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# Contrasting Views on Growing Communities of Churchless Christians

Josephine L. Branch

People throughout the world are seeking something to fill a void in their lives. In this quest, many have found various ways to meet those needs. Some have found contentment in their careers, marriage, or in giving service to others. Many have found their answers in joining different movements or causes. And still others have found fulfilment in becoming part of a family of believers in Christ: a local church body.

The latter of these fulfilments is what this writer would like to focus on within this project. Throughout the history of mankind, biblically speaking, God has desired to have a relationship with his people. The Bible is filled with accounts of God interacting with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets. The Gospels reveal God as coming to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus established the church and will return again to claim her as his bride. The church, although not always designated as such in the Old Testament, took on different forms. God was always present and leading his people. He was with Noah and his family in the ark. God called and led Abraham and his family and Moses and the children of Israel. Scholars and theologians pose each of these groups as a type of "church." They were the people of God, being led by his chosen leader, and being taught to worship and obey him.

Within the last half century, the church of God has begun to take a different turn and take on a different look. Some who are still in the quest for fulfillment and meaning of life are coming to the church, but not necessarily for the benefits of a life of commitment to Jesus Christ. Their agendas and expectations are not consistent with that of established traditional church settings. While it is necessary that methods change from time to time, it more important that the message of salvation not change. In the humble opinion of this author, the church must look something like the model that has been left for her to follow; otherwise, can we truly call her church?

## The New Testament Church

*"... I will build my church..."* Jesus (Matthew 16:18)

These words were uttered during a conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Jesus asked them, "but whom do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh

and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (KJV)<sup>1</sup> We can surmise from this account, that the builder and founder of the church of the New Testament is Jesus Christ.

This new phenomenon of the first century, which was birthed in the midst of the Mediterranean region, came at a time and within a setting of varied influences. From Luke's account, the Roman world was influential because he (Luke) references, "Jesus' birth under the emperor Augustus, his ministry under Tiberius and in the mentioning of the Roman governors and other official with whom Jesus and later Paul had encounters (Luke 2:1-2; 3:1; Acts 13:7; 18:12; 24:7). Rome provided the larger governmental, military and legal context of early Christianity."

Secondly, strong Greek influences in the early church were seen in its language, education, literature and philosophy. Although Latin was the official language of government in the eastern Mediterranean area, the Greek language and culture were more significant and permeated the regions from Greece around the eastern coast of the Mediterranean to Libya. Education was based on Homer and the Greek classics.

The last major influence on the early church was that of the Jewish World. Jesus had Jewish parents and lineage (David and Abraham). He was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, did most of his ministry in Galilee and was crucified in Jerusalem. The Jewish scriptures, in their Greek translations, were the Bible of the early church. Worship and early Christian preaching typically began in the Jewish synagogues of the Diaspora.<sup>2</sup>

Following the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Jesus, the disciples reunited and confirmed their faith in him. As per Jesus' instructions, they waited in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit—as recorded in Acts, chapter two. This experience launched the church as a distinct entity, on a mission of proclaiming Jesus as "both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36 and Matthew 28:19-20)

The early church, mostly Jewish converts, worshipped in synagogues basically and held to core Jewish beliefs—covenant relationship with God and a hope for end-time blessings. However, now they added that Jesus was the promised deliverer through whom the end-time blessings were beginning to be

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<sup>1</sup> Hendrickson, *The Holy Bible King James Version, The KJV Minister's Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, LLC Peabody, MA 01961-3473, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Church History Volume One: From Christ to Pre-Reformation*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530, 1995.

realized, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This new conviction caused conflict with Jerusalem authorities.<sup>3</sup>

As stated earlier, the people of the early church were predominantly of Jewish descent. Their Jewish customs and practices were deeply imbedded within them, but as they began embracing the teachings of Jesus and of his disciples, the church increased in number. Many of their former observances and religious practices lost their place in daily life, as more intense study of the scriptures, prayer, and fellowship emerged among them. (Acts 2:41-46). The continued work of Jesus was prevalent throughout the early church; as it was demonstrated by the power of the Holy Spirit and through his disciples in baptisms and healings that were performed in the name of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

In the book of Matthew, the author poses three propositions 1) God is present in Jesus (1:23), Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 2) Jesus is present in the church – Jesus said he will be in the midst of his followers when they come together in his name to pray (18:20) and that he will be with them as they go out into the world to make disciples of others (28:20; cf 10:40). Indeed, the world will be judged according to how it treats members of his family, for what is done to them is done to him (25:40; cf 10:41-42; 18:5). 3) The church is present in the world. Matthew presents the church not as a static institution, but rather a dynamic movement, an assembly of missionaries who go out into the world as sheep in the midst of wolves (10:16) in order to bring good news, healing, and life (10:7-8). Followers of Jesus will be the light and salt of the world and the salt of the earth (5:13-14). The world may not appreciate them, but it will be a better place because of them. Indeed, the church that Jesus will build will overcome the gates of Hades (16:18), moving triumphantly against the forces of death and evil.<sup>5</sup>

When we look again at Matthew's account, we find that Jesus was very specific intentional in defining his mission and purpose, as well as the expectation of his followers (11:27-30 and 28:18-20). The invitation to "come unto me, all..." was extended and continues to stand. The commission to "go ye therefore..." is also just as valid today. Both are necessary if the church is to grow and thrive.

