THE THREEFOLD MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

By

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Preface

Some time ago two men were discussing the nature of the sun and its function in the solar system. Scientifically one of them was clearly off base, while the other had his conceptual facts as straight as a gun barrel. But something did not seem to add up. The latter was pale as a sheet and looked like death warmed over, while the former was tanned and appeared quite vigorous. What was the palpable difference? The "expert" shunned the great outdoors to be invigorated by the sun like the plague, while the ill-informed one could not get enough of it. No wonder he got the tan and all that this entailed. The message is simple. While the mind matters greatly, it is neither the only nor the final determinant for a powerful and effective life. Church history is awash with examples. There is little doubt that in the Day of Judgment everyone will stand before God with lots of eggs on his face (Jam. 1:21), and undoubtedly will not only be capable clearly to recognize but also fully to detail his flaws (Ps. 40:12). In fact, at that time everyone without exception is liable to contribute to "the great bonfire" of deficient, errant, heterodox or possibly even heretical (?) teachings (1 Cor. 3:13-15). But this does not nullify the fact that some were mightily used by God in spite of their flaws and will receive his astonishing accolade in the Judgment. Quite apparently the presence of power overcomes the flaws. But at the same time where the power recedes, the flaws tend to turn into "killers," whether of organizations, corporations, movements, or causes, as well as of the people who used to run them effectively or pursue them successfully.

Luther's "railing" against James, and therewith, however unintentionally I am sure, against a full-orbed biblical doctrine of sanctification, is a case in point. It is now widely recognized as a fundamental flaw in spite of some of the "nice" things he said about James as well. But it did not hinder the early rapid spread of Lutheranism. Quite the contrary! Eventually, however, when the power evaporated the *one*-sided emphasis upon the legal element in salvation as the so-called "Heart of the Gospel" (justification) at the *systematic* (!) neglect, if not expense of the experiential (regeneration) and the practical (sanctification), caused an undeniable shortfall that clearly had a stultifying effect. Today's Wittenberg is a (Lutheran) ghost town. Incidentally, it is hardly surprising that as a result of this twofold flaw a movement, such as Pietism, arose to fill this double vacuum, even if the latter, in turn, was only partly successful. Candidly, the heart of the Gospel has three chambers, regeneration, justification and sanctification. This is argued from Scripture at length below. So let us never treat one of the chambers as if it is the whole heart. Christianity cannot flourish, in fact, cannot really last, unless this flaw is remedied, just as human beings cannot survive unless they diligently care for all the chambers in their physical heart. Imagine them focusing on one of them only while overlooking, ignoring or even mistreating the others. Enough said!

Early Calvinism provides a second sample. It failed to develop a full-orbed doctrine of regeneration. But it was clearly a powerhouse, and with its *two*-sided emphasis upon the *twofold* grace (*duplex gratia*) of justification *and* sanctification, which was a step up from Lutheranism, the Reformed Faith enjoyed a rapid rise in much of Europe, inclusive of France at the time. However, when the power receded and the notions of "baptismal regeneration" in the (Anglican) UK and "presumptive regeneration" in much of (Reformed) Continental Europe, aggressively moved into the gap, the downgrade was quick in coming and sweeping in its deleterious results. After all, the superstructure of justification and sanctification is bound to crumble rapidly without the foundation of regeneration biblically defined, pursued, embraced, experienced and

promulgated.[1] It is confounding how the Church has been able to miss this in the light of the overwhelming evidence in both the OT and the NT that "The Problem of the Heart is the Heart of the Problem" (See Deut. 5:29; 10:16; 29:4; Ps. 58:2-4; Jer. 4:4; 5:23; 9:26; 11:8; 17:9; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; Rom. 2:29, etc., etc.).[2] The Puritan movement sought to remedy this awful

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[1] Even if in his Commentaries, such as on Ezekiel 11:19, Calvin's exposition and focus upon regeneration are impeccable, still in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, as is universally recognized and as his emphasis upon the *duplex gratia* of justification and sanctification also accommodates, he virtually equates it with progressive sanctification. See **Appendix I** for the impact of Calvin's overall treatment of regeneration (or lack thereof) upon the faith and practice of the Reformed Church in general until the very "present," starting with its formulation and adoption of the early Reformation Creeds, and still strongly in evidence in contemporary publications. Frankly, Calvin's *duplex gratia* notion (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (F. L. Battles, tr. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), III, xi, 1; see also III, iii, 9; IV, xv, 5, 6, 9; IV, xvi, 2, 3, 5, 10) has managed not only to ripple through Reformed Doctrine doctrine and life, but also to dominate them, from the 15th Century *Belgic Confession of Faith*, Ch. 24, onward to the present Century. See for the most recent evidence, Dr. J. H. C. Dee, ed., *Een Schrift-geleerde aan het Woord: Een keuze uit the preken van Prof. Dr. K. Schilder* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre B.V, 1996), 74-75, 307; Samuel E. Waldron, *Faith, Obedience and Justification* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2006), 58; Thomas Wenger, "The New Perspective on Calvin: Responding to Recent Calvin Interpretations" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, June 2007, Volume 50, No. 2, June, 2007), 322-323; Peter Lillback, "Calvin's Development of the Doctrine of Forensic Justification: Calvin and the Early Lutherans on the Relationship of Justification and Renewal," in K. Scott Oliphint, *Justified in Christ* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor/Christian Focus Publications, Ltd, 2007), 65; Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Justification and Union with Christ," in David Hall and Peter A. Lillback, *Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes* (P&R Publishing: Phillipsburg, 2008), 252ff; M. A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology* (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2008; see also Marcus Johnson, "New or Nuanced Perspective on Calvin," in *Journal of the Theological Society* (Volume 51, No. 3: September 2008), 543ff, esp. 553ff; and Thomas L. Wenger, "Theological Spectacles and a Paradigm of Centrality," in *Journal of the Theological Society* (Volume 51, No. 3: September 2008), 559ff, esp. 564ff, 568ff). It is more than noteworthy that in Richard B. Gaffin, *By Faith, Not By Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation* (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2006) Paul's persistent and pervasive emphasis upon the indispensable reality of "regeneration" does not even receive an honorable mention. In "the order of instruction" Paul introduces it in a pivotal place in the light of its crucial function (Rom. 6:1ff) between justification (Rom. 3:21ff) and sanctification (Rom. 6:12ff). In his "order of salvation" it serves an equally pivotal function as he places it (2 Cor. 5:14-17; Phil. 3:2-3) prior to justification (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Phil. 3:4-9) and sanctification (2 Cor. 6:1-7:1; Phil. 3:10-14). Frankly, "overlooking" and failing to identify one of the three major building blocks in Paul's *ordo salutis* in a volume precisely on that topic is baffling. It appears to be indicative of the widespread and determinative impact of the legacy of Calvin regarding the *duplex* nature of the *gratia Dei* upon the Reformed Tradition. It also goes to show how easy it is to be impressed by great men of God, whose shoelaces we are admittedly not worthy even to touch, so as to miss their surprising as well as crucial "oversights," which, definitely in the long run, can end up doing untold damage to Christ's Church, when left un-checked and un-remedied. An awesome display of Holy Spirit power can and will neutralize many a flaw. But when the power recedes, the flaws invariably turn out to be "killers."

[2] Already a quick look at the word "heart" in any Concordance will make this soon, if not instantaneously, crystal clear. It has been aptly called the "mission control center" of man by George J. Zemek, *A Biblical Theology of the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace* (Little Rock: B.T.D.S.G, 2002), 16-18, 31-33. According to his assessment, in the OT the heart is depicted as "the king of anthropological terms," as "man's mission control center," "the seat of man's rational functions," of his "ethical judgment," his "spiritual responsibility," his "planning and volition," his "emotional function," and "the function of desire and longing" (16-18). In the NT it is portrayed as "the center of the inner life of man and the source or seat of all the forces and functions of the soul and the spirit," the residence of "feelings and emotions, desires and passions," "the seat of understanding, the source of thought and reflection," "the seat of the will," and "the source of resolves." In short, in both OT and NT the heart stands for "the center of the human personality," "the thinking, feeling, and willing ego of man" in contrast to man's "external appearance." As such it is the seat of doubt, hardness, deceit and corruption before conversion (Jer. 17:9), as well as of faith, obedience and endurance (only) after God opens it (Acts 16:14) and illumines it (2 Cor. 4:6). It is difficult biblically to quarrel with this composite picture of the heart. Therefore to designate it as man's "mission control center" is no exaggeration! Further, to identify human thinking, willing and feeling as the "internal forces and functions" of the

shortfall, but was only temporarily successful in the UK and spottily successful in continental Europe. Just as Wittenberg, today's Geneva is a (Calvinistic) ghost town, while mega-cities where at one time Christianity was thriving, such as London, Edinburgh, and Amsterdam, have quickly caught up or are not far behind Geneva.

Similarly, a fully committed Pentecostal wondered out loud why Pentecostalism has made such enormous strides in spite of the fallacious stress upon "speaking in tongues" as the sole evidence of the Baptism with the Spirit. Quite a refreshing admission! But what was his solution? "The movement displayed such power that it successfully, even if not universally, circumvented the influence of a fundamental flaw." Great insight!

Clearly, a conceptual determination of an issue or situation, whether proper or improper, rarely, if ever, has the final word! Even "perfect" theology is no "cure-all." It is possible to be as straight ("biblically orthodox") as a gun barrel but nevertheless to be without ("Holy Spirit") power and therefore just as empty! At the same time there may be a legitimate display of ("Holy Spirit") power, but at the end of a "gun" that has its flaws, and can hardly be endorsed as totally "straight." All this means that at times and especially in the face of God's empowering historical presence we can, if not must, be gratefully mild in our judgment in spite of palpable shortcomings or errors, especially when we recognize that all of us are flawed and will have the proverbial eggs on our faces in the Judgment. At the same time we should always and by all means be utterly meticulous in raising our compassionate voice against even the slightest of shortcomings or errors, since sooner or later every deficient or errant chicken will come home to roost. This sets the complementary tone of my inquiry into the Threefold Ministry of the Church. It seeks not only to be mild in judgment about flaws in greatly graced and powerful men of God, but also meticulous in analysis and assessment of all potential pitfalls, even in the most graced and the most powerful! Both the failure to be thankful for all the accomplishments of the past and the error of turning a blind eye to the shortcomings of that same past are and must be displeasing to our God and will do a disservice to the Church. The same, of course, applies to the present. To be mild and to be meticulous do and should go hand in hand, if not hand in glove. All this comes into proper play as long we remember, both for ourselves and for others, the "winged word" of A. W. Pink that "the *best* (!) of man is *man* (!) at best," and that everyone without exception will make an all too generous contribution to the great eschatological bonfire! This perennial reminder and equally perennial remembrance is mandatory for anyone who wishes to opt for "the best of both worlds," that is, to be not only *semper suaviter in modo* (2 Tim. 2:25a), but also *semper fortiter in re* (2 Tim. 2:24b, 25b, 26).

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heart is equally on the money. Finally, to round this off Zemek could have classified speaking and acting as its external conduct! At any rate, since in fallen man the heart is "desperately" wicked (Jer. 17:9) from conception, and is "graphically" likened to a "cobra" (Ps. 58:2-4), it stands in "desperate" and "graphic" need of a heart transplant (Ezek. 36:26), which is the sum and substance of regeneration. Human thinking, willing and feeling should never be equated with the heart. They are its "internal functions," no more and no less. Before the heart transplant, these are all wicked from the core and to the core (Gen. 6:5) from the very conception of life and onward. All this, of course, explains the Flood in full! Even "infants," conceived a nano-second prior to it, were drowned as full co-rebelling "participants" in Adam's fall (Rom. 5:12-14; see also Ps. 51:5), together with their parents (Rom. 3:10-18). The Flood cannot be understood apart from the "perfection" of the utter holiness of God on the one hand (See also Rev. 16:5), and the reality of the exceeding sinfulness of all of mankind on the other. At any rate, following the heart transplant, everything in man, inclusive of human thinking, willing and feeling, needs to be sanitized in sanctification. See for this regrettably rather rare insight even in Reformed circles also and specifically, Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 58-59. In Section III, 3, with its focus on Biblical Evangelism, these "themes" return with a vengeance.

I. The Six-fold Reality-Check for the Church: The Backdrop of its Threefold Ministry

Introduction

This volume deals with the Threefold Ministry of the Church and contains a heart-felt, and hopefully heart-opening plea for the latter to function biblically and effectively to the glory of God the Father as, after all, *his* Temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17), to the glory of God the Son as, after all, *his* Body (Eph. 4:4), and to the glory of God the Holy Spirit as, after all, *his* Workshop (Acts 2:42-47). However, it is predicated upon several reality-checks. The first one is historical in nature, the second one ecclesiological, the third one theological, the fourth one soteriological, the fifth one practical, and the sixth one eschatological. All six of them hopefully will have a rich pay-off in the treatment of our topic.

1. The Historical Reality-Check

The first or historical reality-check is arguably the pivotal one among the six. If the assessment of this reality is recognized, burns itself into the heart of all believers (Lk. 24:32), especially the Ecclesiastical Leadership, and is openly embraced and stipulated by them as accurate and compelling, it will also have such a profound impact of co-dependency upon you, the reader, experiencing the weight of corporate responsibility and shame, that a consensus in the remaining five can for the most part be anticipated as well. While the sixth reality-check may encounter some initial reluctance in principle, in practice its main thrust could conceivably, if not arguably, meet with a solid measure of acceptance as well. So, here it goes!

It does not take rocket science to recognize that the Christian Church, even if it thankfully continues to win individual "skirmishes," and at times even "battles" in both the making and the training of disciples (Mt. 28:19-20), rather decisively lost the spiritual war in the Middle East as well as in Europe, and is fast losing this war in the USA. Presently Idolatrous Islam is ruling the roost in the Middle East, Atheistic Secularism in Europe and an increasingly Godless Humanism in the USA. The fierce and relentless promotion of the homosexual agenda by its highest authorities both "at home" and "abroad" is an unmistakable case in point. In the Middle East the proclamation of the Gospel could well meet with violence and result in death. In Europe it routinely meets with a mocking disdain for "dinosaurs" that are fast dying out. In the USA one can expect more or less politely to be sidestepped, cold-shouldered or marginalized. Candidly, in recent years this is done more and more aggressively. Frankly, we should be greatly moved and grieved about what happened to these at one time hotbeds of Christianity, recognizing that its adherents in these geographical locations now must either fear for their lives (Middle East), for their legitimate place in society (Europe), or for their unimpeded functioning (USA). The problem is that in the grand scheme of things hardly anyone seems to be *properly* heart-broken about this course of events. Of course, every Christian should be such, indeed, must be such, since in all of this the name of our God is grievously blasphemed (See Ezek. 36:20-23) and countless millions, if not billions are deprived of the Gospel. Lamentably no one even appears to be alarmed enough to ask the question why this disastrous turn of events is repeated again and again, and even seems historically inevitable. In fact, Christianity hardly gives it any thought

whatsoever from Christian Institutions of Higher Learning, such as Universities, Colleges, and especially Seminaries, to pulpit to pew on down. To be sure, every few decades a more or less lengthy but still localized and therefore limited lament about "the present malaise" is published, which at times is long in analysis and assessment, but usually too short and too general, if not too oversimplified or too reductionist, in its proffered solutions.[3] At best it is applauded by a relative few and that for a time only. Soon it is "paralyzed and paralyzing business as usual" again, until the next wake-up call in a situation, which has deteriorated even further, simply sees this scenario repeat itself. More often than not, however, laments, often too few and too far between, are ignored, whether with a reference to the glorious once and for all decisive victory secured by Christ in his crucifixion and resurrection, to individual skirmishes or battles that at times against extreme odds are clearly won, or to the sovereign providence of God that "after all" controls everything that comes to pass. The regrettable fact is that in each of these instances we may well encounter, however unconsciously and unintentionally, a presumptuous, self-exonerating, and self-destructive falsehood behind a glorious truth, provided that the diagnosis of Jesus in these kinds of circumstances means anything. After all, it should not go unnoticed that he attributes spiritual downgrades squarely to the lamentable "State of the Church," and in that context does not put his own universal victory (Rev. 1:5), or occasional ecclesiastical victories (Rev. 3:8), or God's providential victories (Rev. 19:6-8) in the equation to smooth out or pacify situations and so to lull them to spiritual sluggishness, slumber, or even sleep. Neither should we! Rather he insists on repentance with a vengeance. So should we! Regrettably, if Revelation 2-3 is any indication, it may take no more than a few decades for once thriving Churches to incur the fierce judgment of God (1 Pet. 4:17) by becoming "loveless" (Rev. 2:4-5), "lifeless" (Rev. 3:1), "listless" (Rev. 3:16), or anything similar, and as a result at first fundamentally and soon practically forfeit the right to exist. This clearly is both a breathtaking and humbling fact. It is even more astounding and sobering that even the most severe and fully deserved judgments (Rev. 16:6) meted out by a holy God (Rev. 15:4; 16:5) apparently do not and cannot result in repentance (Rev. 16:9, 11). It must be a gift of God's sovereign grace (Acts 11:19; 2 Tim. 2:25), which must make us cry out with Jeremiah, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved. Turn me, O Lord, grant me repentance, O Lord, and I will be turned … For you are my (hope and my) praise" (Jer. 17:14).

Candidly, I lost you, the reader, before I even make a start, if you like many (most?) folks would be inclined to wave all this off as excessive, irrelevant, depressing or annoying. But be assured that in doing such you ignore men like Daniel (Dan. 9:1ff) and Nehemiah (Neh. 1:1ff) in the OT (or women such as Anna in the NT; Luk. 2:37), who *in identical circumstances* experienced the unfathomable darkness that first surrounded and eventually invaded them as *an intolerable burden*. As a result they breathtakingly recognized and confessed their "*mea culpa, mea magna, mea maxima culpa*" before God in unceasing prayer that lasted hours (Dan. 9:2-3,

[3] Already in the 1940's a diagnostic lament decried "the defection of American Culture from a vital Christianity," alerted its readers to the fact that "Christianity again faces the apostolic task of seeking to transform an environment that is quite unilaterally hostile," and warned that the notion "that evangelicalism should not voice its conviction in a non-evangelical environment is simply to rob it of its missionary vision" (Carl. F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), 10, 69, 81). Frankly, we are reminded again and again that in the West we reside in a Culture that is Post-Christian, if not in a Cultural Environment, where Christianity is dying a slow but certain death. See also **Appendix II** for a detailed analysis and assessment of a virtual five-volume "lament" from the hand of David Wells about our Western Christian heritage. I tend to agree with his own eventual "concession" that he is much stronger and more eloquent in developing and arguing his properly "sobering" diagnosis than in prescribing and specifying or itemizing the much-needed cure.

21), in fact, days (Neh. 1:4) or possibly even decades (Lk. 2:36-37). If this is not a persuasive argument, hopefully God's own words will be conclusive. He declares to be angry even with the prayers of his own people in a situation in which once thriving circumstances had disastrously and culpably deteriorated (Ps. 80:4ff). Apparently only the hunger for and the presence of Revival can remedy this (Ps. 80:18)![4] The similarity with today's situation in the Middle East, Europe and the USA is and should be palpable. In each continent the once "blossoming vine" that covered lots and lots of "real estate" was ravaged and is no more (Ps. 80:5-13). It is at best a wishful memory in the (often euphoric) speeches or writings of a few, who moreover hardly ever see the heavy hand of God in its virtual extermination (Ps. 80:4-6), and even less frequently utter or call for a "tortured cry" for its "restoration" (Ps. 80:3, 7, 19). In fact, they usually leave hopefully elated audiences or readers behind who are oblivious about their own historical and often personal situation. Elated about a rich past! But oblivious of an anemic present! I know … because I happened to be one of them. We may well wonder how those who "did not soil their garments" in a "lifeless" Church (Rev. 2:4) assessed their situation and how they responded to the heart-rending "barrenness" around them. We know how such folks responded at more recent

[4] So much for folks who are critical of Revival times to the point of rejecting them as too excessively emotional, too individualistic, etc., etc., and therefore identify them as a threat to the proper development of the Church! Candidly, they tend to throw out the baby with a near exclusive focus upon admittedly some questionable bath water, which of course accompanies every movement, inclusive of the mightiest movements of God. These critics routinely seek to offset the flaws with solutions that do have a solid biblical base, but with such a narrow, if not truncated scope that they do not remedy the situations that gave rise to the desperately need for Revival times in the first place. The bottom line is that they, unintentionally I am sure (?), end up cutting their nose to spite their face, often either oblivious of the fact that the malaise continues or somehow managing to explain away what should be recognized as an unmistakable downgrade! This is easily verified and documented as soon as it is recognized that Revival times, ever since Acts 1-12, are characterized by twelve mighty marks: the experiential and tangible presence of Divine Life (an inexhaustible and pulsating well of living water from Jesus through the Holy Spirit; John 7:37-39), evidencing itself in mighty prayer, mighty preaching, mighty conversions (always from 10 to 20 million conversions in a Century), mighty assemblies, mighty holiness, mighty generosity, mighty grass roots evangelism, mighty impact upon society, under mighty leaders, in mighty combat characterized by a mighty pursuit of the Grand Command of "making and training of disciples" (Mt. 28:19-20). These twelve Revival features, taken, as I stated, from Acts 1-12, constitute the benchmark, the standard, the pattern, by which every epoch in Church history will be measured. After all, they are promised and mandated as the heart and core of the New Covenant. In the light of this it seems puny (and self-defeating) to fault and condemn Revival times for its (regrettably) undeniable but peripheral excesses in the midst of a stagnant and basically impotent Church life that (even more regrettably) is usually not recognized as such. See also Keller, *Center Church*, 54ff, for a perceptive and wholesome discussion of the concept, the history, the beauty and the critics of Revival times. He properly seeks to redefine the concept of Biblical Revival, acknowledges historical excesses, but endorses the essential beauty of such times, and admonishes its critics not to throw out the biblical baby with the all too human bathwater. In short, he wishes the return of these times, wherever absent, their evident presence, and their continuation as a biblical promise, a biblical mandate and a biblical necessity. I cannot agree more! "Revival can be widespread, affecting a whole region or country, or more narrow in scope, influencing just one congregation or even just a part of one … Revival is not a historical curiosity. It is a consistent pattern of how the Holy Spirit works in a community to arrest and counteract the default mode of the human heart. It is surely relevant to ministry in twenty-first-century global cultures, as it is relevant in every culture … Many of today's critics deny the basic premises of revival. They reject the idea that we should call people to conversion if they are in the church … (as if) once baptized … they are Christians by definition, regardless of personal experience … The basic insights and practices of gospel renewal ministry are right for two reasons: they fit our times, and they center on the heart in a biblical way … Revivalist ministry emphasizes conversion and spiritual renewal, not only for those outside the church, but also for those *inside* the church. Some need to be converted from clear unbelief … others need to see, to their surprise that they've never been converted; still others need to see their spiritual stagnation" (55, 57, 59). For more details, see **Section III, 2**, which deals with the Glory of Biblical Revival, as well as Footnote 5.

occasions. It drove them to God in pulsating Revival Prayer and to men in pulsating Revival Preaching.[5] At the same time we also know how "others" responded (Read: failed to respond) in the face of gross idolatry and immorality (Rev. 2:14-15, 20). It proved the well-known saying to be true that "good people" only need to do "nothing" for disaster to strike, and to strike hard. In the Revelation context Jesus himself has to come personally to the rescue in order to sanitize his Church (Rev. 2:16, 22-23). It seems that history repeats itself again and again *ad nauseam*, and that the personal intervention of our Lord always is and always will remain necessary. Incidentally, because historically this seems to happen so rarely on a massive scale, folks have come to believe, led by their theological leadership that an unpredictable "serendipity" is God's normal procedure. So we better learn to live with this! However, this quietist and basically self-exonerating assessment flies in the face of the Revelation 2-3 "mosaic." This mosaic was already in evidence in the OT in the days of Judge Deborah. Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun and Issachar put their very lives on the line in the war against Hazor. Reuben took its merry time, deep in contemplative thought to consider its course of action until it was too late. Gilead, Dan and Asher simply decided to stay home. If history is any indication, both of the latter two responses may well be the usual par for the course. But to top it all off the inhabitants of Meroz were "thoroughly cursed, because they did not come to the help of the Lord" (Judg. 5:12-23). In Nehemiah's days a similar scenario was in evidence. He appointed his good brother Hanani as co-mayor of Jerusalem during his decade long absence, because he "was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many" (Neh. 7:2). But upon his return the failure to pay the tithes, the refusal to keep the Sabbath, and the practice to marry unbelievers, all of which Nehemiah had remedied (Neh. 10:28-39) was once again as rampant as ever (Neh. 13:1-30). The warning that

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[5] See Eifion Evans, *When He Comes* (London: Evangelical Press, 1967). This is a remarkable volume which displays the "beauty and loveliness" of Revival times (28). First, it pictures, the backdrop of revivals, namely, times of prevailing apathy and indifference, coupled with spiritual bankruptcy and stagnation, even in the midst of orthodoxy, times of lukewarmness and aridity, coupled with the neglect of the means of grace and a compromise with the world, symptomatic of almost an apostate Church (26), and times that lacked unreserved consecration, and were marked by unwillingness on the part of the churches to labor directly for the salvation of souls (30), often governed by sleepy watchmen as well as cold and suspicious officials with regards to even the idea of revival (70). Second, it also pictures the characteristics of revival times. The greatest innovation took place in the spirit of the preacher (111). God's spokesmen shed their drowsiness (52), and became men of vision, conviction, power and pathos (43, 47, 49), and of earnest, diligent, fervent prayer (37, 40). *They saw no one but God* (90). As a result the preaching style changed. Instead of a theoretical, oratorical, prosaic, formal, and lifeless presentation of the truth that lacked urgency and sincerity, the preaching became personal, free, earnest, close, direct, moving men to repentance and faith. Furthermore, it was no longer apologetic in nature, but a living, dogmatic, authoritative, and successful proclamation of the truth, coupled with powerful appeals to all age groups to hate sin, to love holiness and to shun specific ills, such as drunkenness and profanity (67, 81, 111, 113, 115, 118, 119.120; Jer. 14:9). In short, their love for God and the neighbor was more pervasive, their godliness more prominent, their perseverance more permanent, their prayers were more pressing, their preaching more powerful, their singing more potent, and their zeal for conversions more passionate (95). In the process they avoided both extremes, either leaning too heavily upon man or otherwise leaving the work wholly to God (31). Finally, it challenged all objections to revivals as false and unfounded. They were not just exercises of empty excitement with former sinful habits soon to reoccur. Upon examination most conversions proved to be permanent, and adorned by healthy and vigorous growth (91, 110). The following testimony sums it all up, "I was in College at the time studying great matters, but never having realized them in my experience as living truth. I knew Butler's arguments for a future state, and Paley's *Evidences of Christianity.* I felt their force of the arguments. But there came two plain men from Cardiganshire to Bala, and preached Jesus Christ simply and unaffectedly, without much culture or eloquence. But they had more … no one needed Butler's arguments or Paley's *Evidences*. The change that I experienced was ample evidence to me of the divinity of Christianity. Before I was a mass of damnation, and in the service I became a new creature" (106)!

pronounces a curse upon anyone who "does the work of God negligently," or "with slackness" (Jer. 48:10) is a perennial one, equally applicable to the OT and the NT Church. After all, also in New Covenant times with its Revival salvation, folks can return to folly in a hurry (Ps. 85:8). Both Isaiah and James weigh in on this. Why would we and how could we expect that "God does not take rest to establish the Church as the praise of the earth," if we take our merry time (Is. 62:6)? According to Isaiah, "watchmen do not sleep" (Is. 62:6)! And why would we and how could we expect for God to turn to us, if we refuse to turn to him? James' specifications in this context are crystal clear, and so are an unmistakable case in point, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourself therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. *Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.* Cleanse your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will exalt you" (Jam. 4:6-10). This "heavy" summons is addressed to the total NT Christian Church and everybody in it without exception throughout its history. In fact, and rather incredibly, it is addressed *already* to the early, in fact, the earliest Church, the infant Christian Church that was barely a decade or two old. This means that everybody throughout Church history better perpetually take careful notice of James' summons. For good measure a decade or so later Peter chimes in as well with his solemn and sobering warning that "judgment starts at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17). All this should be a spur for all of us in the midst of two crumbled "continental" societies (Asia Minor, Europe), and one crumbling one (North America), to pay close, humble and contrite attention (Is. 57:15a) to what Scripture has to say about the threefold ministry of the Church as the only remedy that can prevent or cure a disastrous situation. To repeat the injunction that Scripture itself repeatedly utters, we better for our life's sake "incessantly, humbly, and contritely tremble at God's Word" (Is. 66:2, 5) with once again its ever present message that quite apparently "the judgment of God (!)" invariably hovers over the "Household of God (!!)," that is, over "us (!!!)" and so ever stands at the doorsteps of the Church throughout its history (1 Pet. 4:17). "Our God is (and remains) a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). Jesus (Rev. 2-3), James (Jam. 4), Peter (1 Pet. 4) and Hebrews (Heb. 12) all draw one line and stand shoulder to shoulder in this. If Moses would be around, he would fully, quickly and emphatically concur. One seemingly simple "impulsive" act on his part constituted such a violation of the holiness of God that it drew a quick, heavy, and irreversible judgment (Num. 20:10-13; Dt. 3:23-27). The executed Uzzah would concur even more emphatically (2 Sam. 6:5-7; 2 Chron. 13:5-10). David at first took his side. But he repented in a hurry and made no bones about this when the truth of God's Word dawned on him (2 Sam. 6:8-15; 2 Chron. 13:11-13; 15:1-15). And how about Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1ff)? Once again, "Enough Said!" Indeed, "our God is (and remains) a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). What is the bottom line? Listening to Jesus, while sitting at the feet, "as the only thing needful" (Lk. 10:38-42) and subsequently to act upon his Word decidedly and decisively in radical and utter obedience is the only way to "revive our spirits and our hearts" individually (Is. 57:15b) and our Churches corporately (Hab. 3:2), which thankfully results in "joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8; see also Is. 66:10-12; John 15:11). In a word, let us not be deceived by the siren song of "Revival" as merely a "sovereign," rare, unpredictable, serendipitous event, however much it may be the heart-felt object of our desires or prayers. Of course, and let it never be forgotten, "Revival" ever was, ever is, and ever will be a sovereign grace of God. But may the glory of the 100% God never obscure the indispensable nature of the 100% man. To obscure the latter behind the former, however well-intentioned, is to have a glorious truth spawn a deadly falsehood. The

chickens of the sins of omission ever lay the eggs of the sins of commission. Woe, when they hatch, and sooner or later they will. Remember David! At the time kings routinely go to war, he decided to stay home ("omission"). A staircase became his undoing ("commission"). He ended up as a broken man in a broken home in a broken country ("woe") (2 Sam. 11:1-22:26!). The sizzling and electrifying pulsation of the victorious and Kingdom advancing first half of his life "under the good hand of God" came to an abrupt end, chronicled in so many awesome Psalms, fizzled into a depressed , depressing and wearisome existence "under the heavy hand of God," marked by seemingly a very few Psalms only, other than Psalms of repentance. There was not much else "to write home about. Even if in this all David thankfully remains a "man after God's heart" ( ), this still does and continue to spell "heartbreak!" One must be blind not to see this pattern repeated again and again in the history of the Church with its frequently tarnished and tragic history of "Revival."

I cannot sufficiently underscore the significance and relevance of the ominous nature of the "historical reality" with its repeated down turns throughout the centuries. Either Idolatrous Islam (Middle East) or Atheistic Secularism (Europe) or Godless Humanism (USA) proves to be stronger than Jesus who (supposedly) has all the authority in heaven or on earth. Or the downgrades on all three Continents are a judgment imposed by that same Jesus as the "Extraordinary Strategist" (Is. 9:6c, perceptive translation, NET Bible). There is no other alternative. Of course, if Scripture can be believed, which it must, we face "judgment" across the threefold board, even if those "who have never spoiled their garments" (Rev. 3:4) are exempt. May this burn itself into the heart of every Christian, with all that this entails! Frankly, to deny or simply to ignore it is to put one's head in the sand, consequently to be "at ease in Zion," and subsequently in "blissful ignorance" to continue with "business as usual." And that is deadly, whether sooner or later. Once again, Church history is there to demonstrate it. "Ichabod" seems to be written over too many portals too many times. So, the Church and all its members better live *and* act constantly "at 'the edge of despair' in 'joyful confidence'" (See for "a buoyant hope" in "a wretched saint" both Rom. 7:24a and 24b). Separate the two, and the former is bound to turn into hopelessness and the latter into presumption. To fall victim to either one is to self-destruct. But to embrace both simultaneously is to prosper. By all means, compare for the simultaneity of this twosome, the seemingly perennial experience of David during the first part of his life, as laid out in so many of his Psalms (Ps. 22:6-18 and 22-31; 40:7-11 and 12). His life at that time resembles a double-edged sword. "Joyous Victory in and through 'Impossible' Battles!" Compare also Paul and his analogous experience of perennial grief (Rom. 9:2) and equally perennial joy (Phil. 1:4; 3:4). This type of simultaneity resembles a piston in an engine. The faster it goes up and down, down and up, the more headway the vehicle makes. So let the one never be (too) far away from the other! This will make the Church move with ever greater speed and effectiveness. After so many decades or even centuries of indolent marching on the spot at best it has a lot of catching up to do! At any rate, it is cause for great gratitude to recognize that the "fortunes" of even an apparently moribund Church can change quickly and dramatically. When it, as in Revival times, recognizes and displays its "glory," functions the way it should, and embraces the biblical blueprint for victory with all that this entails, it will demonstrate that "the gates of hell cannot prevail against it" (Mt. 18:16). This, then, is the subject of the next section.

2. The Ecclesiological Reality-Check

The next and close second reality-check is ecclesiological. This quickly follows the first one in importance. To put it bluntly, the only reason why God tolerates the present world and allows it to continue is to bring the Church, the Bride of Christ, into existence. The world does *not* have an independent purpose, whether personally "utopian," corporately "utopian," or otherwise. This may sound counter-intuitive in the light of the enormous amount of activities that are incessantly going on in myriads of settings and areas. "Hope seems to spring eternal." But it is nevertheless biblical and true.

Of course, unbelief denies it to be true, and incessantly, and often feverishly, seeks to make the world "a good," "a better," or "the best possible place" (1) in millions of ways, whether individually or corporately, (2) for millions of reasons, such as all kinds of personal accomplishments or all types of self-gratification, and more broadly, all kinds of societal safeguards or all types of comfort zones, (3) in millions of areas, such as healthcare, immunizations, human sexuality, the economy, gross national product, business climate, government, minerals, agriculture, street lights, global warming, prisons, defense, peace keeping, aircraft carriers, space crafts, planet exploration, heavy equipment, roads, computers, tablets, cell phones, cameras, travel, vehicles, airplanes, hotels, food stuffs, beverages, federal and state parks, electronic cigarettes (!), luxury items, retirement, not to talk about the fights against child abuse, obesity, drunk driving, etc., etc., etc., and (4) for billions of people, the youth, the aged, women, men, babies, teenagers, the middle class, the upper class, minorities, third world folks, the disabled, drop-outs, etc., etc., etc. In the process it more or less loudly trumpets every possible success story, and endeavors to overcome every shortfall or failure. The world is a challenging, exciting, beckoning and often attractive place in which to live and to flourish in a million places, and this in a world in which disasters, suffering, death, corruption, crime, violence, warfare, murder, defilement, discord, break-ups, despair, suicide, etc., etc., etc., are equally rampant, at times overwhelmingly so! But, once again, "hope seems to spring eternal," and never ceases to chase "Causes, Objectives, Purposes, or Opportunities Galore," regardless the ideological impetus or political system, whether it "siphons off" resources, as in socialistic capitalism, or claims to "trickle down," as in individualistic capitalism. This is the case, even if every kind, stripe or color of hope thus far has resulted in a "Sisyphus" type of labor, and so has proven to be totally empty, and therefore basically unrealistic and ultimately delusional. After all, "empires" come and "empires" go, whether gigantic, large, medium size, small or miniscule. They all end with "death" of whatever stripe, kind or color. All this results from three biblical realities and therefore stands to eminent reason, all rational, volitional or emotional protestations to the contrary!

The first reality is that the Cultural or Dominion Mandate determines God's definite blueprint for this present world. He does not even allow the Fall into sin to derail this. Mankind *must* cultivate creation. It has no choice. This is part and parcel of the Creation Order objectively disclosed in an explicit Divine Command (Gen. 1:26), which is immediately underscored (Gen. 1:28), once emphatically repeated at a pivotal time, in spite of *recent* protestations (with a fallacious reference to Gen. 9:1-2), routinely highlighted (Ps. 8:6-8), and subjectively wired into the Human Constitution. To refuse to labor is to rebel, to forfeit food and therefore to die. In short, man is doomed (Read: damned) when he doesn't labor in obedience to the Dominion Mandate. The latter is inviolable by Divine Fiat! Even after the Fall mankind does and must continue to push and roll what from that moment onward became its tiresome "Sisyphus"

boulder up the mountain toward its summit in every area and in every aspect of its existence, but only to fail every time. When victory seems to be in its grasp, is poised to be signed, sealed and delivered, or appears to have arrived for good, the boulder comes down, and all too frequently crashes down in a hurry for the process to start all over again. Hence the myriads of pursuits from creating business empires to erecting political power houses to producing philosophical edifices, and to everything below, above, and in between them, all ending up as castles in the sand sooner or later to be swept away by flood tides of whatever sort, whether of decay or death. But one thing is certain. Mankind has no choice. It does and must take dominion! God's original blueprint stands. It does not change one nano-inch. Not in a nano-situation! Not for a nano-moment! Any and all types of laziness stand roundly condemned (Prov. 6:6-11). No work? No upkeep! No future! Even the ever repeated and essentially idolatrous mantra, "It is the economy, stupid," willy-nilly, but tellingly, testifies to this! Economic pursuit, whether proper or perverse, is the driving force behind any and all human action. At its root lies an objectively promulgated Mandate and a subjectively built-in Necessity.[6]

The second reality is that the Fall had disastrous consequences. Creation did not only turn hostile with its innumerable and ubiquitous "thorns and thistles" (Gen. 3:18a), inclusive of its horrendous natural calamities and the atrocious violence in the animal world. Recent science suggests that even terrestrial vegetation appears to communicate that it "suffers" by releasing chemicals as a "warning" when it is violated. If this is correct, the fresh and pleasant smell that results from "cutting the grass" may mean more than what "meets the nose." Nor did it just turn into a house divided against itself with its innumerable "hatreds and disastrous wars," once again inclusive of the savage animal world. No, in addition God hammered this world with a life sentence of "futility" without a possibility of parole, and for good measure hit its rebellious residents with his utterly righteous judgments, however devastating (Rev. 16:4), epitomizing in physical death at the end, only to be topped by a possible eternal punishment (Rev. 14:9-11; 20:15). In this scenario mankind is doomed if it does not labor, but is equally doomed (Read: damned) if it does. In short, labor is an inviolable necessity as well as an utterly futile undertaking, simultaneously an inescapable "must" and a veritable "impossibility." This explains its "Sisyphus" trademark! "Empires" come and "empires" go, whether personal, corporate, or any other type.

The third reality is that mankind refuses to acknowledge this and boldly moves to build a brave new world again and again, starting with Cain and his offspring, in their efforts to put big cities, big farming, big industry, big music and big beauty on the map (Gen. 4:17-22)! But ultimately God did not, does not, and will not allow this to succeed. The Flood put the handwriting on the wall in unmistakable principle (Gen. 6:5-7). Everyone as well as everything is wiped out, culture builders together with their mandated culture products. Noah must have been the first one to experience what "the power of water can do." Upon leaving the ark he

[6] The notion that according to Genesis 9:1ff the Noahic Covenant "abruptly" terminates the cultural "Dominion Mandate" can hardly be called responsible exegesis. To be sure, the command to "take dominion" is not repeated *verbatim*. But what else would we expect Noah to do. "Twiddling his thumbs?" Of course, not! He simply took off, be it from scratch, where he and all mankind had left off! He immediately began to rebuild! How else can we explain the construction project that reestablished a city, with undoubtedly all the cultural expressions in place that originated with Lamech and his family, that aimed in a big way toward "the tower of Babel," and that by God's dispersing intervention exploded throughout the earth (Gen. 11:1-9)? See for further details, **Appendix IV**. A similar verdict of questionable exegesis, to put it mildly, applies to the claim that the "Dominion Mandate" is fulfilled in Christ. Where are the biblical data that even remotely hint in that direction? See on this issue also, Keller, *Center Church*, 211; and Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 712-715.

undoubtedly encountered an totally empty earth without a trace of a past "civilization." The dispersion of mankind throughout the earth prompted by the confusion of languages forcefully underscores that cosmic rebellion is tolerated only to the extent and as long as it serves the purposes of God (Gen. 11:6-9). The ultimate liquidation is a foregone conclusion. All this is encapsulated by Job, 'God makes nations great, and he destroys them. He enlarges nations, and leads them away. He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the earth, and makes them wander in pathless waste. They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man" (Job 12:23-25). Here in a nutshell we encounter the disclosure of the universal Divine pattern that covers the waterfront of all the manifestations of life in the present world. "Awesome Cultivation … Awful Pride … Awesome Judgment … Awful Dissolution …!" It has never been any different in human Empire Building of whatever sort, whether in terms of nations politically, of armed forces militarily, of businesses economically, of educational systems intellectually, of individual projects personally, etc., etc. Just remember the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman Empires in ancient history, the Spanish, French, English, German and Soviet ones in recent history, and all the other innumerable kinds of "empires" throughout world history. According to Scripture, "they (i.e. "Empires") do and will perish, but you will remain. They do and will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they do and will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end" (Ps, 102:26-27). The fact that God's people in the midst of this pitch dark "Sisyphus" concatenation, which endlessly and tirelessly (Read: tiresomely) repeats itself throughout human history, function as perennial beacons of light by fearing Him and keeping his commandments (Eccl. 12:13) is more than just noteworthy. It is awe-inspiring. It testifies to God who is the source of all meaning, as the Only One, and his Law-word which is the grid of all meaning, as the Only Way, to offset and conquer the world's emptiness. But it does not nullify the judgment of futility imposed by God upon this world, and the concatenation of futility experienced by all of mankind in this world.

