 Version. Glide, Oregon: Absolutely Free, Inc., 1996. 77 pp. Paper.

This pocket-sized booklet, with a blue cover featuring a beautiful photograph of a flowing waterfall, takes the world's oldest and best "tract," the Gospel of John, and puts it in an attractive, easy-to-read translation with a series of footnotes designed to explain key passages in the text to unbelievers as well as to new Christians. *The notes are written from a grace perspective*, and thus enhance, rather than hinder, the original message of this most wonderful of all books.

The booklet is the debut publication of a brand new translation of the NT, *Logos 21*, which seeks to render the original Greek accurately, but in modern, everyday English. Although several scholars worked on the project, *Logos 21* is mainly the work and vision of Dr. Arthur Farstad, editor of *JOTGES*. The name refers to the goal of bringing God's Word (Greek *Logos*) into the 21st century.

Most recent translations tend to be paraphrastic, taking liberties with the original.

Living Water beautifully achieves the delicate balance of faithfulness to the original text and high readability.

Another refreshing feature of this version is its use of contractions in conversation. These are essential to convey today's international English

usage. For example, in John 13:7, Jesus replies to Peter's question about foot washing by saying: "What I'm doing you don't understand now, but afterward you will."

Logos 21 is also the first English translation of the Greek Majority Text of a book of the NT. Except for the KJV and the NKJV (which are based on the Textus Receptus, a close cousin of the Majority Text), nearly all other English translations are based on the small minority of Greek manuscripts known as the Alexandrian Text type or the "Critical" Text. *Living Water* features selected endnotes that point out the major differences between the Majority and Critical Texts in the book of John. However, these notes are helpful, not pedantic.

As an evangelist who has preached the Gospel and taught on personal evangelism all over the world, I heartily recommend this important new work in our ongoing task of taking the Gospel to English-speaking peoples everywhere. It would be wonderful if all who hold a Free Grace position would carry copies of this little book with them in a briefcase, pocket, purse, car pocket, or beside the front door, ready at a moment's notice to give one out to a lost soul in need of the Water of Life.

I wish to commend Absolutely Free, Inc. (PO Box 2, Glide, Oregon 97443), the publisher of *Living Water*, for producing this booklet.

The booklet is also now available in Russian, Arabic, Dutch, and Berber and will be available in Spanish and French in the near future.

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Eternity: Reclaiming a Passion for What Endures. By Joseph M. Stowell. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995. 244 pp. Cloth, \$12.95.

This is an important book. Not because it is replete with "exegetical breakthroughs" or because it contains a plethora of scholarly insights, but rather because it calls the reader to focus on what every believer should always focus on. It is a manifesto calling Evangelicals to build their lives on a God/heaven-centered world view.

Dr. Stowell begins by retelling of the story of Scott and Janet Willis, who lost six children in the flaming wreckage of a freak highway accident in 1994. This tragedy was widely reported by the media, not only because

of the horror of the multiple deaths involved, but primarily because of the incredible courage and stability that both parents demonstrated in its aftermath. The underlying premise of Stowell's book is that the spiritual strength that the Willises possessed in the midst of such unexpected trauma was only possible because of their well-ordered faith in the practical reality of heaven as the invisible domain of the sovereign God who works to eternally glorify Himself in and through the events of history on earth.

The book consists of fourteen chapters grouped into four distinct units. The first unit, "In Other Worlds," functions as an introduction and overview of the major motif of the rest of the book, that there are three distinct "worlds" which the believer must properly integrate in order to live a biblical Christian life. The second unit, "The Eternal World Beyond," expounds the first of Stowell's suggested "three worlds"—heaven itself, or "the world to come." The third unit, "The Eternal World Within," deals with the second "world"—the believer's individual spiritual fellowship with Christ now as he lives on earth. The final unit, "This Present World," describes the fallen *kosmos* that we currently live in.

Members of GES will note that at times the author definitely blurs the terms of the Gospel, describing Christians as "those who have claimed Christ as Lord of their lives" (p. 17) and specifically referring to one man's salvation experience as taking place when he "gave his heart to the Lord" (p. 39). Paradoxically, however, throughout the book, Stowell is quite clear that not all Christians have the proper priorities and perspective. Apparently he feels that while all Christians "claim Christ as Lord of their lives" many need this book to help them to follow through on that "claim." (Wouldn't it have been better to stand on a statement like Rom 4:5 relative to the terms of the Gospel and then echo the exhortation of a passage like Rom 12:1-2 as the content of the book was developed?)

One major positive theological strength of this book is its direct stand against all forms of the so-called "prosperity gospel," such as "Fewer things are more unsettling to us than the realization that our righteousness will inevitably cause us to face moments of rejection, discomfort, and in some cases, physical pain—and, as many have, even martyrdom" (p. 227).

One exotic aspect of the book is the author's breakdown of the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 15 as delineating "ten life perspectives that translate into clear kingdom practices." This is a somewhat novel

approach, and most readers will probably differ in their broad understanding of the Sermon's form and function.