As the early church experienced growth, it also experienced some growing pains. Not everyone who came had the right motives, so disagreements and confusions grew as well. Additionally, because of harsh persecution, many new believers left their homes and cities seeking safety

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> I. Howard Marshall *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515

<sup>5</sup> Mark Allan Powell *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, Baker Academic a division of Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, MI 49516

from some who sought to kill them. This fleeing served to aid in the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ, because as they went, they continued to preach the word of God and practice the teachings of the apostles. (Acts 8:4) A most prominent figure who opposed the early church was Saul. Despite his disdain for the "people of the way," Saul loved God and felt he was defending his faith by doing all he could to demolish the early church. However, Jesus encountered Saul on the road to Damascus. This encounter resulted in Saul's conversion and he subsequently became a leading ambassador for Jesus Christ. Paul (Greek for Saul) was used greatly by God, and is attributed to have written over half of the books of the New Testament.

Additionally, in the Book of Acts, Luke emphasizes joy as a primary characteristic of the early church's life and mission. The following is a list of some of those accounts: a) 5:41 – The disciples rejoice that they are considered worthy to suffer for Jesus' name; b) 8:8 - There is great joy in the city when the gospel comes to Samaria; c) 8:39 - The Ethiopian eunuch goes "on his way rejoicing" after being baptized; d) 11:23 – Barnabas rejoices when he witnesses God's grace in Antioch; e) 13:52 – The disciples are filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit; f) 14:15-17 – God blesses even pagan idol worshippers by filling their hearts with joy; g) 15:3 – The conversion of Gentiles brings "great joy to all the believers"; h) 15:31 - The Gentiles rejoice when they hear the decision of the Jerusalem Council; 16:33-34 – A jailer and his family rejoice after they are baptized.<sup>6</sup>

Christ is the head of the church. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote as he gave an analogy of family and church: (5:22-27) "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish."<sup>7</sup> The church was established by Jesus. He is to be honored as the head and the believer's life should exhibit the life of Christ in the church. The church belongs to him.

## The Church in Transition

*"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 210

<sup>7</sup> Hendrickson, *The Holy Bible King James Version, The KJV Minister's Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, LLC Peabody, MA 01961-3473, 2005.

*preaching the word.” Acts 8:4<sup>8</sup>*

"The Church existed from the moment that God set enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, but it did not always assume the same form."<sup>9</sup> In a written section on The Church in the Different Dispensations, Berkhof outlines three periods in which the church was represented: 1) The Patriarchal Period, 2) The Mosaic Period, and 3) The New Testament Period. A brief description of each follows.

- 1) In the Patriarchal Period the Church was best represented in the pious households, where the fathers served as priests. There was at first no collective worship, though Gen. 4:26 seems to imply a public calling upon the name of the Lord. At the time of the flood the Church was saved in the family of Noah. And when true religion was again on the point of dying out God separated unto Himself the family of Abraham. Up to the time of Moses the fear of God was kept alive in the families.
- 2) In the Mosaic Period – After the exodus the people of Israel were organized into a nation and also constituted the Church of God. They were enriched with a ceremonial cultus in which the religion of the nation could find expression. The Church had no independent organization, but had its organized existence in the State. Israel was a Church-State. Foreigners could enter the Church only by joining the nation. Religious worship was regulated down to the minutest details, was largely ritual and ceremonial, and found its highest expression in the services at the central sanctuary at Jerusalem.
- 3) In the New Testament Period. On the day of Pentecost the Church was divorced from the national life of Israel and obtained an independent organization. What had up to this time been a national Church now assumed a universal character. And in order to realize the ideal or a world-wide extension, it had to become a missionary Church, carrying the gospel of salvation to all the nations of the world. Moreover, the ritual worship of the past made place for a more spiritual worship in harmony with the greater privileges of the New Testament.<sup>10</sup>

The early church showed signs of rapid growth. It drew followers who had earlier followed Jesus and person who were impressed with the lifestyle and wonders manifested within the movement. This growth and set of beliefs soon brought the disciples into conflict with the Jerusalem authorities. The

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<sup>8</sup> Hendrickson, *The Holy Bible King James Version, The KJV Minister's Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, LLC Peabody, MA 01961-3473, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI. p 283

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pp.283-384

membership of the Jerusalem church consisted of strict Law-observant Jews from faithful Jews who were not so strict in keeping the Law, from Gentile proselytes, and from those more Hellenized in their attitudes. Internal conflicts began between the Hebrews (Hebraic Jews) and the Hellenists (Grecian) Jews.

Three groups within the Jerusalem church were 1) the followers of Jesus from his Galilean ministry, led by Peter and the Twelve; 2) Judean converts, who came to look for leadership from James, brother of Jesus...James the Just, and those from the Greek Diaspora and others in Jerusalem sympathetic to them, of whom Stephen became the spokesman. These early disciples represented three different attitudes toward the Law, attitudes that did not exactly correspond to the three groupings: interpret the Law broadly in term of its main emphasis (a view that was congenial to the later use of typology), keep all the Law (the converted Pharisees), and preference for the tabernacle in the wilderness and the universalist strain in the Old Testament in opposition to the temple (expressed by Stephen). All three views contributed something to Paul's more sophisticated interpretation of the Law—employing typology, taking the Law seriously but not always literally, and developing the universalism implicit in some of the Prophets.<sup>11</sup>

The deaths of Stephen, James the brother of John and the imprisonment of Peter pushed James, the brother of Jesus, into a more prominent leadership role. He provided leadership when the Twelve moved to other fields of activity. This arrangement provided a model for the second-century church's organization of a bishop assisted by elders in each city.