Regrettably, even some evangelical scholars part company here and question either in principle or in practice for whatever strictly theological or broadly philosophical reason whether it is proper to argue that the world has *no* independent purpose *whatsoever*. In the process they become "*bed*-fellows" with unbelievers in a so-called "common kingdom," totally abstracted from the full-orbed biblical truth, as if this has a positive purpose in its own right. After all, so the argument goes, is not the mandate and goal of the State to implement "civil righteousness?" And should not the Christian make "common cause" with unbelievers, since there *is* a common cause, allegedly due to "natural law" which is a universal phenomenon and to which everybody subscribes by definition, whether in whole or in part? Allegedly this stamps it clearly as an independent undertaking separate from the Church which is governed by biblical law and whose aim it is to establish saving righteousness. In short, since the world, so the reasoning continues, has a life of its own, believers live simultaneously in two worlds that arise from different principles, go by different rules, have different purposes, and never (really) need to meet. There is a common world in which believers and unbelievers synthetically stand shoulder to shoulder, although there also is a sacred one in which they could not be farther apart antithetically. The former rests on "common grace" and is governed by "natural law." It strives for an achievable, general and societal righteousness established by man with a view to the earthly good. The latter is rooted in "special grace" and is under the sway of "Biblical Law." It targets the specific and ecclesiastical righteousness derived from Christ with a view to the heavenly good. In short, the so-called "two-kingdom" theory holds to an organic and progressive linear unfolding of society

as a common undertaking by believers and unbelievers alike, forged as they are into a common bond by virtue of so-called "natural law."[7]

Apart from the fact that the idea of a universally accepted "natural law" is an unmitigated fiction,[8] it totally ignores, and in the process it truncates the full range of biblical truth. For a

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[7] Keller, *Center Church*, 194-245, presents a lengthy, careful, and balanced picture of four views of the "Christ and Culture" issue that take shape in four basic models for the Church to follow. These are the "Transformationist," the "Relevance," the Counterculturalist," and the "Two Kingdom" models. At the end he expresses his wish that the Church would adopt the strengths of each model, while discarding their weaknesses, and proposes a way to succeed in this. Confining myself in this context to the "two kingdom" model, Keller, 212-216, launches five criticisms. From a biblical perspective it (1) overvalues "the function of 'common grace,'" (2) overvalues the "social goodness" impact of "natural revelation," (3) "implies or teaches that human life can be conducted on a religiously neutral basis," (4) "produces a form of 'social quietism,'" and (5) "contributes too great a hierarchy, between clergy and laity." However, in the aftermath of this criticism he points out, 216-217, that an occasional "two-kingdom" proponent is willing to shift some ground. While at first insisting that in the pursuit of their vocation in the "common kingdom," apart from their subjective motivation, there is no difference whatsoever, nor need, can, or may there be, between Christians and non-Christians, some years later he writes that "Nothing in the 2K (two Kingdoms) view entails that 'Christians do not pursue their vocation in a 'distinctively Christian way,' or 'that neither the church nor individual Christians should be in the business of changing the world or society" (Michael Horton). The preponderance of evidence, however, is that according to the basic model the two kingdoms do not interact. They differ in administration, in rule and in goal. On the plus side, Keller, 231-232, observes that this model properly emphasizes that "Christians should 'be the church,'" although not "'simply be the church,'" without an impetus to "change culture." He also, 236, congratulates this model for its emphasis upon the dignity of every vocation pursued by all people, and its insistence on excellence in every vocation. However, while this naturally deserves "congratulation" as a matter of basic "obedience" to the Dominion Mandate, an in-depth assessment may not, cannot, and will not stop there. It must and will proceed by pointing out the biblical flipside of complementary truth. All "common grace" culture is also and intrinsically subject to radical and total futility (Rom. 8:20). "Dignity" and "excellence" do not and may not have or be the sole or final word. Further, "common grace" products constitute "a summons to repentance" (Rom. 2:4), which must be verbalized by Christians everywhere to the glory of God and in compassion for also the "dignified' and "excellent" lost. This makes it crystal clear that the one Kingdom of God interacts with all of creation in every area, phase and aspect. All this escapes the originators and proponents of the "two-kingdom" model. It is well-known fact that it regards the Dominion Mandate abrogated, and that it with its "overvaluing" of "social goodness" and "common grace" it appears to have no eye for the Kingdom imposed futility of creation and the Kingdom ordained purpose of "common grace." Keller's analysis and assessment in these regards renders a valuable service, but it could (should) have greater depth perspective and could (should) be more incisive (See for further details **Appendix III** and **Appendix IV**). The same may well apply to his observation about the emphasis of the "2K" model about the church. The seemingly unanimous opposition of its proponents to the notion of "revival" essentially denies the "crying" need for the NT Church to be a Revival Church by definition, which Keller, 54ff, to his credit properly endorses, and, frankly, in a way that does greater justice to the biblical data than the current "theories" about "revival" (See further Section III, 2 on "The Glory of Revival"). This denial is for all practical purposes, if not equally by definition, satisfied with the *status quo*, has no eye for what is argued in Section I, 2 regarding The Historical Reality-Check, and is bound to mire down in a virtual "business as usual" mentality (For such mentality and what seems to be a prevailing contentment with the *status quo*, see D. G. Hart and John Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education of the OPC, 1995), esp. 190-195).

[8] See also the excellent Paper by Carl F. H. Henry, *Natural Law and a Nihilistic Culture* (to be accessed as follows: "Copyright (c) 1993 *First Things* 49 (January 1995); 55-60." He acknowledges the complexity of the issue in terms of substance and terminology, but in principle categorizes "natural law (universally accessible to human reason independently from divine revelation, or to be derived from human nature in general) as a discredited way to conceptualize universal moral responsibility." It yields "neither an independent nor a sufficient morality." "A sinful race will corrupt any and every standard … Natural law theorists--reaching back to and beyond the pre-Socratics--have themselves disagreed over the precise content of natural law. It has been invoked to define freedom and slavery, hierarchy and equality." The bottom line? "Universally shared norms cannot be distilled from 'the unanchored, self-validating human mind.'" In sum, corrupt humanity can never function or put up a structure that serves as "a potent restorative and cohesive social force." It leaves by definition disintegration in its wake. And

starter it totally fails to take into account the divine "futility" dynamics as a judgment of God. According to Revelation 6 this is part of the warp and woof of the world, not only as it is belligerently organized against God, but also as it is disdainfully organized apart from God. Humanistic prosperity of any sort, whether religious, political, economic, or otherwise, that results from human pride in independence from God (The White Horse) is invariably followed, upon the authoritative summons of the Lamb (Rev. 6:1, 3, 5, 7), in anticipation of his ultimate wrath (Rev. 6:12-16) and as a judgment of God upon that pride, by the sovereign infliction of wars of whatever kind (The Red Horse), which in turn leads to famine (The Black Horse) and death (The Pale Horse) (Rev. 6:1-8). This implies that everyone is at any given time under the sway of any one of the four horses, and during his or her life time will undoubtedly experience the sway of more than only one of them. Caught within this cycle the bend, energy, skills, objectives and output of apostate mankind are invariably directed toward the proud reign of the "prosperity" horse of whatever kind. But similar to the one time "Tower of Babel" (Gen. 11:1-9), which was not tolerated by God, this constant focus ends up in an ever continuing string of not merely futile, but fallacious and delusional undertakings that are by definition doomed to failure but woefully are not recognized as such, too often not even by Christians who fail (refuse?) to recognize the inherent futility of making common cause with both basic and ultimate "tragedy." At any rate, humanistic "hope," indeed, seems ineradicable. But history demonstrates that the judgment of the Sisyphus cycle continues unabatedly and *ad nauseam* for all involved. So why would any Christian worth his "salt" and "light" ever wish to be cultural "*bed*-fellows," and by definition and in principle leave the "salt" of God's Law and the "light" of his Gospel *out of the shared bed-room*? The Church should decidedly not be caught in the unending and precipitous cycle of this world for its life's sake. It should not bet on or against any of the four horses, as if they lead an independent existence. It should definitely not put all its eggs in the basket of the "white" horse in a worldly fashion whether in a Marxist, a Socialist, a National-Socialist, a Libertarian, or in any other fashion. Neither should it support openly, tacitly or by default that the triumph of the "white horse" over the other three "horses" is the personal or corporate "utopian end-all," and that therefore mankind must put all its resources, know-how, energies and skills on the line in the grand battle to accomplish this as if "this is all there is to life." Come to think about it, it may well be that "the white horse" and what it stands for has been more destructive for the church due to "the affliction of affluence" than the other three combined. This has a biblical base. After all, it is "more difficult for the rich to enter the Kingdom than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" (Lk. 19:24). This is never said of the poor, whether wounded, hungry or dying! Besides, the more and the faster it thrives in proud independence, the more and the faster it lays the ground work for the appearance of the other three "horses," in fact, the more and the faster it extends an invitation for them to enter upon the stage of world history. So, and ironically, the more and the faster Church folks decide to support the world in its independent endeavors, the more and the faster they facilitate its tragic destiny that is both self-

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when in its all too human pride it seems to provide some "Tower of Babel" like structure, God blows it apart! By way of addition, this does not deny that all of mankind willy-nilly in one way or another invariably displays the "works of the law" (Rom. 2:14). Mankind in general is incurably moral and has these "works" written on their heart, their mission control center, by virtue of creation. But this must be sharply distinguished from regenerate mankind that has "the *Law* written on the heart" (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:27; Heb. 8:10). The "*works* of the law" are only spottily embraced and always controversially displayed by a rebellious and depraved mankind. History is there to prove this. But the "*Law*" is always universally embraced and uniformly displayed by a regenerate mankind, be it only "by abiding in Christ" (John 15:5) and by virtue of "the indwelling of the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 3:16). Even then, of course, this never is in "perfect" evidence, but only (be it definitely) in "purposeful" evidence.

inflicted and a judgment of God. Hence the Church better not listen to the siren song of an empty and basically destructive two-kingdom ideology that severely truncates the universal range of the Grand Command by essentially removing it from the *res publica*, and therewith from most of every-day life. Thus it eliminates in principle the only possible cure for a doomed society and therefore the only barrier that can prevent its heart-rending downfall. We should, indeed, be thankful for any and all inconsistencies that minimize the impact of the basic two-kingdom model. But let us not be too impressed if these are no more than "a few verbal bones" thrown to us by some two-kingdom folks that may imply that the steel door between the two kingdoms is not totally watertight. Instead, let us pray that any belated (?) recognition to this effect is the first step to throw that door wide open so that the name of Jesus can, must, and will be boldly proclaimed every minute in every setting on every societal square inch![9] All in all, the well-

[9] Of course, I sympathize with the grateful assessment of Keller, 217, that Horton did make a significant concession. But the question remains whether an obvious "hearing of the Word" is complemented with an active "doing of the Word." Obviously only time will tell. But it should be clear that this "concession" could (should!) be the dynamite that blows up the foundation of the "two-kingdom" model as *originally* laid, which as such, incidentally, has no "predecessor" in history, all protestations to the contrary (James K. A. Smith, "Reforming Public Theology: Two Kingdoms or Two Cities," in *Calvin Theological Journal* (2012), 122-137 argues that the recent two-kingdom theory cannot by the farthest stretch of the imagination be traced back to Augustine's "Two Cities." In doing so, it "creates an Augustine in its own image" (127). This leads to its further grave error of depicting Luther's views as "an extension or a supplement or a translation" of Augustine's two cities. "They are different animals" (128). Quite a claim, if not indictment of a shallow scholarship! Further, Keller, *Center Church*, 211, argues that Luther's views and the two-kingdom theory are not exactly "the same animals" either. Along similar lines, Jochem Douma, *Politieke Verantwoordelijkheid* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Van Den Berg, 1984), 26-43 and 44-87, respectively, covers both Augustine's and Luther's position in depth. This coverage convincingly implies that neither one would ever have recognized himself in the way the two-kingdom theory presents them. Finally, and to top this off, if the "devastating" critique of the Interdisciplinary Studies Professor of Covenant College, William Dennison, *Westminster Theological Journal* 75 (2013), 349-370, is to be believed, the wholesale historical defense of the "2K model" by one of its originators, David Van Drunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010) must be filled with so many documented substantive errors in analysis, assessment and conclusions that it simply collapses of its own weight, in fact, appears to crumple like a "house of cards." My critique, however, goes beyond this withering expose of too many crucial historical and interpretative inaccuracies and deficiencies. In the light of **Section I, 2**, "The Historical Reality-Check," anyone who encounters the enormous efforts made to originate (!) and promote the recent two-kingdom theory, is and must be extremely disappointed. There is no evidence, whatsoever, of even any inkling that, in spite of won skirmishes and even some won battles, "we" have essentially lost the spiritual war to Idolatrous Islam in the Middle East, to Atheistic Secularism in Europe and are losing this war in the USA to a Godless Humanism. It is a tragedy to see a movement spring up that societally puts its eggs in the basket of what comes down to a non-evangelistic "common kingdom" that essentially undercuts the universal focus of the Grand Command to make disciples (evangelize) of *all nations* and subsequently to train them, that is, to teach them to observe whatever God has commanded. There is not one square inch of this created reality that is not envisioned in this Command. Of course, this does not exclude, say, economic "cooperation," political "co-belligerence," or simply projects of "friendship" in pursuit of temporal and societal "well-being" (See emphatically **Appendix II** and **Appendix IV**). But it does, must and will include such a deep and ongoing concern for the eternal and personal well-being that it does and will give testimony to folks in the midst of cooperation, co-belligerence, or friendship, both for the glory of God and out of compassion for the lost. This testimony may assume a variety of forms, depending upon people, circumstances, and attitudes, such as, "My friend, if you and I would have lived before the Flood, God would have drowned both of us and wiped out all our cultural achievements … without Jesus, and deservedly so. Allow me to explain!" or, "Folks, remember that all the "common graces" on behalf of which we all do and should stand together in close cooperation, and for which, if needs be, we do and should fight together in full co-belligerence, and for which we strive together in a spirit of friendship, are at bottom designed by God to lead to your (and my) repentance-unto-life. So let me verbalize this out of concern for you," etc., etc. Of course, this may "turn worlds up-side down (Read: "right-side up;" (Acts 17:6), and may test "cooperation," "co-belligerence," or even "friendships." But sooner or later, it will save souls. Paul and

known exclamation of which politicians are so fond, "It is the economy, stupid," should be given a new meaning. "With 'eternity' at stake (*sub specie aeternitatis*) it is utter "folly" to idolize 'the economy' and all that this stands for or implies!"

Candidly, the Church should in all soberness understand that under the reign of whatever horse it is and remains the target for destruction on the part of Satan and his henchmen (Rev. 6:9-11). The Church should also understand that it in the midst of the Judgments that are justly meted out to human society organized against God or apart from God, and take fourfold aim at the earth, the sea, the rivers and the sky (Rev. 8:6-12) as the complementary flip side or further detailed substance of the fourfold cycle symbolized by the four horses, must tirelessly continue to focus upon its Threefold Gospel Ministry to the rich, the poor, the healthy, the sick, the strong, the weak, the fit, the wounded, the well-fed, the hungry, the high and the lowly, the living and the dying (Rev. 10:1-11:6) wherever we find them, regardless the phase and area of life! Frankly, "hang" the world when it subtly or not so subtly is determined to destroy its offspring in a make-belief fashion, and in the process accuses its bold but compassionate Gospel rescuers from turning it and its apostate culture "upside down" (Acts 17:6), which in reality is "right-side up." "*Bed*-fellows" of the world, even if only in a so-called "common kingdom," will never be able to testify to such violent opposition experience that is the biblical standard for "full-blooded" Revival servants of a Reviving God in a Revival Church on a Revival Mission. After all, such "*bed*-fellows," whether consciously and intentionally or not, walk together, hand in hand, arm in arm, and shoulder to shoulder, in implementing the so-called "natural law" which they both embrace. But in the process they do not only ignore that one purpose of "law" is to expose sin in order to drive folks to Christ in repentance and faith. Failing openly to proclaim that believers and unbelievers always operate under an admittedly different Kingship everywhere (Acts 17:7), they also, as a result, do and will fall short of "filling up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ" (Col. 2:24), which, of course, is the suffering of propagation rather than propitiation! Most likely most of us Christians, to our shame, do fall short in this regard anyway. But now the so-called "two kingdom" view provides a theoretical foundation for its legitimacy. This is a

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so many others in Church History have experienced this. Frankly, everyone should! When a General and Cabinet Member in an African country was recently confronted with the message of the Flood, he became pensive and expressed his appreciation for the reminder. I surmise that sooner or later he will be faced with the purpose of "common graces" as well. Christians should learn to love folks more than they love themselves, and eager to suffer and die to save some (1 Cor. 9:22b; 10:33-11:1). The recent "two-kingdom" theory, especially when combined with even a benign neglect of Biblical Revival, let alone its opposition, is hardly conducive to stir the Church to follow in these footsteps of the Lord Jesus and to face (and enter) "the gates of hell" with a Word and Spirit vengeance in battles they cannot lose as long as they display the very devotion and zeal God required from the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan. And we know how the latter turned out! Frankly, too many battles have not been fought or ended in defeat. The bottom line is crystal clear. One does not simply play "common" games, enjoy "common" leisure, share "common" studies, do "common" business, join "common" travel, labor in "common" vocations, pursue "common" trades, in fact, engage in anything "common," aim at anything "common," or celebrate anything "common," etc., etc., and leave it at that in whole or in part! By all means, let us produce, mold, and polish all possible brass for and on a sinking ship (The Clarion Call of the Uninterrupted Dominion Mandate). But let us verbalize the purpose of every last section, piece or form piece of this brass in a summons to repentance and faith (The Universal and Ever Applicable Grand Command). Men of God have often and for very good reason dubbed "The Great Commission" "The Great Omission." In fact, a book was published with that title, and no one challenged its thesis! But neither did it lead to co-dependent and corporate repentance, "I and my fathers have sinned" (Neh. 1:6-7; Dan. 9:3-8)! This should be an "intolerable burden," conjoined to a heartfelt repentance and an unshakable resolve to produce fruit, more fruit, much fruit, continuing fruit (John 15:1ff), "worthy of repentance and faith," as the only "point of departure" that can and will turn the tide, in fact, any tide. Nehemiah, for one, speaks for itself (Neh. 1:11-6:19)!

heart-breaking travesty. The "salt" and the "light" that should (!) be ubiquitous (Mt. 5:13-16) is marginalized, not just in guilty practice, but in deadly principle!

In sum, the fourfold cyclical pattern of world history cannot destroy the Church. God's elect ("144.000") will not be subject to "the wrath of the Lamb," but enter the Holy City and do so in awesome numbers ("innumerable multitude") (Rev. 6:17-7:17). Furthermore, the fourfold Judgment in World history cannot incapacitate it. It will not be deterred from its hot pursuit of the Grand Command (Rev. 11:4-6).[10] If it is deterred, it loses its birthright. After all, it is biblically, and therefore arguably, the only reason why this bankrupt world grinds on and groans on. To counsel against this "hot pursuit" across the waterfront of created reality, whether in whole or in part, is to go counter to God's marching orders to go after all the nations everywhere in all areas of their rebellious and self-destructive undertakings. It is also to display and foster a lack of compassion for the blind and the lost. All in all, in such scenario the Grand Command hardly functions as it should. Once again, and to enlarge on it some more, the two-kingdom theory does not only provide a (fallacious) reason for evangelistic "inactivity" in principle. It also provides an illegitimate justification for those who lag in evangelistic activity "to stay the 'dead-end' course."

The reasoning in favor of and the consequent construction of a dual world and all that this entails must sooner rather than later get our careful and more detailed attention, whether in this context or another. But for now it is sufficient to show that Scripture is crystal clear in denying an independent purpose for the world and its inhabitants. Before the Flood God was so aggravated, to put it mildly, with the wickedness of the human race in general that he decided to wipe them all out! This included the totality of their cultural accomplishments! Not a trace was left of big cities pioneered by Cain (Gen. 3:17) as well as of big farming, big entertainment, big industry, and big beauty, initiated by Lamech and his family (Gen. 3:19-22). Only one man survived, together with his family and selected animals, to repopulate the world, but with not much else to start with and to show for. A few millennia later history repeated itself. The so-called solution starting with Abraham and blossoming into the nation of Israel turned out to be just as big a problem as mankind prior to the Flood. Before the Exile God was so aggravated, to put it mildly once again, if not more so with the wickedness of his people Israel that he decided

[10] The references to the Book of Revelation reflect my position that the only way to do justice to its relevance for the Church throughout its history is the "principle-historical" view. Neither the "preterist" nor the "futurist" view is capable of providing the Church with the "armament" to fight the ongoing battle. It may well be a "criminal" deficiency to deprive the Church of the diagnostic X-Ray of what it can expect to encounter in the (every-day) present (!) world, how it demonstrates that it is not of the world, what it takes to overcome the world, and how it can be sure that it is victorious over the world. In short order, following an Introduction (Rev. 1:1-8) Revelation pictures *Christ and his Church* from I. "The Present Reality" (Rev.1:1:9-3:22) in II. "The Flow of World History" (Rev. 4:1-11:19), while III. "Face to Face with its Enemies" (Rev. 12:1-20:15) until the IV. "The Grand Finale" (Rev. 21:1-22:21). Revelation 4 and 5 picture the Church walking as Christ's Bride to the Great Wedding Feast under the Canopy of the Holiness of God the Father (Rev. 4:1ff, esp. 8) on the Red Carpet of the Blood Of Christ (Rev. 5:1ff, esp. 9), empowered by the Holy Spirit (Rev. 4:5; 5:6) as "kings and priests" (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). As such it encounters "The Prevailing Pattern" of all of World History (Rev. 6:1-11) and experiences "The Inevitable Judgments" of God (Rev. 8:6-10). The so-called recapitulation interpretation of Revelation, which recognizes that the Book consists of a number of "layers" that all X-ray the Church's march in World history from the First to the Second Coming of Christ from a variety of perspectives, entails that the Prevailing Pattern (Rev. 6) and the Inevitable Judgments (Rev. 8) are concurrent realities. This is not the place to enlarge on the principle-historical view of Revelation and what this means in concrete terms. For this I refer the interested reader to the extensive and excellent Commentary of Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998). See also **Appendix III** for the way the "Grand Command" can and must cover the waterfront of life!

to throw them all out! Only a meager remnant survived. This time its once thriving (Solomonic) culture was not totally wiped out, but without a doubt seriously degraded. This, incidentally, was totally predictable in the light of the Mosaic legislation of blessing upon all of life and culture upon obedience, and a similar curse upon disobedience (Lev. 26:1-45; Deut. 27:1-28:68). At any rate, in both instances, the survival of only one family and only a meager remnant, God availed himself merely of two stop-gap measures that could not and cannot solve the problem that this utterly wicked and incurably bankrupt world poses.

Revelation picks up on that when John is told that no one is capable of bailing out the human race--neither mankind in general nor Israel in particular--, "No one in heaven, no one on earth, and no one under the earth!" It is hardly surprising that John weeps uncontrollably. That is to say, *until* he is brought face to face with Jesus as the Lion-Lamb whose cross and resurrection both purposed and guaranteed the emergence of the Church from all nations and languages (Rev. 5:1-10). Without this eye-opening objective that evokes the unending praise of the whole universe (Rev. 5:11-14) God would have terminated the present world in all its rebellious, guilty and polluted bankruptcy long ago. Apart from the fact that ultimately everything is designed to reflect the glory of God in the sum-total of his perfections, the world's *sole* (intermediate) function is clearly to serve as God's "spawning ground" to produce potential members of the Church, no more, no less. *This identifies the Church as the radiant anchorage and radiating centerpiece of World History, all scoffing protestations, strident challenges, and possible questionings to the contrary, scoffing protestations from atheists, sceptics, or humanists, strident challenges from competing religions, and possible questionings from Church members or worldlings.* When the last one of God's elect is inducted, he closes shop, for it is all over. This must all be incessantly bound on the heart of the Church and compassionately, gently, clearly, and boldly as well as prayerfully, hopefully and confidently proclaimed in and to the world. "'Perhaps' God may grant repentance leading to the acknowledgement of the truth in order for it to escape from the snare of the devil who captured it to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Some folks will undoubtedly object that it "turns the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). But it is really "right side up." Others may violently respond and at times with deadly force (Acts 17:5ff; Rev. 2:8-11; 12:11). But many will be "persuaded" and take refuge in the Body of Christ in repentance and faith (Acts 17:4). For that to occur, persecution and even death, is a small, a very small price to pay! In fact, in the light of the saving "outcome," it will and should be experienced as a joy. This principle applies equally to Christ in his suffering of propitiation as it does to the Church in its suffering of propagation.

Not so incidentally, the Christian family does and should pick up on all this, and recognize that its sole (intermediate) function is to produce children for the local Church (Mal. 3:15), and in that context help train them in godliness day and night, whether inside or outside (Deut. 6:4-9). The local Church, in turn, does and should pick up on this as well and recognize that its sole (intermediate) function is to produce and equip members of the Bride of Christ, the Holy City. In obedience to Christ's Grand Command it is devoted to the hot pursuit of both "Making and Training Disciples" with all that this entails (Mt. 28:19-20). All this makes it crystal clear that this world has no independent purpose.[11]

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[11] Not so incidentally, that there is a "worldly commonness" is not in dispute. "Two times two equals four," etc., etc., is a universal given. Neither is the fact that God in his kindness lavishes his "common grace" upon the world. What is in dispute, however, that this world has (1) an independent purpose in the so-called "earthly good" and (2) goes by so-called "natural law" as "a separate drummer" to establish this good! For a further analysis, see **Appendix III** as well as **Appendix IV.**

Of course, this has not settled the question how the Church, although "not of the world," must function "in the world." There are clearly shared societal areas during the reign of the "four horses" and under the sway of the "four judgments," where Church and world rub shoulders, are called upon to make interactive assessments and are faced with the need for joint action. But this receives detailed attention below!

At any rate, all this also puts the awesome glory of the Church (Ps. 85:9; Is. 62:7) in an increasingly persuasive perspective. Against this general backdrop the indispensable significance and fine tapestry of the Threefold Ministry of the Church comes into its own as well. It consists of an Evangelistic Ministry under the Leadership of Evangelists (Eph. 4:10c), an Edification Ministry under the Leadership of Pastor-Teachers (Eph. 4:10d), and a Service Ministry under the Leadership of Deacons (Phil. 1:1). The first one focuses on the "making of disciples" (Mt. 28:19), the second one on the "training of disciples (Mt. 28:20), and the third on all the various logistics (pre)requisite to facilitate the first two (Acts 6:1ff). Frankly, it is passing strange that the Church all too frequently has focused its attention on the achievements, the enjoyments, the pleasures, if not enticements of the world, all too often (routinely?) failing to view and approach it in the footsteps of Jesus first and foremost (solely!) as its God-ordained "fishing ground" (Mt. 4:19). In this context it is equally strange that it also all too often tends to emphasize its Edification Ministry at the neglect or expense of its Evangelistic and Diaconal Ministry. Too often it has failed to launch a very "hot pursuit" to see the latter two equally blossom out and equally flourish as powerfully as Scripture mandates. It has admittedly more than once questioned the continuation of the Office of Evangelist (Eph. 4:10), and therefore failed to promote and grow a vital and indispensable Evangelistic Leadership. Of course, when the Church is powerful it grows quantitatively as well as qualitatively, at times even by leaps and bounds. But when the power recedes, the vacuum of an Evangelistic Leadership comes back to haunt it. It also has more than once minimized the function of Deacons "merely" as "ministers of mercy," and therefore failed to employ them to the point of providing the *total* wide and robust range of *all* the "logistics" necessary to facilitate the biblically mandated Evangelistic and Edification Ministries, whether directly or indirectly (Acts 6:1-6). As we shall observe below, according to Scripture a "ministry of mercy" does not even begin to cover all the bases of the authentic and full-orbed Diaconal Directive. Regrettably, the Church all too often resembles one of those famous trains like the Orient Express. A Church with a strong Edification Ministry reminds us of the part of the train that consists of first class seating coaches, first class sleeping coaches, and first class restaurant coaches. They are extremely comfortable and the passengers are very well cared for. Of course, these "coaches" are necessary for a proper train journey. No question about it! But without a powerful engine, that is, the Evangelistic ministry, which admittedly shows only a few intermittent signs of genuine life on today's ecclesial scene, the train is not really moving, and without a thorough and constant maintenance program, the Serving Ministry, the infrastructure of whatever sort is soon in whole or in part neglected. It turns bizarre, of course, when the passengers in love with their comfort zones do not even seem to notice that they are not really moving, and do not recognize the need to weep over their virtual stand-still on deteriorating and degraded tracks. In fact, they are under the illusion that they are speedily traversing a multifaceted and colorful landscape. Instead the scenery is projected to move fast by the windows marking the moving illusion as a moving delusion. If anyone doubts the latter, a simple reminder may remedy this. Revival times that "routinely" produced between ten and twenty millions of converts in a Century or so are in most locations simply a thing of the

past, and what is even more bewildering, simply forgotten. That is, forgotten, except for a few who reflect on it in both stirring and wistful speeches and writings, but seem oblivious that their own state and the state of their audience is a shamefully culpable and culpably shameful downgrade that requires repentance in order to regain what was abandoned and to return to the height from which they have fallen. Such speeches and writings must warm our hearts about the display of God's glory in the past. But they fail when they do not fill our eyes with tears of repentance about the haunting present. Frankly, I have never attended a Conference on Revival with this as both the expressed objective and the experienced result. Small wonder that one of the mainline Churches in the UK has engaged a full time employee to market and sell vacant Church buildings, while in the USA tens of thousands of Churches closed during the last decade! Furthermore, what used to be the nearly exclusive "logistical" ministry of the Church in the midst of a stagnating world, such as the systematic care for the sick, for the poor, for orphans, etc., and the establishment and maintenance of educational institutions, medical facilities, etc., has now virtually been taken over by the State.[12] All in all, is it any wonder that the ecclesiastical downgrade appears inevitable, and that Revival times, such as promised, mandated as well as displayed in The Book of Acts, and clearly exemplified in Church History are merely (guilty and shameful) memories of a distant and bygone past?

Candidly, once again I lost you, the reader, before I even start, if you like so many folks are inclined to question some or all of this from the very outset or dismiss it out of hand. But remember in the area of Evangelism not only the NT phenomenon of the "spontaneous" expansion of a Spirit-filled Church (Acts 2:47; 8:4; 11:19-21), in which even Pastor-Teachers programmatically participated in doing "the *work* of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5), but also the Revival times throughout Church History, which with the addition of huge numbers of "worshippers" to the Church royally met the Acts 2 benchmark and gloriously reflected its pattern (Acts 2:37)! Such times in the Middle East, in Europe, in the US, more recently in Korea, Malawi and Uganda, and reportedly at present in India and China, which did or do result in overflowing churches everywhere, with massive building programs and impressive societal impact to match, demonstrate this without a shadow of a doubt. Remember also the NT vista upon the Church as an "innumerable multitude, clothed in white robes" (Rev. 7:9-10) that as a matter of course always had, has, and will have an earthly counterpart, and can hardly materialize without a concerted effort of the whole Church without exception perennially to pursue that eschatological reality as its present objective.

Finally, bring to mind as well that in the Diaconal area a widespread and consistent eagerness prevailed to provide a vast array of societal and social services as part of the witness to and the implementation of the Kingship of Jesus over all of life. Once again, before long the biblical function of the world, and the way it continues to operate, in spite of the fact that it does not have its own independent purpose, stands in need of close attention,[13] but for now our interest should be piqued how the threefold ministry of the Church did, can and must contribute to this awesome quantitative and qualitative "end product."

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[12] For the vast influence, the pervasive impact, and the immense imprint of the Christian Faith upon all areas of societal life, such as sexual morality, the dignity of women, hospitals, health care, education, labor, economics, liberty, justice, slavery, art, architecture, music, literature, etc., see Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). See also

[13] See for a starter, **Appendix IV** and its bird's eye assessment of the (intermediate) purpose and (sole) function of the present world.

3. The Theological Reality-Check

The third reality-check is theological and slightly more sophisticated. It pertains to the complementarity of (all) biblical truth. The sin against it may well be the greatest, most widespread, and most debilitating one perpetrated in the Church in every phase and aspect of its existence. It is deadly. It is the failure or refusal to honor both sides of God's complementary truth, by ignoring, downplaying, or destroying one side by means of the other. The Trinity was the target of this sin in the early Church. Is God One or Three? The biblical answer, of course, is "both," even if One in Essence and Three in Persons, and therefore not in the same way. However, Sabellius took a firm hold of the one and proceeded to eliminate the three. Arius, on the other hand, reversed the procedure. He embraced the three and got rid of the one. The sovereignty-responsibility has been a similar issue throughout the history of the Church. Which one of the two poles is taught in Scripture? The biblical answer again is "both." But enamored by human responsibility Arminianism was and is unable to "swallow" full Divine Sovereignty, and frankly bound to end up in "Openness of God Theism," if and when held with rigorous consistency. On the other hand, irreversibly committed to Divine Sovereignty Hyper-Calvinism tends to downplay human responsibility. We all remember the kind of thundering admonition to William Carey when he proposed a Mission to the World of India, "If God wishes to save folks on the other side of the globe, he certainly will be able to find a way to do so!" Finally, how about the seemingly conflicting emotionalities of love and hate in God? Does he love or hate the sinner? For the third time, the biblical answer is "both," even if this requires a careful and qualifying explanation. Nevertheless, most Christians opine that God may hate sin, but cannot but love the sinner.[14] On the other hand, others, be it the minority, simply cannot envision how God who foreordains everybody's eternal destiny could ever display any love whatsoever toward the reprobate, in spite of the kindness that according to Scripture he displays to all of mankind.[15]

All in all, the result of the pervasive sin against the complementarity of truth is an inevitable warfare in all societal structures, whether (a) redemptive (supernatural) in nature, specifically the Church, (b) creational (natural), such as marriage, the family, the state, or (c) voluntary, such as businesses, organizations, clubs, etc. All these infightings, battles, and wars have done untold damage to the Church throughout its existence. What is the culprit? It is the conscious or unconscious allegiance to the ultimacy or primacy of the human mind, rooted in the idolatry of the self. The mind has single occupancy only, such as a Motel 6. In general, when there is agreement, there is "peace." But woe, if and when there is disagreement. Potential or actual warfare, even between "parties," who are "brothers/sisters" and are mandated to put this on display as a "shaming" and "winsome" reminder to the world (John 13:35), is the order of the day, whether in practice or theory. It seems in escapable, and frankly it is, "without Jesus" (John 15:5), "without the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 3:14-19a), and "without the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19b)!"

More concretely, the mind cannot simultaneously encompass clearly stipulated biblical truth, such as, the one-ness and three-ness of God, Divine sovereignty and human responsibility, God's

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[14] See for an illumining series of statements about this issue, David Platt, "The Glory of God, the Lostness of Man, and the Gospel of Christ," in John Piper & David Mathis, eds., *Finish the Mission* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2012), 59-61, and from the same author, *Follow Me* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2013), 42-43. See also Ps. 5:5-6; 7:12; 11:5; Prov. 15:29; John 43:36!

[15] See **Topical Focus #2**: **The Complementarity of Truth**, in the Second Edition of my Commentary on *The Epistle of James,* hopefully to be published soon. This is already available as a separate "Paper" upon request.

love and God's hatred of sinners, and all other complementary truths. The potential list is literally endless.[16] The solution, of course, is the embrace of the primacy of the heart as man's

[16] It seems to me that the debate about God, whether he is with or without "passions," is a further case in point. See for this James E. Dolezal, "STILL IMPASSIBLE: Confessing God without Passions," in *Journal of the Institute of Reformed Baptists Studies* (2014), 125-151, esp. 125-126, 134-135, 137-138, 141-142, 147-151. The traditional view is that God is "without passions," that is, cannot "undergo" or "experience any change in his intrinsic state of being," and that every thought, emotion, word or act of God in Scripture which seems to imply this, such as references to his "change of mind," his "change of affection," his "change of prediction," his "change of conduct," is simply "anthropomorphic" in nature, that is, "language derived from creation and our experience of it." It is a necessary "condescending" adaption or a much-needed "stooping" accommodation to "the conditions of our creaturehood," that is, to our human level of thinking, feeling, speaking or acting. Terminology, such as repentance and grief, that is "ascribed to God, does not properly belong to him," and therefore cannot be attributed to him "as is." The immutability, eternity, perfection, and simplicity of God all forbid this. The notion of an essential (internal) or accidental (external) "change" is by definition heterodox, if not heretical. More recently, however, even so-called "impeccable" Reformed theologians have started to re-think all this. They opine that the multiple contents of these references are an outflow of the preordination of the immutable God. In other words, the immutable eternal God sovereignly ordained that in the context of time he would be both in control of and subject to experiences of change in his thought, will or emotions. That is, the God "without passions" in his eternal nature decided that he would be "passionate," if not "impassioned" in his temporal relations and interaction. In a word, when it comes down to "creature man," he would show "covenantal passions." Frankly, I am somewhat sympathetic with what both positions wish to emphasize. That God is immutable should biblically stand like a rock (Mal. 3:6; Jam. 1:17b)! But the traditional defense of God "without-passions" must, and indeed does concede that we ultimately do not know God. Not just that we do not know him exhaustively. This is a given. But that we in reality are only acquainted with an "anthropomorphic" God. The real God is "hidden." This seems questionable to say the least. I do not think that we would get very far if we would try to tell that to the "recipients" of God's thinking, emotions, words or actions in the Old or New Testament, whether of God the father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, whatever the various biblical references contain, that cover God's thinking, emotions, words or actions, in them we do encounter the real God "at face value," even if we must recognize that in all this he does not mirror what typifies humanity. Never compare "The Glory of Israel" to "Inglorious Mankind" (1 Sam. 15:29)! But to conclude, in fact, speculate that *somehow* an eternal "immutability" and essential "sameness" spawns a temporal "mutability" and therewith essential "newness" goes way too far. Of course, this applies even more forcefully to the speculative and intolerable extrapolation that "after all" it must have been intrinsic and essential divine mutability in the first place that gave rise to eventual temporal mutability and newness. All this illegitimately seeks to establish "essence," which is beyond the limited operating range of creature man, rather than to pursue "ethics" which is the mandate for all of mankind (Deut. 29:29). Biblically, the "solution" appears to be both profoundly simple and simply profound. Do not first of all come up with an all too human dictionary definition of "immutability," subsequently apply that to God and his Word, and consequently find refuge in an equivocal term, such as "anthropomorphic," that basically cannot be defined. This is to separate what God joins together. Neither start out in an all too human way with creaturely language and apply this univocally to God! This is to identify what God distinguishes. Both approaches get us into "hot water," because both overlook, ignore, or militate against the complementarity of truth. No, the God of the Bible defines his own "immutability." "The way I disclose myself to you about myself, about my thinking, about my emotions, about my words, about my actions, all this has the stamp of immutability upon it. You can count on it that I cannot and will not deviate from my Self-disclosure. This is the eternal reality. In and after the Judgment you are not going to come face to face with a different, until then, "hidden God." You may not now or ever know me exhaustively. After all, I am God. But what you know about me in and through my Self-disclosure in the Scriptures, in Creation, in History, in the Human Constitution, in the Judgment, when the sum total of my perfections will be on display as much as this is "divinely" and "humanly" possible, and in eternal life, when the luster of this Self-disclosure will surround you and ever stay with you, as much as this creaturely possible, you know truly and properly! All of my complementary truth, such as my "One-ness" and simultaneous "Three-ness," as well as my divine "Immutability" and my simultaneous divine "Emotionality," especially in this dispensation, may not fit in your mind at the same time, because it is limited and *cannot* contain it, since it has single occupancy only. But it will "snugly" fit in your heart that has the stamp of eternity on it (Eccl. 3:11) and enjoys double occupancy, which will eventually result in unending worship in the splendor and glory of total holiness (Ps. 96:9; Rev. 21:23; 22:3, 9)." The infinite does not undercut or disqualify the finite. Neither does the finite exhaustively predicate about the

mission control center. It has double occupancy, like a Hilton or a Marriott.[17] This is the case for

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infinite. This profound simplicity and simple profundity must guide the Church in this instance as it guided it in the Council of Nicea (The Trinity) as well as in the Council of Chalcedon (The Person of Christ). In both cases it embraced two sides of Mystery without rationally divorcing them or irrationally reducing the one to the other!

[17] In case the concept of the complementarity of truth, and what it entails in terms of its nature and its "residence," is not fully clear, Isaiah 26:12 should lift any remaining fog with its statement that "*God* has performed for us all *our* works (italics added)." Both the complementarity and the simultaneity of God's performance and our works, in which God's 100% and man's 100% equals 100%, cannot but reside in the regenerate heart with its double occupancy! Of course, in this biblical formula, 100% + 100% = 100% God's 100% invariably has the primacy. This is immediately apparent in the Divine-human person of Christ, the Divine-human nature of Scripture, and the Divine-human quality of Providence (See Ps. 105:17). In the formula 100% + 100% = 100% both 100%'s occur simultaneously, while at the same time and with equal cogency the 100% Divine has the primacy over the 100% human. This transcends the limitations of and spells mystery for the human intellect with its single occupancy, just as does the nature of light as both a wave and a particle, at times designated as a "wavicle" to pinpoint its mysterious nature. But it resides snugly in the regenerate human heart with its double occupancy. When it does, as we shall see, it results experientially in "cognitive rest" as its immediate and inevitable by-product.