This book deserves a wide reading. I am convinced that Stowell is correct that an active, eager, yet practical anticipation of heaven (in light of John 14:1-3 and 1 John 2:28-3:3) is fundamental to a stable and spiritually productive life on earth. Pastors reading this book will almost certainly feel led to prepare a sermon series on heaven for their flocks! However this book's warm style and engaging images will be appreciated by *any Christian* who needs motivation for seeing his or her life and career as a fleeting but important vehicle for furthering heaven's interests.

Brad McCoy

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God in Three Persons. By Millard J. Erickson. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995. 356 pp. Cloth, \$29.99.

The doctrine of the Trinity separates Christianity from all other religions. It is also one of the most difficult doctrines to understand. Millard Erickson writes not only a contemporary interpretation of the Trinity but also interacts with liberal and philosophical thought on the subject. His book has three parts: In the first three chapters he deals with the teaching of the church fathers through the fourth century. The next part summarizes liberal and philosophical objections to the Trinity. The last section presents an evangelical defense of the Trinity.

Erickson defends the "perichoresis" view of the Trinity. *Perichoresis* means interpenetration and emphasizes the intimate link of the members of the Godhead. The ancient Greek view placed the emphasis on the monarchy of the Father and His being the source of the Godhead, whose essence is differentiated in three Persons.

In the perichoresis view the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are intimately interlinked so they are unable to exist apart from one another. God can only exist as Trinity. Each Person supplies life to the others. The three Persons not only interpenetrate one another but are all involved in the works of God. Each of the three shares the life of the others and each lives in the others. The emphasis of the interdependence on the others, Erickson contends, better guards against tritheism. The verses in John

where the Father is said to be in Christ and He in the Father are emphasized.

The author has a very helpful section on prayer to the Triune God, maintaining that the majority of our prayer should be so addressed. However, since Christ was prayed to in the Bible and the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity, it is perfectly acceptable to pray and thank Them for Their particular ministries in our lives.

Challenges have been made to the “practical” value of the Trinity. Erickson answers by saying that the Trinity is a unity in which the members love one another and do everything for the other Members’ best good. We are made in the Triune God’s image and one of the things we should try to imitate in our relations with other Christians is the perfect unity and love within the Trinity. This should encourage us to humble ourselves before others and live in unity with them.

Erickson’s interactions with liberals and philosophers on this subject is not easy reading. His criticism of the traditional view’s emphasis on the substance of God and the distinction of the Persons seems slightly artificial. It is certainly good to keep in mind that we should worship and think of God *practically* the way we believe Him to be *intellectually*. However, the concept of mutual love, interdependence, and cooperation in the Godhead is held by those who believe in the traditional view as well.

R. Michael Duffy
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Netherlands

Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity. By Gregory A. Boyd. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992. 234 pp. Paper, \$13.99.

Oneness Pentecostalism is a modern version of the ancient heresy of modalism. From the fact that there is only one God, and that Jesus is God, this type of Pentecostalism deduces that Jesus must Himself be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—all three. To them the distinction between the Father and the Son is like the distinction between the humanity of Christ and His deity. For Oneness Pentecostals, to say that Jesus is both the Father and the Son is to say that He is both God and man. Oneness Pentecostals teach that the Trinity is a denial that God is one and that Jesus is fully God.

Gregory Boyd, who himself was a Oneness Pentecostal for four years, writes a convincing refutation of Oneness modalism.

In chapter 3 he refutes the view that Jesus is the same as the Father. Jesus is explicitly referred to as "the Son" over 200 times in the NT, and not once is He called "Father." By contrast, over 200 times Jesus or someone else refers to the Father as being distinct from Jesus. In over 50 instances the Father is in juxtaposition to the Son in the same verse. Jesus refers to "the Father," "My Father," or "your Father" 173 times in the Gospels as distinct from Himself. Boyd points out that taking these passages as referring to the same person makes God talk to Himself. The same type of evidence is available to show that Jesus is distinct from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is distinctly referred to over 200 times in the NT.

Oneness Pentecostals believe that references to the distinctions merely *appear* to show, but do not, who God really is. These modes only *appear* to interrelate, act, and feel. God is three temporary things to us humans, but the "who" of God remains hidden.

Boyd's strongest arguments against the Oneness view of God is in response to God only *appearing* to have three distinctions. This view accuses God of misleading us in His revelation. It also means that God has never revealed what He is truly like. The love that is so bountifully exhibited in the NT between the Father and the Son would be an illusion and not true love.

Boyd also has an excellent section refuting the works salvation of Oneness groups. They assert that Grace + Faith + Obedience save. Boyd points out that this clearly contradicts Rom 4:1-8. He also shows that the God of Oneness Pentecostals is only concerned about behavior. He doesn't care to have relationships with people.

The only negative aspect of this book is that Boyd does not see that the evidence against the Oneness position on Grace also refutes the Lordship/perseverance position which he advocates as being Grace.

This study is well worth reading.

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What About Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized. Ed. by John Sanders. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995. 168 pp. Paper, \$10.99.

The rise of Pluralism in Western society has challenged Evangelicals to respond again to the question of the unevangelized. If the only way that someone can go to heaven is by trusting in Christ, then what about those who have never heard of Him?

This book deals with three views on the subject: Inclusivism, Postmortem Conversion, and Restrictivism. John Sanders, who also edited the entire volume, argues for *Inclusivism* in section one. Gabriel Fackre makes the case for *Postmortem Conversion* in section two. Ronald Nash contends for *Restrictivism* in section three. The format of the book is that each proponent presents his view and the others critique his view.