James' execution in A.D. 62 left conservative Jewish Christians without a respected, moderate leader. Following Paul's conversion and commission to the Gentiles from the Lord Jesus, he reached an agreement with Peter and the leaders in Jerusalem that his call to go to the Gentiles corresponded to Peter's mission to the circumcised (Gal 2:7-9 and Acts 11:20, 10-11).<sup>12</sup>

The early church continued to suffer persecution and many of those who scattered because of the persecution continued to preach wherever they went. Some key persons in the first century church were Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, James, the brother of Jesus, and Peter; James, brother of John, Stephen, Apollos and the Apostle John. From Jerusalem, the church spread into the regions of Antioch, Rome, Ephesus and Syria.

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<sup>11</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Church History Volume One: From Christ to Pre-Reformation*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530, 1995. Pp.34, 35

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 35



During the Apostolic age, the church was marked by a common faith in Jesus, and a common core of apostolic teachings that set limits to the diversity. Old Testament Scriptures received from Judaism had a common acceptance as the Word of God and commitment to interpret them in the light of the new revelation in Jesus Christ. Other common practices included baptism, in Jesus' name, the Lord's Supper, Sunday assemblies and moral emphases.<sup>13</sup>

Historical accounts report that James, brother of Jesus, Peter and Paul were all killed within five years of each other (between 62 and 68). The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the banishment of Jews from Jerusalem after the *Bar Kokhba* revolt in 135 was the removal of Jerusalem as a geographical center of the Christian movement. There was increased marginalization of Jewish Christians in relation to the growing numbers of Gentile believers.

Three strands of Jewish Christians formed following the forbidding of Jews from Jerusalem in Rome after 135. The following is a list of those strands with their specific characteristics.

- A. Ebionites – The group of Jewish Christians most commented on by Gentile Christian writers, and treated by them as heretical. Their hero was James the Just, and they were antagonistic toward Paul. They believed that Gentile converts must submit to the Law of Moses.
- They emphasized strict monotheism
  - Regarded Jesus as a man
  - Rejected the virgin birth
  - Rejected material sacrifices
  - Rejected the monarchy
  - Rejected some aspects of prophecy
  - Rejected offensive passages in the Old Testament
  - Prohibited meat
  - Emphasis on poverty
  - Concerned with purity
  - Continued Jewish practices of circumcision
  - Sabbath and the Lord's Day observance
  - Observed dietary laws
  - Their Gospel was Matthew, but they also produced other Gospels and Acts of their own.
- B. Nazoraeans / Nazaraeans – Jewish Christians who although living by the Law themselves, accepted Gentile believers without expecting them to submit to the Law. This uneasy middle ground failed to draw much comment from Gentile Christian authors, proved also to be too unstable to survive.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 35-44

- C. Elkesaites – Jewish Christians who absorbed Gnostic tendencies. A prophet named Elkesai is connected with a book of revelations that originated in the early year of the second century.
- D. Other Jewish influences include the Didache, Old Testament Pseudopigrapha (e.g. 2 Edras (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Ezra). Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs, and Ascension of Isaiah; Pseudo-Clementine literature; the fourth century, Greek Homilies and Latin Recognitions, ascribed to Clement of Rome (the Pseudo-Clementines).<sup>14</sup>

“Apostolic Fathers” is the name given to the earliest orthodox writings not included in the New Testament. The name was given because it was assumed that disciples of the apostles wrote the works, a false assumption in all, if not all, cases. The category is an artificial grouping, encompassing many different literary forms and overlapping other classifications." The writings covered a period time from around 96-155A.D.<sup>15</sup>

The Second Century came with its share of heresies and schisms. Namely, Marcion, whose asceticism was very attractive as a fulfillment of Christianity and so was one factor in the ascetic influence in orthodox Christianity. His emphasis on soteriology to the neglect of cosmology was a big problem for the Old Catholic church fathers. In essence, Marcion opposed the Jewish roots of Christianity. The Gnostics were characterized by an intuitive knowledge of the origin, essence, and ultimate destiny of the spiritual nature of human beings. Their overall different systems of thought, although they shared some commonalities of the church, earned them the name "Gnostics". Montanism was a protest against an increasing worldliness and formality in the church. It won many followers who were dissatisfied with Gnostic "elitism" and with the growing accommodation of the church to the world. "Encratism" (from Greek, *egkrateia*, "to have in one's power," "self-control") was one of the words used for "asceticism" (Greek, *askesis*, "athletic discipline") and in a positive sense was present in Christianity from the beginning. The Ascetics practices rejected wine, flesh meat and marriage. They also considered matter as a necessary evil, and felt that human reproduction was bad and a hindrance to the higher life.<sup>16</sup>

The Second Century church developed a three-fold defense of "what is apostolic." To the question; "Where is apostolic teaching to be found?" the church pointed to the Scriptures. To the question, "How are these Scriptures to be interpreted?" it pointed to their content in the "rule of faith." To the further question; "What is the channel through which this teaching has been preserved and where is it to be found now?" the church pointed to its succession of duly

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp. 46-49

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 50

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp. 86-103

appointed bishops and presbyters. The three-fold ministry of the local church (bishop, presbyters, and deacons) became the general pattern by the mid-second century."<sup>17</sup>

The church began with a canon of Scripture. That is, it took over and claimed the Jewish Scriptures as its own. From the beginning, however, Christians placed Jesus at the center of their faith, so they followed the Old Testament as related to Jesus and as interpreted in reference to him.