Austin Phelps, *The Still Hour: Communion with God in Prayer* (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2005), 35, 37-39, may have brought all this to expression in the context of prayer as well as anyone, "Christians often have little faith in prayer as a *power in real life* … Right in the heart of God's plan of government it is lodged as a power … In the mind of God, we may be assured, the conception of prayer is no fiction, whatever man may think of it. It has, and God has *determined* that it should have, a positive and applicable influence in directing the course of a human life. It is, and God has *purposed* that it should be, a link of connection between human mind and Divine mind, by which, through his infinite condescension, we may actually move His will. It is, and God has *decreed* that it should be, a power in the universe, as distinct, as real, as natural, and as uniform as the power of gravity, or of light or of electricity. A man may use it as trustingly and as soberly as he would use either of these. It is as truly the dictate of good sense that a man should expect to achieve something by praying, as it is that he should expect to achieve something by a telescope, or the mariner's compass, or the electric telegraph. This intense practicalness characterizes the scriptural ideal of prayer. The Scripture makes it a reality, and not a reverie. They never bury it in the notion of a poetic or philosophical contemplation of God. They do not merge it into the mental fiction of prayer by action in any other or all other duties of life. They have not concealed the fact of prayer beneath the mystery of prayer. The scriptural utterances on the subject of prayer admit of no such reduction of tone, and confusion of sense, as men often put forth in imitating them. Up, on the level of inspired thought, *prayer* is PRAYER—a distinct, unique, elemental power in the spiritual universe, as pervasive and as constant as the great occult powers of Nature … It lies in the nature of mind … Mind is so made that that it needs the hope of *gaining an object*, as an inducement to effort. Even so simple an effort as that involved in the utterance of desire, no man will make persistency, with no hope of gaining an object. Despair of an object is speechless. So, if you wish to enjoy prayer, you must first form such a theory of prayer—you must *have* it--and then you must cherish such trust in it, as a reality that you should feel the force of an object in prayer. No mind can feel that it has an object in praying, except in such degree as it appreciates the scriptural view of prayer as a genuine thing … If we suffer our faith to drop down from the lofty conception of prayer as having a lodgment in the very counsels of God, by which the universe is swayed, the plain practicalness of prayer, as the Scriptures teach it, and as prophets and apostles and our Lord himself performed it, drops proportionately; and in that proportion, our motive to prayer dwindles. Of necessity, then, our devotions become spiritless. We cannot obey such faith in prayer, with any more heart than a man who is afflicted with double vision can feel in obeying the evidence of his eyes. Our supplications, cannot, under the impulse of such a faith, go, as one expressed it, 'in a right line to God.' They become circuitous, timid, heartless. They may so degenerate as to be offensive, 'like the reekings of the 'Dead Sea.'" It is hardly surprising that with this as backdrop the author covers a variety of "prayer bases," such as the "specificness of object," the "intensity of desire" (49ff), a "subsoil of emotive passion" (58ff), an "energized and energizing fervency" (76ff), etc., etc. At any rate, in this quotation we are told about "Divine condescension" without introducing the notion of "anthropomorphism" in a way that could (would?) turn God into a "stranger." At the same time, we are told about the real "impact" of prayer without removing the reality of "Divine mystery." This is on the level of Chalcedonian wisdom, a surrender of the heart to, and an embrace of the heart of the complementarity of truth at its finest, refusing to fall victim to an idolatry of the ultimacy of the mind that seeks to grasp essence and so to penetrate the impenetrable.

believers and unbelievers alike. Through God's common grace even unbelievers who have a heart's relationship of love can certainly live in apparent peace and harmony with each other in the midst of disagreements. Nevertheless, a heart that is merely subdued and sweetened by common grace has still the "self" on the throne. As such it cannot and will not embrace complementary *biblical* truth. For this embrace to occur a *fully functioning* regenerate heart, which, as we shall see below, replaces the unregenerate heart or self, is indispensable. The emphasis upon *fully functioning* is no luxury. It is hardly a secret that folks who would give their lives in defense of the doctrine of the Trinity turn around and fight the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty tooth and nail. On the one hand, they "swallow" ("warmly take in") the Trinitarian "mystery" that transcends the limitations of their finite mind with their regenerate heart. On the other hand, they "spit out" out a similar "mystery," such as the sovereignty and responsibility compatibilism, with the same mind, upon which they apparently bestow temporary and partial willy-nilly (!) "infinity." In short, the root cause for the difference is crystal clear. In the second instance the fully functioning regenerate heart is, often unconsciously and unintentionally, dismissed and replaced by the primacy or methodological ultimacy of the finite mind. This should not come as too much of a surprise since Freewill Arminianism is by definition incapable of having a biblical understanding of the heart as the radically and totally depraved mission control center of man that stands in need of a heart transplant. What is the upshot? The humanly incomprehensible is just as "heartily" embraced in one instance (The Trinity) as it is "heartlessly" and "apostate-mindfully" (Read: "mindlessly") opposed in a second one (Divine Sovereignty). The summons ever to gain and guard the regenerate heart as a matter of life and death (Prov. 4:23) could not be more apropos!

Candidly, and now for the third time, I have lost you, the reader, if you fail to recognize the relevance of all this and decide to reject or even ignore it. But remember, the heart is and remains man's mission control center (Once again, Prov. 4:23)! Therefore, "The Heart of the Problem is and ever remains the Problem of the Heart." It stands in need of a once for all transplant in "wretched sinners" (Ezek. 36:26), and in need of incessant purification in "wretched saints" (Jam. 4:8-9). That is why it has to be guarded to the hilt. Remember also that the mind may not be conformed to the world which loves to assign it a rebellious and prideful ultimacy as a stronghold raised against the knowledge of God, and therefore must be torn down as such by weapons of warfare that are divinely empowered (2 Cor. 10:4-5a). In fact, the mind does not come into its biblical own until it is renewed daily (Rom. 12:2) by making its total content fully captive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:5b)! The mind is and remains a tool of the heart, whether regenerate or unregenerate. When the heart embraces both poles of any complementary truth, it has a rich pay-off for the mind. It immediately does and will have cognitive rest! This applies to the Trinity, to the sovereignty-responsibility issue, to both God's love and hatred of sinners, and to all other complementary biblical truths. This includes, as we shall see in detail, the Threefold Ministry of the Church. Failure to recognize and embrace "complementary truth" in this context has more than once, if not invariably proven to be (self-) destructive, at times in the short term, but always in the long run. Hence the effort to put the present reality-check into the hopefully unforgettable spotlight! Incidentally, the primacy or ultimacy of the will or the emotions carries the same liability as the primacy/ultimacy of the intellect. Agreement means peace, but disagreement warfare.

However, when the heart has the primacy, it can and will put up with "folly" of the mind, the will or the emotions in loved ones. We all better deeply love and greatly respect Luther in spite

of his "'foolish' railings" against James, which according to one commentator put a centuries' long pall on the Epistle that did not really started to lift until the 1980's and onward. At that time "finally" a whole spate of commentaries and monographs on James began to be published that focused on its message and merits for its own sake! Frankly, even today it seems that James' "justification by works" functions as "Two-Dollar" bill in Christ's Church compared to the "One-Dollar" bill of Paul's "justification by faith." Both are recognized as unquestioned legal currency. But Paul's bill enjoys a much wider circulation than that of James! We all better equally love and respect Calvin as well in spite of his failure systematically and vigorously to put the threefold Gospel on the ecclesiastical map in his *Institutes* (although in his Commentary on Ezek. 11:19 he is right on the money). Or for that matter, godly Pentecostals in spite of their aberration to proclaim "speaking in tongues" as the (sole) evidence of the experiential presence of the Holy Spirit. At any rate, the detailed and telling implications of this reality-check for the Threefold Ministry of the Church are formulated below.

4. The Soteriological Reality Check

In Section III, 3 that focuses on the Evangelism aspect of the Threefold Ministry of the Church the content of this Reality Check receives a much more detailed attention. But for now, although it is a "must" to be alerted to it already, it is sufficient to point out that the Gospel of the Kingdom, thus moving beyond (major) aspects of the prevailing *systematic* theology of Luther, Calvin, as well as many Pentecostals, is Trinitarian and "triadic," that is, comes with *three major prongs*. In order to be transformed from an enemy of God to a child of God the New Covenant must be implemented. This is promised, held out in prospect, by God the Father (Jer. 31:31ff), produced, embodied, by God the Son (Is. 42:6; 49:8), and personalized, transported, by God the Holy Spirit (Is. 59:21). This Trinitarian New Covenant eyes three realities, the reality of mankind's rebellious heart, its filthy past, and its destructive life. This requires a heart transplant in regeneration, a not-guilty verdict in justification, and a godly life in sanctification. Without a heart transplant no one can enter or even see the Kingdom (John 3:3, 5). One is a "blind rebel." Without a not-guilty verdict no one can have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). One is a "hell bound sinner" of whatever stripe (John 4:17-18). Without godliness no one can have fellowship with God (Heb. 12:14). One is a "child of the devil" (John 8:44). As I already stated, all this must and will receive our careful and detailed attention in Section III, 3. But it is necessary to show at this juncture already that the Church must be full-orbed in its Gospel understanding and its Gospel presentation. The tragedy is that it suffered of "the fallacy of the historical perspective." This is to say, it responded to historical situations, and as a result all too often truncated the Gospel of the Kingdom, however unintentionally at times. Even today one is hard put to refer to any sermon that reflects the threefold message of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, "(1) Repent unto (2) the forgiveness of sins and (3) you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), reflecting the need for regeneration, justification, and sanctification. My research suggests, to put it mildly, that the general Church public never heard a Petrine New Covenant message that started out with repentance and concluded via the forgiveness of sins with the Gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38), which resulted in the momentous fact that all 3000 "responders" on the next "Sunday" flocked to the Church as the Workshop of the Holy Spirit to immerse themselves in the Word, in Fellowship, in the Lord's Supper, and in Prayer (Acts 2:42). This in turn led among other things to a breath-taking generosity which was anchored in the deep-rooted conviction that nothing belonged to them, but rather to their Lord and Master, and was on display in the sale of the

property entrusted to them to meet Kingdom needs (Acts 2:44-45). The official reported tally is that of the "products" of today's crusades, who supposedly turn to the person of Christ, only 5% end up in the body of Christ. It has been argued that a severely truncated Gospel cannot but hope to produce "misfits" who imagine themselves to be "heaven-bound," but may well be in for the greatest surprise of their lives in the Judgment. Candidly, the full-orbed threefold Gospel is easily missed. As we already saw, Luther basically championed a one-pronged Gospel (*simplex gratia*) with his one-sided emphasis upon justification, while Calvin upped it to a two-pronged Gospel (*duplex gratia*) with his two-sided stress upon justification and sanctification. As was stated in the **Preface** already, However deeply grateful we may and must be for God to grace us with these choice servants, it may never tempt us to believe that they cannot possibly harbor deficiencies or promote errors that are essentially reductionist or potentially destructive, whether in whole or in part. God's Word always and by definition towers over man's words. It is doubly dangerous to overlook, ignore, or oppose this, when it comes down to what the Gospel of the Kingdom is all about!

But there is one additional item to consider. A reductionist or errant Gospel has immediate implications for the nature and purpose of grace. Commitment to a one-pronged Gospel with justification as virtually the lone, if not exclusive objective easily slides into what may be designated as a hyper-grace position. Any emphasis upon the indispensable need for repentance as the only alternative to perishing (Lk. 13:3, 5), conjoint to faith as its flipside (John 3:16), is too often toned down, to say the least. At times folks who have pled and sought to incorporate the need and requirement of repentance insist have been told in no uncertain terms that there was no place (any longer) for them in their mission organization. Further, any reference to a life of holiness as commanded by God and demanded from God is viewed as an emphasis on or invitation to "works-righteousness," which must be shunned like the plague. In such settings a notion, such as "the disciplines of grace," which indicate the need to be in the Word (John 8:31; 15:7) and in prayer (Lk. 18:1ff; 1 Thess. 5:17), stands roundly condemned as a contradiction in terms, as if God in his governmental dealings with his people does not insist on the indispensable use of the means of grace to grant them the indispensable evidence of grace. A farmer who depends totally upon the grace of timely sunshine and rain to end up with a crop is nevertheless a delinquent sluggard in God's eyes if he lacks the discipline of doing his utmost to prepare and care for the soil (Prov. 12:11; 26:13-16). Only a "fool" extols the 100% God at the neglect or expense of the 100% man!

A two-pronged Gospel is in a better position to summon to holiness. But once it accepts the idea that justification is "the heart of the Gospel," holiness tends to become a caboose, rather than the crowning piece of God's saving activity, while the need for a heart transplant (Ezek. 36:26), also in children of the covenant (Deut. 30:6), coupled with the need for repentance, together with faith, as its evidence, is overlooked, ignored or even denied. Covenant membership, baptismal regeneration, or presumptive regeneration "already" took care of that!

I may have lost you again, the reader, if you turn your back to the fact of and need for the *triplex gratia* that, as we shall see in detail in Section III, 3, runs like a threefold golden thread throughout Scripture, from the beginning of the OT to the end of the NT. Ezekiel 36:25-27 towers as a warning, if not rebuke, over every effort of man to downplay this. Further, passages, such as 2 Cor. 6:1 and 12:5 boldly, if not bluntly proclaim that the so-called "emperors" of hyper-grace, who leave the 100% man out of the picture, or of reductionist grace, who focus on justification only, or at best on justification and sanctification, simply and all too often do not have all the "clothes" on that can provide full and definitive protection against the wrath of God.

The description of the Evangelistic and Edificational Ministries of the Church below furnish copious additional biblical evidence to that effect. In a word, to truncate or twist the biblical full-orbed, Trinitarian and three-pronged (triadic) Gospel and to warp the essence and objective of the grace of the Gospel are sooner or later bound to be destructive for lost souls to one extent or another![18]

5. Practical Reality-Check

The fifth reality-check is both profoundly simple and simply profound, and therefore easily to be grasped, but not as easily to be implemented. While it is not sufficiently intelligible simply to define theology simply as "application"--which does and should raise some eyebrows--, it is irrefutable that all truth does have practical implications and should have practical applications. Difference in theology does and must mean a difference in practice. If it does not, why make it an issue? Divergent views about any truth must always be defended or promoted on two counts. For one, it must be firmly believed to be based on Scripture. But for another, it must just as firmly be believed to be more conducive to holiness. But here we run into a curious fact. Often emotions run high in discussions pertaining to Christian Doctrine (Systematic Theology) or Christian Life (Christian Ethics). But at the end of the day it just as often appears to be a "tempest in a teapot," or "a storm in a glass of water," whatever the doctrine or the practice, because all too often everybody goes home to drink the same root beer, frankly with or without

[18] To define or delineate the Gospel is not an easy assignment. While the Gospel is "good news," not all "good news" is the Gospel. This militates against the notion of a Gospel in the broader and a Gospel in the narrower sense. This twofold use cannot be verified from Scripture. Keller, *Center Church*, 30-31, holds that J. I. Packer in his trailblazing essay, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*," comes closest to the biblical definition. The Gospel is that "God, that is, the Triune God, saves sinners." But then he adds that the product of the Gospel should not be confused with the essence of the Gospel. "Loving deeds--even though they embody the truths of the gospel and cannot be separated from preaching the gospel--should not be conflated with it. The gospel is preeminently a report about the work of Christ on our behalf—that is why and how the gospel is salvation by grace. The gospel is news because it is about a salvation accomplished for us." This could be (is?) a questionable statement. It could (does?) reveal a questionable definition or delineation of what marks someone as a "sinner" and what "salvation" is all about. Once it is grasped that a sinner has "three problems," a cobra-like heart, an excrement-like past, and a poison-like life, which not so incidentally accounts for both the Flood and Eternal Damnation, and that salvation provides "three solutions," a new heart, a new righteousness, and a new holiness, the proper definition or delineation of the Gospel does and must take all these three aspects into account. Thus the Gospel is that "God the Father promises, God the Son produces and God the Spirit personalizes a threefold salvation by turning a threefold sinner into a threefold saint." In this definition or delineation holiness is not just a product of the Gospel but belongs to the essence of the Gospel. The Gospel is, indeed, "about a salvation that is accomplished for us!" But it also pertains to "a salvation that is accomplished in us and through us! In other words, it covers more, much more than "justification" only! Not so incidentally, this definition or delineation also answers the question of Keller, *Center Church*, 39-40, why Matthew with his focus on "the Kingdom," John with his emphasis upon "eternal life," and Paul with his predilection for "justification," seem to approach the Gospel from different angles. "The Bible Doesn't Give One Standard Gospel Outline" (39), we are told. However, the above composite definition accounts for each particular. It also undercuts the errant emphasis upon "hyper-grace" and remedies the deficiency of "truncated grace." Grace eyes all three components of Gospel salvation. No "truncating" allowed! Furthermore, starting with the founding piece of a heart transplant in regeneration and continuing with the centerpiece of a not-guilty verdict in justification, it concludes with the crowning piece of a godly life in sanctification. No "hyper-grace" permitted! No presence of holiness? No experience of grace! In sum, there is both the *threesome* of grace, and a gracious *hierarchy* in that threesome, with holiness as the crowning piece of God's gracious salvation activity. But more about all this in **Section III, 3**!

the root. In other words, the stand one takes makes no practical difference whatsoever in terms of a godly life. As such it may well be subject to Paul's condemnation of "empty babbling without an eye for godliness" (2 Tim. 2:16).

By way of illustration, the meaning of the Lord Supper was a "hot potato" in the days of the Reformation. It precipitated an utterly regrettable split between Lutheran and Calvinist churches. But what practical difference did it make for Lutherans and Calvinists to partake of the Lord's Supper on any given Sunday? Similarly in the areas of the Trinity, Sovereignty and Responsibility, as well as Evangelism, Apologetics, or Counseling! If hotly debated truths or methodologies do not have practical consequences and their proponents do not (have any intention to) act upon them, what good is it to enter into the debate at all? The same applies to "The Threefold Ministry of the Church." The Biblical teaching on this topic is explosive. So is and should be its practical implication for, and application in the life of the Church! After all, the Grand Command for it is to teach its disciples *to observe* whatever God enjoins (and to lay off whatever God forbids) implies that "taking proper, that is, obedient action" lies at the very core of the Christian Faith. The Church undoubtedly sets forth the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of Divine Providence, to confine ourselves to two instances of biblical teaching. But how to *observe* these teachings is rarely, if ever, clearly stated. This is not the appropriate context to enlarge on this, although I have more than just a general idea how to go about it. But for now let it be sufficient for all of us to recognize and embrace from the heart that *orthodoxy* must be fully matched by *orthopraxis*, if it is worth this designation. At the same time, it is doubtful that genuine and authentic *orthopraxis* will ever come about with *orthopathos*. Lukewarm "listlessness" in the pursuit of holiness leaves a bad taste in God's mouth with all that this entails (Rev. 3:15-16). Yes, one can have all the doctrinal ducks in a row (Jam. 1:19), and still be a deluded "babbler" (Jam. 1:22). Both "Spine-chilling," and "Enough said!"

Candidly, I have lost you, the reader, now for the fifth time, if you beg to differ. But remember James' indictment that folks, who eagerly listen to God's Word and seek to know God's Word, still deceive themselves if they do not act upon God's Word. Presumably nobody wishes to be like a man or woman who carefully studies his or her face, but turns around and, oh my, totally forgets, in fact, decides to forget, what he or she looks like (Jam. 1:24). Shaving cream on your face and still in your PJ's! Off to report to your boss? Lipstick on your cheeks and uncombed hair! Off to see your client? Both would be incredibly foolish in the workaday world. You lose your job and your sale. It is even more foolish in God's world! While acting without thinking is bound to be chaotic, thinking without acting is and remains sterile. No wonder that the life of the genuine Christian is a life of daily repentance, of daily forgiveness, and a daily infilling with the Holy Spirit. Without these three components in place a life of holiness is an impossibility, even for a nano-moment. The presence of the practical implications of one's doctrinal or methodological stance is especially telling in the next reality, which spills over in the focus of this volume, The Threefold Ministry of the Church. There is no excuse for not being "action-packed" in "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; Rom. 16:26) in this Ministry.

6. The Eschatological Reality-Check

The sixth and final reality-check is eschatological and may meet with some questions without affecting the substance of this section. At any rate it should be understood that all eschatological positions, whether the Amillennial, the Postmillennial, the Historical-Premillennial or the Dispensational-Premillennial one, are fully committed to victory, both the definitive victory on

the cross and in the resurrection of Christ and the ultimate victory in heaven. But they differ dramatically when it comes down to our earthly scene. Historical and Dispensational Premillennialism are pessimistic and "defeatist" about the present era. The statement that "It is useless to polish the brass on a sinking ship" pretty much sums it up! They stake their hope of victory upon a literal and physical Millennium following the Return of Christ. Postmillennialism is optimistic and trumpets "victory," even in the present era and definitely prior to his Second Coming. Somehow the whole world is or will be getting a Christian signature, inclusive of the nation of Israel. The usually prevailing type of Amillennialism appears to send mixed signals. It prefers to call itself neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but rather realistic. It often hopes, even seeks, and is always thankful for victory, but it is ready to live with providential "defeat." After all, the "wheat" and the "tares" are perennial companions in an ever present and continuing stand-off (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43). The real victory, then, is reserved for the after-life.

The present volume holds to an eschatology that seeks to avoid the questionable aspects that seem to be attached to each view as defined thus far, and may be designated for lack of possibly a preferable terminology as "Proto-millennialism," in which "proto" stands for the admittedly rather rare, but still legitimate dictionary meaning of "radical." In short, "radical" millennialism latches on to the promise of God that holds out the *pro*spect of vic*to*ry but in the *pro*cess demands *to*tal combat for its fulfillment. As such it constantly "throbs" with life as it embraces a perennial D-Day with all that this entails in terms of "blood, sweat and tears" (Col. 1:24), in order to arrive at an ever beckoning, an ever in principle obtainable, an often practically elusive, and an at times joyfully experienced V-Day, which, incidentally, also is and should be characteristic of a biblically consistent and full-orbed Amillenialism. So it cannot but hold to a (Postmillennial) *vision* of victory already on the present earthly scene. The promises of God are too glorious to ignore (See a. o. Ps. 2:8; Hab. 2:14; Mt. 28:19-20, and the many similar passages in the OT as well as the NT). But this comes with a biblical caveat. It simultaneously insists that in God's governmental dealings his promises are invariably realized through a tireless and untiring human instrumentality: 100% God through 100% man. In short, the biblical motto is, "Victory through Battle." In fact, victory *only* through hard battle, consistent battle, perennial battle![19] After all "tribulation" is and remains the "gang way" as well as the "gang plank" to enter the Kingdom of God (1 Thess. 3:3), in which "by the way" true Christianity rejoices (1

[19] I am fond of telling my esteemed Postmillennial friends that the only way they can see their hope (vision of victory) come to fruition is by acting like a Proto-millennialist (or consistent, biblically full-orbed Amillennialist) (victory through battle)! Jonathan Edwards, in his beautiful booklet, *Call to United Extra-ordinary Prayer* (Christian Heritage, 2003), holds out the expectation of such prayer in the (postmillennial) eschatological end times. If he had been a biblically full-orbed "Amillennialist" or Proto-millennialist he would have argued (1) that this kind of prevailing prayer is not just promised for those end times, but divinely mandated for every "present," every "now," in the history of the Church, although he admittedly appears to do this by implication, and (2) that as a result such prayer could no longer be called "extra-ordinary," but would have to be designated as "normal" and the benchmark or standard by which the Church will be perennially judged "for better or for worse" (Is. 62:6-7)! His failure solemnly to insist on this may have been the reason why his otherwise superb booklet suffered a century long obscurity, and although recently brought back in the spotlight, does not have the much needed impact in or upon a society that has lost the war or is about to lose it without much mourning about this. Candidly, why would it have this impact, as long as Revival Prayer is presented as "*extra-ordinary*" and as long as it is held or implied that somehow "the ordinary" will do "fine?" This, once again, points to the need for meticulous definition of the truth of God's Word. In the country of my birth I noticed two sets of tracks originating from the same Central Station and running parallel for quite a number of miles. Passengers seated in the trains heading full speed at their destination on both tracks could unimpededly wave at each other. But suddenly one train hurtled one way and the other the opposite way until they were "poles apart." Buying a ticket in either train at first hardly made a difference. But did it ever at the end! Meticulous theology is not "everything."

Thess. 1:6). The bottom line is this. Presence of (Proto-millennial) Battle? Victory! Absence of such Battle? (Premillennial) Defeat! It is hard to miss that both the OT and the NT testify to this throughout. In short, if the victory is won, we have only God to thank. But if we experience defeat, whether total or partial, we only have ourselves greatly, shamefully, and sorrowfully to blame, and cannot simply ascribe this in a rather detached, nonchalant, or even "devoted" manner to "Sovereignty" or "Providence. Nor can we appeal with a measure of "justification" to "Occasional Skirmishes, if not Battles Won!"[20]

In other words, in Scripture the promises of God transcend the unconditional-conditional polarity. "Unconditionality" tends to emphasize the sovereignty of God while often taking its eyes off, and therefore at the neglect or expense of, the full and unreserved responsibility of man, allowing (believing) humanity too often to act like an interested observer only. "Conditionality" tends to emphasize the responsibility of man, often suggesting or implying that he is the cause to an effect, keeping its eye off, and therefore at the neglect or expense of, the full and unreserved sovereignty of God. Scripture is replete with data that indicate or spell out the transcendence of these two poles. It is imperative to spell this out and explain it in detail in order to give authoritative substance to this claim.

In the OT Joshua has been granted all the real estate from the river Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea upon which "he places the sole of his foot" (Josh. 1:3-4). The grant, in the perfect tense (!), is nothing but amazing in its scope. But for God to grant is not the same as for man to possess. It requires an unrelenting commitment to mortal combat to receive it. Just like it takes a trip to the bank to cash a promissory note, called a check! Ironically, the Israelites did not even rise to that occasion in their attempts to occupy the land of Canaan. Refusing to fight it out and through, they were culpably left with large swaths of the native population as permanent thorns in their side. Incidentally, not until David (1 Chron. 17:3) was there a semblance of the kind of victory envisioned in the days of Joshua! David clearly had every reason to thank God without whom he would have embarked upon an impossible task. The Goliath story is a case in point! But at the same time he paid the heavy price of taking incessant risks and facing incessant danger in at times a very tenuous warfare that for all practical purposes seemed to spell doom. Facing a heavily armed giant in a shepherd's tunic with a few pebbles is not a very assuring enterprise. Neither is facing a murderous government and constant hostile attacks. At any rate, Solomon inherited David's achievements, but squandered them away when he lost his heart for God and decisively turned his back to God, not to mention the rapid downgrade during the subsequent Northern and Southern Kingdoms, which must make us weep (Jer. 8:18-9:1; Rom. 9:2; Phil. 3:18).

The NT counterpart of the transcendence of the polarity under discussion is given by Peter. We have been granted (perfect tense here as well) all that is needful for "life and godliness." This is even more astonishingly all-encompassing. But, once again, for God to grant is not the same as for man to receive. It must be obtained by knowing him who called us to his own glory (2 Pet. 1:3-4). No intimate repentant, believing, grateful, joyful communion with Christ, through his

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[20] Compare for God's governmental concatenation of Divine grace and human responsibility, Thomas Manton, *op. cit*., 8-9, "It is true God has opened an excellent treasure in the church to defray the debts of humble sinners, and to bear the expenses of the saints to heaven. But there is nothing allowed to wanton prodigals, who spend freely and sin lavishly upon the mere account of the riches of grace … There is a difference between causality and order. Mercy is never obtained but in the use of means. Wisdom's dole is dispensed at wisdom's gate (Prov. 8:34) … (even if) the use of means does not oblige God to give mercy … (James) wrote … to prevent or check their misprisions (errors) who cried up naked apprehensions for faith, and a barren profession for true religion."

Word, the Fellowship of his people, the Lord's Supper, and Prayer (Acts 2:42)? No fullness of life or holiness! Period!

In both cases, OT as well as NT, the transcending nature of the promise comes to the fore. The "grant" is in the form of a promissory note that demands a full human commitment to acquire its content. A check written and signed by a trustworthy individual is "money in the bank." But it must be cashed, if it is "to be put in circulation." Until that time it is "unclaimed capital." There are innumerable data in Scripture that underscore this governmental pattern of "100% God through 100% man," the latter as the God-mandated means to an end, and never as a man-made cause to an effect. Abraham had to return to the marriage bed for Isaac to be born (Gen. 18:12). Parents have to train their children for them not to deviate (Prov. 22:6). Folks have to exhort each other daily for holiness to be a reality (Heb. 3:13). Nehemiah does not come out of his clothes to see the promise of a rebuilt Jerusalem fulfilled (Neh. 4:23). The merchant cannot buy the property with the treasure in it or the pearl of great price, until and unless he has sold everything in order to pay for it (Mt. 13:44). To top it all off, God's promise and plan to return the Israelites from the Exile to their "homeland" would not occur apart from their heartfelt prayers as the human means to his sovereign end (Jer. 29:10-14). Frankly, if there had been no Daniel, God would have raised someone else, a "You," to stand in the instrumental gap!

In a word, no fear, no unbelief, no indifference, no negligence, no laziness, no passivity, no lingering, no wasting of time, no procrastination permitted. Not ever! All this stands condemned as rebellion against God (Dt. 1:26-33), and as a result leaves his "money in the bank," be it always for future utilization. After all, both "the gifts (grants) and the calling (summons to cash in) of God" are and remain "irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29)! It is to be feared that in the Judgment all of us to our shame will be faced with "lots of unclaimed capital!"

Candidly, "unconditionality" does not allow for "unclaimed capital" and thereby flies in the face of the complementary truth of Hebrews 4:1-2. God's promises remain in force, even if there is no tangible benefit due to lack of faith! "Conditionality," on the other hand, undoubtedly leaves room for "'dead' capital." But it still suffers two ills. For one, it misses that "unclaimed capital" is and remains "alive." For another, it flies in the face of the complementary truth of Philippians 2:12-13. It is God who works both to will and to work! "Of God, and through God and unto God are all things" (Rom. 11:36)! Both "unconditionality" and "conditionality" thinking fall victim to the primacy of the intellect that does not leave both poles, of sovereignty and responsibility, "alone" for what they are in tandem together, or "at peace," for what they are in harmony with each other. They regrettably (must) jeopardize the one by virtue of and at times even at the expense of the other. At any rate, all this explains why in the present context the fully "complementary biblical truth" of "Victory through Battle" motto is emphasized. It is woven in the warp and woof of Scripture (For an additional sample, see once again Is. 62:6-7). Each victory is and must be hard-fought. After all, unless a seed dies, it does not produce any fruit. But if it does die, the fruit is abundant (John 12:24). In short, no death, no fruit, a little death, (at best) a little fruit, a little more death, (hopefully) a little more fruit, unqualified death, lavish fruit! This decisively establishes and underscores the biblical truth of 100% God + 100% man = 100%. It is hardly surprising that this comes to perfect expression in Isaiah, "*You* have done for us all *our* works (Is. 26:12, italics added; see also Phil. 2:12-13), one of those precious verses that are mostly unknown and hardly ever function among and in believers as they should. Both Divine and human activities take place simultaneously, but the Divine activity has invariably the primacy over the human one (See also Rom. 15:18-19). This, as we saw, is the kind of complementarity of truth that does not fit in the human mind with its single occupancy, but

peacefully lodges in the regenerate heart with its double occupancy, and yields "cognitive rest" to boot. It stands to reason that this twofold truth enters into the Threefold *Ministry* of the Church with a vengeance!

Candidly, and now for the sixth time, I have lost you, the reader, before I even start, if this motto is ignored or rejected even to the slightest degree, whether in theory or practice. But remember that we cannot trifle with Scripture that warns us to follow in the footsteps of both the ant and the pugilist. The ant "never sleeps," and the pugilist invariably trains as tenaciously and incessantly as he does because he knows that only one contestant can obtain "the gold medal." The Church better be longing for the time that the ant and the pugilist are summoned to look at the Christian to supply the supreme model for "the only way to victory!" But most likely that time will never come apart from some exceptional men of God, such as Paul. After all, he summons us to be "imitators of him, just as he is of Christ." Come to think of it, with that and as such he may well beat the ant and the pugilist as a role model, which means that this is and must be within everybody's grasp!

To sum up, I may have lost you, the reader, up to six times. But each time this comes with a price. To fail in the meticulous definition and application of biblical truth is eventually to self-destruct. A balloon can only stay aloft indefinitely in spite of one or more pinholes, as long as enough air is powerfully blown into it. But when the power of the airflow diminishes, the balloon will soon be on the descent and eventually crash land when it is reduced to an intolerable degree. That the Church has crash landed in the Middle East and Europe, and is crash landing in the USA is impossible to deny. So the only alternative is to start up or increase the powerful and empowering air flow and in the process carefully to locate and plug the holes, whether small, medium size, or large! They all better get our careful attention to avoid any and all soft or crash landings. It is sobering, if not spine-chilling, to recognize that the Church has never been able to prevent the one or the other. But in the OT the Psalmist already warned us ever to be on "red alert." "Even after the New Covenant Revival makes its imposing presence known and felt, make sure not succumb to folly again (and again)" (Ps. 85:8). And James complements this, if not underscores this in the NT when he calls all Church members after less than two decades of NT Church history, "adulterers and adulteresses," and warns them to "cleanse their hands and purify their hearts (you double-minded)" (Jam. 4:4, 8). There are apparently threatening as well as present "holes galore," whether of the "pin size," the "medium size," or the "large size" variety, both corporately and individually!

The six diagnostic Reality Checks, the Historical, Ecclesiological, Theological, Soteriological, Practical, and Eschatological one, seek to identify the ever threatening and often present holes in today's Ecclesiastical Balloon in order to proceed to what hopefully and prayerfully may constitute the Biblical Cure for a condition that too often appears to be a far cry from the Revival Glory that our God promises *and* mandates in the light of both the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. As such these six reality checks should not be casually ignored or impatiently shoved aside. They are of crucial significance, and should be treated as such. At any rate they set the stage for and determine the content of our topic in Section II under the heading of The Structure of the Church as the Launching Pad for its Threefold Ministry, which deals with Foundational Principles, as well as in Section III under the heading of The Revival of the Church as the

Dynamics behind its Threefold Ministry which deals with the Practical Implications and Applications of the Foundational Principles.[21]

[21] **Section III,** which deals with the Practical Implications and Applications of the Foundational Principles, is scheduled to focus specifically upon 1. The Nature, Function, Manner, Objectives and Implementation of the Evangelistic Ministry of the Church, 2. The Nature, Function, Manner, Objectives and Implementation of the Edificational Ministry of the Church, and 3. The Nature, Function, Manner, Objectives and Implementation of the Serving Ministry of the Church. All this is to be preceded by a general Introduction and a delineation of Biblical Revival as the Dynamics or Engine behind this Threefold Ministry, and to be followed by a Conclusion. The Conclusion focuses upon Biblical Revival as the Guarantee of the effectiveness of this Ministry.

II. The Structure of the Church: The Launching Pad for its Threefold Ministry

1. The Glory of the Church

There is no greater glory on earth than the glory of the Church. It towers above all societal structures mentioned in Scripture, such as marriage, the family, business enterprises, the state (See Eph. 5:22-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-3:7). After all, these are all "natural" institutions, whether (involuntary) creation ordinances or (voluntary) creaturely associations. The Church, on the other hand, is a "super-natural" redemption ordinance to offset the total and radical bankruptcy of this world, inclusive of its "natural" institutions. Frankly, the Church is the radiant anchorage and radiating centerpiece of world history. It is the Dwelling place of God the Father, the Body of God the Son, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. As such it is an awesome institution, worthy to be embraced, treasured, and advanced at any price. In fact, it is the only institution against which "the gates of hell" cannot prevail (Mt. 16:18)! Not even para-ecclesiastical organizations ever can or may claim this prerogative, and therefore never were, nor are, and never will be able to sanitize a society. If the Church does not rise to that occasion, it simply will not materialize. At the consummation of world history its ultimate victory will be on display in the Bride of Christ, the Holy City (Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2). Nothing in today's terminology can describe its glory. All possible superlatives heaped one upon another fall short to fathom it (Rev. 21:9-27).

For the Church to be what the Triune God designed it to be, it must be filled both with the Word (Col. 3:16) and with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). This is the One Two-fold Mark that the Church must display for its Life and its Ministry sake. A locomotive that faces perfectly laid tracks (The Word), but has no head of steam (The Spirit) is going nowhere. Similarly, a locomotive that has a head of steam (The Spirit) but no tracks (The Word) may blow the whistle, but is not going anywhere either. When fully operational, the One Twofold Mark manifests itself in four ministerial activities and in four ministerial effects. The four activities are (1) The Speaking of the Word through the Spirit in Preaching, (2) The Sharing of the Word through the Spirit in Fellowship, (3) The "Showing" of the Word though the Spirit in the Sacrament (The Lord's Supper), and (4) The Strengthening through the Word through the Spirit in prayer (Acts 2:42). The four effects are (1) The Implementation of the Word through the Spirit in Discipleship (love and obedience; John 15:8-10), (2) The Enforcement of the Word through the Spirit in Church Discipline (Acts 5:1ff), (3) The Growth of the Word through the Spirit in Conversions (Acts 6:7), and (4) The Opposition to the Word through the Spirit in persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).[22] To the extent that a Church ever would fail or refuse to embrace the One Two-fold Mark, it loses its birthright. Christ's designation of the Jewish Assembly as the "Synagogue of Satan" should serve as the handwriting on the wall (See Rev. 3:9; as well as John 8:44 and Lk. 12:10). To the extent it would fail or refuse to embrace all eight manifestations, it is bound to lose its Revival

[22] The content of the Three Reformation Marks of the Church, namely, 1. The Proper Preaching of the Word of God, 2. The Proper Administration of the Sacraments, and 3. The Proper Exercise of Church Discipline, which historically correspond to three of the most grievous errors of Roman Catholicism, are to be gratefully endorsed and applauded. But they fall short of the full Biblical truth. This occurred to me when I analyzed Christ's Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2 and 3. If he had merely applied these three marks to them, he would have given a clean bill of health to more than just two of them.

status and sooner or later will sink into partial or total oblivion. In a word, the Church better be on constant alert not to fall from the height to which God has raised it, and be eager to repent on a moment's notice, as soon as this is called for (Rev. 2:5).

All this does and must set the tone to for us embark upon the Threefold Ministry of the Church.

2. The Organization of the Church

The Church is an Army. No war can be won by any army if it is not properly organized and enters into battle in an uncoordinated manner. Lone rangers may have limited successes. But they do not understand that it takes a team and a team effort to be victorious. The Second World War D-Day at the Normandy Coast would never have turned into a V-Day if the Air Force, Navy and Army had not displayed meticulous coordination. The Sports World knows that in Football a Bill Belichek (Coach) needed a Tom Brady (Quarterback) and that in Basketball a Michael Jordan (Star player) needed a Scottie Pippen (Support cast) to haul in the World Championship hardware. The US automotive industry was not able to compete in the global market when the various divisions within the several companies competed with each other, at times even waged a turf war, and failed to stand shoulder to shoulder in a total cooperative pursuit of new products. But after remedying this costly and near disastrous malady, it turned the corner. In Scripture, as we shall see below, the refusal to be and act as a team player stands roundly condemned from the get-go. So let us take a close look at the structure of the Church that gives rise to a coordinated, powerful and effective threefold Ministry in its pursuit of both the Grand Objective of the making and training of disciples (Mt. 28:19-20) and the necessary logistics as the only (subordinate) reason why this world even continues to exist.

A recent Sports commentator argued, reciting numerous occurrences to back up his thesis, that it is "talent," rather than "teamwork" that wins championships. However, in a recent elite tournament two teams, both loaded with talent, battled each other for the "gold medal." The team that had the talents the longest won out handily. The moral of the story is crystal clear. It takes talents and teams, teams and talents to haul in the trophy. According to Scripture, this is the way it is in and with the Church. As we will see, each Christian has received a spiritual gift, and therewith is a brilliant talent. But since each talent is limited, each Christian is only selectively brilliant, and therefore stands in need of his fellow Christians who have other talents that complement him. In a word, the Church is and must be both a team of talents and a talented team for it to win wars. Talented lone rangers will not do. Neither will a large number that is devoid of talent. The critical mass will not be reached unless and until everyone has identified and arrived at his talent, and is sufficiently humble to function as a team member, always cooperating with and yielding to other talents as the situation requires. This is regrettably a rarity in the Church. However, remember that the eye, the ear and the tongue are all selectively brilliant but never go it alone. They form a team. They never seek to compete with or outdo each other, but honor and complement each other in a powerful division of adjoining and joint labor. Paul drives the same message home when he compares the Church to a body (team) in which every part (talent) has its own place and function (1 Cor. 12:12ff). Now on to the details!