Inclusivism is the view that people are saved on the basis of believing the revelation that they *have*, whether it is special or general revelation. Sanders contends that Christ's death for sin is the ground of all salvation, but people do not need to know about Christ to be saved. Inclusivism is defended by the "faith principle," which means that one must only trust what God reveals. People are saved by faith and not doctrine. Faith includes "some truth" about God, but, this truth can come from general revelation. Inclusivists believe that salvation is only through Christ, which is one of the major differences between them and Pluralists. However, since most of the world's unevangelized peoples are involved in other religions, inclusivists believe that God saves through false religions. Sincere followers are saved by the faith that they have in God.

This explains why they must posit a "faith principle." Sanders has not seriously considered how the worldviews of a pantheist, polytheist, animist, or nontheist predispose people to reject the most basic information of a personal, sovereign, moral, Creator God. As Ronald Nash comments, "In the moment when a pantheist, polytheist, or animist begins to think seriously about the possible existence of one sovereign, personal Creator God, he or she has already taken a first step away from that religion." This is further complicated by the fact that all the other world religions teach some form of works salvation. How can anyone be saved by faith when they believe that they must work their way to God? Without special revelation the most natural idea that comes to man is that he must appease the Deity through good works or sacrifices.

Postmortem Conversion is the view that all the unevangelized people will get an opportunity to hear the Gospel after death. Fackre interprets 1 Pet 3:19-20 and 1 Pet 4:6 as references to the dead being evangelized. However he does not do any serious exegesis of the passages themselves. He never mentions the other more likely options that (1) Christ preached through Noah to the wicked who are now in hell or that (2) Christ announced triumph over the fallen angels. In the context, both of these views are more likely and correlate better with the rest of the Bible, where one's opportunity to be saved ends at death (John 5:24, 28, 29; 8:21, 24, and Heb 9:27). In all of these passages there is a close relationship between death and judgment.

Restrictivism is the view that no one can come to God except through Jesus Christ. Not only is Christ the only ground of all salvation, but everyone must have *explicit knowledge of Him* in order to be saved. The only weakness in Nash's chapter was that he didn't really present the restrictivist position. Instead, he refuted the other two views. Although this reviewer agrees with his critiques of the other two positions, it would have been beneficial to see a positive presentation of the biblical evidence for the restrictivist position.

The chapters by John Sanders and Ronald Nash were particularly helpful in understanding the issues involved in this ongoing debate. *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* is well worth reading.

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Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas. By Ronald H. Nash. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992. 176 pp. Paper, \$10.99.

Christianity is only one of seven worldviews. According to Ronald Nash a worldview is "a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality." All people consciously or unconsciously have a worldview or a way in which they see the world and interpret things around them.

Worldviews in Conflict is an easy-to-read defense of the Christian worldview. In the first two chapters the author defines *worldview* and presents the Christian worldview. Chapter 3 covers three tests (reason, experience, and practice) for determining the truth of a worldview.

Nash points out that Christianity has a much better answer to evil than do naturalism or the New Age Movement. In naturalism there is no God. Nothing exists outside the material, mechanical, natural order. However, if this is true then there is no ground whatsoever for saying something is evil or good. Morals must be relative. This is completely contrary to our experience and unlivable in the real world. Morals come from persons. People are relative since they are mortal. In order to have *absolute* morals there must be an absolute Law Maker. Most Naturalists believe that murdering innocent children, stealing, and lying are wrong, but they do not have philosophical foundations on which to rest that belief.

The New Age Movement is primarily represented by the pantheist worldview: "everything is god and god is everything." The problem with this theory is that if god is everything then He is also good and evil, thus obliterating the distinction between the two. Evil actually becomes an illusion.

Nash shows that these two worldviews do not pass the test of reason, experience, or practice. The Christian worldview is one of the only worldviews that provides an answer for evil. God made the world good and allowed evil in it for a good reason of His own. For reasons of logical consistency it does not matter what that reason was. The Christian view recognizes a real evil and good. Thus they can be dealt with.

The last chapter shows that Jesus' incarnation and resurrection are more probable than the other options.

It would have been better had the author covered the other four worldviews (determinism, logical positivism, physicalism, and evidentialism), although they are not as popular as the three he did cover. This book is an excellent introduction into worldviews and how to defend the reasonableness of Christianity.

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Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions. By John Piper. Nottingham England: InterVarsity Press, 1993. 239 pp. Paper, \$15.00.

The goal of missions, John Piper contends, is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. The ultimate goal of the church is not missions. Worship is. Missions exist because worship does not. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. Worship is not only the goal of missions; it also fuels missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. As the title indicates, Piper exalts the greatness of God in missions, a proper and necessary emphasis. It is entirely possible to get lost in the task of missions and forget the ultimate goal, which is to bring glory to God.

The book is divided into five sections. The first is God's supremacy through *worship*. The second is God's supremacy through *prayer* as the One who sustains and empowers the whole process. The third section is God's supremacy through *suffering*, which He uses to advance His kingdom and purposes on earth.