The first collection of New Testament books is attributed to Marcion. Early Christian scholars such as Melito of Sardis, Origen, Augustine and Athanasius were instrumental in establishing the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> Scripture principles accepted that sayings and teachings of Jesus and the apostles were preserved in both oral and written form. Early church fathers, (Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna) referred to the "writings" (collections of writings of Paul, and "Memoirs" of the apostles, the Gospels) as "Scripture."<sup>19</sup>

"Several second-century authors (Polycarp, Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria) refer to a three-fold standard of authority for Christians: the prophets, the Lord, and the apostles. This may reflect a natural Christian periodization of history, but the grouping into three authorities may reflect a Christian alternative to the three-fold division of the Hebrew Scriptures into Law, Prophets and Writings."<sup>20</sup>

The idea of canon was established by about 180. The collection of writings was used and or referenced by Tertullian, Eusebius, Irenaeus and Marcion. The term, "New Testament" or "New Covenant" was a title of a collection of books for Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen, if not already for Irenaeus."

By the end of the second century there was a core canon recognized virtually everywhere in the great church: four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen letters of Paul, and varying other apostolic writings. In general, Revelation was accepted in the West but not in the East; Hebrews was accepted in the East as a writing by Paul, but not in the West. Of the general epistles, the widest acceptance was given to 1 Peter and 1 John; the others were less well known."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 106

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 112

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 114

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 115

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 117

In the fourth and fifth century these came to be general agreement in the Greek and Latin churches about the extent of the New Testament canon, although several Greek authors did continue to omit the book of Revelation from their lists and some Latin sources were ambivalent about the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.

Jerome treated the New Testament canon as a "given" not subject to modification, and Councils at Hippo in 393 and Carthage in 397 followed Augustine in ratifying a twenty-seven-book New Testament.

#### Criteria for Canonicity

1. Inspiration
2. Apostolicity
3. Antiquity
4. Applicability
5. Public reading in the assembly
6. Right doctrine

"The organized church did not create the canon, but recognized it." The canon was in a sense "inherited." Writers from the second century on repeatedly referred to the canonical writings as the books "handed down to us." Authoritative books were received as part of the deposit of faith handed down in the church. Succeeding centuries ratified a situation already established. The approach of the church was not "we determine," but "we recognize" these books as apostolic. The canon represented the books "received" by the church. The church, therefore, functioned as a witness, not as a judge in the process of canonization. In that same sense, the church gave us the Bible. It received and preserved the sacred Scriptures.<sup>22</sup>

The steady growth of the church within the Roman Empire reached its climax in the fourth and early fifth centuries. The fourth century saw Christianity become the official religion of the Roman world. The process of Christianizing Europe was slow and before completion received the setback of the barbarian invasions of the fifth and subsequent centuries.

Constantine began a policy of imperial favor for Christianity. Constantius II took a more vigorous official stance against paganism, prohibiting all pagan sacrifice in 341 and ordering the closing of temples in 356. Julian revoked some of the privileges of the "Galileans" and restored those of paganism. Apollinaris of Laodicea and his father of the same name rewrote some of the biblical books in classical meter and classical style in order to provide an alternative educational curriculum. Others who were active against paganism were Jovinian, Valentinian and Valens and Gratian. Theodosius I made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 119-121

(370-95).<sup>23</sup> A summary of some common features of Sunday liturgies in the fourth and fifth centuries included:

- I. Service of the Word (the Mass of Catechumens, also known as the Synaxis)
  1. Preliminary Prayers and Songs
  2. Readings from both Old and New Testament
  3. Psalms sung between the Scripture lessons
  4. Sermon
  5. Prayers and Benediction for different groups
  6. Dismissal of catechumens and penitents
  
- II. Service of the Supper (the Mass of the Faithful, also known as the Eucharist).
  1. Prayers of the faithful, Series of biddings by the deacon with the people responding, *Kyrie eleison* ("Lord, have mercy"). Completed by prayer by the bishop
  2. Kiss of peace
  3. Offerings brought by the people
  4. Anaphora or Canon of the Mass:
    - a. *Sursum Corda* ("Lift up your hearts")
    - b. Preface-"Let us give thanks"
    - c. *Sanctus* (or *Trisagion*- "Holy, Holy, Holy")
    - d. Thanksgiving prayer:
      - (1) Epiclesis – Invocation of the Holy Spirit
      - (2) Words of Institution
      - (3) *Anamnesis* ("Memorial" of passion and resurrection)
      - (4) Oblation – Offering or sacrifice
      - (5) Intercession for the living and the dead
    - e. Lord's Prayer
  5. Communion
  6. Benediction<sup>24</sup>

### The Church Re-defined

*"The Five Star Church gives believers the criteria for a well-rounded ministry that is rooted in biblical standards and that provides quality service for all who attend."*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 238-239

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 248

<sup>25</sup> Stan Toler and Alan Nelson, *The Five Star Church: Serving God and His People with Excellence*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids MI 49530, 1999.