It has become increasingly popular, especially in Pentecostal circles, to promote an ongoing Five-fold Ministry, as if this were taught in Ephesians 4:10, an apostolic, a prophetic, an evangelistic, a pastoral, and a teaching ministry. However, a meticulous exegesis of this passage as well as other relevant passages of Scripture does not support this construct. First, the Greek

wording of Ephesians 4:10 does not allow for a five-fold ministry. It presents and emphasizes rather a four-fold one. God has given "some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastor-teachers." The original terminology translated as "some" occurs only four times. This means that the hyphenation of pastor-teachers is mandated, which precludes and therewith forbids the expansion of biblical truth into the popular but mistaken view of a so-called five-fold ministry.[23] Second, the office of Deacon, as presented in Philippians 1:1 and underscored in I Timothy 3:8-13, is never taken into account. This simultaneously expands as well as truncates biblical truth by definition. One simply cannot add an alien non-biblical element to or leave out an essential biblical component from God's truth and hope for clear sailing. Third, while it is true that at the time of Paul's writing of Ephesians there were still live apostles and live prophets, Ephesians 2:20 indicates that they made up the foundation of the Church. Ephesians 3:4 adds by way of explanation that they are "foundational" in as much they disclosed the mystery of Christ that was thus far an unknown entity. Clearly this foundation was laid in full, as reflected in the completed canon of the NT. This makes it equally clear that these offices ceased to be operational. To deny this is to deny not only that the Christ-mystery is fully known to the Church, as if it is not in possession of the full Gospel. It is also to deny that Scripture contains all the features of this mystery, which undermines its sufficiency for the Church's Gospel ministry. All this is corroborated by other data in the NT. An "Apostle" (with a capital "A") had to be an eye-witness of Jesus, and had to be part of the Apostolate which had the Holy Spirit breathed upon it to produce the "apostolic" Word of God (John 20:22-23), while a "Prophet" (with a capital "P") was a specially authorized mouth-piece of God that has an inerrant and universally binding message, whether in the OT (See Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:19-21) or the NT (See Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 2 Pet. 3:16). No one today meets these conditions and therefore can claim this privilege and this function. Clearly, Apostles with a capital "A" and "Prophets" with a capital "P" had their day, fulfilled their calling, and ceased to be necessary any longer. Their Office simply had run its *full* course. This said, however, apostles with a small "a" are still in evidence in NT times. They are folks with a specific mission.

Romans 16 opens up a window upon their function. In this chapter Paul requests the Roman congregation to greet a number of hard-working people, women as well as men some of whom risked their necks for him and all of whom deserved the undying gratitude of him as well as of all the churches (Rom. 16:3-15). It is rather remarkable that he does not send his greetings to them directly. This starts to make sense, however, if they were his unofficial or official "co-workers" who either as a spontaneous and voluntary or as an assigned and sent advance party, that is, "advance" in comparison to him (Rom. 16:7c), were instrumental in jump-starting the Church in Rome. If they did not at least partly labor "in his name," they definitely acted with his knowledge and encouragement. So with this as backdrop Paul "summons" the Romans to honor them as their "founding brothers and sisters," while urging them in no uncertain terms as well to keep a wary eye on, in fact, to distance themselves from others who were sowing discord and undermined both their and his teaching, which he undoubtedly summarized in his Letter. It is in this context that Paul calls Andronicus and Junias outstanding "messengers" or "missionaries" (*apostoloi*), if not an outstanding "missionary" team, who as his fully involved "co-prisoners" in

[23] Nowhere in the NT is the "pastor-teacher," which is the substantive as well as functional equivalent of "elder" or "overseer" (bishop), ever designated simply as "pastor," or "shepherd." See on this specifically Jacob van Bruggen, *Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk* (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, 1984), 97-98.

the service of King Jesus either time-wise preceded him in their ministerial labors or were commissioned by him to start what he eventually would solidify, if not complete (Rom. 16:7).

All this leads to the conclusion that the NT, apart from the original, fundamental and unique "APOSTLESHIP" of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1), distinguishes four types of apostles, (1) the ones with a capital "A," the "Twelve" (Mt. 10:1ff; Gal. 1:17, 19; 1 Cor. 15:9; 2 Cor. 11:5 and 12:11 (if not ironic), Eph. 2:20; 4:11), (2) self-appointed apostles (Rev. 2:2b); (3) false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2c), as well as (4) apostles in the wider sense of the word, such as apparently the "Seventy-Two" (or "Seventy," depending upon the manuscript) and others like them (Lk. 10:1ff; Rom.16:7; 1 Cor. 9:5; 12:28-29; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). The latter are "folks-with-a-specific-mission," which may be called "unique" in a derived sense. Today we designate them as "missionaries" or "missionary-associates" sent out with individually defined mandates. According to the blueprint of Romans 16, they generally spread or help spread the Gospel often in "virgin" territories and plant churches. Incidentally, while both the inner circle of the "Twelve" (Mt. 10:1ff) and the broader tally of the "Seventy-Two" (Lk. 10:1ff) have the identical mandate, the identical authority and the identical ministry when Jesus sends them out into the villages, there is at the same time a sharp and decisive distinction between the two groups. Only the "College of the Twelve" had the promised Spirit (John 16:12-15) breathed upon by Jesus to produce the inerrant Word of God as the basis for the forgiveness and retention of sin (John 20:22-23), and so as the Keys that can bind and lose, and open or close the Kingdom (Mt. 16:19). In this regard all other NT "apostles," inclusive of the "Seventy-Two," are second tier, and are 100%, without any ifs, ands or buts, answerable and accountable to the God-breathed, Inerrant, Authoritative, Necessary, Sufficient and Clear Word of the "College of the Twelve."[24] Even if specific passages are not always easy to interpret or understand, only "the ignorant and the unstable do and will twist it to their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). All others can expect to arrive by means of this Word at "all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing good fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:9-10, that is, to experience "the riches of the full assurance of the understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2-3). In short, this is the promise for everyone who reads, examines, interprets, absorbs and surrenders to the Word in 3-D, that is, "(1) to explore it with their mind and (2) store it in their heart so that (3) they do not and will not sin against God with their lives" (Ps. 119:11).

Prophets with a small "p" are in evidence in NT times as well. These, as we shall see further below, are folks who set forth the existing Word of God, similar to the schools of the prophets in the OT. But there is no evidence in the NT that they represented an "office."

This leaves us with three attested offices in the NT, the office of Evangelist (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11), of Pastor-Teacher (Acts 20:17; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1ff; 5:17) and of Deacon (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8ff).[25] They have the ultimate, be it delegated and ministerial authority in the Church.

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[24] See for the place and function of Romans 16 as well as of the use of the term "apostle" in the NT, also Jacob van Bruggen, *Het Raadsel van Romeinen 16* (Groningen: Uitgeverij de Vuurbaak, 1970), 15-36, esp. 19-22, 27-32. For additional interesting details, see **Appendix V.**

[25] A careful study of all the pertinent biblical data, such as Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11d; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Tit. 1:5, 7; Jam 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-2), does (and should!) lead to the conclusion that the office of pastor-teacher, elder, overseer (bishop) fully overlap each other. In fact, they are one and the same! There may be a difference in function within the office (1 Tim. 5:17). But this does not warrant the regrettable decision on the part of many to split the office in two, thus tearing at the exquisite biblical tapestry and putting the future of the Church in jeopardy. After all, it tends to elevate the function of the one component and lower the expectation for the second. Or, ironically, it manages to

Everyone is answerable to them, inclusive of the apostles with a small "a" and prophets with a small "p." Scripture is crystal clear in this regard (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-13; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Heb. 13:7, 17).

Incidentally, if Evangelists are sent on a mission, they can double up as "missionaries," whether at home or abroad. Further, as we shall see below, Pastor-Teachers must have the gift of "speaking the oracles of God" in Petrine terminology (1 Pet. 4:11a) or, which amounts to the same thing, of "prophecy" (with a small "p") in Pauline terms (Rom. 12:6b) in order to qualify for the office, just as the office of Evangelist and Deacon can only be occupied by those who have the corresponding gifts of "evangelism" and "service." Finally, as we shall see as well, Deacons are responsible for all the logistics that are connected with the ministry of the Evangelists and the Pastor-Teachers. They must facilitate them in any way possible, in terms of equipment, transportation, etc., etc., must smooth their course of action, in terms of finances, removal of possible roadblocks, etc., etc., must be alert to any needs in those who are touched by or respond to their ministry, whether short term or long term, and must extend a helping hand wherever needed, in terms of sickness, employment, etc., etc. It is hardly surprising that at the cradle of the Diaconal Office we find as the ground rule that anyone in this capacity must meet the high standard of being "full of faith, full of the Spirit, and full of wisdom" (Acts 6:3, 5). What else can we expect for folks who are handed a "full time, 24/7 job" to serve those who are and should be on "a 24/7 job" themselves (Acts 6:4)?

At any rate, according to the NT, these three offices are sufficient to cover all the ministries of the Church. There is no need any longer for any additional offices. The upcoming detailed treatment of the nature, function and operational activities of these offices will underscore this. Besides there is a grave danger attached to the continuation of "Apostles" with a capital "A" and Prophets with a capital "P," whose words are supposed to be "universally" authoritative by definition. Sooner or later they will usurp original rather than delegated authority and no longer be ministerial, but magisterial in their approach to people. The moment this occurs the Church becomes "cultic," under the mastery, control and jurisdiction of one or more supposedly "infallible" human beings, whether officially or unofficially, rather than under the exclusive sway of the Word. This is deadly, as Church history demonstrates again and again.

The structure of the Church, which presents the framework for its threefold ministry, can best be presented in the form of a grid, such as tic-tac-toe, consisting of three layers, each of which has three segments. The bottom layer focuses on the Membership of the Church and mandates, as we shall see below, daily Evangelism, daily Speaking and Daily Service. The top layer covers the threefold Leadership in the Church, and accommodates the three Offices of Evangelist, Pastor-Teacher and Deacon. The middle layer represents the threefold Giftedness in the Church and covers the gift of Evangelism (Mt. 4:19), as well as the gift of Speaking the Oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:10a) and the gift of Serving (1 Pet. 4:10b), according to Peter.[26] The

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do both at the same time. As a result Scripture passages such as Hebrews 13:7, 17, etc., are often truncated or can easily become unintelligible to one degree or another. In short, one cannot seriously impair either a truly corporate leadership in which all the participants stand shoulder to shoulder or, for that matter, the unified command structure of an army, and expect to "win the war!"

[26] What comes into view here is the biblical distinction between the leadership gifts of Ephesians 4:10, the extraordinary gifts of 1 Corinthians 10-12, and the ordinary gifts mentioned in Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:10. This distinction is mandated by the fact that every believer has one of the gifts mentioned in the Romans and 1 Peter passages by definition. No such gift, no Christianity! This cannot be said about the gifts mentioned in the 1 Corinthians chapters. They resemble and are treated as "icing on the cake" and therefore are "optional" in nature. Of course, it is commonly agreed that the leadership gifts in Ephesians are in a class of their own. But it is customary in

apostle Paul follows in the footsteps of Peter when he differentiates between the gift of "prophecy" (with a small "p"), clearly corresponding with and identical to "speaking the oracles of God" (Rom. 12:6b)[27] and the gift of "service (identical Greek term in both Paul and Peter) (Rom. 12:7a). But he enlarges on Peter when he breaks the gift of "prophecy" down into two sub-gifts, "teaching" and "exhorting" (Rom. 12:7b, 8a) and the gift of serving, into three sub-gifts, "sharing," "caring," and "showing mercy" (Rom. 12:8b, c, d).[28] The emerging tapestry is exquisite on the face of it and displays the deep-structure of the Church that either must be in place or to be *implemented* post-haste as the necessary condition for it to function and act like an organized, efficient, effective and successful army,[29] not only prepared to manage small-scale

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"gift" analysis and assessment seminars to lump them all together. The total number then comes to more than two dozen. This is a serious error. Such seminars put the biblical "gift" area in a fog, and usually have no tangible impact upon the attendees, and as a result do not translate in a more effective ministry on their part. They usually ascribe one or more gifts to themselves, but end up with "business as usual." To stick to a superficial "description" removes from view an in-depth "prescription" that aims at the "hot and unstoppable pursuit" of the purpose of the gift.

[27]To underscore, it appears that Peter's "speaking the oracles of God" and Paul's "prophecy" explain each other. No other conclusion makes sense since they both address the same subject matter. Hence my conclusion that what is meant here is "prophecy" with a small "p,' the same kind, incidentally, that is mentioned in Joel 2:28 and comes in further view in Acts 2:17. The conclusion that following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the reference to "sons and daughters" either has no universal face value or implies that they all will contribute to new revelation is unacceptable. The text in its context conveys in OT terminology that everyone, old and young, male and female, will turn into God's "mouthpiece." While the Apostles with a big "A" and Prophets with a big "P" *produce* the Word of God, all believers will simply *broadcast* it and pass it on (See specifically Acts 4:29). In other words, they will all be "prophets" with a small "p." The obliteration of the distinction between "Prophecy" and "prophecy" basically comes down either to the counterproductive expansion of the canon by a few, practically even if not theoretically, or the equally counterproductive curtailment of the vigorous promulgation of the canon by the many, practically, even if not intentionally. After all, it either mixes the human with the divine to guide the human, or it hampers the outflow of the divine to benefit the human, with all that both detrimentally entail, be it each in its own way. The bottom line? They are and must remain horses of a different color with a different mandate to fulfill their God-given function with "majesty!"

[28] Note that in Paul the first two gifts, "prophecy" and "service" are abstract nouns, corresponding with the two categories of "speaking the oracles of God," and "service" in Peter, while the remaining five are concrete nouns, "he who teaches, he who exhorts, he who shares, he who cares and he who shows mercy." This makes me conclude that there is no discrepancy between Paul and Peter. Both indicate that there are two gift *areas*. Paul then adds that there are two *functionaries* in the first, the speaking gift area and three *functionaries* in the second, the serving gift area for a total of six gifts, one in the evangelism, two in the speaking and three in the serving area. Incidentally, van Bruggen, *Ambten,* 151-152, arrived at the same conclusion regarding the composition or "build-up" of Romans 12:6b-8, two abstract nouns and five persons, indicating two terrains of operation with two activities in the first and three activities in the second terrain. At any rate, this makes eminent practical sense. There is a need for only one OBGYN or midwife to bring someone in the world. Furthermore, it takes two, a pediatrician and a general practitioner, to keep folks healthy. But, finally, there are always three attendants in a doctor's or dentist's office to take care of the logistics so that the doctor can totally and exclusively concentrate on the task at hand for the benefit of the patient. All this suggests as well that the Church leadership shows a similar pattern, with one type of evangelist, two types of pastor-teachers, overseers or elders, and three types of deacons, and must put this on practical display in order to be fully effective. Or possibly with greater precision, since the three offices should only be occupied by folks who possess a gift that corresponds to that office, an evangelistic, speaking or serving gift, it can be expected that in a rather straightforward fashion the evangelists "evangelize," but that within the office of pastor-teacher which covers teaching as well as exhorting the two-fold giftedness will manifest itself. Similarly, within the office of deacon, which covers sharing, caring and showing mercy, the Church will encounter the three-fold giftedness. It also can be expected that the Leadership will show the better part of wisdom by requesting those among them to address situations or issues for which they are specifically equipped by their giftedness.

[29] Many Church folks decry the very idea of "success." They hold that it necessarily carries the worldly overtones of "empire building." In this they are mistaken. As all will and should agree, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all embarked on an intentionally successful mission (See e.g. Is. 53:10b). This makes it hardly surprising

skirmishes, to prevail in up-scale battles, and to succeed in large-scale campaigns, but also poised to win the all-out war. With its structure in place and fully operational, the Church resembles a modern up-to-date factory that does and must have all its essential machinery continually and indefinitely in place in order to run at full capacity. The following graph aims to visualize all this. However, it also serves to show not only how to integrate "talents" and "team," but also how to facilitate "talent development" and "team building" in order to arrive at a fully operational and functioning Church that is ready "to take on the gates of hell," and to prevail against them (Mt. 16:18)!

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A. The Leadership Layer

1. Evangelist (Eph. 4:10c)	2. Pastor-Speaker (Eph. 4:10d)	3. Deacon (Phil. 1:1)
a. Must Evangelize	a. Must Pastor-Speak (Teach and Exhort)	a. Must Serve (Share, Care, Show Mercy)
b. Must Train EVERYONE To Evangelize	b. Must Train EVERYONE To Speak (Teach and Exhort)	b Must Train EVERYONE To Serve (Share, Care, Show Mercy)

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B. The Gift Layer

1. The Area of Evangelism (Mt. 4:19)	2. The Area of Speaking (1 Pet. 4:10a; Rom. 12:6b) Those who are gifted to	3. The Area of Serving (1 Pet. 4:10b; Rom. 12:7a) Those who are gifted to
	a. Teach (Rom. 12:7b)	a. Share (Rom. 12:8b)
	b. Exhort (Rom. 12:8a)	b. Care (Rom. 12:8c)
		c. Mercy (Rom. 12:8d)

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C. The Membership Layer

1. Daily Evangelism (Mt. 28:19) (Acts 8:4ff; 11:19ff; 1 Cor. 10:32-11:1)	2. Daily Speaking Eph. 4:15)	3. Daily Service (Gal. 5:13)
	a. Teaching (Mt. 28:20)	a. Sharing (Eph. 4:28)
	b. Exhorting (Heb. 3:13)	b. Caring (Rom. 16:1)
		c. Mercy (Mt. 5:7)

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that God's instrument to accomplish this mission are promised "success" in the implementation of his plan, even if there are strict conditions (Josh 1:7-8). But all fears should be laid to rest when the root condition of "biblical success" is recognized for what it is, namely predicated upon "dying" (John 12:24). This once and for all separates it from its worldly counterpart decidedly and decisively. We are called upon boldly and humbly to be in hot and successful pursuit of advancing the cause of God's name, God's Kingdom, and God's will and to be joyful in the warm embrace of "dying" to that effect. Without the latter the former cannot be achieved. After all, the message of Jesus is quite simple in its profundity, "I died for you? You die for me, and this is not negotiable!" Candidly, I fear that folks who decry "success," basically shield themselves against "paying the price," whether consciously and intentionally or not. This ultimately stamps this decrial as an act of "impiety," however "pious" it may seem at the surface. See for further details **Appendix VI.** This **Appendix** also weighs in on the contribution in this matter from Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, 1ff.

Now on with the details, starting with the basic operational Membership Layer, reflecting the kingship and priesthood of all believers (Rev. 1:6; 5:10), continuing with the overseeing and directional Leadership Layer, and concluding with the pivotal but much neglected Gift Layer! In fact, it seems that both in Biblical theory and in Biblical practice all three Layers leave a lot to be desired, and need to come in a much sharper and full-orbed Biblical focus and a much improved and full-orbed Biblical implementation. In short, "holes galore" to be fixed in the fabric of all three of them, with all that they regrettably, culpably (?!) and shamefully (?!) entail in terms of shortfalls and failures! In fact, both shortfalls and failures must be as countless in number as the countless Christians who exemplify and at time cherish these "holes," whether consciously and intentionally or not. Anyone questioning this sobering "state of affairs" may be reminded of the six Reality Checks in Section I that diagnose the widely prevailing ecclesiastical situation that calls for a much-needed both biblical and heavenly cure!

3. The Foundational Membership Layer

I cover the Membership Layer first because the Church in its totality is "the base of operation" for its threefold ministry. Furthermore, from it the Leadership must be recruited and from it the Gifts do emerge. In short, it is the soil that produces the ingredients necessary for the Church to take shape as the functional, operational and powerful Militia Dei. Starting, then, with the bottom layer of the total Membership of the Church, upon "their repentance, the forgiveness of their sins, *and the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38) all genuine believers are both mandated and eager *daily* (1) to "evangelize" (2) *daily* "to speak the Word," and (3) and *daily* "to serve." Let me unpack this systematically.

First, the Great Commission (Read: "Grand Command") of making disciples of *all* the nations, which at present make for a total of 7 billion people, can hardly be started or completed *in toto*, unless and until all believers, as Scripture indicates and Revival times demonstrate, join in one capacity or another in spontaneous and daily evangelism (Acts 11:19ff).[30] Of course, it takes the empowering gift of the Holy Spirit of which the Apostles were very much aware. They would be "useless," and therefore were told to wait, until he would be poured out on them on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). The same applies to "today." Without the Holy Spirit it is a "no-go" across the board. Hence the indispensable *promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit* to every believer upon their repentance (regeneration) and their forgiveness (justification)! Paul emphatically accentuates this. "Not to have the gift of the Spirit is not to belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9). Period! This stands to eminent reason. Without the indwelling Spirit indwelling sin (Rom. 7:20), or the flesh (Rom. 7:18; 8:5; Gal. 5:16-17), will maul and obliterate everybody, and nullify any possibility of any holiness whatsoever, regardless the type of the form (John 15:5; Rom. 7:24). Of this holiness the making disciples is an essential component. After all, the latter is a "command" (Mt. 28:19)! Of course, the sober "stickler" is that "without holiness no one can see the Lord" (Heb. 10:14), that, is, ever come into his presence and ever fellowship with him. Since, then, evangelism is part of the Christian's sanctification, it neither is nor can ever be optional. To exempt oneself will have temporal and may have eternal consequences. One simply cannot be

[30] See the remarkable volume by Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, Publishers, 1997), first published early in the 19th century, as well as its 20th century counterpart, Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012). Both volumes share the "same impressive tune," even if they "differ in verse!"

disobedient and hope to escape the bitter fall-out of a Church that shrinks or a membership that is "spat out" (Rev. 3:16).

Frankly, there is a great, Grand Canyon like gap between Malachi and Matthew. What God the Father promises as the substance of the New Covenant can never materialize apart from what God the Son produces through his Cross and in his Resurrection, as the Twin Pillars of the NT Gospel Message of the Kingdom (Lk. 24:46-48). This is to say, the OT as the book of the Father is "nothing" and accomplishes "nothing" apart from the Gospels as the book of the Son. He personifies the New Covenant (Is. 42:6; 49:8) and in that capacity provides the substance of what the Father promises. But there is a second equally great, equally Grand Canyon like gap between John and Acts.[31] What the Father promises and the Son produces will never be personalized without the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8). The OT as the book of the Father and the Gospels as the book of the Son are "nothing" and accomplish "nothing" without Acts, the Epistles and the rest of the NT as the book of the Holy Spirit (Once again, John 16:12-15)! In a word, the Spirit transports the substance of the New Covenant (Is. 59:21). He instills power in the believer and his daily Gospel Evangelism. Think of Peter at Pentecost in contrast to the threefold denial in Caiaphas' Courtyard. He also instills conviction in those who are exposed to that Gospel. Think of the 3000 conversions at Pentecost. This twofold "instilling" receives an awesome depth perspective when we think back of the OT and the Gospels. God the Father empowered very few speakers and convicted very few people in the OT. Only one man before the Flood, and only a meager number before the Exile! Similarly, God the Son did not empower and convict many in the Gospels. In fact, and comparatively speaking hardly anyone! This powerfully lights up the dispensation of the Holy Spirit! Without him everybody is and remains a "desert" (Is. 32:14-15), a "cemetery." (Is. 37:1ff) and a "Dead Sea" (Ezek. 47:1ff). But when the Spirit is poured out and makes his grand and impressive entrance the effect is awesome. The "desert" turns into one vast "fertile field," and not just a barren place with a "few acres of arable soil." The "cemetery" turns into one great "maternity ward," and not just a place with some "clinics," few and far between. And the Dead Sea turns into one large "fresh water lake," and not just a locale with a "few spots of fresh water." Neither grieved (Eph. 4:30), nor quenched (1 Thess. 5:19), nor outraged (Heb. 10:29), the Spirit in his unencumbered and overflowing presence will fill and empower all believers. But he does not stop there. This comes with a purpose. He will make their spontaneous and daily evangelistic activity the order of the day! The history of powerful Revival times with routinely between ten and twenty million conversions in Century or so, is there to demonstrate this, however few and far between they may have been, frankly, to the culpable shame of the Church corporately and of its members individually when the Divine promise as well as mandate to that effect leaves them "cold." In the light of both promise and mandate, the least we can do is to pray humbly, fervently, incessantly and expectantly for these times to visit us, to remain with us, or to return to us, both corporately (Hab. 3:2) and individually (Ps. 119:25, 37, 50, 77, 88, 93, 116, 144, 154, 156; see also Is. 57:15). It has been well said that apparently the lack of corporate revival is no excuse for the lack of daily personal revival!

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[31] The idea of the awesome "gap" between John and Acts at this pivotal juncture in Scripture, "the (immense) transition the Holy Spirit effects from the Gospels to the Acts," "the enormity of the progress between the last chapter of the Gospels and the first chapter of Acts," was first brought to my attention by Adolphe Monod, *Farewell to his Friends and to his Church* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), 103, 113, republished with the title *Living in the Hope of Glory* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 41, 55. It made me equally and very aware of a similar awesome "gap" between Malachi and Matthew.

Second, in addition to the eager and daily pursuit of evangelism all believers are also mandated and eager to "speak the Word" daily. This consists of teaching (Mt. 28:20; Heb.5:12) and exhorting (Heb. 3:13). But both must have the *quality* of authoritative "heralding" or "proclaiming" the truth to be effective (See specifically and emphatically Mt. 7:29).[32] This is pivotal and applies to other ministerial disciplines as well, such as evangelism, counseling, and apologetics.[33] This is not a popular view. It is thought to be heavy-handed, insensitive, and sure to turn people off. We are often told that in all its ministries the Church should really and extensively resort to listening first, to building relationships, to smooth the way for eventually presenting facts for careful consideration. While all this is well and good, and at times may have its proper and limited place, this by and large does not seem to jibe with the customary approach of men, such as Paul. In fact, as far as we know, he never did anything close to it, let alone bog down in it! In his evangelistic apologetics or apologetic evangelism he *proclaimed* the truth of Jesus in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), *proclaimed* the truth of God in Athens (Acts 17:23), and *proclaimed* the truth of Moses and the prophets to Herod Agrippa (Acts 26:12-23, esp. 22-23).[34] All his "preliminaries" served that purpose. But it came and comes with a price. In Thessalonica he barely escaped a vicious mob (Acts 17:5-6), in Athens he was mockingly called a "babbler" (Acts 17:18, 32), and in Agrippa's presence he was declared "insane" (Acts 26:24). This, I repeat, is the inevitable price of "heralding" or "proclaiming" the truth of God. Frankly, without this quality no ministry, whether evangelistic, apologetic, edificational or otherwise, will ever be able to reach the heart, man's mission control center. It will stop and mire down at the intellect, the will, or the emotions. But the intellect can only store "dead" capital, the will only "make-belief" capital and the emotions only "fleeting" capital. No, only "proclamation," more precisely, "authoritative proclamation,"[35] that "bears witness to the truth" in the footsteps of Jesus (John 18:37b) is the God-given instrument that can "create ears to hear" (John 17:37c) by "cutting to the heart" (Acts 2:37; 7:54). As such, it will grip its owners and either electrify it unto conversion (Acts 2:41; Acts 17:34) or have it rise up in physical retaliation, such as stoning (Acts 7:58) or in verbal abuse, such as mocking (Acts 17:32).

Of course, within the fellowship of the saints there is a place for study, for discussion, for interaction, to ascertain and understand the meaning of a text or the ins and outs of situations. In

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[32] John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 77-79; see also 80-81.

[33] See Acts 17:3-4, 23

[34] Recent proposals in apologetic methodology seek to replace "the use of rational or evidential arguments" with "the art of persuasion," along the lines of Aristotle with his threefold emphasis upon the "'inviting' character of the speaker" (*ethos*), the "'facilitating' diagnosis of the frame of mind of the one spoken to" (*pathos*), and the "'impelling' content of the words spoken" (*logos*). In other words, the "theology of persuasion" is basically pitted against the questionable "notion of compelling proof" as the focus of an apologetics that arguably can be verified from Scripture (Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 123ff, esp. 126-127, 139-160), ostensibly in the footsteps of Paul. After all, did he not emphatically state that "knowing the fear of God we *persuade* others" (2 Cor. 5:11), and were not some Jews, many Greeks, and a few of the leading women in Thessalonica *persuaded* to join Paul and Silas (Acts 17:4), and did not Herod Agrippa retort, "You almost *persuade* me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28), and did not Paul seek to *persuade* the Jews in Rome about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets, in which he was at least partially successful? So this proposal, which is basically neo-presuppositional in nature, in that it embraces Van Til's "negative apologetics," which argues the thesis of "the impossibility of the contrary to Christianity," but sidesteps his "positive apologetics," which infers that the negative argument constitutes "the absolute proof of Christianity," *seems* biblical. But is it warranted as it is formulated and presented? For a detailed answer to this question, see **Appendix VII.**

[35] See Mk. 1:14 for the centrality of *proclamation*, and Mk. 1:27 for *authoritative* proclamation. The Sermon on the Mount is also characterized throughout by "proclamation" (Mt. 5:2ff, 17ff, 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44; 6:1ff, 5ff, 16ff, 19ff, 25ff, 7:1ff, 7ff, 13ff, 15ff, 21ff, 24ff) with the resounding hallmark of "authority" (Mt. 7:29)!

fact, even in the company of unbelievers there is a legitimate place for "interaction" to get to know each other, to find out where folks are, what they think, why they tick the way they do, etc., etc. But understanding in Scripture is threefold, of the mind (Dan. 9:2), of the heart (1 Ki. 3:9; Is. 6:10) and of life (Job 28:28). To be sure, without the understanding of the mind the truth resides in a fog. But without the electrifying understanding of the heart truth will be "still-born." It will never blossom out into an understanding of life which is on display in obedience (Eph. 4:13). And that is where authoritative proclamation comes into the picture, "Thus says the Lord!" This, not so incidentally, explains the heavy stress of Proverbs on "instruction" (Prov. 1:8; 4:1, 13; etc., etc.) that aims at the "heart" to produce "the fear of God" and is en route to "holiness" (Prov. 1:7; 2:1-22; see also for the same pattern, Ps. 119:11). It also explains a similar emphasis in Romans that the Word has "molding" power (Rom. 6:17). Once again, with regards to unbelievers there is a place for reasoning, for conversing, for give and take interaction (Acts 17:17-18a), but *proclamation* has the final word (Acts 17:18b-19, 23).[36] God's truth is never up for merely "dialogal" discussion, not in the OT and not in the NT, and therefore not in Church history either! God's truth is authoritative. The heart must bow before it for it to make a practical difference. It must bow before it unreservedly to embrace it, fully to absorb it and radically to display it. "Let your heart be perfect with the Lord your God to walk in his statutes and to keep his commandments" (1 Ki. 8:61; see also 1 Chr. 22:19)!

Of course, the prescribed manner of the indispensable and therefore much-needed proclamation needs to be carefully examined and meticulously implemented. Peter requires meekness, a difficult term to translate, but the diametrical opposite of a stubborn harshness and brazenness. He also insists on a respectful attitude (1 Pet. 3:16). Paul calls for "meekness" as well (2 Tim. 2:25) and for "goodness" (Rom. 15:14). He claims to have portrayed a loving and gentle spirit, and likened himself to a nursing mother or father (1 Thess. 2:7-8, 11). He is a man of the heart, from the heart to the heart and at the heart. But all this does not take away that this same Paul "congratulated" the Thessalonians that when "his word came to them, they received it not as the (negotiable) word of man, but as the (authoritative) word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13). All this in the footsteps of Jesus who as a model of "meekness" (Mt. 11:29) nevertheless "spoke with authority" (Mt 7:29). In short, the Word never bends to the fickle likes or dislikes of man. But man either bends to the authoritative Word of God in any and all theological disciplines or will perish sooner or later (See Jer. 15:19b).

At any rate, to "teach" is to convey the truths of God's Word regarding "the things that are," topics that are normally covered in a Systematic Theology, such as the Trinity, Predestination, the Holy Spirit, the Sacraments, etc., and "the things that ought to be," topics that are generally covered in Christian Ethics, such as the Ten Commandments, the Fruit of the Spirit, etc. The enormous volume of topics in Scripture makes daily teaching and daily exposure to teaching a necessity. Otherwise the net result will be "ignorant and unstable" folks who are liable, I paraphrase, to "twist Scriptural truth to their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16).

To exhort is to ensure that "hearers of the Word" are or become "doers of the word" (Jam. 1:22). It is as simple as that. Since folks who fail to act upon the Word deceive themselves, exhorting is not merely an optional extra. It is just as much a necessity as teaching. In fact, Scripture insists that it is to be done daily so that nobody will be "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). It is clearly a matter of life and death!

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[36] See Keller, *Center Church*, 29; see also D.A. Carson, "What is the Gospel? – Revisited," in Sam Storms and Justin Taylor, eds., *For the Fame of God's Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper* (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway, 2010).

Both "teaching" and "exhorting" come into their indivisible own in the phraseology of Grand Command. The Church must "*teach* ***to observe.***" To be sure, "acting" without "thinking" (knowing) is chaotic by definition. But "thinking" (knowing) without "acting" is sterile by definition as well! If Scripture is allowed to weigh in, incessant acting in purposeful obedience is hardly imaginable without incessant exhortation to obedience (Heb. 3:13; see also 13:22). Too many pulpits and lecterns are "teaching" platforms only. Too often the explicitly expressed goal of concretely "observing" the content of God's Word is overlooked or ignored, whether consciously and intentionally or not. Frankly, constant exhortations-to-observe are all too frequently missing, and tireless exhorters-to-observe are even in shorter supply. Ideally the next sermon should never be preached until the previous one is obeyed to the letter. Lone can only imagine the impact this would have to the glory of God and the salvation of sinners.

Not so incidentally, teachers without exhorters tend to produce "anacondas." Every Sunday the attendees in the Church service receive their sermon "piglet." Half asleep they digest it for a week to return the next Sunday for another "piglet." Exhorters are not content with that scenario. They are after folks to recognize that biblical "piglets" are not "sleeping pills," but "aviation fuel" to mount up as eagles (Is. 40:31). By the same token, exhorters without teachers tend to be "a pain in the neck," and are often treated as "gadflies." They need teachers to pave the way for their exhortations. In short, teachers "desperately" need exhorters and exhorters "desperately" need teachers. The use of the adverb "desperately" is not an exaggeration! It may even be an "understatement." Both therefore must be humble enough to pursue a joint-speaking ministry. But, as we shall see, most fail miserably in this regard and all too often end up as lone "meteors." They basically isolate themselves and their ministry, whether consciously and intentionally or not. Hence they come and they go without much lasting effect. For a time they may illumine the sky more or less brightly. But at the end of the day they have not produced a "marching-army culture" that is "self-sustaining," "self-governing," "self-propagating," "self-replicating" and "self-multiplying." It should not come as a surprise that at their demise they leave a darkening or darkened sky behind![37] In a word, "lone rangers" ought to be identified as such, and, if needed, admonished, rebuked and called to repentance for the sake of a fruitful long-term ministry, if not survival, of the Church. They may start out as "rebels" against inexcusable situations. But they will end up as totalitarian and stifling builders of their own "empire," however portrayed or perceived by themselves or others. This analysis and assessment will prove to be correct, when upon their demise it crumbles and disappears.

Thirdly, all believers are mandated and eager to serve. Service comes in three areas, "sharing," "caring" and "showing of mercy." In "sharing" believers generously donate their time, their energy, their skills, their money, etc., to needy people, at needy times and in needy situations. Caring takes it a step further. In fact, it goes deeper. They recognize pain, whether spiritual, physical, mental, emotional or volitional pain, in fact, any kind of life-controlling shortfalls, and seek "carefully" to remedy them with their presence, with their empathy, with

[37] It is increasingly recognized that the Epistle of James is best characterized as an "exhortatory" letter. In fact, its content suggests that James is an "exhorter" with the gift of "exhortation." It also strongly suggests that as an "exhorter" James is an "implication-visionary." As such he is worth his weight in gold! Frankly, this is an additional reason for pastor-teachers to covet the company of exhorters. It will allow them to see farther, if not far, afield in their ministry. This will, can, and should be of inestimable value for those entrusted to their care. It is bound to add a decisive preventive edge to their labors. After all, an ounce of prevention is still worth a pound of cure! I argue all this in greater detail in the Introduction of the Second Edition of my Commentary, *The Epistle of James*, hopefully to be published soon.

their words, with their actions, but especially with the Word of God that gives direction and with the Spirit of God who gives power to follow through on this. "Showing mercy" goes deeper yet. In Scripture mercy is invariably shown to folks who are "terminal." In other words, it "mercy" handles matters of life and death. Without the Good Samaritan's hands-on mercy the man who was beaten to a pulp would not have survived. Without God's justifying mercy the publican would have been lost forever. Potentially as well as actually showing mercy is costly. The Good Samaritan risked his life, while the priest and the Levite, of course, were not that "foolish" (Lk. 10:31-32). But Jesus took it a step further. He forfeited his life. Frankly, everyone stands in need of mercy to survive, if not in a physical sense (Good Samaritan) or no longer in a justifying sense (Tax Collector), definitely in the sanctifying sense. Without Jesus no one can do anything that is pleasing to God (John 15:5). That is why the author of Hebrews tells us that we need mercy perennially (Heb. 4:16).

One may well ask the question how daily evangelism, daily teaching and exhorting, daily sharing, caring and showing of mercy ever can and will come about. First, without the gift of the Holy Spirit this is impossible to achieve in any one of these areas. No Spirit, no power whatsoever! According to Scripture, the way to that gift is paved by the prerequisites of repentance and forgiveness (Acts 2:38). But when these are present, evidently so, the gift is secured, in every Christian, experientially so! There is no doubt that Peter experienced the vast difference between cowardly denying Jesus when confronted by a simple girl (Lk. 22:6) and courageously standing up for Jesus facing a huge crowd (Acts 2:14ff). So, no such gift, no salvation, and no hope ever to succeed in daily obedience in anything anywhere! Second, however, even with the gift of the Holy Spirit one may have to crawl before one can walk. It is precisely at this point that the Leadership Layer comes into play. It covers the threefold Leadership in the Church, and accommodates the three Offices of Evangelist, Pastor-Teacher and Deacon. As we shall see, they are the indispensable "sparklers" in a Revival-Church whose mandate it is to "spark" it into "perpetual" motion in incessant, daily, Evangelism, Speaking and Serving. This, then, is the next Layer to be considered!

4. The Guiding Leadership Layer

The threefold Leadership of the Church that occupies the top layer of the structure of the Church has two tasks to perform in order to turn the Church from a "standing army," that deteriorates as a "care facility" or a "retirement center," into a lean, powerful and effective "Marching Army."

The first task of the Leadership is simply to fulfill the function that is peculiar to their Office. Evangelists must evangelize. Pastors-speakers, also designated in Scripture as elders, overseers (bishops), or rulers must pastor-teach and pastor-exhort, and Deacons must serve, share, care and show mercy. The Third Section of this Paper is intended to spell out the component elements of these three ministries in great detail, and how to go about them in a hands-on manner. But for now it is essential to come to grips with the biblical fact there is a vital second task for the Leadership to perform that is too often, if not universally neglected, whether in part or in whole. In fact, it may even be ignored or opposed in theory or in practice. If believers must evangelize daily, speak the Word daily, and serve daily, they must be competently trained in all three areas. The threefold Leadership of the Church must shoulder this as a joyful burden that will have a rich pay-off for the future. In fact, without it there will be "bankruptcy" of one kind or another, rather than a pay-off, if Paul is to be believed (2 Tim. 2:2).

Training covers five phases. Trainees must (1) be taught, (2) be modeled, (3) be observed, (4) be refined and (5) be certified. When I ask my lady students, whether they want to marry a man who is not certified, that is, unable (or unwilling) to evangelize, teach or serve their children, the answer is invariably and emphatically, "no!" Well, I then counsel them to tell him to come back in a year, if and when he "proposes," but is compelled to admit that he is not certified, whether in one or all of the three areas. But I do not stop there. I address the Leadership and seek to get across to them that if they do not train all their young men in all three areas, their lady-members will all remain unmarried. If this ever would be the case, in fact, as it is, should be, or should have been the case in untold numbers of Church situations, the Leadership is fully to blame and has failed to act like "shepherd-watchmen on the wall." The final outcome is grim, not only for the sheep, but also for the shepherd-watchmen (Ezek. 33:1ff; see also Ezek. 34:1ff; Acts 20:26). Reality-check #1 continues to function as an ominous "handwriting" on the wall! Frankly, to put all this in perspective, it may well be that the marriage relationship is one for which potential partners are less prepared than for any other one, which explains the abysmal track record of tension, trouble, and divorce. The fact this relationship is (supposedly) permanent only accentuates the gravity of the situation.

All this is why everybody who "joins" a Church must be asked at that very moment where he wants to start in the training process, whether in evangelism, in speaking or in serving. The proper reply, which I, to my initial surprise, heard once out of the mouth of a young man, should emphatically always be, "In All Three." This clearly evidences the presence of the gift of the Holy Spirit and marks a believer as a genuine "disciple of Christ." To be a disciple is simply to be a student who wants to pay the full price of reading, studying, absorbing, *and* displaying the content of the Word in a life of "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). After all, according to Jesus, "a disciple does and must bear 'much fruit' to prove that he is one" (John 15:8). He starts out by bearing fruit and is subsequently pruned to bear more fruit (John 15:2). But this is not enough. As he abides in Christ, his Word abides in him, and he responds in Prayer, fruit, more fruit, turns into "much fruit" that glorifies God and demonstrates his discipleship (John 15:5-8). But this is still not the end. It must be "abiding fruit" that produces fullness of discipleship joy through continuing prayer (John 15:11, 16).

At any rate, the training will start with the study of a (short) Manual each, on Evangelism, Speaking, and Serving. This will be the basis of his instruction in a Classroom or similar setting by a competent pastor-teacher, which takes approx. 20% of the training time. The remaining 80%, of modeling, observing, refining and certifying, must be spent in the field. One cannot learn to swim in the desert. One must get into the pool. While "Pastor-Teachers" should be in charge of the Classroom in all three areas, the Evangelist takes over when "students" are prepared and ready to enter the field in Evangelism. His task, then, is to model, to observe, to refine and to certify them in and for that mandated ministry. The Pastor-Teacher has the identical task in the area of Speaking the Word, and the Deacon in the area of Serving. Because the Speaking gift has two components, the training .in speaking should really be done by the Pastor-Teacher and the Pastor-Exhorter, and because the Serving gift has three components the training in serving be undertaken by the Deacon-"Sharer," the Deacon-"Caregiver," and the Deacon-"Shower of Mercy." But additional details that spell out the content of these components below in **Section III**!