The fourth section deals with Christ's supremacy as the conscious focus of all saving faith. Here he deals with pluralism, inclusivism, and annihilationism. He asks and then answers three questions in the affirmative: 1) Will anyone experience eternal conscious torment under God's wrath? 2) Is the work of Christ the necessary means provided by God for eternal salvation? 3) Is it necessary for people to hear of Christ in order to be eternally saved?

In the fifth section Piper defines "all nations" in Matt 28:19 as all people groups in the world as opposed to all individual Gentiles or countries. He also has a good discussion as to what it means to be "reached" in terms of missions. Biblically a country can be said to be reached when the message is proclaimed in an understandable way (Matt 24:14; Mark 16:15). However, in Matt 28:19 (and Rev 5:9 and 7:9-10) a response is included. Missions leaders define a people as "reached" when there is an indigenous church capable of evangelizing the group. Leaving a permanent witness behind to continue evangelizing a people is an important task in missions.

The book does have a few weaknesses. In the section on prayer the author discusses how our lives on earth are a war that we must fight while praying. However, one of the elements included in this war is the laying hold of eternal life. He never defines "eternal life," but considering his Reformed background it most likely means going to heaven. While we

agree that life is a war and we must continue to fight prayerfully, we don't agree that we do this to lay hold of heaven.

Let the Nations Be Glad is well worth reading for the perspective that it gives to the Godward orientation of missions.

R. Michael Duffy

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No Place for Truth, or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?

By David F. Wells. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1993. 318 pp. Paper \$14.99.

Wells, a seminary professor of historical and systematic theology, discusses key aspects of the decline of interest in biblical truth in America. He is very thorough in his presentation. He discusses everything from the influence of television, the shift in preaching and the role of the pastor, changes in theological education, changes in theological publications, and illiteracy.

What is at stake, Wells argues, is the very life of Evangelicalism. "Theology is dying . . . because the Church has lost its capacity for it. And while some hail this loss as a step forward toward the hope of new evangelical vitality, it is in fact a sign of creeping death" (p. 301). Creeping death—a powerful indictment!

Concerning today's pastors Wells writes, "In this new clerical order, technical and managerial competence in the church have plainly come to dominate the definition of pastoral service. It is true that matters of spirituality loom large in the churches, but it is not at all clear that churches expect the pastor to do anything more than to be a good friend. The older role of the pastor as broker of truth has been eclipsed by the newer managerial functions" (p. 233). And again, "The evangelical pastor is now the C.E.O.; in the pulpit, the pastor is a psychologist whose task is to engineer good relations and warm feelings" (p. 177).

By contrast, Wells argues that "the fundamental requirement of the Christian leader is not a knowledge of where the stream of popular opinion is flowing but knowledge of where the stream of God's truth lies" (p. 215).

This is a powerful, convicting book. I highly recommend it, especially to pastors, church boards, and other concerned Christians.

Robert N. Wilkin

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

Heaven: Your Real Home. By Joni Eareckson Tada. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995, 215 pp. Cloth, \$13.95.

According to many authors, believers will spend eternity doing little more than singing all the time. This is not the picture presented by Joni Eareckson Tada (hereafter referred to as Joni).

Joni says that believers “will be busier than they ever were on earth. No idling away eternity strolling streets of gold. No passing away time while plucking harps by the glassy sea. We will have jobs to do . . . We will serve God through worship and work—exciting work of which we will never grow tired” (p. 66).

These are exceptional insights. Most Christians seem to have little interest in eternity. It seems boring to them. The reason it may seem boring is that they don’t understand what the Scriptures say about eternity future.

There’s more. Joni also recognizes the biblical doctrine of eternal rewards: “The more trustworthy you’ve been [in this life], the greater your service in eternity” (p. 67). She even gives a good answer to the charge that it is self-serving and mercenary to focus on gaining rewards (pp. 90-91).

Unfortunately, Joni doesn’t develop the doctrine. She leaves many questions unanswered, saying: “Whew, I’m glad theologians study such things” (p. 70). This is an overall problem with the whole book. It lacks any detailed discussion of biblical themes or passages.

In spite of the lack of depth, Joni’s book is worth reading because it makes several important assertions. For example it shows that believers will meaningfully serve God forever and that how believers live now *will* impact the quality of their experience in God’s kingdom. Joni has a clear picture of the fact that this life is at best a sketch of what is to come. An additional value of this book is that Joni gives us an inspirational glimpse into her prayer life.

Two cautions. First, in the epilogue Joni gives an evangelistic appeal which does not clearly explain the Gospel. She invites the reader to pray the following prayer: "Lord Jesus, I realize I have lived my life far from You and I see now how my sin has separated me from You. Please come into my life—my heart, mind, and spirit—and make me the person You want me to be. Forgive me for living away from You all these years and help me to turn from my old ways. I invite You to be Lord of my life and thank You for the difference You will make. Amen" (pp. 209-10). There is no mention of trusting Christ for eternal life there. Instead, the emphasis is on turning from sins and on commitment of life.