In defining the "church," Louis Berkhof submits: "the *visible church* – the company of the elect who are called by the Spirit of God / the communion of believers" and the *invisible church* – (a broader concept) "the community of those who profess the true religion together with their children." Berkhof continues, "The one Church of Jesus Christ is on the one hand visible and on the other invisible. This is a distinction applied to the Church as it exists on earth. She is called invisible, because she is essentially spiritual and cannot, as far as her essential nature is concerned, be discerned by the physical eye, and because it is impossible to determine precisely who do and who do not belong to her. This same church, however, becomes visible in the profession and conduct of its members, in the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, and in her external organization and government."<sup>26</sup>

If one was born in and has always lived in the United States of America, the idea of a 'churchless Christian' is probably not an everyday thought. However, after extensive research, Timothy Tennent holds that, "Many Western theologians have virtually no actual face-to-face experience with the majority world church. Sometimes theological writings seem to be completely ignorant of major on-the-ground realities in the world. Entire courses on ecclesiology can be taken in Western seminaries with no mention of Kanzo Uchimura's famous "non-church" movement in Japan or the emergence of churchless Christianity in India. Frequently, theologians can all too easily discount the insights of the social sciences."<sup>27</sup> Tennent further submits that there is evidence in India of "followers of Christ" living in rural and urban cities who have not joined a visible Christian church, and remain within the *Hindu* community. They are called *Jesu bhakta*, "devotees of Jesus"; bhakti means "devotion." This research, documented by Herbert Hoefler, in his work "*Churchless Christianity*" suggests that there are more nonbaptized followers of Jesus in Madras than there are formal, visible Christians in the traditional sense.' The bhakti movement allows for Hindus to focus their worship on a particular god, so it is not scandalizing for someone in their community to choose to worship Jesus. The *Jesu bhakta* follow an *ishta devata* theology within Hinduism. The practice of *ishta devata* allows a person to worship a particular, chosen deity without necessarily denying that other gods exist. They are, therefore, allowed to focus their worship exclusively on Jesus and yet maintain their cultural and social particularities as Hindus. If asked, they continue to call themselves Hindus. They will not identify themselves as Christian, and many do not attend any church. This unwillingness to identify

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<sup>26</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, Eerdmans Printing Co. Grand Rapids, MI, 1995 p. 281-282

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p.22

with the church or with baptism is not due to any shame about following Christ, but to strong cultural associations surrounding the terms.<sup>28</sup>

Hoefler further observed that "many Northern India Hindus do indeed, have distorted and unfortunate notions about the church or organized Christianity. They infer, for example, that Christians are disrespectful because they keep their shoes on in the presence of God. They look on Christians as culturally foreign because they sit on pews rather than on the floor or use Western musical forms rather than the indigenous *bhajans*. They simply do not understand why Christian women will no longer wear bangles or participate in popular cultural festivals. Many Hindus think that to become a Christian means using Western style eating utensils, eating beef, and drinking alcohol. In short, even if a Hindu is drawn to Christ, they may find membership in church or the term *Christian* repugnant. This raises the vital issue: Can someone say "yes" to Jesus and "no" to the visible church?"<sup>29</sup>

Distorted views of the terms *church* and *Christianity* and the presence of nonbaptized followers of Jesus who do not identify with the visible church are not limited to Hinduism. These tendencies have also been observed throughout the Muslim world. In a comment about Muslims, by Robby Butler, Butler reported that "for a Muslim to say that he has become a Christian is to communicate that he has launched into a secret life of immorality." Butler argues that 'becoming a Christian is perceived by Muslims to be entering a prayerless, apostate community.' Yet despite these perceptions, Muslims generally hold positive views of Jesus Christ. The Qur'an teaches that Christ had a miraculous birth, was a miracle worker, and was a prophet without sin.

These positive views of Christ, alongside such embarrassing perceptions regarding terms like *Christian*, *church* and Christianity, within the Muslim community have also spawned a range of churchless, but Christ-loving movements. For example, Rafique Uddin and David Cashin have observed many Muslim followers of Jesus (*Isa*) who do not separate from the mosque or unite with a visible church. *Mission Frontiers* highlighted a missionary couple named Alejandro and Bertha Ortiz, who have nurtured several of these "Jesus Mosques" in the African country of Benin. They claim that in another Muslim nation there are over 100,000 Muslims who worship Jesus as *Isa* in Islamic mosques.<sup>30</sup>

Another example of the church re-defined is the Emergent/Emerging Church Movement. After research and review of varying articles about this movement, from persons who were either for or against the movement, the

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<sup>28</sup> Timothy C. Tennent *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530 p. 193-94

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 193-194

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p. 195

following are some descriptions and characteristics of the Emergent/Emerging church.

Scot McKnight, (who has publicly aligned himself with the Emerging Movement states that “Emerging Churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures. This definition encompasses nine practices. Emerging Churches: 1) identify with the life of Jesus; 2) transform the secular realm, and 3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they 4) welcome the stranger; 5) serve with generosity; 6) participate as producers, 7) create as created beings, 8) lead as a body, and 9) take part in spiritual activities.”<sup>31</sup>

In his DVD, *The Emerging Church: The Battle for Truth*, Charlie H. Campbell, Director of the Always Be Ready Apologetic Ministry, (and opponent of the Emerging Church Movement) submits the following:

Emergent is the name of an organization (emergentvillage.com), an official network of likeminded leaders within the Emerging Church movement. (Emerging church refers to a broader movement). The Emerging Church is a movement of people in the church who are seeking to re-invent or reconstruct Christianity so that it might be more accommodating to our culture and particularly our youth culture, which is heavily influenced by postmodern attitudes, beliefs and practices.” Its leaders are Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones.<sup>32</sup>

Campbell continues with, “The emerging/emergent church movement falls into line with basic post-modernist thinking- it is about experience over reason, subjectivity over objectivity, spirituality over religion, images over words, outward over inward, feelings over truth. These are reactions to modernism and are thought to be necessary in order to actively engage contemporary culture. This movement is still fairly new, though, so there is not yet a standard methodology for doing anything. Therefore, there is a huge range of how far groups take a post-modernist approach to Christianity. Some groups go only a little way in order to impact their community for Christ, and remain biblically sound. Most groups, however, embrace post-modernist thinking, which eventually leads to a very liberal, loose translation of the Bible. This in turn leads to liberal doctrine and theology.”<sup>33</sup>