All this is clearly the Biblical Model that is laid out in principle in 2 Timothy 2:2 and was practiced throughout by the Apostle Paul. Incidentally, in addition to all other required courses, Theological Seminaries should have at least three clinical courses in each of these three areas of

up to three weeks (during "January" or "May" terms?) along the lines just mentioned to train all its students and to certify that they are "competent" in all three areas. If they must be such as believers, how much more as potential leaders! Of course, a clinical course in Apologetics is also warmly recommended, but could be combined with the one in Evangelism. The two are and should be "kissing cousins." Practically, biblical evangelism frequently, if not invariably, ends up as an apologetic evangelism as well. Properly, a biblical apologetics always is and should be an evangelistic apologetics. Thankfully in a Counseling Study track clinical courses are routinely offered. At any rate, the Church should insist on such courses that cover the three mandated areas of ministry and seriously consider withholding all support from Seminaries or similar Schools until they do not just teach their students in the class room, but also train them in the field and do not just outsource them. Professors that do not train their students in the field are deficient, and if they refuse to do so, they are delinquent, if the example of Jesus means anything. The latter trained his disciples by "doing and teaching," in that order (Acts 1:1). They were enrolled in a Threefold "Show and Tell" School of Ministry! Frankly, Seminaries should take their cue from Medical Schools. These insist, for instance, that an OB/GYN student cannot and will not be certified until he or she has delivered 500 or more babies *always in the presence of their teacher-mentors*, in order not to jeopardize the physical and temporal safety of patients. This takes three years of "merciless apprenticeship," virtually 24/7! How much more determined should not Seminaries be to emulate this in their concern not to jeopardize "spiritual and eternal safety?" The 18th Century Presbyterian Log College may well serve as a model. When it was operational, the Church grew exponentially. When a more "traditional" Seminary replaced it, the growth of the Church declined markedly. What is the bottom line? However excellent the 20% class room time may be, the 80% in the field will make or break a competent and effective ministry! Once again, if the Leadership of the church does not sufficiently train and certify its young men in all three areas, young ladies who biblically insist on that in their future husbands, may never get married. This would be black mark on the leadership and stingingly expose their deficient, if not delinquent negligence!

All this has a powerful implication that is usually overlooked and brings up a question that must be addressed.

First, then, the implication! Since all of the membership must be trained and certified in the areas of evangelism, speaking and serving, the inevitable implication is that no one may be ordained and installed in one of the three continuing offices, unless or until the certification in all three areas has been verified. Potential leaders who are lacking even in one of the three can hardly be expected to grasp, pursue and provide a full-orbed leadership. When applying or under consideration for a leadership position in a Church, they must have completed or at least be eager to seek a threefold certification. Refusal to submit to a certification process disqualifies them from holding office. Postponement until after ordination or installation is unacceptable as well. One simply does not and should not do business after the fact. At any rate, all this stands to eminent reason. How can leaders insist on a threefold certification, unless or until they are certified themselves.

Now the question! How can the Church ensure that the "leader-trainers" are properly positioned and properly equipped properly to prepare their "membership-trainees" for their life's ministry within the home as well as beyond it in the church and in the world? And, furthermore, how can we humanly be certain that the Threefold Ministry of the Church will be effective. Here the pivotal middle layer of the threefold giftedness enters the picture. The adjective, "pivotal," as we shall see, is hardly an exaggeration. In fact, without this middle layer the Church is destined

for the very failure that is so in evidence in so many ways, at so many times, and in so many places! It is analogous to a smoothly running and effective society. It is commonly agreed that a large and functional middle class is its indispensable backbone. When it is not developed or forced to take the back seat, not only does the gap between rich and poor grow ever wider. But also the much-needed entrepreneurs with their entrepreneurial spirit fade out, with all that this entails societally. The gift layer serves a similar function in the Church. When it is left undeveloped or is stymied by neglect or otherwise, there is, as we shall see, a heavy "entrepreneurial" toll to be paid, with all that this entails ecclesiastically.

5. The Pivotal Gift Layer

The structural tapestry of the Church is exquisite. The threefold mandate of the Membership and the threefold function of the Leadership dovetail with the threefold Giftedness! Each believer is entrusted with an ordinary "spiritual gift," either in Evangelism (Mt. 4:19), in speaking the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:10a) or in serving (1 Pet. 4:10b). But it must be developed. One cannot expect folks to learn to swim in the desert. They must enter the pool. Nor, for that matter, can one expect them immediately and competently to swim during their first outing into the pool. It takes practice and practice and practice. Similarly, the gift will by and large not suddenly "pop" up nor, what is more common, slowly "emerge" (I have seen both), *unless* and *until* the trainees in the certification process *immerse* themselves in "Schools" of Evangelism, Speaking, and Serving, and *not* stop or slow down until they reach their objective, the identification of their gift. From my personal experience this may take at least three weeks of intensive *non-stop* field work under competent and vigilant supervision. If I may avail myself of the following illustration, effective training resembles the harvesting and preparing of pine trees for their future use. The first week they are cut to size, say, as two by four by eight. To build a deck with the thus cut boards would guarantee that sooner or later they would "rot." Therefore the second week the boards are to be "treated," so that they will not rot, but be sure to last. Everyone is aware of the quality of "treated pine." The third week, however, they are nicely polished, with the rough edges smoothed out, and so to receive the finishing touch. At last, they are ready to function "indefinitely" according to the plan of the "builder." Of course, "three weeks" may not be sufficient in all instances, depending upon the intensity of the "Training Schools" and the make-up of the trainee. While a "know-how certification" may take a relatively short time, the emergence and identification of one's giftedness may require a (much?) longer time. But the end is always extremely gratifying. When the gift emerges, comes out in the open, and is joyfully experienced, the recipients, both male and female, become positively *unstoppable*. This is the grand objective, to arrive at a church scene where every member has identified his or her giftedness and demonstrates this by being "unstoppable" in his or her God-given spiritual niche!

My research, which is admittedly limited, but covered a cross-section of Church leaders, disclosed that routinely no more than 15% to 20% of a congregation is "unstoppable." In several instances the percentage was 10% or less. This is utterly regrettable. The reason is that a full-orbed apprenticeship program that certifies church members in all three membership mandates by means of three "boot camps," three "pressure cookers of obedience," is virtually non-existent in local congregations and is totally ignored in Theological Seminaries. This grim picture must be remedied immediately. It also explains, at least partly, why 35000 churches have closed their doors in the USA in the last two decades, while close to 90% of the remaining churches only manage to hold their own or are regressing, and only a little more than 10% are gaining in

membership. Rarely, if at all, is "God's Army" trained until it is "unstoppable" as a "Marching Army" with nobody AWOL. If the Satanic energy, in evidence everywhere, from a passive indifference to the things of God to a virulent, hostile, and increasingly aggressive atheism, would only be matched by a militant Church, it would face a different landscape, from "editorials" in newspapers, to "productions" in the entertainment industry, to political "anti-corruption" campaigns, and in all the gaps in between. Revival fires invariably make a huge impact upon society. It does not take a majority to accomplish this, as the homosexual lobby has demonstrated. Instead the Church all too often, if not usually, hunkers down in a virtually permanent R&R with a relative few taking care of the weekly pastor-teacher "maintenance," with hardly eying a vigorous evangelistic outreach, and with only a small number, at times "hired hands," to cover the logistics. This is not just a shame. It is criminal negligence. The Church needs "unstoppable" people. It cannot be satisfied to resemble a "care facility" or a "retirement" center. Even if every Church does and must have a "clinic" section to treat the "wounded," and sooner or later sees folks slow down because of age (and learn to pray up a storm), it is and must first and foremost be an "armory," a "training center" that prepares for battle and prays for victory. The grand objective must be for *all* of its people to be or to become "unstoppable," or at least to be eager enough to take decisive steps to reach that level. Scripture indicates the following five steps.

1. Calling upon the Lord for salvation (Acts 2:21) turns the sinner into a "Hopeful Disciple."

2. Attaching himself to the Word, Fellowship, the Lord's Supper and Prayer (Acts 2:42) turns him into a "Devoted Disciple."

3. Producing the fruit of repentance and faith (John 15:5) turns him into an "Assured Disciple."

4. Carrying out the Grand Command (Mt. 28:19-20) turns him into a "Productive Disciple."

5. Identifying his gift (1Mt. 4:19; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; Rom. 12:3-8) turns him into an "Unstoppable Disciple."[38]

But, once again, for all this to be embraced and pursued the gift of the Holy Spirit subsequent to the experience of heartfelt repentance and the refreshing forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19-20) is indispensable. Without it nobody even wants to begin to make a move toward obedience in each of the three areas (See also Phil. 2:12-13), let alone seeking to be trained for it in a thorough and effective manner. Several reasons may contribute for someone not to recognize his or her giftedness and as a result fail to be "unstoppable." One may be biblically "ignorant" of the "Gift Layer" altogether. The present Section should remedy this. One may be too "lazy" to pursue "boot camp" participation. One may be "indifferent" and basically not "care" to get involved in the training process. Or one may simply not be a Christian. In order to remedy all this, in general "teachers" must lay out the biblical data in this area and refuse to stop teaching until it is crystal clear. Subsequently, "exhorters" must be tireless in their "call to action" as a matter of ecclesial life and death. In particular instances "evangelists" must enter the congregational ministry picture if it proves to be a matter of regeneration rather than sanctification.

Candidly, the (generally missing!) gift layer in the Church is pivotal for at least four reasons.

(1) It is pivotal for the assurance of salvation. Since each believer has received a gift, the experiential display of it in action indicates and seals the presence of salvation. On the other

[38] See **Appendix VI f**or a further biblical description of what a genuine disciple looks like and how he operates.

hand, and to repeat once again but now in greater detail, failure to identify one's gift may indicate either a general ignorance regarding the gift area, a prevailing laziness to determine one's gift, an indifference to pursue its emergence, or arguably the lack of saving grace. Ignorance can quickly be remedied. Laziness or indifference demand heartfelt repentance. In case saving grace is lacking the only way-out is to call on the name of the Lord in repentance and faith for the forgiveness of sons and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). With the crucial (!) indwelling presence of the Third Person of the Godhead everything does and should fall into place. There will be a hunger to be taught in order to drive out all ignorance, and an unmistakable and focused thirst to be trained and certified in evangelism, speaking and serving, to be topped off by a commitment to be fully active in all three areas, until the gift in one of them emerges. It should not be blithely ignored or nonchalantly waived off that according to Scripture the various divine gifts are also divine commands. One *must* be involved in making disciples (Mt. 28:19), in teaching (Heb. 5:12), in exhorting (Heb. 3:13), in sharing (Eph. 4:28), in caring (Rom. 16:1), and in showing mercy (Mt. 5:7) as a matter of unreserved *obedience.* One cannot just take or leave them as at best and merely the necessary avenues to discover one's gifts. All types of laziness and indifference that refuse to avail themselves of these avenues to establish one's giftedness constitute hard-core disobedience, and this is never a small matter! Couple this with an often empty claim to have a saving interest in Christ, and we face nothing more than self-deluding presumption. How different from an ever "zealously" dedicated and ever "feverishly" active Christian manifestly gifted "Green Beret," who is in hot pursuit of "making and training disciples" until the "gift" makes its appearance in others as well, and so is the human instrument to secure the future of the Church and all that this entails! That all this does and will bolster a robust assurance in all involved stands to reason. Even if this is factually based on the promises of God the Father and the accomplished work of God the Son, experientially it invariably follows the active and activating presence of God the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14-16) and the necessary consequent pursuit of holiness (1 John 3:18-24) "without which no one shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:10)!

(2) It is pivotal for the proper recruitment of Leadership of the Church. It has been mentioned already and is properly argued that leaders to be properly positioned and to function effectively may only be appointed to the Office that corresponds with their giftedness.[39] Too many leaders have failed because they were "mismanaged." One does not put a carpenter or plumber in an electrician's "office," nor an electrician or a carpenter in a plumber's "office," nor a plumber or an electrician in a carpenter's "office." Of course, everyone is able to screw in an electric bulb, to plunge a toilet and to put a nail in the wall to hang a picture. But when the going is grim, that is, lightning "fries" the electric system, sewage backs up into the house, or the roof caves in due to heavy snow, it is time to call in the expert. Not to do so is to court disaster when situations reach the breaking point. In other words, someone with a clear-cut evangelistic gift should not be put in a pastor-teacher or a diaconal office, neither folks with a pastor-teacher gift in a diaconal or evangelist office, or a person with a serving gift in an evangelist or pastor-teacher office. To exemplify in one instance, I have seen pastor-teachers fail miserably in a Missionary-Evangelist capacity. No compelling urge to do street evangelism, to go "door-to-door," to do market evangelism, etc., etc., and seemingly lots of idle time on their hands. They give the appearance of spinning their wheels, or even of being lazy. However, the root problem

[39] See for the same assessment Jay E. Adams, *Trust and Obey: A Practical Commentary on First Peter* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1978), 132; as well as from the same author, *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1996) on 1 Peter 3:10-11.

is that they are simply mismanaged and misplaced. The very moment that they "come home," take charge of a local congregation in their gift area of teaching or exhorting, they begin to blossom again![40] Furthermore, unless the candidates for leadership have identified and displayed their giftedness, the Church will not and cannot end up with "unstoppable" leaders, each in their own niche. As a result it will hobble at best without making much headway. This can only add to the inevitable disaster.

(3) It is also pivotal for the ongoing mobilization of the members of the Church in the threefold ministry of the Church. The Leaders function as the "captains" who will utilize the gifted people as their "lieutenants" to mobilize and train the total congregation in the field, whether in evangelism, speaking (teaching and exhorting) or serving (sharing, caring and showing mercy). Mobilization is not a "one man's job!" The better part of wisdom is for the leadership to make up an annual list of dates and times for evangelistic outreach, as well speaking (teaching and exhorting) and serving opportunities. As soon as the 20% teaching with the Manual as basis and guide has taken place, the trainees sign up for ten or more dates and times to do their 80% fieldwork under the supervision of the Leader with the assistance of the gifted people in their niche. On these dates and during these times they will observe operational models, put in practice what they have been taught and shown, be scrutinized for refinement and correction, and finally be certified. At that point they qualify as fully trained Church members. But this is still not the end of the process. They will persevere in field work in whatever way, until the gift that God has entrusted to them will suddenly pop out or slowly emerge and make them "unstoppable" in their niche. Folks who do not know their gifts must be taught that every true Christian has received a gift to advance the Kingdom in his or her niche. Those who are too lazy to enter the boot camp or are simply too indifferent must be exhorted to do so. It is not optional. Failure or refusal to identify one's giftedness, therefore, stands in need of repentance. Christians who at the entrance of the Kingdom have experienced "repentance and forgiveness of sins, *and subsequently have received the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38) will undoubtedly submit. However, those who continue to resist may well be lovingly and boldly confronted with the question whether they truly belong to Christ. After all, every Christian gas received a gift to be used to advance the Kingdom, and not to stay buried or to be buried (Mt. 25:24-30).

(4) It is, finally, pivotal for a seamless transition that guarantees the perpetuation of the threefold Church ministry. When the leadership retires, home-grown gifted believers will stand ready to take over "on a moment's notice." It also guarantees that the ministry of the Church will continue without missing a beat. The biblical ministry "culture" always resides in the "unstoppable" people, each one with his or her own gift and in his or her own "niche." If it is personified in the leader only, his departure will be detrimental for the Church. At best it will bring it to a virtual stand-still and to a wait and see attitude until a new leader is chosen. However, history demonstrates that more often than not there will be a noticeable down-turn which may not be remedied and reversed, especially if the new leadership is not up to the task.

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[40] The Football Player, Jordan Cameron, started his football career in Brigham Young University before he transferred to the University of Southern California. In neither place did he admittedly amount to much. But drafted by the Cleveland Browns of the National Football League the coaching staff dug a little deeper and recognized his niche. They positioned him in the playing field as a "tight end." From that moment on he lit up the scoreboard with touchdown after touchdown! The Church would do well to follow a similar procedure with every Christian. Let it "patiently" determine everyone's giftedness and position him or her in the proper niche for the greatest return of God's investment!

In closing, it is more than just interesting to note the importance that Paul ascribes to the proper functioning of the gifts recorded in Romans 12:3-8. As all commentators recognize, Romans 12-16 contain the practical implications of God's "mercies" (Rom. 12:1) that he enumerates in Romans 3:21-11:36, justification (Rom. 3:21-5:21), regeneration (Rom. 6:1-11), sanctification (Rom. 6:12-8:39) and election (Rom. 9:1-11:36). These implications pertain to some pivotal practical characteristics of a Christian (Rom. 12:9-21), to the State (Rom. 13:1-7), to a life of love and holiness (Rom. 13:8-14), to the *adiaphora* of life (Rom. 14:1-15:13), to a bird's eye view of the nature and purpose of ecclesiastical leadership and the prayerful involvement of the congregation in it (Rom. 15:14-33), and to greetings in general and final instructions in particular (16:1-27). But it has escaped many, if not all commentators that he emphatically starts out by insisting on the proper functioning of the gifts (Rom. 12:3-8). Apparently this is both essential and pivotal for a Church-on-the-March, however significant the other topics are or may be. In short, it is the first among equals for a reason. In this passage Paul starts out with the exhortation to be utterly sober and concludes with the exhortation to be fully functional in the exercise of one's giftedness. In other words, he challenges each believer to honor the limits of his giftedness, but at the same time to deploy it to the limit. Let's first take a look at the details of each exhortation in the remainder of this section and then in the Conclusion determine its implications for an efficient and effective Church-on-the-March!

Here, then, are the details of the opening and closing exhortation!

1. In the opening exhortation Paul starts out by cautioning believers not imperialistically to occupy the place and usurp the function that properly belong to others, but to be sober-minded and stick to one's own gift-niche (Rom. 12:3). When calamitous situations occur, electricians, plumbers and carpenters do not arrogantly push the experts in their field out of the way to take over in areas where they themselves are incompetent, not qualified or not certified. They recognize full well that they are "selectively brilliant" only, and gladly make way for other "niche players," when and where this is called for. But Paul does not stop here. He continues to assure both the Church in general and the believers in particular that, thanks be to God, there is no need to be imperialistic (Rom. 12:4). In a properly functioning Church there is completely integrated cooperation among the individual members just as in the human body there is no envious, grinding, reductionist, and self-destructive competition, say, among the eye, the ear and the tongue. They harmoniously and effortlessly do their job unimpeded by the other members. Neither the ear nor the tongue faces or seeks to face the road while driving. The eye does and has the full latitude to do so. Similarly, in a pitch dark place the eye is not asked to come to the rescue. It is the ear that is straining for a sign of life. If the place is totally deserted the tongue does not do much good either and the mouth remains closed. Finally, when one is requested to deliver a speech, the tongue enters the fray. Neither the eye, nor the ear does, can, or desires to replace it. In short, this "facial" triad is smoothly, efficiently and wholeheartedly governed by eager, thankful, and cheerful cooperation as well as unreserved, effective and wholesome contribution. What is in crystal clear evidence is the undeniable fact of a fully joint and integrated effort and a fully committed and unobstructed deferral to each other.

In sum, Paul insists by way of prohibition that in the body of Christ with its many members we may not be proudly imperialistic, whether consciously and intentionally or not, and must stay within our God-given niche, limits and limitations to be pleasing to God and to be effective in ministry. But he also insists by way of encouragement that in a properly functioning body of Christ we do not need to be imperialistic, but may enjoy seeing each other deploy their giftedness to their full potential and to their all-enriching limit!

Not so incidentally, the remainder of Romans 12 explains what it takes to obey the prohibition and to embrace the encouragement. Pervasive love "compels" and "propels" to heed the former, while the reality of combat "demands" and "drives" to embrace the latter. By the way, why would anyone be surprised that every part of Scripture is always an organic and perfect fit? After all, the Holy Spirit is its originating Author!

At any rate, obedience to the prohibition is predicated upon the experiential presence of mutual love that is "devoted," "diligent," and "prefers" to honor others in their God-given niche "amicably, humbly, unpretentiously and peaceably" (Rom. 12:9-10, 16, 18). Love is (1) a profound *desire* to be united with an object, (2) a sheer *delight* when this union is accomplished, and (3) a sacrificial *drive* that pays any price to arrive at that union and to retain it. When this love is experienced, the pursuit of such obedience is a "natural" (Read: super-natural!).

Further, the embrace of the encouragement is bound to be present and needful in times of inevitable combat. It helps and enables folks to be ever joyful in hope, ever persevering in tribulation, ever devoted to prayer, never to pay back evil for evil, always respect what is right, never take revenge, refusal to overcome evil by evil, but rather with good (Rom. 12:12, 14, 17, 19, 21). The benefits of true friendship in which one can share everything without holding anything back, is incalculable.

Candidly, it is "foolish" to think or pretend that a "lone ranger" can snatch victory from the jaws of a looming or lurking defeat, let alone "act, as if" this is possible! If we do not seek to "hang together," we will "hang separately" is a fully biblical datum! Of course, we all know that a lone monk succeeded to bring the wildly popular gladiator games in ancient Rome to an abrupt end. This often prompts folks, including Presidents of Nations, to pontificate that "a single individual can change the world all by himself." But it is universally ignored that the monk did so by dying! To gain victory, any kind of victory, this is what it takes, if the words of Jesus mean anything (John 12:24). It is compelling to argue that without surrendering his life Telemachus would not have made a dent in that deceased culture! And even after his death it took a joint effort to terminate the games officially. In a similar scenario Wilberforce was by-passed as Prime-Minister of the UK due to his nearly single-minded focus upon the "slavery" issue. In all this he "died" of sorts. But the abolition was a joint effort after a battle that lasted a life time. Hugely successful sports teams in whatever field always have two or three "superstars," but they are also always "family." Some "lone rangers" always operate in independent isolation. But others turn into official or unofficial "cult leaders" who enrich themselves in cash, reputation, or otherwise, whether consciously or not. When they vanish, their empires always collapse (Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, etc.). This stands to reason. They function as the pillar of a one pillar suspension bridge that holds up the bridge and directs all traffic. Also, to be a follower of a strong man at any time and in any situation is both foolish and calamitous. After all, humans are only able to pass on their bad traits. The "good" comes exclusively from God and never from any other source. The fact that Paul repeatedly weighs in on this whole issue, and more than once hammers away at this same anvil (See 1 Cor. 12:1ff) discloses that the threat of a doing your own thing, sporting a non-communicating, uncooperative, non-accountable, reductionist, or a much- or all-controlling, a partly or mostly stultifying, and a frequently or usually oppressive lone-ranger syndrome, is far greater than anyone may imagine. I do not know of any Church that does not at least have the seed of a questionable leadership of that sort in it. Neither apparently does the apostle Paul, which must be more than a sufficient reason for self-examination.

Ecclesiastes already raises a warning flag, if not rings alarm bells in this context when it points out that while "one may be 'good,'" "two are 'better' than one" when it comes down to

labor effectively and so to get a return on one's investment, but that (only) a "threefold cord, clearly the 'best' scenario, is not quickly torn apart" (Eccl. 4:9-12). "Two are better than one!" Each *one* needs the "better" of a partner to be a team of *two* to prevent the inevitable stumbling from turning into a disastrous failure, to produce the much-needed warmth in the midst of inevitable freezing temperatures, and to stave off sure defeat in inevitable times of vicious attacks, whether subtle or not so subtle. But even this ante can and must be "upped." In fact, it always takes the "best" of two partners to be a team of *three* to seal the victory. Lone rangers in sharing the Gospel in evangelism, speaking the truth unto edification, or serving in the broad logistical area, however good or even excellent they may be in their function and content, become automatically the enemy of the "better," once they believe, whether deep down or openly, that they have "arrived." Similarly, any two-some in evangelism, pastoring or serving, just as automatically become the enemy of the "best," when they think they have everything under "perfect" control. After all, it is only "a threefold cord," in this context a cord with the three strands of evangelizing, pastoring and serving that "cannot quickly be torn," provided, of course, that these three "dictates" of Scripture mean anything.

All this stands to reason. All Christians are admittedly "brilliant" in their experienced gift and their assigned function. But at the same time, they are only "selectively" brilliant! In isolation they may light up their environment more or less dimly. But jointly they form a powerful beam of light that illumines the waterfront. At times antagonistic folks or hostile conditions may force isolation upon them. But proudly to opt for isolation, whether consciously and intentionally or not, whether subtly or not so subtly, stands roundly condemned in Scripture for its dire implication and its equally dire outcome! "He who isolates himself, whether at the unapproachable top of a hierarchy or blocking access as an incurable soloist, if not solipsist, seeks his own (self-serving and self-promoting) desire. He quarrels against all sound wisdom" (and thereby proves himself to be a narrow-minded fool with all that this entails) (Prov. 18:1-2).

Ultimately only a tripod can remain standing on a solid threefold footing. Frankly, I have seen (great) Evangelistic Leaders (regrettably) put the total ministry of the Church practically even if not theoretically under the virtually one umbrella of "making disciples." Eventually the once vigorous Sunday Evening Service died for lack of a *bona fide* Pastor-Teacher that would feed the flock at that time-slot. The end product is at best a shallow Church. I have seen (great) Pastor-Teachers (regrettably) put the total Ministry of the Church practically even if not theoretically under the virtually one umbrella of "training disciples." Eventually the once vigorous Weekly Outreach into the community greatly diminished for lack of a *bona fide* Evangelist in charge who would blaze the trail and set the tone. The end product is at best a stifled Church. I have seen (once great) denominations (or organizations) put their ministry practically, even if not officially, under the virtually one umbrella of "humanitarian" assistance, whether at home or abroad. Eventually the "making as well as training of disciples" took the back seat, and slowly but surely disappeared for lack of *bona fide* Evangelists and Pastor-Teachers. The end product is at best a "social gospel" Church (or organization). In each instance there was the inevitable loss of members for a variety of reasons and due to a great variety of untreated wounds and hurts. Even a perfectly spelled out biblical theory of ministry should not fool anyone if the practice is non-existent, truncated, twisted or skimpy (Jam. 1:22). The tragedy is that the "downgrade" is not always immediately noticeable. As we already saw, frequently the presence of Holy Spirit power overcomes existing flaws and removes "cracks" from sight. This tends to lull folks to sleep, to ignore danger signs and to keep the "best" at arms' length, in the

mistaken conviction that the "good" is bound to last as-is! Regrettably, when the "cracks" become visible, and folks fall through it, it is often difficult to remedy the situation.

In short, "selective brilliance" requires close cooperation in a joint ministry, whether in the Membership area, with its three mandates, in the Gift area with its three niches, or in the Leadership area with its three offices. More specifically, in the Leadership area, each office must be allowed to develop a own vision for its own ministry in order to advance, to formulate its own blueprint to communicate its content, to map out its own strategy to field it, and to embark upon a hot pursuit to implement it. When one office is arrogant enough to monopolize the ministry of the Church with its vision at the total, virtual or partial exclusion of the other two offices, or has the audacity to dictate their vision, it may well thrive in the short run, especially when one or more charismatic individuals are in charge. But this will prove to be destructive in the long run. Each office can only "sparkle" in its own right, and "spark" others in its own niche. Hence Paul's warning to all believers, "right out of the starting gate" (Rom. 12:3-4), not to occupy the place or usurp the function that God has allotted to others and his complementary encouragement that there is no need for that, once they have come to terms with themselves, and flourish in their own rights and in their own niche. This applies to both an established Leadership as well as those whose gifts have been identified.

At any rate, when all this is settled in principle, each office reports its findings to the combined threefold Leadership for its prayers, examination, assessment and adoption, until it results in a harmonious threefold vision, threefold blueprint, threefold strategy and threefold pursuit to which each of the three offices is a unique contributory that the other two could never duplicate. This should come with the understanding that in the field the Evangelist takes the agreed upon lead and sets the agreed upon tone, with the Pastor-Teacher and Deacon both in the auxiliary position, that in the pulpit the Pastor-Teacher is in charge with the Evangelist and the Deacon in the Nr. 2 position, and that in the logistical area, the Deacon takes over as agreed upon with the Pastor-Teacher and the Evangelist to follow suit. This, of course, requires the heartfelt embrace of the Pauline injunction for each Leader "not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think" (Rom. 12:3) and the humble recognition that his contribution to the over-all vision of the Church, with all that this biblically entails in theory and practice, can never cover more than one third (33.33%) of its needs. In this scenario the three Offices combine their selective brilliances, and form a powerful beam of light that puts the multi-colored threefold "sparkle" in the whole church and powerfully illumines it until it "sparks" every believer in his or her God-given and identified niche. Once the threefold "culture" of daily evangelism, daily speaking and daily serving is in place in the fabric of the Church and the Membership is constantly mobilized to that end by the threefold Leadership with the assistance of the three types of Gifted Folks, it is difficult to see how the Church cannot continually transition itself under an ever evolving and revolving Leadership. After all, it successfully functions under the motto, "One for All, and All for One." Only this does and can solve the perennial "one and many problem." It avoids like the plague the regimenting tyranny and oppression of the One and the fuming revolt of the Many that is woven in the warp and woof of the apostate world with "its lust of the flesh, its lust of the eyes and its pride of life" (1 John 2:16; see also Is. 59:13). But it only can be a universal and inviting "haven of harmonious rest" as well as a pulsating "beehive of collaborative action," if it is marked by a culture of "self-denial," fed in turn by a universal

"model of communal love," and characterized by the "hallmark of purposeful holiness."[41] Romans 3:3-8 that is rooted in the sobriety of humility is unintelligible and unattainable without the sacrificial self-denial of Roman 12:1-2. The prevailing and perennial recognition of "selective brilliance," so wisely, so lovingly, and so effectively practiced and pursued by the eye, the ear and the tongue, is essential for a wisely, lovingly and effectively functioning Church. If the good (the one) wishes to be a dominating loner at the neglect or expense of the better (the two) or the best (the three), and the better (the two) a dominating tandem, at the neglect or expense of the best (the three), hostility will raise its ugly head at the exhortation for both the good and the better to remedy the situation and to proceed to, let alone to pursue, a maximally collaborative ministry as a matter of life and death. When this hostility ever arises, in defiance of James' exhortation by all means to listen, not to talk back, and not to fight God's Word (Jam. 1:19), repentance is the only sanitizing remedy. From this perspective a perceptive and honest diagnosis of the widely prevailing ecclesiastical condition and practice is that it is brimming with present and potential hostility! Even the suggestion already that "all is not well" routinely is and will be ignored, sidestepped or rejected as superfluous, annoying or offensive. The history of the Church, the family and the individual all copiously witness to this effect. Not much has changed since the disclosure of this minefield in the Letters of the Lord Jesus and his apostles, such as James, Peter, Paul, Jude, and John, which are chockfull of explicit or implicit calls to repentance!

It stands to reason that the presence of a "hot and strenuous pursuit" is clearly essential for the Threefold Ministry to flourish, whether in the Leadership, the Gift, or the Membership areas. Half-way measures are sure to fail. Frankly, Ecclesiastical History teaches us and personal history taught me that the "suffering," which invariably accompanies any biblical type of hot pursuit, will by and large not elicit much attention, let alone sympathy, from the (Church) public at large, that is to say, not until it proves to be successful, and at times not even that. Paul saw all in Asia (his very own converts?) defect from him (2 Tim. 1:15), except for one believer who put his life on the line (2 Tim. 1:16-17). In the final phase of his life every one deserted him and had him face the shrill imperial music all by himself (2 Tim. 4:16a). It is amazing that he did not turn cynical but responded with an intercessory prayer (2 Tim. 4:16b), glorying in the presence of God who strengthened him to fulfill his ministry, the main reason (!), and rescued him, more or less an afterthought (?) (2 Tim. 4:17-18)! In a word, God's servants must ever focus on their joyful mandate and be willing, if not eager to suffer in silence, at least until there is a reason for folks to sit up and take notice. At that time success is bound to attract followers to one degree or another. This produces a Leadership team, whether under the auspices of the Evangelist, the Pastor-Teacher or the Deacon. But the end-station is not reached until this Leadership team is both transformative and transactional in nature, and so turns into a Team of Leaders, first of possible, then, of potential, further of actual, finally of proven Leaders.[42] It is (1) properly transformative when it molds the followers by putting them in the starting blocks. It is (2) properly transactional when it energizes the followers. And it is (3) properly a Team of Leaders, when their followers, always in the grand context of the United Threefold Ministry of the Church, are set in motion to develop their own vision, to formulate their own blueprint, to map out their own strategy, and to embark upon their own hot pursuit with the prayerful confidence of

[41] For an examination and a proposed solution of "The One and Many Problem," that plagues the world in all its manifestations, phases and aspects, see Henry Krabbendam, *Sovereignty and Responsibility* (Bonn: Verlag fur Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2002).

[42] The attachment of the terms "potential" and "proven" to "leaders" is suggested by Dr. H. Reeder, pastor of the Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL.

success that should spawn new followers and new leaders. This vision, etc., can be an adjacent, a joint, or a sectional vision. But it must always be subject to the Grand Vision of the Triune God for his Church, and as such will entail a ministry bathed in the suffering that "fills up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24; see especially 2 Cor. 11:21-28). Whatever honor we may properly bestow upon "go-getters" who populate para-ecclesiastical organizations, they basically avoid or withdraw themselves from the kind of suffering Christ mandates, Paul and the other apostles exemplify, and their Letters identify. Ostensibly aiming to assist the Church, they tend to siphon off its cream from the top, and to leave it in a weakened condition. Basically para-ecclesiastical organizations function as "lone rangers" with all that this entails. Hence my earlier fervently expressed hope and prayer that the Church will repent from its anemia, and of any hostility to "go-getters," rise to the occasion of their God-given mandate, absorb all para-ecclesiastical personnel, form a Full-orbed and United Front, and as such storm the "(stationary) gates of hell" (Mt. 16:18). Explicitly or implicitly Paul's opening exhortation contains all this. But there is more!

2. In the concluding exhortation Paul goes into great detail about the content and functioning of the individual gifts within the fabric of the local church. In doing so he does not deal with the evangelistic giftedness that marks the external outreach ministry of the Church. The contours and function of this giftedness (analogically) mirror the parallel giftedness in the speaking and serving area. But in detailing the latter Paul goes "decisively" beyond Peter (1 Pet. 4:10-11). As we saw, Peter identifies two types of gifts, "Speaking the (existing) oracles of God" and "Service." Paul designates them as "Prophecy" and "Service," both abstract nouns that indicate *areas* of ministry. But he further unfolds the Speaking area as well as the Service area. The first one is occupied by folks who teach and exhort; the second one by folks who share, care,[43] and show mercy. In all these five instances we encounter *people*, designated in *concrete* terms by masculine participles. The "prophetic" and "service" areas must be developed "proportionally," that is "to the hilt." The folks who teach and exhort must follow suit. On the other hand, those who share must be "generous," those who care "diligent." and those who show mercy "cheerful" (Rom. 12:6-8). The bottom line is unmistakable. While in humility no one claims anything to which he is not entitled, whatever the cost, in obedience everyone gives it his "all," whatever the price. In short, a fully functioning Church resembles a six cylinder engine that fires on all pistons simultaneously and in total unison. The "selective brilliance" of the various parts serves the whole, and the "one beam of light" snugly accommodates all the parts.

What follows now is a Summary statement regarding The Structure of the Church as the Launching Pad of its Threefold Ministry.

(1) By definition all believers are commanded to be involved in the three activities of sharing the Gospel (Mt. 28:19-20), speaking the truth (Eph. 4:15; Heb. 3:13) and acting the truth (Acts 2: 42-47) in love.

(2) The Church of Christ is graced with three (remaining) offices, the office of Evangelist (Eph. 4:11), Pastor-Teacher (Eph. 4:11) and Deacon (Phil. 1:1).

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[43] Many translators go for the translation, "he who leads." This is a very possible translation. But Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, tr., *Theologial Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), Vol. VI, 700-701, points out that the notion of "caring" or "protecting" is an equally prominent aspect of the Greek original, and in the present instance expresses its preference for the translation, "he who cares." So do I! It fits the context much, much better. In fact, it is the only translation that shows the cohesive structure of the passage.

(3) Each believer has received an "ordinary" spiritual gift (Rom. 12:3-5; 1Pet. 4:10) in one of three areas: evangelism (Mt. 4:19), speaking (1 Pet. 4:11a; Rom. 12:3-8) or acting (1 Pet. 4:11b). The evangelistic gift is one-fold (Acts 1:28), the speaking gift two-fold, teaching and exhorting (Rom. 12:6, 7b, 8a), and the acting gift three-fold, sharing, caring and showing mercy (Rom. 12:7a, 8b, c, d) for a total of 6 specific gifts in 3 main areas.

(4) The "ordinary" gifts should be distinguished from leadership gifts (Eph. 4:11) and "extraordinary" gifts (1 Cor. 12-14). "Ordinary" gifts are a part of the fabric of a Christian. "Extraordinary" gifts are not. In short, one cannot be a Christian without the former, but can very much be one without the latter. **Note that all six ordinary gifts are also a matter of obedience as part of the biblical command structure**. Every Christian must evangelize (Mt. 28:19), teach (Heb. 5:12) and exhort (Heb. 3:13), as well as share (Eph. 4:28), care (Rom. 16:2) and show mercy (Jam. 2:13). This mandates beyond a shadow of a doubt that training in each area, whether by means of "boot camps" or otherwise, is not and cannot be negotiable!

(5) The giftedness will manifest itself in the course of surrendering to the six-fold command structure. They will (only) "pop out" in "the pressure cooker of obedience," "the boot camp of intensive training," or the "microwave of rapid maturation," regardless the length or the type.

(6) The threefold office is only open to qualified individuals (1 Tim. 3:1-13) who have displayed their giftedness in the area of the corresponding office to which they are called.

(7) The Biblical Data thus far provide a "liberating" eye-opener for the place and function of women in the Church. The customary claim and "wisdom" is that for women to be useful and fulfilled in the Church, the latter should open its offices to them. Otherwise they are mired down in the membership and unable to realize their potential. Many denominations have succumbed to this "dilemma," totally overlooking the "gift" area and what it does and should entail. Paul makes it crystal clear that no woman should be in a place of authority in the Church and anchors his prohibition in both creation and the fall (1 Tim. 2:12-14). This makes it a universal and therefore inviolable instruction. However, no such prohibition exists regarding the gift area. On the contrary, women and men are equally endowed in the gift area, that is, in evangelism, speaking (teaching or exhorting) and serving (sharing, caring and showing mercy). As such they can, do and should shine. The Church Leaders as directing and superintending Captains must build an "organization" that uses them to the full. When they blossom and are effective in their gift function, it will not faze them that they cannot meet once a month on a Leadership level. In fact, since the Leaders consist of unstoppable folks as well, it can be expected that they will be more than willing, if not eager to receive feed-back from their Lieutenants, male or female, and will bend over backward to honor their input, their requests and their suggestions. This ensures that there is no need for them to spend time in Leadership meetings! "Captains" (Officers), "lieutenants" (gifted folks), and "soldiers" (members) stand shoulder to shoulder and act in unison!

(8) Folks who do not know their gift are ignorant, indifferent, lazy, or may not claim to be Christians. This is to say, they are unaware of the biblical teaching, have no interest in the pressure cooker, regard it too much of a burden, or do not have a gift to start with.

(9) But those who have identified their gift will be "self-propelled" and "unstoppable" in their specific area, and live by the motto, "If you do not use us, you will lose us."

(10) Statistically, with six functioning gifts, there will be *one* evangelistic gift, *two* speaking gifts, and *three* diaconal gifts, for every six believers. The evangelistic gift parallels an OBGYN. There is no need for more than one "facilitator" to/ be present at a birth scene. The two speaking gifts resemble a Pediatrician and a Family Practitioner, both needed to ensure vigorous health.

And the three acting gifts are similar to the Support Personnel, such as in a Doctor's or Dentist's office, which has usually three "(lady-) attendants" to keep the office logistically operating and functional.

(11) If the Evangelist (Office) and the evangelistically gifted are effective, the Pastors-teachers/Elders/Bishops/Rulers will have enough to do, so that they will be in need of Deacons (Acts 6:1ff). Deacons are supposed to do everything (a) to permit the evangelists and pastors-teachers to do their job uninterruptedly, and (b) to "service" their target audience. This means that they function both on the outside of the Church, shoulder to shoulder with the Evangelist and on the inside, shoulder to shoulder with the Pastor-Teacher/Exhorter.

(12) In this Biblical Structure the Evangelist-Leaders (Captains) should train and mobilize the total Membership (Soldiers) to Evangelize by means and with the assistance of the Gifted People (Lieutenants), just as the other two Officer-Leaders should do in their own areas. Thus all Evangelism should be done in the context of the Church with a view to the Church.

(13) All evangelistic, pastor-teacher and diaconal labors in the Church should have the worship of God in the splendor of holiness as their objective (Eph. 4:12-16; Rev. 4:8-11).

All these introductory items, general as well as specific, form the backdrop for what follows in the Third Section of this Paper, a careful presentation of the several constituent elements of the Three Ministries of the Church under the Leadership of the three Offices.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion calls for the broad implications of the present Chapter that makes for an efficient and effective Church-on-the-March, and determines its concrete consequences that should be explosive for a powerful impact of its threefold Ministry.

However, these implications and the consequences may not materialize, or at best sparingly and haltingly, until the five Reality-Checks, stated in Section I come into their own. They should not only touch a temporary responsive chord, but must be permanently embedded in our hearts, minds, wills and emotions. If they are, we will grasp and echo several things.