Second, Joni advances a popular misconception: that believers will spend eternity in *heaven* (cf. pp. 70, 73-91). However, Revelation 21-22 clearly identifies *the new earth* as the home of believers in eternity. While we may well visit the new heaven in eternity, we will live on the new earth with the King of kings, who will rule from His throne in the New Jerusalem (compare Rev 3:21; 21:10ff.; and 22:1ff.). God's purpose for mankind and for earth will not be thwarted. He will ultimately establish His reign over men on earth—first on this earth in the millennium, and then on the new earth thereafter.

Joni may not be a theologian. However, concerning the eternal state of believers, she sees some things which many theologians have missed. I recommend this book.

Robert N. Wilkin

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

One-Verse Evangelism. By Randy D. Raysbrook. Navigator *Napkin Evangelism* Series. Colorado Springs: DawsonMedia, 1996. 11 pp.

This booklet presents a very simple method of evangelism. Raysbrook suggests that rather than putting an unbeliever through a complicated "sword drill" jumping from verse to verse, that we settle on one verse and explain it carefully. He recommends that we write the verse on a piece of a paper, even a napkin if our evangelistic conversation takes place in a restaurant.

Ten years ago Randy Raysbrook published an article by the same name. In the very first issue of *JOTGES* Kevin Butcher critically reviewed that article (Autumn 1988, pp. 91-93). Butcher pointed out a

number of problems with the way the message of the Gospel was presented there.

Don't let the fact that this booklet has the same title as the previous article make you think that its message is unchanged. Actually, Raysbrook has responded to all of Butcher's criticisms. A comparison of the two is very encouraging. Raysbrook has modified his article significantly, yet retaining its attractive feature, its simplicity.

No longer does Raysbrook suggest that we tell people that in order to have eternal life they must make Jesus Lord of their lives, allow Him to have total control, or turn away from their sins. Instead, he exhorts us to tell people that to have eternal life they must believe (or trust) in Christ. He strongly emphasizes that eternal life is a free gift and that it's received at the moment of faith and can never be lost. And, while he encourages leading a person in prayer to express his faith in Christ, he tells us to "remind him, though, that he is not forgiven because of how or what he prays, but instead because he trusts in Jesus" (p. 9).

There were two minor inconsistencies in the booklet which should be noted.

First, in his introduction Raysbrook asks a person he is witnessing to "if he wanted to turn his life over to Christ" (p. 1). What he means by this is not clear. In any case, this statement does not fit with the rest of the booklet since Raysbrook makes it clear that faith in Christ, not turning over one's life, is the only condition of receiving eternal life.

Second, the verse chosen to illustrate one-verse evangelism, Rom 6:23, does not state the condition of receiving the free gift of eternal life. This, of course, is a problem. Yet Raysbrook doesn't deal with it directly. His bridge illustration diagram is filled with words taken straight from the text. Yet one key word, *trust*, in the diagram is not to be found in the verse. At the end of the booklet Raysbrook does suggest that we should "know at least one verse that backs up each step in the illustration in case the person needs further explanation" (p. 11). It would thus be helpful if when Raysbrook mentions writing the word *trust* in the diagram that he tells us to put in parenthesis another verse like John 3:16 or Eph 2:8-9.

Kudos to Randy Raysbrook and the Navigators. This booklet is much improved and it's one I'm happy to recommend.

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PERIODICAL REVIEWS

“To Him Who Overcomes’: A Fresh Look at What ‘Victory’ Means for the Believer According to the Book of Revelation,” Stephen L. Homcy, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, June 1995, pp. 193-201.

In Revelation 2-3, the Lord Jesus Christ exhorts the seven churches of Asia to “overcome.” What it means to be an overcoming believer is foundational to both Christian living and the doctrine of eternal rewards. This article, by an associate professor of NT and Greek at Messiah Biblical Institute and Graduate School of Theology, is a study of the meaning of “to him who overcomes” in Revelation and its implications for the believer.

Homcy believes the seven churches represent the universal church throughout the church age. He initially observes that the need to repent from both wrong doctrine and wrong actions is a common element in the message to five of the seven churches. Some *JOTGES* readers might find fault with his definition of repentance as “a turning to God from all else” (p. 195), preferring to view repentance as a change of mind. However, at least in this context, I believe that Homcy’s definition is accurate and, to my mind, essentially synonymous with the position that repentance is “the call to enter harmonious relations with God” (Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 145).

Homcy sees Rev 12:11 as the key to understanding what overcoming means for the believer. The foundation of the victory by tribulation believers have over Satan and his demons is the death of Christ and “the witness of their lives that the Lamb who died is the Lion who lives and rules” (p. 199). He goes on to write, “Believers are instead to pursue a passionate love for Jesus which proves itself in faithfulness to him at all costs” (p. 199).

“With faith firmly planted in the risen Lord, believers are not uprooted from their testimony even by the prospect of death (Heb 2:14-15)” (p. 199). These are principles believers do well to heed.

Although Homcy’s interpretation of Revelation 12 sheds light on the overcoming passages in Revelation 2-3, there is a lack of exegesis in the immediate context, which would have provided more insight. It seems reasonable to me that the exhortation to overcome is simply a call to

the churches to keep doing the right things and change the wrong things. For example, the Lord commends the labor, patience, and perseverance of the church at Ephesus (2:2-3). They also rightly hate "the deeds of the Nicolaitans" (2:6). But they had lost their "first love" (2:4). To be an overcoming church (2:6) they needed to keep on patiently working for Christ while regaining their love for Him. This type of analysis can be carried through with each of the seven churches.