In his comments on the Emerging Church, author, Matt Slick, President and Founder of Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry wrote: “The

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/February/11\\_35html2start=1](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/February/11_35html2start=1) Five Streams of the Emerging Church

<sup>32</sup> Charlie H. Campbell, *The Emerging Church: The Battle for Truth*, The Always Be Ready Apologetics Ministry, 2008

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*



Emerging Church is a movement that claims to be Christian. The term “Emerging Church” is used to describe a broad, controversial movement that seeks to use culturally sensitive approaches to teach the postmodern, un-churched population with the Christian message.”<sup>34</sup>

Five themes that characterize the Emerging Movement and outlined by Scot McKnight are:

1. Prophetic (or at least provocative) – The emerging movement is consciously and deliberately provocative. Emerging Christians believe the church needs to change.
2. Postmodern – Postmodernity cannot be reduced to the denial of truth. Instead, it is the collapse of inherited metanarratives (overarching explanations of life) like those of science or Marxism.
3. Praxis-oriented – how the faith is lived out. At its core, the emerging movement is an attempt to fashion a new ecclesiology (doctrine of the church). Its distinctive emphases can be seen in its worship, its concern with orthopraxy, and its missional orientation.
4. Post-evangelical – the emerging movement is a protest against much of evangelicalism as currently practiced. It is suspicious of systematic theology; does not have an airtight system or statement of faith; do not believe any one theology gets it absolutely right.
5. Political – considered by many to be “‘Democrats,’ and that spells “post” for conservative-evangelical-politics-as-usual.”<sup>35</sup>

In his book, *Silent Issues of the Church*, Carl H. Lundquist writes “in addition to renewal movements taking place in almost every major denomination, new resources for spiritual renewal are available to God’s people. These also take many forms:

1. Spiritual formation seminaries – ‘a new emphasis in theological schools on the inner spiritual life of their students.’ Lundquist reports that: “In a recent review of thirty-one seminary catalogs, I counted sixty-nine different courses in the field of spiritual development cumulatively available to students. They clustered around four basic areas: spiritual formation, prayer, the history of spirituality, and its application to ministry.”
2. Spiritual direction – “consists of a one-on-one relationship with exclusive attention upon the soul’s growth. The spiritual director is a catalyst who through listening, discussing, and praying helps the seeking Christian to evaluate his inner

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<sup>34</sup> <https://carm.org/what-emerging-church> 12/22/2007.

<sup>35</sup> [https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/February/11\\_35html2start=6](https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/February/11_35html2start=6)

progress with God and to seek new cutting edges of spiritual growth. Ideally, it is a three-way partnership—the director, the directee, and the Holy Spirit. In its highest contemporary forms, spiritual direction is not autocratic and authoritarian by humble, flexible, and responsive to the Spirit.

3. Spiritual retreat centers – There are now available to laypersons and Christian workers, spiritual centers scattered all over the world, perhaps as many as 1, in the United States alone. They provide periods of withdrawal from normal activities to engage in devotional exercises for the cultivation of a love relationship with God.
4. The devotional classic – Another source of fuel to feed the flame of devotion is to be found in the classics of Christian devotion that span twenty centuries of church history. Happily, the Western church is beginning to read again the devotional writings of the Christian mystics and to learn from their experiences about the riches of life in Christ.<sup>36</sup>

Spiritual renewal movements are important. No doubt, when a person takes or makes the time to invest in his or her own spiritual growth, the potential for growth is increased. The impact this type of investment can make could prove limitless. In speaking personally with professing Christians who are not connected or involved with a local church, this writer was given a number of reasons why: a dislike of the preaching/teaching styles; services are too long; the churches beg for money; they or loved ones were hurt or mistreated by members of the church and something happened a long time ago that they have not been able to forget or forgive. Granted these are not uncommon complaints, and even more uncommon is the tendency of the church to write them off as excuses...but for the unchurched, these are very real issues that evoke real feelings and emotions. Ultimately, there seems to be very little that anyone can say or do. Unless the Holy Spirit convinces them of their need to release those issues to Him, the unchurched will continue to live a life of bondage.

### Revisiting the Biblical Model

*"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Psalm 127:1<sup>37</sup>*

As was stated earlier, Jesus said to Peter, "...I will build my church..." During this building process, the church has undergone numerous

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<sup>36</sup> Carl H. Lundquist, *Silent Issues of the Church*, S.P. Publications, Inc. 1985

<sup>37</sup> Hendrickson Bibles, *The Holy Bible King James Version: The KJV Minister's Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, LLC Peabody, MA 01961-3473. 2005

changes, some good and beneficial; some not so good. However, the church continues to stand and grow.

Berkhof notes that “The principle designation of the Church in the Old Testament is derived from a root which means “to call.” It was applied especially to the assembly of Israel as it met for worship. The most common word for “church” in the New Testament, which is also the most important, comes from a verb meaning, “to call out.” Both words contemplated the Church as an assembly called by God. In the New Testament the word “church” is first used by Jesus. He applied it to the company that gathered round about Him, recognized Him publicly as their Lord, and accepted the principles of the kingdom of heaven. Later on the word acquired several different connotations.