1. We will grasp and echo what John Calvin wrote in his Commentary on Isaiah 49:23, "When we see that matters are now very different, and that 'kings' are not the 'nursing fathers,' but the executioners of the Church; when in consequence of taking away the doctrine of piety and banishing its true ministers, idle bellies, insatiable whirlpools, and messengers of Satan are fattened (for such are the persons to whom the princes cheerfully distribute their wealth, that is the moisture and blood which they have sucked out of the people), when even princes otherwise godly have less strength and firmness for defending the Word and upholding the Church; let us acknowledge that this is the award due to our sins, and let us confess that we do not deserve good 'nursing fathers.' But yet, after this frightfully ruinous condition, we ought to hope for a restoration of the Church and such a conversion of kings that they shall show themselves to be 'nursing fathers' and protectors of believers, and shall bravely defend the doctrine of the Word." Whatever view one has about the biblical function of government, Calvin's confession must grip our heart, and the biblical "co-dependency" expressed in it must become a universal model, especially in a day and age where conditions have deteriorated exponentially with the loss not only of the Middle East to Idolatrous Islam, but also of Calvin's (and Luther's) Europe to Atheistic Secularism, and the looming loss of the USA to a Godless and Ungodly Humanism. Taking the historical reality check with the utmost seriousness we confess with Daniel, Nehemiah and all those who followed in their footsteps that we are guilty, individually and

personally, and we all do and should repent, personally and individually, and produce fruit in keeping with and worthy of repentance (Mt. 3:8) in the hot pursuit of the Threefold Ministry and all that this entails!

2. We will grasp and echo the central significance of the Church. You will not put any eggs in the basket of the world. Literally nothing positively can hatch there. Scripture tells us that we must distance ourselves from it for our lives sake, both as it is organized rebelliously against God and as it is organized disdainfully apart from God. The first one usually stands to reason. But the latter is a different story. Before long the world infiltrates, often in the area of "common grace," subsequently brings us to our knees and finally takes us down. However, if the Church is our life in the full biblical sense of the word, we will start out on our knees and rise to every occasion. We will also grasp that the para-ecclesiastical route is not the biblical way to go. This is not to discount any of the accomplishments of para-ecclesiastical organizations in their zeal to further the Kingdom of God. Far from it! However, while we recognize that they usually, if not invariably, move into a vacuum that the Church has created by its lamentable sins of omission and at times feel forced to do so as a result of the Church's refusal to move aggressively in pursuit of the Grand Command, or at times even by its subtle or not so subtle hostility against sought after, proposed, and biblically mandated missions of whatever sort, this does not vitiate the bottom line that it is the Church, and not para-ecclesiastical organizations, however empowered and blessed, that receives the promise that "the gates of hell will not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). This does and should make us thirst and pray for the day that all para-ecclesiastical organizations will simply be absorbed by a militant, powerful, and effective Revival Church-on-the-March, in fact, a March that goes so "Far, Fast, and Furious," as modeled by Paul (Rom. 15:24, 28; Rom. 1:13 and 15:22; and Rom. 1:15, respectively), that no external organization can even keep up. That will be the day!

3. We will grasp and echo the complementarity of truth and never "unbundle" what God has bundled together, such as the three Ministries of the Evangelist, the Pastor-Teacher and the Deacon. For each Ministry, as has been stated already, "to isolate itself from the others is to pursue its own desires and rages (!) against all sound judgment" (Prov. 18:1). This is tough language. But everyone who listens to it will experience it as wholesome medicine! To ignore it implicitly or dismiss it explicitly can easily in the short run, and will eventually in the long run, lead to a non-functional Church, failing to fire on all pistons, and possibly even to a dysfunctional Church rampant with unwholesome competition, possibly fed by "envy and selfish ambition that leads to disorder and every evil practice" (Jam. 3:16), which in turn is rooted in the lust to satisfy one's own pleasure (Jam. 4:1). In a word, none of the three Ministries may go it alone, independently from the two others, similar to the eye, the ear and the tongue. They are interdependent and meant to function in an integrated and cooperative manner, again just as the eye, the ear and the tongue. Neither will we "bundle" what God has unbundled. None of the three Ministries may occupy the dominant position, and no individual may seek to dominate the Church's threefold ministry, either as Evangelist, Pastor-Teacher or Deacon, and put the other ministries under his umbrella. Rather each Ministry and each individual will always defer to the others in the area of their God-given niche and competence. Once again the eye, the ear and the tongue form the joint model. The one may not be relegated to an inferior position or be reduced to the others. The Church would turn into a cargo ship with the containers unevenly distributed. The ship's forward progress will be seriously impaired, and it may even capsize.

Once more, and to be as crystal clear and as graphic as possible, and confining myself to the evangelistic Leadership (Evangelist) and the edifying Leadership (Elder, Pastor/Teacher), these

two Leadership areas together represent three gifts, the one evangelistic gift in the Evangelism area, and the two teaching and exhorting gifts in the Edification area. Since believers as well as leaders can only "sparkle" and "spark" in their gift area, a Church with any Leader in the two Leadership areas who monopolizes or dominates the Leadership position with his specific gift, whether evangelism, teaching or exhorting, at the explicit or implicit neglect or expense of the other two gifts, is led by "one third of a man" because two thirds of the "sparkle" and the "spark" necessary for the Church to soar to the glory of God are sorely missing. The provocative manner in which this is worded is meant to convey the seriousness of a basically arrogant leader whether consciously and intentionally or not, who in word or in deed functions as a one-man show in basically determining the vision of the Church by himself, in virtually placing all his supposed co-workers under his umbrella, and in not co-developing with them to their mutual full potential!

In sum, a Church governed and directed by "one third of a man" will not last! A three-engine airplane, such as the long-range wide-body jet airliner MD-11, can only be certified when it is capable of flying on one engine without crashing. But when it becomes inoperative, the end is in sight with all that this entails in terms of heart breaking casualties. So a powerful and effective one-man leadership may be capable of "flying" safely for a time. But it is very rare that it can be replaced, which implies that sooner rather than later the "experiment" comes to a not so gracious end. History supplies plenty of proof of the shortsightedness of a virtual one man's leadership that does not insist that the Threefold Ministry Culture is woven in the fabric of the Church so that potential gifted successors are groomed to wait in the wings in order to ensure a smooth and seamless transition. Frankly, only when the structural engine of the Church in terms of a gifted threefold Leadership conjoint to and fed by a gifted threefold membership fires consistently on all three pistons will it "at best" not merely enjoy a meteoric and transient Leadership, but under God embody a self-perpetuating and lasting Revival Culture that gives rise to a seamless perpetuity. This reminder cannot be repeated enough.

4. We will grasp and echo the truth of the full Biblical Gospel that is Trinitarian in its origin and Triadic in its content. Concretely, we will honor the OT as the Book of God the Father and drink in his Self-disclosure in all of his Perfections, all of his Thoughts, all of his Will, all of his Emotions, all of his Words, whether Promises, Injunctions, Prohibitions, Threats, or otherwise, and all of his Actions, whether of his Holy and Deserved Justice, Curse and Judgment, his Loving and Merciful Grace, Blessing and Prosperity, or otherwise, in short, all of the Positive and Negative Universal Principle and Patterns, found in the Sacred Text, whether immediately and quickly "gleaned," or to be judiciously and skillfully "mined" from it. We will recognize and embrace that the fullness of all of this Self-disclosed Glory enters in and is personified in his Son whose Mission it is to manifest and explain the Father (John 1:18). Otherwise it is impossible to avoid an "anemic," truncated or even a partial or near-empty Christology, which all too often has characterized, if not plagued the Church. We will honor the Gospels as the Book of God the Son, in which he as its Embodiment discloses the Fullness of the Glory of the Father in the totality of his OT Self-disclosure. We will recognize and embrace that the Fullness of the Father's Glory embodied in the Son enters in and is personalized by God the Holy Spirit. Otherwise it is impossible to avoid an "anemic," truncated or even a partial or near-empty Pneumatology, which once again has marked. We will honor the Epistles and the rest of the NT as the Book of God the Holy Spirit in which he completes the Disclosure of the Full Glory of the Son (John 16:12-14). We will recognize and embrace that he pours the Fullness of the Father's Glory, embodied in the completed Fullness of the Son's Glory (John 16:15) in the believer. Otherwise it is impossible to

avoid an "anemic," truncated, or even a partial or near-empty Christianity.[44]

We will also grasp and echo the truth of the full Triadic Gospel that conveys the three "definitive" graces of regeneration (John 3:3, 5; Rom. 6:6), justification (Rom. 5:1; 2 Cor. 5:21), and sanctification (Heb. 10:10) through union with Christ by the primary means of the authoritative Evangelistic proclamation of the Word (Mt. 13:1ff, 18ff) in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) as well as the three "progressive" graces of daily repentance and faith, daily forgiveness and daily holiness through communion with Christ (John 15:5) by the primary means of the authoritative Edificational proclamation and use of the Word (Col. 3:16) in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). We will honor and embrace that "calling on the Name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; Jam. 4:2c) is the God-given channel through which both the "definitive" and "progressive" graces are embraced, received, experienced and displayed (See also for the combination of Word, Spirit and Prayer, John 15:7; Eph. 6:17-18; 1 Tim. 4:5).

5. We will grasp and echo the wisdom of James. Hearing the Word with the utmost attention, without any back-talk, let alone outbursts of anger against its content, is glorious and necessary (Jam. 1:19-21). But it is not sufficient. Mental euphoria about a well-understood and formulated doctrine, such as Theology proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, or Eschatology, etc., suffers of self-deception, if it is not accompanied by, in fact, suffused with a commensurate experiential reality that makes itself felt and an activating reality that makes itself known. The first reality has a "glow" that is there for all to see and take not. The second one has an "impact" for everyone to stand up and be on the move. Regrettably, doctrinal euphoria too often is taken to be the end station. One's conceptual position laid out in a multitude of literature and outlined in a multitude of conferences is as strong as the rock of Gibraltar, and it should be. But stop there, and it has barrenness written all over it. Embrace it as such, and it cuts. Swallow it as such, and it kills. James' message to this effect is crystal clear. It is delusional (Jam. 1:22)! The Word of God must experientially be stored in my heart so that I would be actively holy and not sin against the God of that Word (Ps. 119:11). When the Reformation age of youthful, radiant and pulsating Confessions turned into the Post-Reformation age of geriatric dogmatic confessionalism, history shows that the handwriting was on the wall. Mostly beautiful sculptures, all right! But it was soon enshrined in an undoubtedly attractive and well-attended museum that over time took on the earmarks of a mausoleum! At least both Pietism and Puritanism thought so, but were able to read the handwriting, and thankfully responded. At any rate, I am afraid that James' analysis and assessment has been and still is much more pertinent than many, if not most of us can even begin to fathom, and that is a scary proposition!

6. Finally, we will grasp and echo the commitment to an existence of "Victory through Battle" in all its various aspects and phases. The promises of God are not there as an "invitation" to take a beeline to our "Lazy Boy," or "Lazy-Girl" for that matter. Rather, they are recognized

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[44] All this is also the considered view of one of the finest (Dutch) theologians the Church of Christ has ever produced, Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1928), II, 287; or Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, John Bolt, ed., John Vriend, Eng. Tr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003-2008), II, 320, "Just as in the ontological Trinity the Father is the first in the order of subsistence, the Son the second, the Holy Spirit the third, so also in the history of revelation the Father preceded the Son, and the Son in turn preceded the Holy Spirit. The "economy" of the Father was especially that of the Old Testament (Heb. 1:1); the 'economy' of the Son started with the incarnation; and the 'economy' of the Holy Spirit began on the Day of Pentecost (John 7:39; 14:16-17). The Father came without having been sent, the Son came after being sent by the Father (Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; John 3:16; 5:23, 30, 37; 6:28ff; etc.), and the Holy Spirit only came because he was sent both by the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 16:7)." This is robust *Trinitarian* and authentic *Biblical* Theology at its finest! It retains the Biblical emphasis upon and honors the glory of each of the Three Persons of the Godhead!

as a lifeline for drowning people who take hold of the motto *Ora* ***et*** *Labora* and put that on vivid display. It prompts them to incessant and communal prayer `for these promises to be fulfilled as a matter of both survival and victory. But this fulfillment invariably requires the full involvement of human instrumentality. There is no reason whatsoever to anticipate God's blessing upon covenant children unless and until they are trained "night and day" by covenant parents (Deut. 6:6-9). Similarly, there is no reason whatsoever to anticipate a Church to be powerfully effective and to flourish in its several Ministries unless and until it suffers and dies in hot pursuit of this (John 12:24; Phil. 1:21; 3:10). Is the Church's failure in all this the reason for the virtual demise of Christianity in the Middle East, for its practical demise in Europe, and for its threatening demise in the USA, as documented above? Another scary proposition!

With the far-reaching implications and the sobering warnings of the six reality checks in place, we can now determine how they show up in a number of concrete and explosive applications and consequences that pave the way for and give rise to the content of Section III.

1. It has applications and consequences for the organization of the Church in terms of the triad of Evangelism, Training, and Serving. For one thing, when the Pastor-Teacher, who is usually "in charge" in a congregation embraces the biblical triadic ecclesial Leadership, he will immediately recognize that he is not and cannot be the sole visionary of the Church, and will never accept the designation of "Vision Pastor," as if he can supply the vision for the whole Church in all its phases and aspects without equal input of the Evangelist and the Deacon. Nor can he ever supply a robust and full-orbed Pastoral vision without the assistance of his Fellow Pastors-Teachers/Elders/Overseers/Rulers. A one-man Leadership, whether formal or informal, is a potential disaster. He can only "sparkle" and "spark" in his niche at best, and he deprives himself, whether by default or design, of others whether in the same or in one of the adjoining niches to "co-sparkle" and "co-spark" with him, an indispensable necessity to light up the world and a key commodity in times of leadership transition. The latter, of course, would imply a corporate Pastoral Leadership as well as a joint Evangelistic-Pastoral Leadership, both of which is required by the Biblical blueprint.

Not so incidentally, this is seriously undermined by the distinction between "ruling" and "teaching" elders, as if they represent two offices. Frankly, this hamstrings the Church. Whatever the "subjective" or even "hermeneutical" reasons may be to opt for this distinction, exegetical competence and honesty *must* conclude that there is no difference in office between elder, pastor-teacher, overseer (bishop) or ruler. These various terms are used promiscuously and designate the same office (See Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1ff; 5:17; Tit. 1:7; Heb. 13:7, 17; see also emphatically Van Bruggen, *Ambten*, 96-98, 100-105), for a comprehensive and conclusive (!) argument). They simply present the Church with a wide ministry mosaic that calls for usually older men to shepherd-teach the congregation with the Word of God, to oversee how it functions in every-day life, and to meet its needs to that end (Is. 3:6-7; 4:1). Second, the leadership in view by these terms is invariably presented as "plural" (Acts 14:23; 20:17), except when the personal and individual qualifications are enumerated (1 Tim. 3:1ff). However, while there is no difference in *office*, there is a clear-cut difference in *intensity.* While all elders, pastor-teachers, overseers, rulers must be equally honored, that is, respected by virtue of their office, double "honor" or "respect" is owed to those elders who definitely in terms of time, likely in expense of energy, and possibly in quality, are a cut above the others in tirelessly and laboriously devoting themselves to a "preaching and instructing" (exhorting?) ministry *to the point of exhaustion*. The Greek for double "honor" does not necessarily imply the idea for double "remuneration." The context does not require this and may

not even allow it (See especially 1 Tim. 5:3). But it stands to reason that elders, etc. who may not be otherwise employed will be "honored" with an "honorarium" that allows them to make ends meet (1 Cor. 8:12; see also van Bruggen, *Ambten*, 100-103). Candidly, it is always a joy to me to be introduced in an East African setting to all the pastors in a morning service, all equally competent to pastor-teach with the result that the Church never misses a beat in the absence of one or two of them. The biblical plural of "elders" in this context could well indicate that in a thriving Church under the leadership of multiple capable men it would be the better part of wisdom if not one of them would fill the pulpit exclusively or near exclusively, apart from vacation and special services. My own long experience in the Netherlands, the United States as well as in Uganda has shown me that multiple preachers provide stability to a congregation that pays off, once again, both in its ongoing ministries and during times of transition. A "centipede" is bound to be more stable than a "monoped!"

As a result any (so-called) Senior-Pastor who is worth his "salt" and his "light," will step back from a one-man leadership position and biblically champion a corporate, general umbrella Church Leadership Board that (ideally) should consist of three branches. Each one of these branches should hammer out its own vision and the method of its implementation in terms of a communicating blueprint, a clear-cut strategy, and the pivotal hot pursuit. The end result of their deliberations should be submitted to the General Church Leadership Board for final approval with the understanding that the Leadership Board should defer wherever possible to the visionary "wishes" of each branch in its niche area.

2. To deviate from the general and global biblical blueprint of a threefold leadership, a threefold gift area and a threefold mandate with all that this entails has, does and will cost the Church dearly. For one, where are the Churches in which the Leaders do not only "do their thing," but also focus on the certification of all believers in the three areas of evangelizing, speaking and serving? The vacuum in this regard is huge and it shows in the departure of great numbers of youths from the Church. They are not systematically evangelized, or trained to evangelize, speak and serve. If Church leaders would run their business as they run their Church, they would go bankrupt in a hurry. It is time to wake up, to be alarmed, to repent and to die to self in obedience to the King of Kings and implement the Biblical blueprint that he presents and lays out as non-negotiable.

Further, in this context each Leadership Branch is responsible to draft its own Training Manual, set up its own Five-fold Training Program, and submit this to the Leadership Board as well for its approval and its systematic implementation. While for the implementation it is "all hands on deck," specifically the Pastor-Teachers should be responsible for the Teaching section in each Program, and the Deacons should provide the "logistics" for the three Programs to be conducted effectively.

3. Each Training Program should take place under the umbrella of the Full, Three-pronged, New Covenant Gospel as God's instrument to make disciples in Evangelism and to train disciples in Edification. The Full Gospel has two layers. The Gospel for wretched sinners is to supply them with the threefold grace of the Heart of Jesus in Definitive Regeneration (John 3:5), with the Righteousness of Jesus in Definitive Justification (Rom. 5:1), and the Holiness of Jesus in Definitive Sanctification (Heb. 10:10). The Gospel for wretched saints is to furnish them with the threefold grace of continuing daily repentance and faith, continuing daily forgiveness of sins, and continuing daily holiness of life. To truncate the Full Gospel for wretched sinners or wretched saints to a one-pronged or even two-pronged affair is to put a partial noose around the neck of the Church that sooner or later will cause its downgrade or even its demise. Similarly, to

apply the Full Gospel to sinners only and not equally to saints, of course not on the same level with an identical content, will sooner or later have the same result. In fact, when in either case the one or two-pronged good is or becomes the enemy of the three-pronged best and seeks to keep it at bay, whether subtly or not, it will be sooner rather than later.

4. The three Training Programs should be pursued with such vigor by the Leadership of the Church and be so embedded in the fabric of the Church that the total Membership of the Church either is or will be certified in each of the three areas of Church Ministry. In the light of the Grand Command (Mt. 28:19-20) this is and should be the first order of business in a Church that recognizes it has all the trappings of an armory, a training ground to multiply saints and enhance their sainthood. It is to be anticipated that once the Trinitarian and Triadic Gospel is understood, embraced, and absorbed in its Fullness each of the three Training Programs will be organized by the Leadership, welcomed by the Gifted Folks, and greeted by the Membership with open hearts, open minds, open wills, open emotions, "open hands," "open feet," and "open tongues." Times of transition of leadership resulting from resignation or retirement are frequently crisis times, especially when the leadership is outstanding. In fact, such crisis times are inevitable, if the Membership is not certified in all three areas of Ministry as mandated, and demonstrate their certification under the threefold Leadership and assisted by the three kinds of gifted people. Unless the latter is the case, the Ministerial Culture is embodied in the Leadership only. This stands to reason for in such scenario resignation or retirement leaves a huge gap that unless filled fully and competently by a successor is bound to be traumatic and at times terminal. The bottom line is this. Every time a congregation goes down upon the departure of a "Senior-Pastor," the departing folks are bound to him, rather than to the Lord Jesus. Since all that is good only comes from above, any man can only pass on what is bad. That's why a follower of a human being always courts disaster. He can only walk away with his flaws. Putting every Church member through the three training Schools will cure an idolizing tendency in a hurry, and prepare the trainees for a threefold service. In sum, the not so subtle failure on the part of departing pastors to do a full-orbed job may well be rooted in a kind of self-service. By the same token the untrained remaining membership may well ever so subtly be prevented from spotting and avoiding a kind of self-service. In either instance, the bottom line is a slippery slope!

5. The blessed effects of a fully functioning Church in terms of its committed Leadership and its certified Membership that as a result is not only competent in all three areas of Ministry but has also identified its giftedness and consequently has become unstoppable in its niche, are numerous. For a starter, it will overcome the curse that plagues nearly every Church, that is, the curse of having both a devoted core and a non-performing periphery. This is of transcending significance. It allows the Church (for once?) to operate as a genuine Body. Scripture avails itself of this metaphor again and again, and does not tire stressing its enormous importance. Only when every member functions properly will the Body not have to struggle with dead weight, but enjoy robust health and can it also be expected to display healing power. Especially the impact of the threefold gift-area, as has been stated already, is pivotal. Once again, by way of illustration, an electrician, a plumber and a carpenter can do the simple things in all three areas, such as putting in new bulbs, plunging a toilet and hammering a nail in the wall. But when the electric system fails, the sewage backs up or the roof caves in, one calls for the expert, the folks who are gifted in that area. The electrician is called to fix the electric system, the plumber the sewage system, and the carpenter to repair the collapsed roof. The same principle applies to the spiritual area of life. The evangelistically gifted take the lead in evangelism, the speaking gifted in the speaking area, and the serving gifted in the serving area. Scripture is crystal clear. One may not

proudly push "the expert" out of his area, but must defer to him (Rom. 12:3). This is similar to the way the body works. The eye is needed for seeing, the ear for hearing and the tongue for speaking. No one ever has seen the ear say to the eye when driving, "Move over, it is now my turn to face the road." This is an intolerable "colonialism" and an unacceptable "imperialism." Every Church member is only selectively brilliant. To be sure, everyone must be certified in evangelism, speaking and serving. But in the all-out war that is raging with its many pitched battles, everybody better be utterly humble, know its own place and specific function, and seamlessly stand shoulder to shoulder with fellow Christians in the organized making and training of disciples. In other words, "Do not ever try to take over! Let everybody communicate in word and deed, in clearly articulated as well as body language, "I need you," so that the various selective brilliances come together in mutual embrace and mutual support to form one concentrated beam of light that brightly illumines the waterfront. Otherwise we are doomed to at best a "curtailed," and at times even a twisted fruitfulness that destroys the-future-with-and-under-God-and-his-smile (See for all this specifically 1 Cor. 12:12-27)!

All this may seem a tall order. Frankly, it is! Only Holy Spirit Revival times seem to come close to experiencing this. Such times that display and extol the Presence of the Glory of God in Twelve Mighty Marks (Acts 1-12), Mighty Abundance of Holy Spirit Life, evidenced in Mighty Prayer, Mighty Preaching, Mighty Conversions, Mighty Assemblies, Mighty Holiness, Mighty Generosity, Mighty Evangelism, Mighty Societal Impact, under Mighty Leaders in Mighty Combat in Mighty Pursuit of the Grand Command (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1-12), saw routinely between 10 and 20 million worshippers added to the Church of Christ in a Century or so, whatever the geographical location, whether in the Middle East, Europe, North America, the Far East, or Africa. Therefore, these times ought to be carefully examined in the light of Scripture, especially since they came and went, exploded on the scene, sooner or later lost their fervor, and eventually appeared to have run their course. Section III seeks to give an account of all this as it deals in more depth with the three Ministries individually and provides a kind of Mini-Manual for each of the three.

But a major foundation stone of the Church's threefold Ministry is Romans 12:1-2, and what immediately follows in Romans 12:3-8. In Romans 12:1 Paul summons us in the light of the mercies of the Full Gospel to a holy, once-and-for-all, self-sacrifice as the only service that is sensible and sound and carries the smile of God. According to Paul in Romans 12:2, this must be followed up, in sharp contrast to "the worldly lust of the flesh, the worldly lust of the eyes and the worldly pride of life," by a daily discernment of the revealed will of God through an ever-recurring renewal of the mind and in a humble, ever switching, situational self-denial.

It is telling, but at the same time hardly surprising, that as the first order of business in putting such definitive self-sacrifice and such multi-faceted self-denial in concrete terms, Paul calls for all members in the Body of Christ to deploy their giftedness in humble sobriety and simultaneously without any holds barred. In short, do not transgress the limit of your giftedness in self-serving pride. You may not! But you do not need to do this either since you form one body. Just like the eye or the ear may not take over each other's function and frankly do not need to do so. The analogy makes it abundantly clear that both a hostile take-over and a failure harmoniously to cooperate spell disaster! At the same time, use your giftedness to the full self-denying limit in both the general area of speaking, specifically as teachers or exhorters, as well as in the general area of serving, specifically as folks who share, care or show mercy.

In short, all this spells "partnership!" "In partnerships, a steward mentality means that each member views the others as full equals with the rights and responsibilities of joining together in a

common venture. In true partnership, each member seeks to build and empower the other."[45] That is to say, genuine partners do not encroach upon someone else's niche ("rights"), but give it all they've got in theiniche ("responsibilities")!

6. Once in the present historical situation the Six Reality-Checks specified in Section I are grasped and embraced as "cutting edge" relevant, and the often overlooked or misunderstood Threefold Structure of the Church as the indispensable Launching Pad for a full-orbed and effective Ministry, as laid out in Section II, has come into full view, the stage is set to be utterly serious in the training phase of the Membership of the Church that will lead to the certification of each believer in each of the three areas of ministry. The training process starts with the teaching and absorption of the three Manuals that spell out the content of the three ministries. Once this has been completed, it is time to enter "the field" for their component elements to be modeled by the trainer, and to be observed and refined in the trainees with certification as the intermediate goal and the emergence of the giftedness as the grand objective. All Christian Institutions especially of Higher Learning, such as Seminaries, should have clinical courses in their curriculum to cover the three Ministries and to prepare their students for them, 20% in the Classroom and 80% in the field, with enthusiastic support and hands-on involvement of all Faculty members! The Classroom is able and needed to "teach" prospective Evangelist, Pastor-Teachers and Deacons, that is, provide them with theological head knowledge and may even set their hears ablaze. But intensive field work is indispensable to "train" and "grow" them, that is, to produce actual "sparklers" and "sparkers."

Once the training of the Membership is complete and the Giftedness is established, the Church has turned into an organized Army, and is poised to be or become a Marching Church that fires on all pistons. When it does, the Leader-Captains will mobilize the whole Church and in the process train all its "needy" members by means and with the assistance of the gifted Lieutenants in all the areas of the ecclesial ministry. Second, when a Leader-Captain with his entourage enters the field of battle, he can always count on the physical presence of the other two Leader-Captains with their entourage in a supporting role. In other words, the Church always moves as an organized united Army. This principle was already non-negotiable in the Conquest of Canaan. The whole Army was ordered to move as one man from conquest to conquest (Num. 32:1ff; Josh. 1:12ff; 8:1) under the Leadership of Joshua. This principle was warmly embraced by the Israelites on the verge of crossing the Jordan. In fact, they threatened every one with who would rebel or refuse to fall in line (Josh. 1:18). Even if the Mosaic Law does not appear to require this in so many words, we must deeply appreciate the sentiment. Armies cannot function with a committed core and a hangers-on type of periphery. The question may well be asked whether the failure to abide by this principle of non-negotiable unity resulted in the large swaths of Canaanites who were not disenfranchised and as a result did not only become "thorns" in the side of the Israelites but brought about their down fall! By way of concrete application, the Pastor-Teacher expects both the Evangelist and the Deacon with their entourage to be present in the Preaching Services of the Church. Similarly the Evangelists as well as the Deacons can expect the other two ministries to join them in their field of labor. After all, as we saw, every believer as a believer must evangelize daily, speak daily and serve daily. Of course, it requires humility as well as commitment for Leaders with an entourage in one area of ministry to function as number #2 in the two other areas. But Paul leaves no doubt about this (Rom. 12:3-8). The

[45] Paul Hiebert and Sam Larsen, "Partnership in the Gospel: Misers, Accountants and Stewards," in Stephen Holthaus und Klaus W. Mueller, ed., *Die Mission der Theology: Festschrift fuer Hans Kasdorf zum 70. Geburtstag* (Bonn: Verlag fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1998), 167.

bottom line is that the United Ecclesiastical Front must be in clear evidence across the board of the Threefold Ministry of the Church.

Of course, the details of this United Effort need to be worked out into a carefully delineated blueprint so that everyone is consciously and intentionally on the same page. In order to accomplish this, the Threefold Leadership must first of all brainstorm and determine the over-all "strategy" to win the war. This requires a thorough knowledge of Biblical principles. It also must outline on the "operational" level how to win specific campaigns. This requires and equally thorough knowledge of the "lay of the land." But both must be geared to embrace the "tactics" to be victorious in individual battles by means of the all hands-on deck cooperative involvement of every combatant. A Church that steadfastly refuses without reservation to enter into all-out battles in self-abandonment with the sole objective to prevail in them en route to winning the war, and never moves beyond extensive theorizing about the ins and outs of wars and campaigns, is like a football team that forever stays "safely" in the huddle and does not plunge, injury or not, into the defensive line of the enemy with a view to scoring the winning touchdown. In short, unless the Church embraces the suffering of Christ (the suffering of propagation!) in mortal combat (Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 2:3; 4:5; 5:8-9) for the joy of victory that is waiting on the other side (See Heb. 12:2, 4), it will be sure to experience the suffering of being routed in the agony of defeat, if not demise. This is the unmistakable testimony and solemn warning of Scripture (Heb. 10:28; 1 Pet. 4:17), of Jesus (Rev. 2:1-3:22), and of the nearly Two-Thousand Year-Long History of the Church!

Now on to Section III, and the Three Manuals! They are preceded by a short Introduction as well as a focus upon Revival as the Dynamics behind any and all Ecclesial Ministries, and, finally, followed by a motivational Conclusion on Revival as the only Guarantee of any Effective Ministry as Scripture envisions, promises, and mandates it.

III. The Revival of the Church: The Dynamics behind its Threefold Ministry

1. Introduction
2. The Glory of Revival
3. The Evangelistic Ministry
4. The Edificational Ministry
5. The Diaconal Ministry]
6. Conclusion

NOTE:

This Section is still partly "Under Construction." Extensive Papers on all the segments, except the one on 5. Diaconal Ministries, are already written and available upon request. But in this context they await summarizing abbreviations. They are scheduled to cover:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Revival as the Engine for an Effective Ministry**
3. **A Manual on the Ministry of Evangelism**
4. **A Manual on the Ministry of Speaking**
5. **A Manual on the Ministry of Serving**
6. **Revival as the Guarantee for an Effective Ministry**

Appendix I

"John Calvin's *Duplex Gratia*" Its Impact upon the Early Reformation Creeds and upon Reformed Theology through the Ages.

The impact of Calvin's *duplex gratia* is reflected in the early Reformation Creeds, such as the *Heidelberg Catechism* (HC), which makes only one occasional reference to regeneration in Lord's Day (LD) III (Question & Answer 8) without further defining it. To be sure, LD. 16 (Q. & A., 45) states that by virtue of the sacrifice and death of Jesus "our old man is crucified, dead and buried with him that so the corrupt inclinations of the flesh may no longer reign in us, but that we may offer ourselves unto him a sacrifice of thanksgiving," with a reference to Romans 6:6-11. But LD. 23 (Q. & A., 60) is far from crystal clear in explaining this further. We are told that we are justified "only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuses me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart." While it is, indeed, only through genuine faith that man's sinful record can be replaced by the imputed righteousness of Christ (justification), "the inclination to all evil" can only be undone by the heart transplant, as promised in Ezekiel 36:26 (regeneration). This is not transparent from this clause. Further, once this heart transplant occurs, "the flesh" may be incorrigible in its "lusting" against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). Still the new "I" is no longer "inclined to all evil" (Rom. 7:15-16). In fact, quite the opposite! It "delights in the Law of God" (Rom. 7:22). As a result any and all sin goes against its grain (1 John 3:9). Incidentally, while the righteousness of Christ is the undisputed basis for our justification, according to Scripture the holiness of Christ is necessary for our sanctification. LD. 23, therefore, without a biblical delineation is unclear in its formulation in more than one way.

With regards to LD. 33 (Q. & A., 88-90), it informs us that "true conversion" consists "of two parts, the mortification of the old and the quickening of the new man." However, they are both defined as a process. The first one is said to be a "sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins, and more and more to hate and flee from them." The second one is "a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works." This twofold definition virtually equates "conversion" as the combination of the negative and positive side of progressive sanctification. This does not comport with the biblical teaching that conversion as the "human" flipside of regeneration is once for all and instantaneous.

In all honesty, we cannot but conclude that from a biblical perspective much of what we saw in the *Heidelberg Catechism* in the area of regeneration and conversion must be recognized as (quite?) misconceived, most of it as (thoroughly?) confused, and all of it as (very?) confusing. After all, (1) regeneration is a once and for all implantation of a new heart, promised by God the Father (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26), produced by God the Son (Rom. 6:3-11), and personalized by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8). The evidence is conversion, consisting of the combination of repentance and faith, or a turning from self and sin to God for forgiveness and holiness through the heartfelt embrace of, or closing with Christ. (2) Further, to underscore this

glorious biblical truth once more for it fully to sink in, with the destruction of the old heart or self on the cross of Christ and the production of the new heart or the new self in the resurrection of Christ, "the inclination to all evil" is once and for all destroyed and once and for all replaced by "the delight in the law of God" (Rom. 7:18)! Of course, the "flesh" that lusts against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17) is still in the believer, but this is not to be equated with "the inclination to all evil," characteristic of the wicked heart of the unbeliever. With the heart transplant in regeneration "the delight in the Law of God" (Rom. 7:22) replaces the "evil inclination." In fact, the new heart, Jesus' heart, is such an awesome reality that Paul, possibly to the initial surprise of many, if not most, does not even attribute actual sins to it, but rather to "indwelling sin," or "the flesh" (Rom. 7:20). But because these sins occur on its watch, the new heart is fully responsible for them. (3) Finally, without going into further details, when through union with Christ "the platform," or "infrastructure" of definitive regeneration (John 3:5), definitive justification (Rom. 5:1) as well as definitive sanctification (Heb. 10:10) is in place, the "outflow," or "superstructure" of daily (progressive) repentance and faith, daily (progressive) forgiveness of sins, and daily (progressive) holiness of life inevitably follows. This edifice of profound simplicity and simple profundity is regrettably nebulous, if not missing in the *Heidelberg Catechism*, which in its lack of full-orbed biblical clarity may well have contributed to the widespread spiritual decline of a once thriving Christian culture. Of course, it goes without saying, and I therefore haste to add, that as an early Reformation document it ought to be received with great gratitude. Frankly, it is remarkable how in the midst of a society that was drenched in a pervasive Roman Catholicism this document could at all have been produced "as-is!" But it may never be overlooked that "the *best* (!) of man is always *man* (!) at best," and therefore must be examined and improved or revised, whenever the Word of God, as in this case, demands this!

Not so incidentally, the same early Reformation pattern regarding regeneration is reflected in the *Belgic Confession of Faith* which states that "true faith … regenerates" (Article 24). This would be an "unthinkable" Arminian statement in a Reformed Creed, if it had not progressive sanctification in mind, but would refer to the biblical doctrine of regeneration. In the so-called *Three Forms of Unity*, adopted by many Reformed Churches in Continental Europe, the *Canons of Dort* thankfully fills the doctrinal gap in the area of regeneration. But this Creed functions so little and so rarely in those Churches, in fact, is so often belittled and endangered in many of them, that it did not make any decisive difference in its "spiritual offspring." This offspring is all too often, if not virtually, unaware of the full-orbed biblical teaching in this area, especially after the notion of "presumptive regeneration," whether in its theological formulation or its widespread practical impact, gained a seemingly monopolistic foothold. It should never be forgotten that one of the forerunners, if not the father of "The Great Awakening," according to Gilbert Tennent, namely Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, was maligned in the Dutch Reformed Church setting in the USA when he introduced the utter necessity of rebirth as a matter of experiential life and death in a (frequently if not habitual "presumptive salvation") context that was dominated by the otherwise in so many ways commendable *Heidelberg Catechism*, as if it was an alien doctrine! Neither should it be forgotten that George Whitefield was forced to preach outside the established Church in an Anglican (often, if not prevailing "baptismal salvation") setting in the United Kingdom, and was looked upon with suspicion in a Presbyterian setting in the USA, when he emphatically and incessantly preached the same Biblical truth. It should be viewed as a grave possibility, if not a near certainty, that the "opposition" to both men and their penetrating preaching was prompted not as much by the generally prevailing unfamiliarity with the doctrine of regeneration as it was by the lack of

regeneration itself, which was undoubtedly due to its unfamiliarity through one or more centuries of neglect.

Frankly, it must have been just as unsettling, if not threatening an experience to be told in the 17th Century that a "heart transplant" was indispensable in order for "blind rebels" to see and enter the Kingdom (John 3: 3, 5), as it was for Nicodemus in the 1st Century! But this does not make it any less imperative and cogent to preach it together with the biblical truths of justification and sanctification as God's *triplex gratia*! After all, as an apparent consequence of the New Covenant Gospel (Ezek. 36:25-27) the necessity of rebirth is one of the three cornerstones of evangelistic preaching of Christ himself (John 3:3, 5), with the necessity of justification (John 4:16-18) and of sanctification (John 8:31-32, 43-44) as the two equally indispensable others. The notions of both (any type of Lutheran) *simplex gratia* (justification) and (any kind of Calvinian) *duplex gratia* (justification and sanctification) fall seriously short of the full-orbed, biblical Gospel, and the *exclusive* emphasis upon either one or the other therefore is simply "not going to do it," that is, not often enough in the short run and never enough in the long run. The biblical "tripod" stands like a rock, and provides a sturdy stability for whatever is built upon it. To reduce it to a "mono-pod" or even a "bi-pod," whether consciously or intentionally or not, results in an unsound and wobbly situation. However, to do so with one's eyes wide open, while ignoring, downplaying, or lowballing the resulting dangerous, if not destructive byproduct, must be regarded as unconscionable. As a case in point, the glorious Kuyperian superstructure of the Kingship of Christ over every square inch of created reality, and all that this biblically entails, was seriously undermined by the equally Kuyperian infrastructure of "presumptive regeneration." In fact, it at times forcibly replaced the Biblical infrastructure which required a heart-transplant as the inviolable point of departure for "seeing and entering Christ's Kingdom" (John 3:3, 5) and therefore of any type of viable and effective superstructure. The result was heartbreaking. Presently "Ichabod" is written on the portals of Dutch society with its practical, if not theoretical Atheistic Secularism in thorough control. The once prevailing glory is gone, with the Church in its failure authoritatively to proclaim the Biblical infrastructure as the major "culprit."

At any rate, it must be quite clear by now that "the best of man is always man at best." Human formulations, such Creeds or even Sermons, routinely and legitimately may and do function as "roadbeds" on which people "travel" in their spiritual life. But once they are "absolutized" and practically treated as on a par with the inerrant Scripture, they turn into "ruts" that do not allow for any additions, improvements, subtractions, or corrections. Roadbeds facilitate and speed up traffic. Ruts victimize traffic and frustrate it. Now, proposed additions, etc., may be thoroughly unbiblical, and as such ought to be resisted to the hilt. But all human "roadbeds," since they are time and history bound, sooner or later simply stand in need of "re-pavement!" To deny this is to assert their "sufficiency" and "infallibility." This, of course, is unacceptable on the face of it.

To return once more to the Reformation Creeds to make all this crystal clear, the *Heidelberg Catechism* does not contain a definition of faith. LD. 7 essentially focuses on the assurance of faith! However glorious as a "confession" of faith on the part of its two authors in the midst of a degraded biblical, theological and ecclesiastical setting, it cannot and may not function as a "definition" of faith. In its Chapter XIV, 2, the more mature Reformation document, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, transcends this, if not towers above it. "The principal acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life" (See also *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, Qu. and A. 72). To

believe in Christ is "to eat his flesh and drink his blood," "to feed on him" (John 6:29, 48, 50-58), that is, actively and experientially "to embrace and to appropriate him."

Incidentally, neither the *Belgic Confession* nor the *Westminster Confession* devotes a separate Chapter either to the Doctrine of Regeneration, or to the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. These are clearly systematic vacuums that must and frankly will be filled, for better or for worse! In both these areas the ecclesiastical "roadbeds" clearly need painstaking work.

Finally, the much venerated and quoted LD. 1 of the HC needs some sympathetic-critical attention as well. It properly strikes at the heart of Roman Catholicism. The latter embraces works in the foundation of justification, rejects, undoubtedly for that reason, assurance of salvation, and accuses the Reformation of opening the door to licentious living. LD. 1 counters with a resounding "Threefold No" to the Roman Catholic life-threatening errors. First, it is Christ *Alone*! Second, there *is* Assurance! Third, Holiness is a *Given*! As such it is a glorious statement of early (Baby?) Reformation faith. But is this as full-orbed a teaching as the Scripture requires? Let us not forget that this is an opening statement with which we inundate children of the covenant! After all, it is a Catechism! A prominent Christian Statesman, thoroughly schooled in the Westminster tradition with its Confession and Catechisms and recognized world-wide, once ventured the opinion that giving children of the covenant the comfort of LD. 1 and the assurance of LD. 7 before ever impressing upon them the need for regeneration and summoning them to faith and repentance, may well have been the noose around their necks that did not only result in the virtual demise of the Reformed Faith on the Continent of Europe, but also in the staggering numerical loss of believers on that same Continent. Both the Reformed Faith and the Reformed Church are less than a shadow of their former self. In fact, that the Continent of Europe is a spiritual waste land is beyond question.