Although not completely clear, at one point the author seems to take the position that *all* believers are overcomers. He comments on 12:11 of "the certainty of the believer's victory: Jesus calls them to overcome and they will overcome" (p. 198). I do *not* believe that victorious Christian living is a certainty and that if one does not overcome he's not a true believer. Scripture and experience teach us otherwise.

Despite some shortcomings, the article is basically accurate in its presentation of what it means to overcome. This exhortation by Homcy is good for Christians to consider:

"In the midst of this crossfire our lives must declare the victory of Jesus over sin and death, with confidence in the ultimate triumph of his work over all the power of the enemy. This means that we will not love our earthly lives but the author of life; that we will not measure success by human, earthly standards or victory by personal, earthly gain but in terms of our cooperation with God's plan to advance his kingdom; that we will not sacrifice the testimony of Jesus on the altar of compromise and convenience" (p. 201).

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"The Testing by Fire of the Builders' Works: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15,"
Harm W. Hollander, *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 89-104.

The design of this article is to establish that Paul has adapted the tradition of the testing of men's works by fire at the final judgment for 1 Corinthians 3. This theme is found regularly in OT Jewish and early Christian literature. To be specific, the author argues that the *Testament of Abraham* (a Jewish or Jewish-Christian apocryphal work, possibly from the first century A.D.) expresses a very close parallel to Paul's wording in 1 Cor 3:10-15. On the other hand, he suggests that the apostle did not borrow from the *Testament*, but only shares its familiarity to the tradition.

Hollander is careful to point out that the substantial differences between the *Testament of Abraham* and 1 Corinthians 3 make it a serious obstacle to any theory of a dependence on the apocryphal book. Of preeminent importance is the fact that the *Testament* speaks of the judgment of *the righteous and the sinner* based on works, but Paul manifestly speaks of a judgment of *two types of believers*. Since that is the case, one wonders how Hollander can maintain that Paul has adapted a tradition similar to that of the *Testament of Abraham*. What prevents us from viewing Paul's distinctive theology of a believer's judgment as guided by divine revelation, and independent and uninfluenced by *any* tradition?

The value of other aspects of the article is positive, yet mixed. The background to Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians 3 is correctly taken to be divisiveness in the Corinthian congregation as described in 1 Corinthians 1. But the author really *stretches* the passage when he supposes that members of the Corinthian congregation were placing their faith in these leaders (Apollon, Paul, and Peter) along with Christ to help them attain *salvation!*

The context of the passage is aptly applied to those responsible for the growth of the Christian church. Yet, the author denies that the details broaden to address the judgment of all believers. While the author agrees that only believers are mentioned in the unit, "the day" (3:13) is interpreted as the Day of the Lord, which he sees as a time of *general* judgment for *all* people.

The six materials of v 12 are divided into two categories: those which are perishable and those which are not. Any descending value in the list is rejected. But strangely enough, those who build with the wood, hay, or straw are primarily considered to be less qualified and less stimulating people. Also according to Hollander, 3:15 doesn't refer to a loss of salvation, and the phrase, "he himself will be saved," must carry a full soteriological sense. But he renders 3:15b as "If any man's work is burned up, *he will be fined,*" because this translation of the Greek forms an exact opposite to 3:15a, "he will receive a reward." It is unclear as to why a translation, "he will forfeit [his reward]," is a less likely antithetic parallel.

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“Rejection Imagery in the Synoptic Gospels,” Karl E. Pagenkemper, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (July-September 1996), 308-331.

If you are looking for an article that hits close to the center of the Gospel debate, this article is one you will want to read. It is well written and reflects a commendable amount of research.

This is part two of a two-part article. In my estimation, this second installment is far more valuable than the first, since it interacts with the Scriptures in much more detail.

Pagenkemper considers many difficult texts which are often taken as teaching that in order to gain entrance to God’s kingdom, believers must be faithful until Christ returns or until they die. Unfortunately, the author finds no problem with that explanation.

Pagenkemper shows that he is aware of the Free Grace explanations of these passages. Yet he rejects them because he feels that the imagery concerns eternal salvation, not eternal rewards.

Here are the passages considered in this article: the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt 13:24-30), the Parable of the Dragnet (Matt 13:47-50), the Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matt 22:1-14), the Parable of the Narrow Door (Luke 13:23-30), the Parable of the Good and Bad Servants (Matt 24:45-51; Luke 12:41-46), the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), the Parables of the Talents and of the Minas (Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27), and the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt 25:31-46).

Pagenkemper sees the outer darkness as a reference to hell. He considers the five virgins who are excluded from the wedding party to be lost. And he contends that the third servant in the Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11-27) and the unfaithful servant of Matt 24:45-51 and Luke 12:41-46 are both unregenerate as well.

There are a number of problems with the views Pagenkemper adopts which he does not answer. Before anyone could adopt the views he suggests, these questions must be answered satisfactorily.

If “the sons of the kingdom” in Matt 13:24-30 are saved, as the Lord clearly indicates in Matt 13:38 and as Pagenkemper agrees (p. 314), then how can they be sent to hell in Matt 8:12 (“But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”)? If, as Pagenkemper argues (p. 316), the outer darkness refers to hell, then this question must be answered.