1. Most frequently it denotes a circle of believers in some definite locality, a local church, irrespective of the question, whether it is assembled for worship or not. Some passages regard it as assembled, Acts 5:11; 11:26; I Cor. 11:18; 14:19, 28, 35 and others do not, Rom. 16:4; I Cor. 16:1; Gal. 1:2; I Thess. 2:14, etc.
2. In some passages it denotes a domestic church, or “the church in the house” of some individual. The wealthy, it would seem, often provided a meeting-place in their homes, 16:5, 23, I Cor. 1:9; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2.
3. In its most comprehensive sense the word serves as a designation of the whole body of believers, whether in heaven or on earth, who have been or shall be spiritually united to Christ as their Savior, Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32; Col. 1:18, 24.

Berkhof concludes by offering several figurative designations of the Church in Scripture. It is called “the body of Christ,” I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18, “the temple of the Holy Spirit,” I Cor. 3:16; I Pet. 2:5; “the Jerusalem that is above,” Gal. 4:26, “the heavenly” Heb. 12:22, or “the new Jerusalem;” Rev. 21:2 (cf. verses 9 and 10), and “the pillar and ground of the truth,” I Tim. 3:15. It should be noted that our word “church” is derived from a word which means “belonging to the Lord,” and thus stresses the fact that the Church is the property of God.<sup>38</sup>

Other observations of Berkhof are: the difference of opinion between Roman Catholics and Protestants as to the essential nature of the Church. The Roman Catholics find its essence in the Church as an external and visible

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<sup>38</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI pp 279, 280

organization. And this organization, strictly speaking, does not consist of the whole body of the faithful that constitute their Church, but of the hierarchy, consisting of the priests together with the higher orders of bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and the Pope. They distinguish this body as the “teaching church” from the common body of believers as the “learning” or “hearing church.” This hierarchical body shares directly in the glorious attributes of the Church, such as its unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity, while the general body of believers is adorned with these only indirectly. Theoretically Roman Catholics still hold to the principle that there is no salvation outside of their external organization, though the facts often constrain them to modify it in various ways. The Reformation reacted against this external conception of the Church and sought the essence of the Church in the invisible and spiritual communion of the saints. This Church includes the believers of all ages and no one else, and outside of it there is no salvation. It is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, destined to reflect the glory of God as this is manifested in the work of redemption.<sup>39</sup>

Both Militant and Triumphant – as she now exists on earth, the church is a militant Church, called unto and is engaged in a holy war. The Church in heaven is the triumphant, in which the sword is exchanged for the palm of victory, the battle-cries are turned into songs of triumph, and the cross is replaced by the crown.

Both Visible and Invisible – The Church becomes visible in the profession and conduct of its members, in the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, and in her external organization and government. She is called invisible because she is essentially spiritual and cannot, as far as her essential nature is concerned, be discerned by the physical eye, and because it is impossible to determine precisely who do and who do not belong to her.

Both an Organism and an Institution or Organization – This distinction applies only to the visible Church. The Church as an institution or organization becomes visible in the offices, in the administration of the Word and the sacraments, and in a certain form of Church government. But even if these were absent, the Church would still be visible as an organism, as a communion of believers, in their communal life and profession, and in their joint opposition to the world.<sup>40</sup>

Attributes of the Church belong primarily to the visible church are recognized in her unity, holiness and catholicity. Her distinguishing

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pp. 279-282

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

characteristics are the true preaching of the Word of God, the right administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful exercise of discipline.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

*"For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightiest be justified in thy sayings and mightiest overcome when thou art judged." Romans 3:3<sup>42</sup>*

The Church is representative of the body of believers here on earth. It is made up of true believers who acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ as Peter did. Christ is the "Rock" upon which the Church is built (I Cor. 3:11).<sup>43</sup> For someone, anyone to try and re-define what God has already ordained, established and defined sends the message that what is is insufficient. Have we as a people forgotten whose universe, world and church it is?

Listed below is some Scriptural support for a circle of believers in some definite locality, a local church, irrespective of the question, whether it is assembled for worship or not are listed below.

As assembled for worship – Acts 5:11; 11:26; I Cor. 11:18; 14:19, 28, 35

As assembled not for worship – Rom. 16:4; I Cor. 6:1; Gal. 1:2; I Thess. 2:14

If the church/disciple/believer/follower of Jesus Christ truly believes and accepts the truth of God's Words, he or she will need to be prepared to answer certain questions concerning his or her faith. In bringing this topic to closure and hopefully having addressed it sufficiently in light of Scripture, I submit the following.

1. How can the believer fail to publicly acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior? Answers: In the words of Jesus - Mark 8:38; Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 9:26, 12:8-9. From the Apostle Paul: Romans 1:16a; 2 Tim. 1:8, 2:12 and I Jn 2:23.
2. How does the believer refuse baptism? Answers: Matthew 28: 18-19; Mark 15: 16a; Acts 2:38

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. pp. 285-286

<sup>42</sup> Hendrickson Bibles, *The Holy Bible King James Version: The KJV Minister's Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, LLC Peabody, MA 01961-3473. 2005

<sup>43</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament with Greek Parallel*, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN 37422, 1992. p.60

3. Can Christians say "yes" to Jesus, but "no" to his church?  
Answers: Ephesians 5: 23-27; Co. 4:15-16; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:11-14; Heb. 10:16-25.

To profess Christ is one thing; to possess Him is another. The Christian must be willing to obey the Word of God. That obedience will be revealed as the Christian submits to the will of God daily in his walk with the Lord. Unfortunately, in many instances, it seems that local congregations have succumbed to a mindset of relaxed standards and accommodation for members and visitors as they try to keep or attract them to return to their worship services. The serious follower would do well to revisit the Scriptures. Only then will we find out what God requires of all of us, and then we will be better equipped to follow Him and lead others.