At any rate, this analysis and assessment better not be waved off. After all, our comfort in life and death does and should go biblically well beyond the formulation of LD. 1 of the HC! Our only comfort is, can be, and may be, first, that through union with Christ we receive his heart in (definitive) regeneration (John 3:3, 5; Rom. 6:6, 11) so that we have an entrance into the Kingdom of God, his righteousness in (definitive) justification so that we can have peace in the Kingdom from God (Rom. 5:1) and his holiness in (definitive) sanctification so that we can have fellowship in the Kingdom with God (Heb. 10:14); furthermore, that we through the Holy Spirit call on him in repentance and faith (Acts 2:21, 38) for the union with Christ to become a reality; and finally, that through prayerful communion with him in continuing (daily) repentance and faith and via continuing (daily) forgiveness we produce much (daily) fruit of holiness to demonstrate and so to assure ourselves that we are his disciples (John 15:8).

Incidentally, according to LD. 1 assurance precedes holiness. In Scripture assurance follows holiness. Undoubtedly founded on the twofold rock-like promise of God and the completed work of Christ, it clearly does, will, (and should?) fluctuate with the presence of holiness through the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:19-24; see also Rom. 8:15-16). Frankly, however admirably LD. 1 may stand like a rock in the life and death struggle with the fundamental tenets of Roman Catholicism, it pales in the light of the full-orbed truth of Scripture. Of course, it cannot and may not go unnoticed that the "re-pavement" of LD. 1, as suggested, has a cutting evangelistic edge. I fear that without this "edge" the tragedy of losing children of the covenant to the world can never be remedied. This loss is and must be deeply disturbing on anyone's count!

Not so incidentally, a set of questions could be raised about the division of the HC in three Sections, namely, Sin, Salvation and Gratitude. All three could stand some improvement. Since it is the purpose of the Law not only substantially to identify the content of sanctification, but also

methodologically to exposes the sinfulness of man, it would have been for the better if the HC had reflected this in (greater) detail. The second Section gives the impression that Salvation is to be identified as "justification" only. This would truncate salvation, which is threefold, as argued above, and consists of regeneration, justification and sanctification. This has implications for the third Section. Holiness is not and cannot possibly be merely the grateful response of the believer to "justification," if the Scriptures, such as John 15:5, mean anything. In sum, Section I could have been much more "sharply" formulated. Remember that Paul was convicted when face to face with the Tenth Commandment. Why withhold this from the Church? Sections II and III should have been much more clearly framed. Section II and III leave us with too much fog. Section II suggests a truncated view of "salvation," be it by implication. This spells danger. Section III easily gives folks the impression, especially youngsters who are catechized without a full view of what the Biblical threefold salvation is all about, that they are capable of a grateful response. This comes down to a crypto-Arminianism in the area of sanctification. This increases the danger exponentially. After all, without holiness no one shall see the Lord (Heb. 10:14). See specifically John Piper, *Future Grace, Revised Edition: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God* (Eugene: Multnomah Publishers, 2012), and his valuable insight and assessment about how "gratitude" should and should not function in the life of both the Church and the individual Christian. It is not simply the "mandated" and "expected" human response to the activity of God's grace on the part of believers or, for that matter, of God's common grace on the part of believers and unbelievers alike (Rom. 1:21). It is part and parcel of God's activity of grace, even if it functions as an internal impetus to make that grace tangible in a wide variety of ways in the area of holiness!

It has been said that "heresies" are sung into the Church. This makes sense. Regular singing of heresies produces grooves of heresy that in the long run may be irremediable. The glorious "wheal" of catechizing in a Church and home setting may be equally undone by the "woe" of catechizing when its deficiencies produce grooves of deficiency. It is crystal clear and a matter of oral and recorded history that the full biblical truth will be viewed as an alien intruder once these grooves are in engrained evidence. My God have mercy upon his Church not to treat a human document that is by definition "inferior" to Scripture on a theoretical or practical par with Scripture. It eventually will be theoretically or practically dominant over Scripture. *Vice versa*, may the Church be ever and incessantly alert not to be magisterial in its relationship to or its attitude toward Scripture, whether consciously and intentionally or not, and may treat its documents as "roadbeds," rather than to be victimized by them as "ruts" in any way form or shape. In a word, may their godly "wheal" never turn into a humanly inevitable "woe" to the slightest degree!

Appendix II

"Analysis and Assessment of a Five-Volume Lament"

A series of diagnostic "laments" in five volumes comes from the hand of David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993); *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994); *Losing our Virtue* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998); *Above All Earthly Powers* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2005); and *The Courage to be Protestant* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008). In the first four volumes he documents the virtual disappearance of theological truth, the factual marginalization of the sovereign God, the rotting of the moral fabric of society, the frightening evaporation of holiness among professing Christians, and the practical disregard of the Kingship of Christ. In all this the Church shows to have fallen down on the job by adopting worldly methodologies, whether modern or postmodern, by catering to all too human likes and dislikes, and by relinquishing its mandate to para-ecclesiastical organizations in an unprecedented way. No doubt the extensive analysis and assessment of a wide variety of cultural and counter-biblical ills, from (1) Paganism, Enlightenment, Postmodernism, that has not just "collapsed the distinctions between right and wrong, good and bad, decent and indecent, but made them irrelevant" (*God in the Wasteland*, 48) and an idolatrous concentration of the human Self in every imaginable way, to (2) a watered down and soft evangelicalism, the emergent church, the seeker-friendly church, the psychologizing church, the marketeering church, the consumer-oriented church, etc., etc., greatly contribute to our understanding of the times. But Wells himself appears to concede to his critics that his books have (mostly) been "about this kind of diagnosis," while offering "little prescription," and were "too negative" in tone and substance, and with "not enough positive" and concrete remedial details. All this was at least partly due to his belated recognition and admitted "miscalculation," "how remote a robust, biblical faith of a Protestant kind has actually become to too many people today. I thought they would know what they had departed from and needed to return to." This is offered as an "excuse" of sorts, but with the continuing acknowledgement that "knowing how postmodern culture impacts biblical faith, how it can unravel that faith or rearrange its priorities or how it masks certain things and magnifies others, or seduces biblical faith or perverts it, is not the same thing as saying what we should do about it" (*The Courage*, 217). To be sure, he points out the necessity for the Church to return to the bold proclamation of "objective truth," and the majestic "transcendence" and "holiness" of God, with all that this entails for the Gospel (*No Place*, 278, 281-282; 291-292; 299-301, respectively). There is a crying need (1) to reintroduce the centrality of God across the board in both the affairs of the world and the ministry of the Church (*God in the Wasteland*, 120ff), (2) to recover the holiness of God, and against that backdrop make the concept and "crushing weight" of sin reappear, to address it for what it is in all its guilty ugliness before God and man, to recover the "Good News" of the Reformation and never to lose heart in courageously, boldly, and confidently proclaiming it (2 Cor. 3:4, 12; 4:1, 16; 5:6, 8) to wretched sinners and wretched saints alike (*Losing our Virtue*, 35-41, 129-140, 179-191, 204-209), (3) to debunk the idolatrous "Black Hole" of the ironically empty and ultimately meaningless rebellious Self with its hollow promises and rebellious worldviews, and in its place to emphasize justification by faith, based on Christ's penal substitution, as the heart of the utterly meaningful Gospel (*Above all Earthly Pow'rs*, 29, 153-162, 198-202, 218-232), and, last but not least, (4) to find its moorings again in

the ecclesiastical Reformation triad with its insistence upon preaching the inerrant, authoritative and sufficient Word of God truthfully and properly, upon keeping or returning the administration of the Sacraments to its rightful place and with its proper function, and of dispensing Church discipline in the appropriate manner and with the proper diligence (*The Courage*, 226-242). In short, Wells' five volumes are quite detailed and helpful in repeatedly addressing and plumbing the depth of a great number of degrading, dangerous and deadly, especially modern (Enlightenment) and postmodern, "ills." The proposed "remedies" are truthful throughout, and at times heartwarming, such as expressed in the following quotations from *God in the Wasteland*, "The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common" (30); "It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless" (88); "When the consumer is sovereign, the product (in this case God himself) must be subservient" (101); "Without the holiness of God sin has no meaning and grace has no point, for it is God's holiness that gives to the one its definition and to the other its greatness" (144). "Until we recognize afresh the centrality of God's holiness, until it once again enters into the innermost fibers of evangelical faith, our virtue will lack seriousness, our belief will lack poignancy, our practice will lack joyful pungency, our worship will lack joyful seriousness, our preaching will lack the mordancy of grace, and the church will be just one more special interest pleading for a hearing in a world of competing enterprises" (145). However, both the explicit and implicit "remedies" still are (admittedly) presented in such general terms and lack so many necessary specifics that they seemingly "must" fail to make any appreciable difference in an utterly alarming situation. At times they even fall short of full-orbed biblical truth. After all, as we shall see below in detail, the Gospel covers more, much more, than "only" the doctrine of justification, however glorious it is, and the Church must display more, much more, than "merely" the three marks of the Reformation to be fully biblical, however truthful they are. All this is leads to the conclusion that in order "to make (even) a dent" in today's thoroughly pluralistic culture we must go well beyond any unspecified generalities and any reductionistic oversimplifications. Men, such as Martin Luther and Thomas Manton blaze a trail and set the tone for all of us here. Luther's Preface to his Catechism for Young Children apparently contains the lament that the knowledge of God's Word is virtually absent among the common folks. But he did not stop there. He addressed this by publishing his Catechism and monitoring its careful implementation. The lament was short, and the proposed cure deep in substance and extensive in detail. In the heyday of Puritanism Thomas Manton, *An Exposition of the Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., n. d.), 8, expressed his deep distress about the depressing state of the spirituality of his day, "We are all apt to divorce comfort from duty, and to content ourselves with a 'barren and unfruitful knowledge' of Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 1:8, as if all that he required of the world were a few naked, cold and inactive apprehensions of his merit, and all things were so done *for us* that nothing remained to be done *by us*. This is the wretched conceit of many in the present age, and therefore either they abuse the sweetness of grace to looseness, or the power of it to laziness." Ironically, such was written in a time period that evokes our envy. This should make us wonder how he would assess our condition! At any rate, his response was his detailed and influential Commentary on the Epistle of James that is still a remedial landmark contribution today! He is fully aware that both "the devil (hell) and the angelic host (heaven) are in the details." So, once again the lament was short and to the point and the solution as thorough as one could expect. Incidentally, not all "laments" are created equal. E. g., Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand

Rapids: Baker, 1994) bemoans the anti-intellectual mind-set of a stifled and stifling evangelicalism that comes to expression, a. o., in its adherence to a narrow-minded Dispensationalism and its penchant (sic!) for "six-day creationism," and so supposedly shuts itself off from the cultural pursuits of the day. He recommends that it should broaden its vision, which, of course, may well end up with the embrace of evolutionism, and possibly abortion and homosexuality. Carl Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011), properly opposes the focus as well as content of this "lament" on solid biblical grounds and in the process asks the incisive question what, after all, constitutes "the evangelical mind." He concludes that it is undefined, undefinable (13-26), and troublesome due to its lack of a solid and well-defined "doctrinal core," of an uncompromising commitment to "biblical inerrancy," and a waffling attitude about a staunch and "consistently biblical hermeneutics," and all this conjoint to a virtual bid for a legitimate, but ironically mostly elusive place at the pluralistic "cultural round table" of the day. Such bid will never be forthcoming without the demand once and for all to capitulate on issues, such as homosexuality, and to relinquish the biblical stance on a historical Adam, and all that this entails in terms of the Fall of man and his Redemption in Christ (Rom. 5:12-21). Frankly, the former is already tolerated, if not defended, and the latter is already under attack in the broadly so-called evangelical world (27-38)! All this spells the unavoidable "marginalization" of "traditional" Christianity, but also the (faint) hope that the "marginalized" of whatever stripe will band together under the banner of "an agreed-upon evangel" (39-41). Thankfully Trueman, unlike Wells (?), does not simply call upon us to maintain or return to the traditional (Reformation) *status quo*. It is precisely the contention of the present volume that this leaves far too much to be desired, and is totally insufficient to stem the unmistakable onslaught that is unleashed again the "Cause of God and Truth." How can one expect for something that somehow failed in the past to succeed in the present or the future? One should have one's head in the sand not to recognize that Christianity in the West, inclusive of the USA, lives of borrowed time and therefore better be alarmed enough to study the enemy lines and to be resolved to take, resume, or augment the full (battle) action that Scripture requires as the *conditio sine qua non* for "victory," whatever the cost or the price. All this, again with Trueman, does not require us simply to take a long and hard look at the "mind" (Noll), but rather, and again unlike Wells (?), at the "evangel" itself. The definition of the Gospel (according to the Scriptures of the OT and NT) and the way it conquers (through the Church) are, indeed, the burning issues. It may well come as a surprise to the reader (of the balance) of this volume that the Church rarely, if ever, has agreed on the content of the Gospel or had a full-orbed view of what it was supposed to be and how it was supposed to operate effectively. In fact, throughout its history it has operated at best with a curtailed Gospel and has usually failed properly to construe the nature and function of the Instrument ordained by God to spread it. This regrettably applies to some extent to the Reformation as well. I intend to argue all this in detail, and hereby invite you, the reader, to be "the proverbial Berean" in assessing it and subsequently to take appropriate action in line with your findings (Acts 17:10ff). At any rate, it must be more than disconcerting to be told at the start of the Third Millennium that there apparently is still no well-defined "evangel" on which we may agree, or disagree for that matter! If true, it is to our guilty shame before our God, and goes a long way to explain the "lamentable" condition of the Church throughout its history.

Appendix III

Hallowed Be Your Name (Worldwide), Your (One) Kingdom Come, Your (Revealed) Will Be Done (Universally)!

According to Scripture, the world has no independent purpose apart from contributing in a general sense to the glory of God as every part, phase and area of created reality does by definition. Furthermore, for it to thrive it must surrender to God's Law as it is revealed in Scripture. Allow me to unpack this in some detail at this time, with more detailed arguments to follow in **Appendix IV**.

1. To start with, the diagnostic summons, "To the (Mosaic) Law and to the (Biblical) Testimony; those who do not speak according to this maxim have no dawn" (Is. 8:20), wherever, whenever, however, and by whomever, applies universally, to the Church and to the world alike. They are both under the same umbrella of the Law of God to which they are answerable as it reflects his nature and is given through Moses as his intermediary. The veritable and incessant stream of judgments based upon God's Law, especially the First Commandment, and proclaimed by the OT prophets not only upon Israel but also upon all the nations of their day, testify to this definitively. Anyone who doubts this better read the Book of Psalms, which echoes this repeatedly (See Ps. 2:1ff; 96:1ff; 97:1ff; 98:1ff; 99:1ff).

2. Furthermore, the Church as the showcase of the righteousness of God's Law (Mt. 5:20) and as the focal point of the holiness of God himself (Mt. 5:48) is by these very two facts identified as "the salt" that keeps *all* of the apostate earth in all its aspects and manifestations from spoiling and rotting away (Mt. 5:130, and as "the light" that is the only hope and way out for all of the rebel world" (Mt. 5:14). There is not a "happy, go lucky" aspect of this world where God allows mankind to go about its business as an independent entity, and where it can thrive on its own terms, even if it "reportedly" exists under God's universal umbrella.

3. To top it off, all this is underscored by the fact that every single one of God's "common graces" is explicitly designed by him to lead all of the earth, all of the world as well as all of the Church to repentance (Rom. 2:4). So it should, in fact, must go without saying that what God conveys in silent eloquence throughout created reality the Church better command and shout from the roof tops in vocal eloquence everywhere (Acts 14:15-18). There is not one square inch anywhere on earth where God does not address mankind with the silent summons to repent and not one square inch either where he does not insist that the Church brings this everywhere to expression in heartfelt obedience and in hot pursuit of the Grand Command to make disciples of all nations and train them to observe whatever he commands. God's Kingdom is woven of one cloth and covers the waterfront.

These three truths already radically and totally vitiate the notion of two independent kingdoms, supposedly each with its own purpose and each governed by its own law. To promote this notion is to feed the Church a sleeping pill. Frankly, it may well be that believers who are virtually asleep embrace it as a justification not to wake up.

The bottom line is this. Since the sole (intermediate) purpose of the world is to function as God's "spawning ground" of those who eventually make up the Completed Church as "The Bride of Christ, the Lion (King)-Lamb (Priest)" (Rev. 5:5-6) in Perfect Purity (Rev. 19:7-8), "The Holy City" (Rev. 21:2), the Church has only one option. It does and must view, recognize, approach, and enter the world first and foremost, if not solely, as its "fishing ground" for daily

additions (Acts 2:47). In doing so all believers without exception acknowledge and embrace their first and foremost function, if not their sole function of being "kings and priests" (Rev. 5:10). Empowered by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:16; Acts 10:38) Christ came as the "LION-LAMB" to propitiate! In his footsteps and empowered by the same Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Rev. 5:6) Christians are summoned and privileged as "lion-lambs" to propagate! Propitiation called for and implied suffering and death (Rom. 3:25; Rev. 5:9). Propagation calls for the same (John 12:24; Phil. 3:10).

To be sure, the Church will do its level best and go the extra mile prayerfully to seek and promote the common grace welfare of society (Jer. 29:7). But it is prompted to do so precisely as the bold and manifest embodiment of the righteousness of God's Law that exceeds the righteousness of any and every Tom, Dick and Harry (Mt. 5:20) with a threefold purpose in view that by far transcends the reality of a more orderly, a more livable, a more attractive, and a more pleasant society.

First, and in general, it purposefully *contributes* to a cultural environment and a cultural atmosphere not as a goal in itself, but as the framework in which it can peacefully and effectively pursue and implement its threefold ministry (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

Second, and more specifically, it purposefully cooperates *to bring about and increase* the multitudinous subpoenas and ever ongoing silent but eloquent summons to repentance unto life (Acts 11:18), embodied in the innumerable common graces with which God in his kindness and goodness floods every nook and cranny of the society of man (Rom. 2:4).

Third, and quite pointedly, it purposefully trumpets the kindness and goodness of God in explicit obedience to his explicit command of God for all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) by universally *verbalizing* and thus underscoring the silent summons of common grace in every possible nook and cranny of human society. "Get rid of your filthy past, make yourself a new heart and produce a godly life. Why would you die? I do not delight in the death of even one sinner" (Ezek. 18:31-32).

To illustrate, a vote for Street-lighting in a City Council undoubtedly makes the city more livable, could make driving easier, and might well restrain crime. But transcending this, voting for Street Lights will allow the Church to move more freely into its threefold Ministry, since it will add a silent but eloquent call to repentance to the multitude that are in existence already, and will provide an occasion to bring this aggressively to vocal expression in any and all settings. Other common graces, such as schools, hospitals, the printing press, the internet, automobiles, airplanes, etc., etc., the list is potentially endless, can and must be viewed from the same threefold perspective in the same manner. The pursuit of this threefold purpose, although this is fully biblical and clearly mandated, has no place within the horizon of the two kingdom theory, in fact, cannot even come into its purview. The best scenario is that its "promoters" are blind to this. A worse scenario is that they choose to ignore it, but the worst possible one is that they fight it. However, whatever the scenario, they end up as blind leaders who in the process culpably blind their followers.

Frankly, apart from Revival times, the Church has been lamentably "silent" in all of these three areas. It is difficult, in fact, impossible to deny that it, while virtually gorging itself on common grace of whatever kind, did not explicitly promote it to advance its Threefold Ministry, failed to register its summons to universal repentance, and rarely, if ever, brought this boldly to verbal expression at the common table. Not so the apostle Paul. Not by a long shot! The commonness of common grace (Acts 17:28) as a suppression of the truth (Acts 17:29), was a

starting point, an occasion as well as a ground for him to issue God's universal call to repentance to encompass all people in all locations at all times (Acts 17:30).

What a far cry from a professing believer who regarded it embarrassing, in fact, "offensive," to treat the enjoyment of a common meal in a common restaurant served by a common waitress as a summons to repentance that had to be "verbalized" by leaving a pointed Gospel Tract behind. No eye for the glory of God to pluck someone out of darkness, no compassion for a lost soul residing in darkness, and no grasp of a believer's duty to drive out the darkness as the light of the world.

What a joy openly to praise God with a smile for his goodness, while smoothly moving from a Hotel Lobby to the 50th Floor together with total strangers in an elevator, "What a convenience. It beats climbing the staircase," or frolicking on a sunny beach with white sand and gentle waves next to total strangers, "What a vacation. The kids have a ball," only subsequently to remind folks gently and boldly whether together in an elevator during a 50-floor ride or on the beach building sand castles next to yours, God's grand design of repentance-unto-life in and with all that awesome kindness and goodness!

The bewildering, if not ominous bottom line is that the Church, too often already lulled to sleep, now is burdened by a "theory" in terms of basically a "two kingdom" fallacy, that is only of recent vintage, all protestations and arguments to the contrary, to justify its silence, and to dismiss any summons to recognize the height from which it has fallen and therefore to repent or else (Rev. 2:5)!

Frankly, Esther once and for all does and should put an end to this "fallacious theory." It is a most remarkable Book that revolves around three pivotal themes. The first and main one is "Providence." The second one is "The World," and the third one "The Church." "Providence" functions as the all-determining silent as well as eloquent backdrop of the other two. Esther establishes once and for all that "Providence" never did, never does, and never will function in any other way, than as the all-controlling factor of all of history, any doubt or protestation to the contrary. "The World" cannot help itself in the display of all its typical features of "the 'good,' the 'bad' and the 'ugly.'" Esther conveys once and for all that "The World" will always be "The World," and never will or can lose its stripes. "The Church" is caught in the middle, as it at times is shoved around, at times facilitates, at times counter-punches, but in the end can be assured of victory. Esther communicates once and for all that "The Church" can count on it that this pattern ever was, ever is and ever will be repeated. But it equally communicates that "The Church" cannot and may not presume on a glorious end, if it fails or refuses to conduct itself in a godly fashion and is unwilling "to pay the price." This, of course, puts **Section I, 2**, "The Historical Reality-Check," with the grim picture of the Middle East, Europe and the USA. in perspective. Now on to the details!

It has not gone unnoticed that Esther never mentions the name of "God." This has raised many an eyebrow. But it should not have. The reason for it is analogous to the reason why James refers to Jesus sparingly, and never mentions the Holy Spirit even once. James, in fact, the Holy Spirit as the overarching author, had only one purpose, namely to convey in the clearest of ways, and to delineate in detail that "Holiness" is what authentic and genuine Christianity is all about, reflecting the Message of God the Father in the OT from beginning to end, and of God the Son in the pivotal NT Sermon on the Mount. This "forest" should not be missed as a result of a multitude of otherwise excellent or even essential "trees." The rest of Scripture would identify all of them in due time. So Esther focuses upon "Providence." Literally everything, every spoken word, every done deed, every occurred event, every human presence, every experienced

relationship, whether "good, bad or ugly" is "Providence." Of course, it is the Providence of God the Father. It takes place under the umbrella of the authority of God the Son. It unfolds under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. But let us establish the existence and location of the "forest" first and foremost! So no mention even of the Name of God! We better not question the wisdom of this, or doubt the need for it. A recent publication, *The Practical Atheism of the Christian Church* [46]speaks volumes! Both James and Esther seem to say, "Do not force me 'to clutter up' my explicit purpose with even the most glorious and otherwise absolutely necessary truths." Anyone who embraces James and Esther as part of God's "perfect" Book cannot and will not object to this by definition, in fact, will "herald" it on. "James is perfect as is Esther, in spite of everything! So, there must be a perfect reason for what is included in them or not. Therefore let us not "spoil" either one of them in thought, word or deed!" All this will return and pay off handsomely when we now shift focus to the two other themes, first, to "The World," and subsequently to "The Church.".

The Book Esther arguably has seven panels. Let's analyze and assess their content and in the process determine how "The World" manifests itself in them, and how "The Church" rises to the occasion! In all this "Providence" proves to have the "final word."

Panel 1 is covered by Esther 1:1-22. We come face to face with (1) a display of "human pride and human benevolence on the world scene," (2) of "domination and defiance in the marriage relationship," and (3) of "a self-serving view and use of the "works of the law" (See Rom. 1:). Xerxes puts the spotlight on his fame and fortune and have his people share in both (1:1-9), orders his wife around who promptly refuses to comply (1:10-12), and decides to cut her down to size in order to keep the fabric of smoothly running authority relationships intact (1:13-22).

Panel 2 is covered by Esther 2:1-23. It shows us (1) "a remedial solution" and an "oppressive determination," (2) a "self-indulgent course of action" and "grand finale," and (3)" "a seemingly unrelated by-product." Xerxes is persuaded to set the wheels in motion to find a replacement and rounds up every beautiful girl to pave the way for that (2:1-11), spends a night with every one of them to finalize the process (2:12-18), and escapes an assassination attempt by an unexpected coincidence (2:19-23).

Panel 3 is covered by Esther 3:1-15. We are told of (1) "an explosive conflict situation," (2) "a wrathful resentment," and (3) "a deadly solution." Haman collides with Mordecai and targets his extinction with a vengeance (3:1-5), for good measure goes systematically after the annihilation of a whole nation (3:6-11), and passes legislation to that effect (3:15).

Panel 4 is covered by Esther 4:1-5:8. It starts out with (1) "an eye-opener," if there ever was one, (2) continues with "an even greater challenge," and (3) concludes with someone taking "the bull by the horns." Esther encounters a consternation of the highest order and is apprised of the situation (4:1-7), is told bluntly to put her life on the line or else (4:8-14), and resolutely leaves her comfort zone in what may seem like a "leap of awesome faith" (4:15-5:8).

Panel 5 is covered by Esther 5:9-7:16. It begins with (2) "the euphoria of a planned execution and the frailty of a sleepless night," (2) followed by "a seemingly innocent leading question and a dreadfully shocking humiliation," (3) quickly to end up with "a withering attack" and "a public hanging." Haman cannot stand Mordecai's refusal to obey the King's command, takes it personal, and decides upon the most harsest death penalty, death by hanging, while unaware that the King during a sleepless night was alerted to the fact that Mordecai saved his bacon and was never properly rewarded. The next day he asked Haman how he would define a

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great, if not the greatest possible reward. Convinced that he would be the recipient he really pours it on, and was promptly told that he would hand that reward in person to … Mordecai, of all people. In utter dismay he hastens home to report this "event" to his family and friends, is told in no uncertain terms that he is a terminal case because his enemy is a Jew, is hurried to dinner with the King and Queen, is exposed as wicked to the core, squirms in an unseemly fashion, incites the boiling rage of the King and a public

Panel 6 is covered by Esther 8:1-9:19. We read of (1) "a potent counter offensive," (2) "a literally life and home saving edict," and (3) "a total and undisputed victory" that could not have been more decisive."

Panel 7 covers Esther 9:20-10:3. We witness (1) the "inauguration of an impressive feast," as (2) "a perennial memorial of what had transpired," (3) and the makings of an amazing track record.

Appendix IV

"The Function of the World and the Purpose of 'Common Grace'"

The question why the world "functions" as it does if it has no independent purpose, is a real one. Scripture is quite clear that with the Noahic Covenant God simply stipulates that this world must continue as planned, structured, organized and mandated. The notion that the Noahic Covenant is "brand-new," because the summons to take dominion is not *verbatim* repeated is a fallacy. The reason why only the multiplication aspect is repeated is simple. It is quite possible that a billion people were wiped out. With the earth at least 5000 years in existence, a population of one billion would be far from extraordinary. Procreation goes fast. Well, Noah is merely told to start all over again with the assurance that he does not need to fear another abrupt end. He only has to look at the rainbow to be reminded and assured of that. There simply is no need to repeat the full

Dominion Mandate. The notion that "whatever is not abrogated continues" does not only apply to the relationship of the OT and the NT, it also applies to the developing story in the OT and the NT. Frankly, what other option did Noah and his family than to continue along the same lines as before? Naturally they remembered all the accomplishments up to the Flood, which were considerable in the area of agriculture, industry, entertainment and beauty pageants (Gen.). So they would as a matter-of-course go about their reconstruction and their further development, hopefully in a God-centered fashion, but regrettably in quite the opposite direction (Gen. 11:1ff)! Once more, it is pure and unfounded speculation that God puts a radically and totally new plan in operation.

Nevertheless, the budding new mankind faces a new reality. They must continue the cultural obligation, all right. But they face the two horns of a very depressing dilemma. They are "doomed (Read: damned) if they don't!" Anyone who does not wish to work will not be allowed to eat. This is a divine rule of thumb implied in the Dominion Mandate and underscored by Paul (2 Thess. 3:6-12)! But with equal certainty they are also "doomed (Read: damned) if they do!" This world is "vanity" from top to bottom. It is "empty" of meaning and of everything related to it. Scripture is utterly clear on this (Eccl. 1:2, 14; 2:17; 12:8). Furthermore, it is such as a judgment of God who did subject it to emptiness (Rom. 8:20). He put the stamp of "futility" upon it and burdened mankind with a Sisyphus labor. "You messed up. But I will not allow you to change the way this world was and is supposed to run. It is business as original and usual. However, because you messed up big time you are now condemned to "build 'bridges' to nowhere." These are personal, corporate, societal and cultural bridges of all kinds, covering all facets, aspects and phases of our globe focusing on the vast as well as the minuscule in the universe in which mankind is stationed, drawing from its rich resources and seeking to manage, sidestep or overcome its threats! "Bridges" galore, political bridges, economic bridges, commerce bridges, educational bridges, information bridges, musical bridges, graphic art bridges, performing art bridges, business bridges, medical bridges, transportation bridges, infra-structure bridges, outer space bridges, scientific bridges, entrepreneurial bridges, theoretical bridges, practical bridges, colorful bridges, clever bridges, cutting-edge bridges, humanitarian bridges, etc., etc., etc., etc. They are increasingly awesome in each culture.

But each culture also comes and goes. Think of the four cultures and the empires that gave rise to them in the book of Daniel, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. But also empires and their cultures prior to them, the Chinese and the Egyptian, or those that are more recent, the French (Napoleon), the British, the German (Hitler), the Russian (Soviet Union), etc., etc., etc., etc.! They all had their heyday. But they are either gone or declining, sooner or later to be replaced by other emerging ones.

But this precipitates a further question. Why all these rich and enriching accomplishments? Why all these multiple, variegated, often marvelous, at times ingenious and frequently enjoyable bridges into nowhere that nevertheless and incessantly embody the aspirations, the hopes, the energies, the congratulations and the applause of all of mankind, as if they are of lasting value? Inclusive of boutique hotels, fancy restaurants, safaris, stock markets, bullet trains, space walks, etc., etc., etc., etc.! Of course, the answer is that they are all "common graces" of God arising from the kindness and goodness of God and serving the plan and purposes of God. But these "graces" must be understood biblically not to become "deadly pitfalls."

The biblical teaching on "Common Grace" resembles a three-story building with a very visible, quite familiar, and generally recognized four-fold bottom story, a pivotal, but a little known, less appreciated and hardly emphasized two-fold middle story, and a foundational but

usually ignored or simply overlooked two-fold top story. Especially the middle floor, but even more so the top floor, must be taken into necessary account not to become "deadly pitfalls!"

1. The four-fold bottom story, with which most folks are quite familiar, is that "common graces" enrich life, restrain sin, facilitate the Church, and render mankind without excuse before God.

a. The enrichment has already been noted. It is always marked and at times immeasurable. The modern explosion of technology across the societal board is only one instance.

b. Further the restraint prevents this world from becoming a hell hole in which it is impossible for mankind to survive, let alone thrive. The radical and total depravity of man, encumbered by the threefold problem of a wicked heart that resembles a "cobra" (Ps. 58:5), a filthy past that resembles "excrement" (Phil. 3:8) and an ungodly life that resembles "poison" (Jam. 3:8) better be controlled and restrained or else! Noah's killer-flood attests to this "or else" big time. So does Israel's exile! Uncontrolled and unrestrained sin invariably spells "the end!" The restraint can be external, such as through "governmental" control in the broad sense of the word, whether in the state, the family, or in society in general. It can also be internal, such as through natural human dispositions or inclinations. In both instances it is fed by "the works of the law that are written on the human heart" (Rom. 2:14-15). They cannot be expunged, and whenever or wherever in evidence cannot but have a sanitizing influence, in whatever way, of whatever sort, and to whatever extent. They can run the gamut from the mundane, such as speed limits, stop signs, and street lighting to ensure safety, to the significant, such as (air) traffic regulations, penal laws, and internet protocols to prevent disorder and crime, to the momentous, such as city, state and federal constitutions, a government with three both interdependent and independent branches, and armed services to prevent tyranny as well as anarchy. Mankind is incurably moral in pursuing its objectives and it shows!

c. Additionally, a well-ordered society can only benefit the Church in its peaceful and unhindered pursuit of a godly life and its various God-given ministries (Jer. 29:7; Rom. 13:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:1-2).

d. Finally, the combination of God's evident self-disclosure in his "common grace" as well as in creation in general and man's rebellious suppression of it in ungodliness, unrighteousness, and his refusal thankfully to worship God, renders him inexcusable and sure to face judgment. In fact, the more the graces, the greater the guilt of ingratitude, and the greater the judgment!

But from a biblical perspective there is much more to be said about the "common grace" phenomenon! There is a middle floor to consider, as well as a veritable penthouse as the top floor.

2. The middle floor is that "common graces" are pivotal both in their negative shortfall and in their positive purpose. They cannot remove futility, but do serve the well-attested purpose of a summons to repentance and consequent life!

a. To start with, God has imposed an utter futility upon this world (Rom. 8:20) that is copiously underscored in Scripture (See once again Eccl. 1:2, etc., etc.). All of the grandeur, all of the abundance, all of the facilitation, and all of the enjoyment of "common graces" does not and cannot remove it. As we saw already, but bears repetition, man is doomed (Read: damned) when he refuses to work and work hard (2 Thess. 3:6-8). But, irony of ironies, he is equally doomed (Read: damned once again) when he does! "Enjoy your wife," the Preacher intones, "all the days of your meaningless life" (Eccl. 9:9). This puts everything in perspective. Don't ever idolize anything this world has to offer, as if it is ultimate and "eternal," and can give meaning to life, whether marriage, business dealings, worldly achievements, as well as joy or sorrow, for

that matter. It will be your undoing (1 Cor. 7:29-31). Only God is and can be the source of meaning (and the law its "grid") (Eccl. 12:13). It has been well said that mankind resembles the passengers on the Titanic. What achievement! What magnificence! What opulence! What invulnerability! But a cruel iceberg suddenly cut into the vitals of this supposedly unsinkable vessel, and all its grandeur and merriment abruptly ended in sudden disaster in a dark, icy and disastrous ocean without enough lifeboats to accommodate the threatened and with no rescue in sight for the drowning. In a word, don't be fooled. Don't bet on the "fleeting" and the "perishable!" This world is both, and therefore a doomed proposition and inevitably a disaster in the making! Don't stake your hope on it. It will miserably fail you. After all, "it is appointed for all of mankind to die, and after that the judgment" (Heb. 9:27)! All the glamor of construction projects that defy centuries, of world championships that send the euphoria sky high, of records that supposedly stand the teeth of time and can "never be broken," and even of philosophical contributions that are celebrated as monumental paradigm shifts, and cultural advances that lifts society up to an unprecedented level, sooner or later do fade and will vanish.

b. Nevertheless "common graces," even if they function as "lights" in a dead-end street, are more than a dead-end street themselves. This hangs together with God's plan and purpose for this world. In spite of its ghastly and foul-smelling bankruptcy he continues it, but *exclusively* as the "*spawning ground*" for future members of the Body of Christ. *All common graces serve this purpose*! Why and how? God does not delight in the death of sinners, but rather that they repent and live (Ezek. 18:31). Here the positive purpose of "common grace" enters into the picture. God's riches and goodness are designed to lead precisely to that end, namely repentance unto life (Rom. 2:4), resulting in the fear of God as the sole source of all meaning and the embrace of his commandments as the sole grid of all meaning. Without God and his Law futility has the first, the middle and the last word. So common grace does not only impart a seemingly healthy blush to a deadly white face (enrichment) and functions as an embalming fluid that holds the stench from a rebellious corpse at bay (restraint). It also serves as an urgent and omnipresent spur for it to turn and to avail itself of a beckoning life! Not so incidentally, from this perspective it is the grievous height of irony that mankind capitalizes on what God has established and designed as a benevolent spur and a restraining remedy to repent and believe, and so to escape his wrath, as a ground on which to ignore this wrath or wave it off. After all, it seems so counter-intuitive that a world with so much riches and abundance to enjoy, riches and abundance of all sorts, material, intellectual, aesthetic, technological, entertaining, etc., etc., etc., etc., would suddenly face the stark and dark reality of eternal horror. But however much substance this world seems to have in whole or in part at the moment or even in the time span of its "glory," it is fundamentally, "hollow," and essentially "dead capital!"

This, of course, has everything to do with putting "common grace" in the proper perspective. All the common graces in the world cannot remove its futility. In fact, as part of the world they are just as futile as the world. At the same time, all the futile common graces in the world constitute either an impressive and uninterrupted string of substantive appeals or one gigantic and overwhelming substantive summons "to repent and live." "Common grace" is simultaneously an empty futility and a substantive solid, a substantive futility and a futile substance, just as mysterious as the physical phenomenon of light as both a wave and a particle, often dubbed as a "wavicle!" Here the complementarity of God's truth mentioned in the Theological Reality-Check shines as bright as ever! But there is even more to be said about the phenomenon of "common grace," in fact, much more! What has been seen thus far puts us on the trace of the dual, duplex essence of "common grace." This is the top floor or penthouse of which

most folks are not aware. And if they do, they rarely want to occupy it. In fact, they routinely seem to ignore it, and often even prefer to shun it at their temporal and at times eternal peril.

3. Herewith, then, we indeed close in on the very (dual) essence or nature of common grace. It must be sharply distinguished from special grace, as well as from sin for that matter. Special grace, whether it is the grace of *regeneration*, justification, sanctification, or otherwise, comes from above, and from above only. It spells "life" (Col. 3:1-3), and it spells "purity" (Jam. 3:17) in all its manifestations. Sin, on the other hand, whether it is the sin of rebellion, guilt, pollution, or otherwise, comes from "below," and from "below" only, "rough as a rock, brutal as a beast, and malevolent like a demon" (Jam. 3:15). It spells "death" (Gen. 2:17) and it spells "filth" (Ezek. 36:25) whenever, wherever and however it raises its ugly head. From this angle everything comes only from "above" or from "below." There is no grey area or middle ground. Nothing that grace is or does, ever can, does, or will come from "below," and nothing that sin is or does, ever can, does, or will come from "above."

However, from another, equally biblical angle, the "peculiar and dual genius" of "common grace" is that it comes both from "above" and from "below," roughly parallel, as we shall see, to both the "futile substance" and the "substantive futility" that marks the world, as stated above. This must be explained for it not to be or become an utterly baffling proposition. But it must be explained as well for "common grace" to have the rich "cosmic (!)" pay-off that in my experience is universally overlooked, all too often ignored, even explicitly denied, or at times implicitly ridiculed.

a. That "common grace" is a gift of God, prompted by his kindness, is by and large accepted, if not embraced and extolled as such. The rich progress that results from and goes hand in hand with "common grace" ranges from the mundane, to the significant, to the momentous has already been detailed above, and speaks for itself. It usually does and should produce the thankful worship of God. But that it simultaneously comes from "below," and as such is hard like an infertile rock, brutal like a devouring beast, and demonic like the lying and murderous enemy of our souls is far from transparent, and easily dismissed with a denigrating wave of the hand. Frankly, if this is the response, "common grace" turns into a "deadly pitfall." Let me make an effort to explain this, make it transparent, and, if necessary, turn it into a much needed "wake-up" call.

b. To succeed in this it must be crystal clear and fully grasped that apart from the straightforward and immediate "given" of the great variety of the rich and enriching material components as well as the non-material endowments of created reality, such as its exquisite beauty, its operational effectiveness, its robust health, its attractive personalities, its favorable dispositions, etc., there is a category, in fact, an incredibly vast amount of "common graces" that are fully the result of human ingenuity and productivity! Remember the monumental building projects, the electrifying world championships, the staggering human records, the eye-opening philosophical truths, the stupendous technological advances, the unprecedented scientific contributions, the ingenious political accomplishments, in short, all the properly celebrated "creations" of man of whatever time or kind! While both the straightforward components, the immediate endowments, and the products of human ingenuity are subject to futility, the latter have an additional distinction. This distinction is laid out in the Book of the Psalms and the Book of Proverbs. Not only does the former convey that God is "angry with the wicked all the time" (Ps. 7:11; see also Ps. 11:5), which undoubtedly spells "the end of their wickedness" (Ps. 7:9, 12-16), and the latter that "the lamp of the wicked will be put out (Prov. 13:9), undoubtedly because the "soul of the wicked desires evil" (Prov. 21:10). Proverbs also emphatically states that "the

lamp of the wicked is sin" (Prov. 21:4b). Especially the latter verse opens up a vista on what is at stake here for the phenomenon of the "common graces," especially those that are the results of human ingenuity and productivity.

The fact that this lamp spreads "the light of common grace" seems indisputable. As such it may be enjoyed for 100% as a gift of God. At the same time that same "light" is characterized as sin, and stands equally condemned 100% as the product of human pride, reflective of an "arrogant self-aggrandizing look" and fed by an "arrogant rebel heart (Prov. 21:4a). In the final analysis, therefore, "the light of the wicked is darkness." In that capacity it must be shunned, and should precipitate a call to repentance. After all, only God is the "fountain of life" (Ps. 36:9a). To be sure, this is the life of "common grace" as well as "special grace." At the same time, only "in His light do we see light" (Ps. 36:9b), and it is this very light of God, which indicates that all "common grace," dispensed to and by unbelievers, whether of character, temperament, skills, accomplishments, etc., is both fully God's gift and simultaneously fully human darkness. The observant reader can hardly miss the fact that also in this context the formula 100% + 100% = 100% has the final interpretative say.