If five of the virgins represent unsaved people, why are they called *virgins*? Doesn’t that suggest people who are pure? And why do they have oil? They have enough oil to light their torches/lamps and to keep

them burning for a while. If oil represents the Holy Spirit, then doesn't this mean they are saved? If it represents having spiritual strength, which seems more reasonable, then doesn't this mean that they represent *believers* who failed to develop enough spiritual resources to remain faithful to the Lord in difficult times?

If the Parable of the Ten Virgins "is about those who are 'close' to the gospel message and yet have not experienced the reality of it, as seen by their lack of preparation" (p. 323), doesn't that make the point of the parable the need to prepare ourselves for eternal salvation by being faithful?

Why are the unfaithful servants called *servants*? Are unbelievers servants of God?

If the Parables of the Talents and of the Minas deal with two saved people and one unsaved person, why are they presented at the same judgment? Believers will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which is 1,000 years *before* the judgment of unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment (cf. 2 Cor 5:9-10; 1 John 2:28; Rev 20:11-15). There won't *be* any unbelievers at the Judgment Seat of Christ!

If the third servant in the Parable of the Minas is unsaved, why is he treated differently from the people who are excluded from the kingdom? After Jesus deals with the third servant, He uses a contrast word, *but*, to refer to the unsaved: "But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want Me to reign over them, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). The third servant doesn't receive this treatment. If he too is unsaved, why not?

If the unfaithful servant "is condemned eternally because of his unfaithfulness to his assignment" (p. 321), doesn't this mean that faithfulness is a condition of eternal salvation? If not, why not? If it *does* mean that, as Pagenkemper clearly suggests, then why doesn't this contradict passages like John 4:10; Rom 4:1-8; Gal 3:6-14; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; and Rev 22:17?

If the basis of judgment for eternal salvation and eternal condemnation includes works, as Pagenkemper indicates in his conclusion, "the basis for this eternal judgment is the individual's works," then why isn't this salvation by works? And, again, how is this to be harmonized with the many verses which say unequivocally that salvation is *not of works* and that it is the gift of God?

If, as Pagenkemper suggests, we should evaluate our works to see if we are truly justified before God ("Am I reflecting my reception of the message?" [p. 328]), then wouldn't this lead me to think that my

justification depended upon my faithfulness? And wouldn't it be impossible to be sure that I was truly saved because my works are imperfect?

These and questions like these are ones which led me away from the views advanced by Pagenkemper. In my opinion, the Gospel and the Scriptures collapse under that way of thinking. The only way to maintain the purity of the Gospel and the inerrancy of Scripture is to realize that God *not only* rejects unbelievers, He also rejects *unfaithful believers*. Of course, this latter rejection is not absolute. It is a rejection in relation to reward, not in relation to kingdom entrance. And, it is a temporary rejection, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, not an ongoing rejection.

I urge well-grounded believers to read this article. It would make an excellent resource for a Bible study group, a church-leader study group, a Bible college or seminary class discussion, etc. While I disagree with the author, I'm glad he has openly stated his views and given us a chance to evaluate them.

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"The Filling of the Holy Spirit: Quality of Life," Thomas Ice, *The CTS Journal* (Chafer Theological Seminary), Spring/Summer 1996, pp. 9-11.

According to some Bible teachers, the filling of the Holy Spirit is the single most important element in Christian living. If you are filled with the Spirit, then God is in control of your life and you will live a holy life as long as you stay filled. If filling ceases through willful, unconfessed sin, it can be regained by applying 1 John 1:9 and being filled again.

Ice argues for a different understanding of the filling of the Holy Spirit. He suggests that the Scriptures present two different types of filling of the Holy Spirit and that neither corresponds precisely to the model presented above.

One type of filling, he suggests, is temporary empowerment for special service, most commonly for prophetic utterance. On several occasions in the Book of Acts the apostles were filled with the Spirit in this sense (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 9:17; 13:9). This filling only lasted as long as it was necessary to complete the task that God had given.

The second type of filling, called “normal filling” by Ice, is synonymous with spiritual maturity (Acts 6:3, 5; 7:55; 11:24; 13:52). Ice cites Timothy Crater approvingly in an explanation of this sort of filling: “One does not become full in order to live the victorious life, but one becomes so submitted to and influenced by the Holy Spirit that the extent of the Spirit’s influence over his life may be described by saying [he] ‘is full of the Holy Spirit’” (p. 10).

While we might quibble with Ice as to whether passages like Acts 7:55 and 13:52 refer to spiritual maturity or to temporary enablement, his point is well worth considering.

Some holding this view would suggest that only the second type of filling occurs today. Ice doesn’t clearly indicate where he stands on this point. However, he seems to imply that he agrees with that assessment when he calls the second type of filling “normal filling” and when he says concerning the first type of filling, “Some conclude that, since the fillings produced prophetic utterances that only occurred in the first century, there are no such sovereign fillings by the Holy Spirit today” (p. 9).