The rub is clearly this. When Christians, inclusive of Christian scholars, do not recognize "common grace" for the darkness that it is (also), and define it only as the (common) light that it is as well, it will eat them alive. In this scenario, why would they seek to spread the (further) special light of saving grace that calls for repentance or even emphasize that common grace, whether as an immediate "given," a material or non-material endowment, or as a "product" of human ingenuity all by itself already constitutes a summons to repentance? They are so enamored by the (artificial) light of darkness that they forget to introduce the utter necessity of the true light that drives away the darkness of sin and transcends the darkness of common grace. From God's perspective both the sinner's darkness of sin and the sinner's darkness of common grace constitute a suppression of his truth. Rarely, if ever, did or does anyone in daily life concede this, least of all Christian scholars who in their published works or their course offerings invariably extol accomplishments of unbelievers as valuable sources and guides for both thinking and life, totally failing or refusing to recognize that they are "Trojan Horses" as well.

The failure on the part of Christians to embrace and own this perspective puts them in double jeopardy. Not only does the supposed "salt of the earth" lose its preserving quality, which was designed to hold decomposing decay at bay, which is bad enough all by itself. What makes matters worse, however, "the light of the world" turns off its illumining and life-producing radiance. By focusing their exclusive attention upon "common grace" as a gift from God, and making this their guiding light, they never warn unbelievers that it summons them to "repentance unto life," and in the process do not recognize that its darkness is swallowing them up. The world "floats" on common grace. When Christians do the same, they even if involuntarily and unintentionally embrace a "friendship with the world-in-its-darkness," assuming that they pursue "light." Frankly, if God does not prevent this, they are bound to end up as his virtual or real "enemies" whether they know and acknowledge this or not. James alerts us to the fact how easy it is to succumb to this temptation (Jam. 4:4), and how agonizing the cure is (Jam. 4:7-10)! At any rate, abdicating its high privilege and restless responsibility to be "the preserving salt of the earth" and "the illuminating light of the world," Christianity soon becomes increasingly irrelevant. It is hardly surprising that this invites an ever-growing boldness and ridicule on the part of the world. But what should be spine-chilling, it deserves an ever-intensifying displeasure of God. History is there to prove all of this and more!

Frankly, this puts Christianity, inclusive of Christian scholarship, at the crossroads. It either looks at all of creation and history in God's light, will recognize that according to Scripture the antithesis, evidenced by the 100% human darkness, is more fundamental than common grace, however rich and enriching in its gift character. Consequently, with all due gratitude to God for his unmistakable benevolence on display in his “common grace,” it will not tire of stressing the indispensable need for repentance reflected in it, and, where possible and appropriate, will not cease verbalizing and so issuing its “silent” but virtually “omnipresent” and eloquent call to repentance. Or it mistakenly elevates common grace as a divine gift above the divinely diagnosed antithesis, whether in its scholarly endeavor or its practical output, failing to see in the process that this "grace" is at best God's kindly dispensed embalming fluid to keep the corpse of mankind from emitting its inherent stench and spreading its decay. In this second scenario Christianity, while not even recognizing that the very purpose of common grace as God's gift is designed to lead the recipients to repentance (Rom. 2:4), is basically bound to interpret the world “in the supposed light of human darkness.” That is when and why it will lose its birthright, marginalize itself, and eventually choke to death. History is littered with the "remains" of former Christian endeavors, including Christian Institutions of Higher (and Lower) Learning because in the name of “common grace” they turned “special grace” to pasture, and directed their energy mainly, if not exclusively, to pre-evangelistic and non-evangelistic endeavors. However unavoidable, and therefore unobjectionable, in one sense, the near exclusivity of these endeavors did not just turn the often undoubtedly “good” into the competing enemy of the "best." No, they turned the at best "temporarily profitable" into the deadly enemy of the only “eternal good.” Again, all an observer needs to do, is to take a quick unbiased look at the long history of Christianity, inclusive of (higher) education to be thoroughly convinced of that.

Incidentally, and without going too far afield, in this very same context the question has come up in some Christian Schools, whether classroom and student evangelization is part of their mandate. Too frequently this is rejected out of hand. After all, so goes the argument, regardless whoever runs a School, the latter is not a Church, but an educational institution! In other words, let the Church evangelize, and allow the School to do her own thing. Besides, she already has her hands full, if not more than enough on her plate. This argument is spurious, shortsighted and negligent. It is spurious on the face of it. If the Church, whose main mandate is preaching the Gospel to believers and unbelievers alike, is involved in Christian “education” as a highly touted auxiliary service, there is no reason why the tables could not be turned on the School. While its focus is naturally education, why could it not have an equally high-touted auxiliary service, namely an appropriate evangelistic output, snugly befitting the educational enterprise that deals with cold and hard data as well as living and breathing students! Not to offer this service vis-à-vis data indicates a shallow shortsightedness. After all, proper scholarly coverage of materials of any sort, which must include transcendental penetration of the data, will inevitably bring the scholar face to face with the prevailing darkness that can only be conquered by the Gospel. This implies that an evangelistic apologetics must be woven in the warp and woof of any and all educational undertakings. Not to offer this service vis-à-vis students adds the further dimension of dangerous negligence. After all, given the biblical fact that the fear of God is the beginning of all genuine knowledge (Prov. 1:7) and wisdom (Prov. 9:10), which reside exclusively in Christ (Col. 2:3), and given the further fact that this fear lodges in a regenerate heart only, without which Christ as the repository of wisdom and knowledge is not accessible, evangelistic input that aims at a heart transplant becomes an utter necessity, however selectively applied, that is, wherever and whenever this is called for. In short, that the School is not an evangelistic

organization is royally admitted. But it seems utterly thoughtless and neglectful, if not "criminal," for the School not to be involved in an evangelistic apologetics, when transcendental scholarly research and considerations require such, or in unapologetic evangelism, when students do not appear to have "the root of the matter" in them. In fact, either one will and must be pursued by a truly Christian educational system both in an auxiliary manner and out of principle. Such pursuit ought to be the policy of every Christian School as a condition for employment, even if the matter of strategy and practical application is wide open for meaningful discussion. My recommendation would be that in case of need the implementation of such policy should be built into programs of new faculty orientation and continuing faculty improvement to insure quality standards and quality control. Anyone who is not yet fully persuaded of the wisdom of this approach may do well to remember the biblical teaching that there is no genuine wisdom or understanding in a heart, mind or life of any and all who rise up against God (Prov. 21:30). So much for making common grace a sole anchor point! Furthermore, what good does it do for anyone to gain the world, including its so-called wisdom, but lose his soul? So much for a methodology that makes "*bed*-fellows" with the world and refuses or fails to call to repentance, whenever that is needful! All in all, it would be utter tragedy if a Christian Institution of Learning would joyfully and proudly send its graduates into the world to advance the Kingdom with a Degree signed by its President. However, God refused to sign it! If students fall through the cracks of such Institution, the latter is responsible, and must own up to the blame. God, have mercy upon such Institution. If they jump off the side, they can only blame themselves. In that case, may God have mercy upon them! Enough said.

Appendix V

"Apostles and Apostleship in the NT"

Jacob van Bruggen in his *Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk* (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, 1985), 9-64, hardly leaves a stone unturned (such as found in Lk. 11:49; 17:5; 24:9-10, 33) in arguing that "the apostles" in the NT consist of a combination of both the known "twelve" (12-15, see Lk. 9:11; John 20:24; 1 Cor. 15:5) and the known "seventy" or "seventy two," depending upon the manuscripts (15-20; see Lk. 10:1-24), and so, bottom line, do not exceed the total of "eighty two" or "eighty four." All those designated in Scripture as "apostles" belonged to either of the two groupings. Both were regularly present with the Lord Jesus, before as well as after his resurrection, and both were sent on missions (Mt. 10:1-15; Lk. 9:1-6; and Lk. 10:1-24) by Jesus personally, and according to the model that he himself personified as the archetypal "Apostle" (Heb. 3:1). As such they followed in his footsteps with authority over sickness and demons (Mt. 10:1; Lk. 10:9, 17-20), with the authoritative proclamation of the Gospel of the

Kingdom as their central concern (Mt. 10:7; Lk. 9:6; and Lk. 10:9, 11), fully aware that they are entering a combat zone, with its pains (Mt. 10:34-39; Lk. 10:16) and its rewards (Mt. 10:42-42; Lk. 10:17-20), but also one that does not allow them to be AWOL at pain of spiritual death (Mt. 10:16-34).

It cannot go unnoticed thus far that both groupings enjoyed the identical mission with the same mandates and therefore appear to share the same essential apostolate! Incidentally, the only difference is that the "twelve" line up with the tribes of Israel. Their number corresponds with that of the twelve tribes. Together with the twelve tribes they have twenty four elders as their representatives sitting on two times twelve thrones (Rev. 4:4). They form the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem in which the tribes have their names written on twelve gates (Rev. 21:12, 14). Frankly, in this scenario the difference between the "twelve" and the "seventy" or "seventy-two" seems "symbolic" only! Be this as it may, together with the prophets both groups of apostles, the "twelve" and the "seventy" or "seventy-two" were instrumental in the revelatory disclosure of mysteries, such as the mystery of Jews and Gentiles as fellow heirs in Christ's Kingdom (Eph. 3:4-6; see also 1 Cor. 13:2; 14:29-33; Gal. 1:12, 16). Some of the apostles even doubled as prophets and speak in that capacity (Mt. 10:40-42; Acts 15:32; Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 9, 19). The prophets, furthermore, may have the ability to bring the secrets of human hearts to light (1 Cor. 14:24-25) and to make authoritative announcements about the future (Acts 11:28; 21:10). As such both apostles and prophets take aim at the edification of the Church (Acts 11:2-28; 13: Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 14:3), which could lead to the conversion of unbelievers as well (1 Cor. 14:24-25). At any rate, in their receptive capacities both apostles and prophets constitute the joint twofold foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20; see also Lk. 11:49).

But there is a clear cut distinction between the two. It lies in the fact that only the apostles and their believing co-workers were emphatically promised (Mk. 16:14-18; Lk. 10:19) and copiously granted the ability to perform "signs and wonders" in order to accompany and authenticate their message (See Mt. 10:1-8; Lk. 9:1-6; Acts 2:43; 3:6; 4:16, 22; 5:12; 8:4-7; 9:33-35, 40-41; 14:3, 10; 15:12; 16:18; 19:11-12; 20:10-12; Rom. 15:18-19; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). The purpose of these "signs and wonders" is (1) to get the Kingdom off to a fast start, (2) to ensure its quick embrace, and (3) to have it advance rapidly with a clearly original and unique burst of initial Holy Spirit energy and power (like a "big bang" of sorts!?). This promise and grant were not extended to the prophets. All this goes to say that once the "mysteries" of the Kingdom were fully and sufficiently disclosed, both the apostolic and the prophetic instruments could fade out and disappear. This also applies to the "signs and wonders" that were typically apostolic, serve to emphasize the arrival of the Kingdom, and were written down as a testimony for the Church of all ages. As such they continue to accompany and authenticate the apostolic message, and to strengthen the faith of the Church of today as immeasurably as they did the Church of the first generation during their occurrence. However, it apparently must be conceded that some "signs and wonders" may remain a possibility, especially in the mission field. At any rate, this leaves the Church with three offices, that of evangelist, pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11) and deacon (Phil. 1:1).

All this sounds admittedly very intriguing. But there are some caution signs. First, it is difficult to prove that designated "apostles," such as Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor. 9:5-6) and others (Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:7; 1 Thess. 2:6), as well as possibly Matthias (Acts 1:23) were or even may have been part of the "seventy" or "seventy-two."

Second, to flatten out, in fact, to remove any foundational distinction between the "twelve" and the other NT apostles, other than the fact that the "twelve" apostles were the permanent inner

circle of a large pool of apostles and of an even larger pool of disciples present with Jesus 24/7 seems to go way too far. The "twelve" appear to have more than just a symbolic function. The reality is that the "College of the Twelve" had the Holy Spirit of "inspiration" breathed upon them (John 20:22-23) as the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that he would guide them into all truth, not just by "illumining" existing truth (1 Cor. 2:10-14), but by adding substantive truth beyond what Jesus had taught them himself (John 16:12-15). Of course, beyond the teaching of Jesus, not beyond the person of Jesus! The latter is the blasphemous (!) offense of anti-Christian Mormonism and Islam! This "breathing-upon" the College of the Twelve produced the "out-breathing" by the College of the Twelve (See also 2 Pet. 1:21). In other words, it gave us an inerrant account of the sacred teaching of Jesus in the NT Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But it also produced the sacred and inerrant NT teaching beyond the Gospels. It gave us, more or less in chronological order, James, Paul, Peter, Jude and John. All together this led to the formation of the whole NT.

In short, in Matthew 10, Luke 9 and Luke 10 both the "twelve" and the "seventy" or "seventy-two" were launched upon a fully identical mission. This makes eminent sense. It proclaims explicitly at this juncture in time and implicitly for all of future Church history that every disciple is by definition a missionary! But in Matthew 16 and John 20 we are in a different ballpark. In Matthew 16:19 Jesus promises Peter and in Peter the Twelve a set of Keys to the Kingdom, that is, the widely diversified biblical teaching content that in a wide variety of circumstances would determine the entrance to the Kingdom for a wide variety of people operating on multitudinous wavelengths. Hence a set of Keys! But not until John 20:22-23 did Jesus entrust them with this set. Only the Holy Spirit could and would make sure that neither Peter nor any of the other apostles would go off the deep end (See Mt. 16:22-23 and Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 9:46-48), and only the Holy Spirit could and would see to it that what they "breathed out," God, indeed, "breathed out." Neither the entrance into the Kingdom, nor the forgiveness and retention of sin allows for any miscalculation or margin of error (John 20:23). All this eventually led to the NT as the end result. In it the "College of the Twelve" officially presents us with its exhaustive teaching content in writing. This content is final! The ":seventy" or "seventy-two," as well as all the others designated in the NT as "apostles," are missionaries, all right, who better not be AWOL. But most certainly they do not come into play in the present context of Matthew 16 and John 20. Here the exclusive focus is on the "Twelve" as the authoritative foundation, instrument, and launching pad for any and all missionary labors. No wonder that their names are attached to the twelve *foundation* stones of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22) and as such bear the weight of the "twelve tribes" of the Israel of God, portrayed as the twelve gates. It indicates that they were, are, and ever will be unique and not just *primi unter pares*, the first among equals. Putting all this together, there is clearly a kinship between the "twelve," the "seventy" or "seventy-two" as well as "others" who are identified as "apostles" in the NT. They are all "called in order to be sent" on a mission. It is equally clear that content wise their ministry was identical. But to conclude as a result that they were on a par with the "twelve" in an "*identical* apostolate" is unacceptable. Furthermore, it cannot be established with any degree of certainty that these so-called "others" were part of the "seventy" or "seventy-two."

Frankly, it is the better part of wisdom to "construe" (1) Jesus as the archetypal "APOSTLE" or MISSIONARY of the Father (John 20:21a; Heb. 3:1b), (2) the "Twelve," the "Seventy" or "Seventy-two," and the other "apostles" together all as men with an identical general mission, namely, to advance the Kingdom (John 20:21b), (3) the "The "Twelve Apostles" (more than likely without the other "apostles") and Prophets" as the disclosers of the mysteries of the

Kingdom of Jesus and in that capacity as the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20; 3:5), and more specifically (4) the College of the Twelve as the unique instrument through which God "breathes out" the NT to determine the entrance in the Kingdom and the forgiveness or retention of sin (Mt. 16:19; John 20:23). As a result all believers are called upon (1) to confess and mirror all of Jesus in word and deed (Heb. 3:1c), (2) to follow in the footsteps of the Twelve, the Seventy or Seventy-Two, and the designated apostles, such as Barnabas, and reflect them as missionary models, (3) to build and rest on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, and more specifically (4) to cling to, and not to add anything or subtract anything from the breathed-out Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16), OT as well as NT, in making disciples and training them in whatever God commands!

In short, every Christian is by definition a disciple (Acts 6:7) and as such is "called to be sent" (Mk. 3:14; Lk. 6:13; see also **Appendix VI**). This puts the apostolic function of the Church in a clear and concise perspective! All this helps, if not serves to explain the widely held thesis that and why the foundational Apostles and Prophets had their day. The infrastructure is in place. *In toto*! It also explains the thesis that and why "apostles" and "prophets" continue to this day. The so-called Five-fold Ministry holds that Apostles and Prophets are still around and function as the first and second highest rank in the Church. That is, they occupy the top rung and the second rung respectively. Scripture takes the opposite view. Just as every believer is a disciple, every believer is also an "apostle," a man or woman with-a-mission, as well as a "prophet," a man or woman with-the-mandate to speak the Word of God (Acts 2:17b; 4:31). All three are embodied in the person of every believer, and so compose the bottom rung! With the foundational Apostles and Prophets gone, every believer is now under the delegated and ministerial authority of the remaining and continuing Threefold Leadership of the Church, the Evangelist, the Pastor-Teacher, Elder, or Overseer (Bishop), and the Deacon, and must do their bidding (Heb. 13:7, 17). Honoring the delegated nature of its authority, it will always take its place under Christ and function in the service of Christ. Honoring the ministerial nature of its authority, it will always take its place under the Word and function in the service of the Word. The so-called Five-fold Ministry does not and cannot guarantee this to the potential detriment, if not down fall of the Church, After all, the claim of being an Apostle or Prophet implies Magisterial Authority in a fallible human being. Sooner or later, this will without a doubt turn "tyrannical," destructive and deadly!

Appendix VI

"Prosperity and Productivity in Scripture" (Success, Faithfulness, Fruitfulness and Discipleship)

Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 1ff, weighs in on the issue under discussion in this **Appendix** in a helpful manner. He covers three terms, "success," "faithfulness," and "fruitfulness." He prefers the latter term to exemplify what God requires from the Church in terms of "productivity." "Success" may suggest the wrong connotation. It could have the implication of a worldly undertone. "Faithfulness" may have a drawback as well. It could carry the liability of a passive, if not placid demeanor. However, since all three terms are biblical, the better, if not only part of wisdom is to integrate them. Jesus came "to save sinners," "to see the travail of his soul," and so to be productive, in fact, to "prosper" (Is 53:10-11), ostensibly in terms of the two components of the Grand Command (Mt. 28:19-20) that is, to advance the kingdom in making and training disciples. In this general context Joshua already

was told that he would "prosper," and to have "good success" (Josh. 1:8). This concept runs like a golden thread throughout Scripture. "Success" is a never ceasing promise and a never ceasing mandate (See Deut. 27-28). That this implies and requires the presence of "faithfulness," loyal, reliable, constant, diligent devotion of heart, mind, will, emotion in word and deed (1 Cor. 4:2) is without question. But the frequently stated mantra that God is not as much interested in success as he is in faithfulness is unconscionable. It is quite biblical to confirm that "faithfulness" is a fundamental Christian trait. But it is at least equally biblical, in fact, even more so, to insist that an integral part of faithfulness is the longing, if not passion to prosper, to be productive, to be successful. To deny this is to hide a deadly fallacy behind a glorious truth. Horatio Bonar already threw down the gauntlet when he argued that anyone who biblically shares the Gospel ("makes disciples"), preaches the Word ("trains disciples), or provides the logistics for both ("diaconal service"), and does so from the heart will end up with a broken heart when he is not successful. Spurgeon "amens" this when he wonders how any fisherman can be content with his fishing if he does not catch any fish? In fact, he insists that no one can even call himself a fisherman if he has never caught anything, just like a baker cannot identify himself as such when he has never produced a loaf of bread! Of course, it is quite to the biblical point to top this all off by designating "success" as "fruitfulness" (John 15:1ff). In fact, the fine tapestry of this Chapter should not be missed. Jesus proceeds, if not ups the ante, from "fruit" (John 15:2a), to "more fruit" (John 15:2b), to "much fruit" (John 15:5), to "continuous fruit" (John 15:16). In fact, Jesus tells us in quite a statement that a "disciple" does not demonstrate that he is such until he produces "*much* fruit" (John 15:8).

Incidentally, all this makes eminent sense when we cull all the biblical data regarding discipleship together and following an Introduction systematize them in a meaningful way under three headings: the "Essential Make-up" of a Disciple, the "Constituent Marks" of a Disciple, and the "Perpetual Motion" of a Disciple.

Introduction

1. The Term Disciple occurs some 250 times in the NT, but ONLY in the Gospels and the Acts. Doubtless the SUBSTANCE of Discipleship is also in the Rest of the NT, and must be taken into consideration when scanning the notions of "Disciple" and "Discipleship."

2. A Disciple is basically "called" as a "disciple" (Mt. 10:1ff), but in order to be "sent" as an "apostle" (Mt. 10:5ff; 16ff). The "call" is a matter of careful choice (Lk. 6:13-16). But the "sent" should harbor no illusions. They can count on "victory," all right (Mt. 10:7-15). But this is to be won through exhausting and at times heart-rending "battle" (Mt. 10:16-25). The term "disciple" by itself is "formal" in nature and has no substantive "content." He is a "learner," a "pupil," a "student." But, as we shall see, being a genuine disciple is "overwhelming" in its implications and applications. It "implies the existence of a personal attachment that shapes the whole life of the 'learner,' leaving no doubt who deploys the formative power" (Gerhard Kittel, ed.; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, tr., *Theological Dictionary of the NT* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), Vol. IV, s. v.

3. Jesus, John the Baptist, Pharisees, and Paul (Acts 9:25) ALL had "Disciples." Jesus had the "Twelve" but also others (Joseph of Arimathea). The Flow Chart in Paul runs from Helpers and Faithful Men to Others (2 Tim. 2:2). The whole Church consists of "Disciples" (Acts 13:52; 14:20) AS Believers (Acts 6:7; 14:22 // John 8:31) who possess the Spirit (Compare John 14:15ff, 15:26ff with Acts 9:17; 13:52; 19:1ff).

4. Jesus, John, the Pharisees and Paul ALL also "Trained" disciples. Training covers five basic phases: Teaching, Modeling, Observing, Refining, and Certifying. Leroy Eims, *The Lost*

Art of Disciplemaking, mentions a number of Principles to be taken into account in the "training" or "discipling" process: The Principles of Selection, Association, Instruction, Patterns in the NT, Fellowship, Propagation, Encouragement, Preparation, Modeling, Personal Involvement, Productivity, Dying unto Life. A pivotal principle is the one of "Personal Involvement" or "Modeling." This requires the "Trainer" to be 20% in the Classroom and 80% in the field with his "trainees" to monitor, empower, encourage, assist them, etc., etc., in the footsteps of Jesus. See also and especially Acts 1:1 where Luke tells Theophilus that his first Treatise (The Gospel of Luke) covered what and how Jesus "began to DO and teach." Churches, Seminaries and Christian Colleges are near-universally failing or refusing to "imitate" Jesus in this regard, as well as men, such as Paul (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1: 5). I fear that an all too fleshly aversion to "die unto life" lies at the root of the refusal to "march into the field together," shoulder to shoulder as trainers and learners. The bottom line is that as its painful result there is a vacuum of competent and effective laborers in "the second generation," which well may have produced and continue to produce the grim picture that I recorded in **Section I, 2**, "The Historical Reality-Check. But now on to the Three Headings that seek to systematize the biblical data!

First, then, the Essential Make-up of a Disciple:

1. True Disciples possess the Definitive Heart of Jesus in Regeneration (Rom. 6:6-11), the Definitive Righteousness of Jesus in Justification (2 Cor. 5:21), and the Definitive Holiness of Jesus in Sanctification (Heb. 10:10).

2. Regeneration provides them a New VISION to see the "lost" for what they are (2 Cor. 5:16), Justification with a New PASSION to seek the "lost" (Is. 6:8), and Sanctification with a New MISSION to go after the "lost" (Mt. 28:19-20).

3. This means that the Prayer for Laborers, urged by Jesus before Pentecost (Mt. 9: 38), has been heard. Since every Christian/Disciple has a New Vision, a New Passion and a New Mission by definition, every Christian is also and simultaneously a New Laborer BY DEFINITION! In principle, therefore, the Laborers are ABUNDANT in number, 3000 new "recruits" in one day already at Pentecost (Acts 2:39). But in practice they MUST be trained to be operational and effective! See **Section III, 3** for details.

Second, the "Constituent Marks" of a Disciple:

1. He starts out as a HOPEFUL Disciple. Anyone who genuinely and sincerely calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). But he cannot be designated as saved until it "shows," just as a tree cannot be designated as a good until it produces fruit (Mt. 7:17-20). The term "hopeful" was introduced during the Great Awakening when "confessors" did not always prove to be "possessors." It cautions the preacher not to put too quickly a stamp of approval upon a "responder." It also cautions the "responder" not to be satisfied with an "imaginary heaven." Throw this twofold caution to the wind and both may end up with an "illusion" that is essentially a self-deceiving and soul-destroying "delusion." A temporary celebration or joy (Mt. 13:5, 20-21) is too high a price to pay for an eternity of misery and grief.

2. He continues as a DEVOTED Disciple, when in the assemblies of the Body of Christ he embraces from the heart the Teaching of God's Word, the Fellowship with other believers, the Supper of the Lord and corporate as well as personal Prayer (Acts 2:42)

3. He turns into an ASSURED Disciple when he shows fruit, more fruit, much fruit and continuing fruit by abiding in the Vine through the Word and Prayer (John 15:1ff)

4. He seeks to be a PRODUCTIVE Disciple by joining his fellow believers in their "hot pursuit" of "making (other) Disciples, and training them" according to Jesus' Grand Command (Mt. 28:19-20)

5. He does not rest until he is an UNSTOPPABLE Disciple by identifying his Giftedness, whether in Evangelism (Mt. 4:19), Speaking or Serving (Rom. 12:3ff; 1 Pet. 4:10-11), and incessantly demonstrating this in relentless ministry. See for details, **Section II,**

Third, the Perpetual Motion of a Disciple:

1. A Disciple Follows his "Trainer" (Mt. 4:19; Mk. 1:16-20), whatever the cost (Lk. 19:21).

2. A Disciple Adhere to his "Trainer," regardless of what others do (John 6:68).

3. A Disciple Surrenders radically and totally to his "Trainer" (John 11:16).

4. A Disciple Renounces everyone and everything else for the sake of the "Trainer" (Lk. 14:26, 33).

5. A Disciple Apprentices with the "Trainer" and "gets his feet wet" with him (Lk. 9:1ff, 23ff; 10:1ff).

6. A Disciple Mirrors his "Trainer to a "T" (Lk. 6:40; 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 11:1).

7. A Disciple Experiences the same Consequences as his "Trainer" (John 15:18).

8. A Disciple Shoulders and Pursues his Mission in the footsteps of his "Trainer" (Mk. 3:14; Lk. 6:13; John 20:21).

9. A Disciple is Fruitful in Sanctification (John 15:8), which consists of Personal Holiness (1 Thess. 4:4) as well as Multiplication (Acts 6:7; 1 Thess. 1:8).[47] Clearly, what Jesus fully expects to "reap" from a disciple of his is fruit, more fruit, much fruit, in fact, incessant fruit (John 15:1ff)! But because "making disciples" or "evangelism" is a "command" (Mt. 28:19), and therefore an essential component of the believer's sanctification, it is also an essential part of "fruit-bearing." Of course, "making disciples" in conversion and "training disciples" in holiness do not constitute the identical fruit. They must be distinguished. At the same time, "What God has joined together (in the activity of fruit-bearing), let not man separate" (Mt. 19:6). In sum, faithful to his Master and in the footsteps of his Master a "Disciple" has an intolerable burden to prosper, to be productive, to be successful, to be fruitful in "hot pursuit" of the Grand Command to "make" and "train" Disciples (Mt. 28:19-20). The fact that such is only possible through "suffering" and "death" (John 12:24; Phil. 3:10) once and for all distinguishes, in fact, separates him from all those who worldly in their pursuits, "enemies of the Cross" (Phil. 3:18) "who set their minds on earthly things," and "whose end is destruction" (Phil. 3:19). A genuine disciple, in short, is "double-crossed." He first humbly embraces Christ's "Cross of Propitiation," and then joyfully shoulders his "Cross of Propagation!" In doing so he surrenders to Christ's adage, "I die for you. You die for me. And this is not negotiable!"

10. In short, a Disciple is "made" to "train" Disciples to "make" Disciples to "train" Disciples, etc., etc. (2 Tim. 2:2). The Three Manuals in Section III, 3, 4 and 5 are designed to produce this "Snowball" effect which is an essential characteristic of a genuine Revival Culture.[48]

Of course, all this may be countermanded by the often heard argument that "conversions" are a product of sovereign grace. They are not in our hands or up to us. Frankly, is "holiness" in our hands and up to us? Is this not equally a matter of grace only? If Scripture means anything (John 15:5; Rom. 7:21), can we really add a nano-part to our "sanctification" any more than a "nano-convert" to the Church (Acts 2:47)? This shows the topsy-turvy nature of our (lack of true) understanding of biblical truth. Well, what is the solution? James is crystal clear in spelling this out. "You do not have, because you do not ask" (Jam. 4:4). No holiness without incessant

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[47] See for a plea to take multiplication utterly serious and for ways ti pursue it, see Francis Chan, *Multiply: Disciples making Disciples* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012).

[48] For some hands-on literature on "Discipleship," see Michael A. Milton, *The Demands of Discipleship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005),

prayer! Similarly no conversions without incessant prayer! Who is or should not be shamefaced in either instance? Those who are not so sure about the necessity of this bottom line are heartily recommended to read the small volume on prayer by Austin Phelps, *The Still Hour* (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, 205). Every sentence seems to resemble a "shaming" bumper sticker for folks, that is, for most, if not all of us, who do not appear to have a hunch of what Revival Prayer is all about!

It is no secret that the well-documented New York Revival in the early 1900's was started by eventually untold numbers of Christians offering up untold prayers in an untold fashion for the grace of God to be revealed in "making" (conversions) as well as subsequent "training" (holiness) of disciples. No wonder that there was an untold effect! Candidly, when our hearts break as they should, when we do not see holiness, which is a promise as well as a mandate, so our hearts must break as they should, when we do not see conversions, which is equally a promise and a mandate. Both are inherent, in fact, essential to Christ's "Grand Command" (Mt. 28:19-20) on its way from Pentecost to an "innumerable" (!) as well as "godly" (!) multitude (Rev. 7:9). So let us not, as is too often the case, hide a "terrible falsehood" behind a "glorious truth" to get ourselves off the proverbial hook. Once again, "Enough Said," I trust!

Appendix VII

"The Proposal to Replace 'Presuppositional' Proof with 'Neo-Presuppositional' Persuasion in the Methodology of Christian Apologetics"

In this **Appendix** I seek to deal with the question whether the proposal that rather emphatically replaces (discursively) compelling "proof" with rational "persuasion" is biblical in the way it is nowadays formulated and presented in Christian Apologetics and supposedly suggested, if not mandated by Scripture passages, such as Acts 17:4; 26:28; 2 Corinthians 5:11.[49] This "proposal"

[49] See Scott K. Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics* (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway, 2013), 122, "We have attempted to show in the (present) chapter why the notion of proof is, at best, tenuous. It is not a useful way to discuss apologetics if our goal in a Christian defense is to set *Christianity* forth as the only viable option. But we dare not simply end with a negative 'not proof' conclusion. In the next chapter, we will present the positive case for *persuasion* as the proper mode of a covenantal apologetics. This chapter, then, is central to all that we have thus far argued, and will

is basically "neo-presuppositional" in nature in that it embraces Cornelius Van Til's "negative apologetics," which posits and argues the thesis of "The Impossibility of the Contrary to Christianity," but sidesteps his "positive apologetics," which necessarily infers and so allegedly establishes that the negative argument essentially and positively constitutes "The absolute proof of Christianity."

To start with Herod Agrippa's response to Paul (Acts 26:28), the proposal at the least fails to mention, if not overlooks, that it is in reply to Paul's *proclamation* of truth. In short, Paul *proclaims* with a view to persuasion. This is equally obvious in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1ff), in Athens (Acts 17:22ff), and in Rome (Acts 28:23). The context of 2 Corinthians 5:11 more than suggests the same. But in its present formulation this proposal equally fails to recognize that for Agrippa "persuasion" did not stop at "the adoption of a particular point of view," or the "identification with a particular position." The latter is the objective of the Aristotelian "art of persuasion," which is emphatically presented as the prevailing model for "neo-presuppositonal" persuasion. After all, Agrippa tells Paul that "he nearly persuades him *to become* a Christian." Based on *proclamation* Paul is clearly after *conversion*. This is also clear from his call to repentance (and faith) in Athens (Acts 17:30)! More precisely, he is after conversion by means of *Gospel* truth! Frankly, why do we need Aristotle and his so-called threefold framework of the proper *ethos*, the proper *pathos* and the proper *rhetoric*, when Scripture is ever so much more clear and cogent in its emphasis upon the biblical character of the speaker, the biblical diagnosis of the hearer, and the biblical content of the spoken word (2 Tim, 2:22-24; see also 1 Thess. 2:1-12))! Let us by all means acknowledge that by God's "common grace" Aristotle's clinical observations are on the money as far as they go, but fall woefully short of Paul's *Gospel Apologetics*. To him "persuasion" results from the *proclamation* of *Gospel* truth that addresses the heart of man, even if it is *through* the mind, and uses it only as a wayside station toward the *conversion* of the hearer, even if it is via the *acknowledgment* of the truth (2 Tim. 2:24-25; see also 1 Thess. 1:4-10; 2:13-16)! Agrippa was fully aware of all this. So should a Biblical Apologist! A Christian apologist who holds that "our goal in a covenantal apologetic cannot be the conversion of those to whom we speak," apparently because "this is a goal we cannot accomplish" (Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics*, 159), still chooses Aristotle over Scripture and smuggles in a grave error behind an undeniable truism, and therefore is certainly not a Pauline Apologist! Of course, "persuasion" is clearly a biblical concept. It indeed implies, if not underscores, that "discursively compelling proof" is not in Paul's purview, and that on solid biblical grounds. "Absolute proof" that is "discursively" or "syllogistically compelling" is simply not in the jurisdiction of finite man, and frankly has never seen the light of day! If it had, "Foundationalist Enlightenment Modernity" would be firmly, if not unshakably in the "saddle," and "Postmodernity" would have been disqualified from the very start.

But even if it is recognized that it must be based on the presentation of authoritative biblical truth, three crucial elements are still missing in any "theology of persuasion," if it resembles a beautiful Swiss watch that lacks a moving clockwork (*Proclamation*), an energizing battery (*Spirit power*) and the observance of the proper time (*Conversion*). This is not just a nit-picking criticism.

For one, John Owen seems fond of reminding folks that if a preacher does not aim at repentance, as a rule he will never get repentance and ends up with a barren ministry. Similarly, if an apologist does not aim at conversion, as a rule he will not get conversions, and at the end of

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be crucial" (123-160); see also from the same author, *The Battle Belongs to the Lord* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003), 149ff.

the day remains practically barren. It does not come as a surprise that both Evidentialist and Presuppositional apologists routinely concede that their methodologies are not very fruitful, if at all. At any rate, I fully agree that "the use of rational and evidential arguments," whether in terms of "logic and facts" (Evidentialism) or of "the theory of logic and facts" (Presuppositionalism) as the core of one's apologetic method needs to be debunked. It mires down in "probabilities" and cannot deliver "compelling proof." Frankly, to be content with "probability thinking" is passing strange. God "proclaims" that everybody is fully conscious of his existence (Rom 1:21). With (the kind of) apologists as friends who end up with his probable existence only, God hardly needs any enemies! Furthermore, it is increasingly recognized that "compelling proof" is an elusive entity (See also Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 25). To repeat, it simply is not in the jurisdiction of man, however defined. So there is a passionate need of a huge paradigm shift.

But to replace objective "rational and evidential argumentation" with "the art of persuasion" *in the form it is promoted today* falls quite short of it. Candidly, it is sub-biblical. For one thing, in the footsteps of Aristotle, whether consciously or not, it still targets the mind. No, in the power of the Spirit and in dependence upon the Spirit a Biblical Apologetics, whether it is the Apologetics of Peter, Stephen or Paul, targets the *heart* of man as his mission control center (Acts 2:37; 7:51-54; 28:25-27) by means of the "proclamation-presentation of Gospel truth" with a view to repentance and submission! Within this framework additional relevant truths, whether of Scripture or nature, serve as a "corroborating" cast (Rev. 2:25ff, 34f; 7:1ff), and the truths of experience, facts, or logic as a "supporting" cast (Acts 2:22-23, 36; 17:22-23, 28). In short, it now stands to reason why modern Christian apologetics laments the lack of effectiveness. *Methodologically* they do not target conversion, but ultimately "agreement," whether through (discredited) "probability reasoning" (Virtually all Evidentialists), (non-existing) "absolute proof" (Van Til's Presuppositionalism and R. C. Sproul's Evidentialism), or (deficient) "persuasion" (OIiphint's Neo-Presuppositionalism). Frankly, and to underscore, "the cat really appears to come out of the bag" when we are openly told that the "goal in a covenantal apologetic *cannot* (italics, mine) be conversion." This cuts at the heart of Biblical Apologetics which is evangelistic to the core with its call to repentance. It is greatly to be feared that all those who teach and promote this thesis basically call for either a pre-evangelistic (Evidentialist) or a non-evangelistic (Presuppositionalist/Neo-presuppositionalist) methodology, whether negative or positive, do not aim at the heart (See Keller, *Center Church*, 57-59), and for that reason are bound to end up with a barren apologetics, whether consciously and intentionally or not. But what is worse, those who embrace it will turn out to be barren apologists. This is the admitted verdict of history. What may be the worst, however, is that by painstakingly spending all their energy in developing a pre- or non-evangelistic apologetics, once again, whether of the negative or positive variety, their promoters sooner or later may even fail to emphasize, or even lose sight of the central place of evangelism altogether, close the eyes of their disciples to it, and make its practice take the back seat both in their own practice and in that of their followers. That this scenario is a hard and fast rule principially in an Evidentialist and practically in a Presuppositional/Neo-presuppositional Apologetic Methodology can hardly be denied. By all means, consult the writing(s) of any such Apologist and it is soon, if not immediately crystal clear that a Gospel Apologetics is conspicuous in its absence. Further that this scenario, if it has any credibility, spells "barrenness" goes without saying!

At any rate, once the exquisite "Swiss watch" is fully in place, the much needed apologetic paradigm shift has occurred. In terms of this graphic image, a truly Biblical Apologetics aims at

conversion (the observance of time) and does so by *proclamation* (the moving clockwork) in *Holy Spirit power* (the energizing battery). This makes it utterly regrettable that present day apologetics is lacking in all three areas. Enough has been said already about *conversion* as its objective and about *proclamation* as its instrument. But the indispensable presence of *Holy Spirit power* stands in need of additional comments.

By and large the Holy Spirit is introduced only at the conclusion of the apologetic enterprise as a sort of "caboose." *After* everything is said and done by humans, folks are finally reminded that "thankfully" the Holy Spirit can bring every seeming or apparent failure to a successful conclusion. This is unacceptable. In fact, to bring him into the picture at the end is basically offensive. He must be present from the very start and this must be acknowledged from the start. No Holy Spirit presence? No power, no proclamation and no conversion! Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit when he started his convicting *apologia* and proclaimed the Gospel with a view to conversion (Acts 2:38)! So were Stephen (Acts 7:51-53), and Paul (Acts 17:17)!! In fact, *and to top all this off, so was Jesus* (Mt. 4:17)!!! If all this, indeed, represents biblical truth, it may be difficult to dismiss the following three unavoidable conclusions. For any apologist to overlook it must spell "deficiency." For any apologist to ignore it must spell "delinquency." For any apologist to oppose it must spell "delusion." Let's face it. If Scripture is true, which it is, no one should even "attempt" any ministry whatever, wherever, whenever or however, without the experiential and activating presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). He is the only one who can turn a barren desert that kills into a fertile field (Is. 32:15), a cemetery that is occupied by dead folks into a maternity ward (Ezek. 37:1ff), and a "Dead Sea" that for good measure kills everybody else into a fresh water lake (Ezek. 47:1ff). No wonder that Jesus did not start his ministry until he came upon him. No wonder that the apostles were told to wait until he was poured out upon them (Acts 2:33). No wonder that the "diaconal" service to widows in Jerusalem was entrusted only to folks who were full of him (Acts 6:1). No wonder that Paul prays for all believers to be strengthened by him in the inner man (Eph. 3:16). No wonder that the need for an earth-shaking paradigm shift must be shouted from the roof tops when any ministry whatsoever, inclusive of an apologetic ministry quenches him (1 Thess. 5:19), grieves him (Eph. 4:30) or insults him (Heb. 10:29), by overlooking, ignoring or neglecting him, whether consciously and intentionally or not!

All this is not to say that today's Christian Apologists of whatever stripe have no sharp eye for or a deep interest in the Gospel, the need for conversion, the significance of the Holy Spirit, etc., etc., from the perspective of a Biblical or Systematic Theology. Far from it! But it is to say that this does not enter into their apologetic methodology. Neither is this to say that this **Appendix** contains a complete analysis and assessment of the various reigning apologetics of the day. However, in **Topical Focus #8: The Problem of Evil** to be published as soon as possible in the Second Edition of my Commentary, *The Epistle of James*, I scan the current apologetic methodologies in more detail and greater depth. This **Topical Focus** deals with arguably the most difficult issue or "hottest potato" of Christian Apologetics, and is candidly in search of hopefully a better, more biblical solution than the present day apologetic "proposals" that clearly have not been able to stem today's atheistic onslaught. In the meantime it is available already upon request as a stand-alone Paper.