However, as Ice himself indicated, that sort of filling was not limited to prophetic utterances. There is nothing in Scripture which would suggest that the Spirit no longer provides temporary enablement for special tasks. I personally have felt on a number of occasions that God gave me special power and boldness in my preaching. While experience can’t prove an interpretation, it should cause us to reconsider. It seems likely that God is still today in the business of giving special enablement on occasion when we witness, preach, teach, suffer hardship, etc. If so, should we not be praying for God to do this for us?

Ice makes very little effort to discuss or refute the view that the filling of the Holy Spirit refers to divine control over one’s life causing obedience and holiness. However, a comment he makes about what he calls “normal filling” suggests a difficulty he has with the traditional view: “It cannot mean absolute control by the Spirit since this would necessitate sinless perfection: a believer would not be able to resist the sovereign work of God. So ‘filling’ does not denote ‘Spirit possession’ as some suggest . . . Even the decision to thwart the control of the Spirit and fall back under the control of the flesh would be impossible if God were 100% in control of the person. Thus, the filling of the Spirit is not total control but rather a progressive and dominant control by the Spirit” (pp. 10-11).

This article has one major weakness: It is too short to deal adequately with this important subject. Ice does a good job of raising the issue and getting the reader thinking. More detail is needed, however, to guide the reader who is unaware of this discussion to the point where he or she can make an informed decision.

I recommend this article. It will cause you to think through this issue. To do this article justice, however, be prepared to read through it several times and to have a Bible handy to look up and study the many verses cited. The article would make an excellent resource for group study.

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A HYMN OF GRACE

FRANCES A. MOSHER

Pianist

Christ Congregation

Dallas, Texas

JESUS, THY BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

Lord, I believe Thy precious blood,
Which, at the mercy seat of God,
Forever doth for sinners plead,
For me, e'en for my soul was shed.

Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
For all a full atonement made.

—Nicolaus L. von Zinzendorf (1700-1760)

Translated by John Wesley (1703-1791)

The lyrics of "Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness" must surely comprise one of the clearest, simplest, and most straightforward poetic expressions of the total efficacy of the Lord Jesus for the salvation of fallen humanity. In each stanza the author proclaims his absolute assurance of being justified before God, not because of any work or merit of his own, but solely because of the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 64:6 states that “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.” How gracious, then, of God the Father to provide us instead with Jesus’ righteousness as “our glorious dress.” Second Corinthians 5:21 assures us that “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

The hymn’s second stanza seems inspired by Rom 8:33-34: “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

The final stanza finds scriptural support in 1 Tim 2:5-6: “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

“Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness” is one of more than 2,000 hymns written by Nicolaus von Zinzendorf.¹ Born at Dresden, Germany, to a noble, wealthy, and highly cultured family, Zinzendorf was educated at Halle and Wittenberg. Influenced both by his pietistic maternal grandmother, and by Francke, a teacher at Halle, “the fundamental ideals of Pietism and a deep interest in foreign missions were inculcated in him.”²

Upon completion of legal studies at Wittenberg, Zinzendorf took a post as Councilor to the Elector of Saxony. While serving in this position, he purchased a large estate and offered it for use as a home for religious refugees.³ The largest refugee group to settle on his estate was the Moravians, believers who traced their roots back to fifteenth-century followers of John Hus. The Moravians’ history was one of frequent persecution and ridicule because of their religious zeal and enthusiasm.⁴ Between 1722 and 1729, about 300 Moravians emigrated to Zinzendorf’s estate, establishing a religious community called Herrnhut.⁵ Zinzendorf himself became a Moravian minister and bishop.⁶

¹Ian Bradley, *The Book of Hymns* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1989), 92.

²Elgin S. Moyer, *Who Was Who in Church History* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 451.

³Ibid.

⁴William Jensen Reynolds, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), 27.

⁵Moyer, *Who Was Who*, 451.

⁶Bradley, *Hymns*, 92.

In 1735, the Herrnhut congregation published its own hymnal, *Das Gesang-Buch der Gemeinde in Herrnhut*.⁷ Of the 999 hymns in the collection, 208 were by Zinzendorf. His hymns “reveal not only pietistic influence but also strong evangelical and missionary zeal. Many of them deal with the suffering and death of Christ and are lyric expressions of personal devotion.”⁸

The real birth-moment of Zinzendorf’s religious life is said to have been simultaneous with his study of “Ecce Homo” in the Düsseldorf Gallery, a wonderful painting of Jesus crowned with thorns. Visiting the gallery one day when a young man, he gazed on the sacred face and read the legend superscribed, “All this I have done for Thee; What doest thou for me?” Ever afterwards his motto was “I have but one passion, and that is He, and only He.”⁹

It is to the praise of God that throughout his life Count Zinzendorf continued to focus not on what he was doing for Christ, but on the sole and complete sufficiency of what Christ had done for him. “Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness” is an outstanding expression of that focus.

No tunes were included in the Herrnhut hymnal, so the original setting or settings for this hymn are uncertain. More recent hymnals have set the lyrics to various tunes, including “Malvern” and “Uxbridge,” both by Lowell Mason,¹⁰ “Germany” by William Gardiner, and “Herr Jesu Christ, Mein’s Lebens Licht,” from a 1625 hymn collection.

⁷Reynolds, *Survey*, 27.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Bradley, *Hymns*, 92.

¹⁰Ibid., 93.

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