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# Business versus Prosperity Theory

Zeila M. Mendanha

The prosperity theory, also known as the prosperity gospel, or wealth-and-health gospel, is a religious concept developed by some Christians, who believe that the will of God for them manifests in the form of financial blessings and physical wellbeing. Christians that advocate for the prosperity gospel believe that, for an individual to increase their material wealth, they must demonstrate faith, speak positively and make donations towards religious causes. Put differently, God blesses those who have faith in him with physical health and material wealth. Proponents of the theory view the Bible as a contract between man and God. Humans have the responsibility of having faith in God, while God has the responsibility of delivering security and prosperity to humans<sup>1</sup>. Despite its growing popularity, the prosperity theory is based on arguments that are wholly contrary to God's intention for humanity and as such is unacceptable, especially because it corrupts and misleads some Christians into believing that wealth will come to them because they have faith in God, and not because they are willing to work.

## Belief in the Theory of Prosperity

The popularity of the prosperity theory has continued to grow rapidly across the world. The growth in the theory's popularity is a clear indication that many people strongly believe in its tenets. Some Christians today have expressed a strong belief in the theory, because they see prosperity as a sign of God's blessing. These Christians believe that God often rewards believers with prosperity in this world. Advocates of this theory often use the Old Testament to reinforce their belief, citing that God mainly rewarded his obedient followers through wealth<sup>2</sup>. Some of the characters in the Old Testament often cited by advocates of the prosperity theory include Jacob, Isaac, Job, Solomon, Abraham and David. According to Jonathan Huggins, these characters' experience of abundance and wealth were largely tied to their faithfulness to God<sup>3</sup>. For instance, Job 42:10 says, "The LORD restored Job's prosperity after he prayed for his friends. The LORD doubled everything that Job had once possessed<sup>4</sup>." In light of such Bible verses, some Christians have come to believe in the theory of prosperity.

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<sup>1</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Business for the Glory of God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Business for the Glory of God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.

<sup>4</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.



Proponents of the theory of prosperity such as Joel Osteen argue that people who prosper in this world, do so because God is blessing them for being godly<sup>5</sup>. Based on this argument, one can conclude that the incentive to having faith or living a godly life is part of the material blessings that come to individuals that have faith in God. The main benefit of the Christian faith is therefore the material or financial benefits they receive. To this extent, people should consequently attribute prosperity and material success to God. 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, has been cited as an example of the verses that support the connection between prosperity and God. In respect to this verse, God answered Jabez's prayer of material and blessing positively. As such, some Christians, especially in modern society, tend to believe that prosperity is a blessing. Another example of a verse in the Old Testament some Christians use to justify their belief in the theory of prosperity is the verse Genesis 24:35, which says, "The Lord has blessed my master greatly and he has become wealthy." This verse is an extract of a conversation between Abraham's servant and Laban, with the servant telling Laban how the Lord had given Abraham abundant health for having faith in Him<sup>6</sup>.

Some notable proponents of the theory of Prosperity have mentioned that this conversation is proof that God had fulfilled his contract with Abraham, repaying him with abundant wealth in exchange for his faith in the Lord. Huggins, in his article, also cites Job 42:12, which reveals that in the latter years of Job's life, God blessed him abundantly, giving him six thousand camels, fourteen thousand sheep and a thousand donkeys<sup>7</sup>. According to Huggins, In Job's circumstances his faith in God during hard times was reward through wealth and possessions. Christians who take these verses on face value, believe that God does not want them to be poor and for that reason, all they have to do is have faith in God and follow his teachings. In the end, just like Abraham and Job, they will become wealthy.

Advocates of the theory, however, do not realize that there is more to the Lord's blessings than earthly things and material possessions. David Lockwood mentions that individuals who believe in the theory of prosperity tend to take the Bible out of context in an attempt to fulfill their own personal doctrine and gratification<sup>8</sup>. People such as Abraham and Job walked and worked in obedience to God and were rewarded based on their hard work. As such, the belief that one only has to have faith in God in order to prosper is a fallacy that takes the bible verse out of context. Undoubtedly, God does not forbid people from obtaining wealth; neither does he want his followers to attain wealth from begging congregants and other people. God wants people to work while focusing on developing in the body of Christ. People such as Job,

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<sup>5</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.

<sup>6</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Business for the Glory of God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.

<sup>8</sup> Lockwood, David, *Business Laws from Proverbs*. Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press, 2015.

Isaac and Solomon worked and earned a living by good and humble. They set their minds on advancing the Kingdom of the lord and not on building an empire for personal gain<sup>9</sup>. In essence, their wealth and material possession was a sign of their hard work and dedication to God. As such, the observation that God's main purpose is to reward his obedient followers through material possessions is a highly misguided observation<sup>10</sup>.

Advocates of Prosperity seem to have reduced God's blessing or favor to a formula for success. They mainly embrace their views and belief of the prosperity theory in an attempt to achieve their financial goals. They are not willing to pay the price of hard work; instead, they choose to believe in something extraordinary in order to fulfill their goals and dreams. In the Bible, there is no indication of wealth being a favor from God; neither is poverty an indication of punishment from God. People who quote the bible to justify their belief in the prosperity theory of the gospel take the Bible's verses either at face value or out of context.

### **Base for Belief in Prosperity Theory and Biblical Interpretations**

The Bible neither supports nor defends the prosperity theory. Nonetheless, this has not prevented people from interpreting the bible in different ways to justify their belief in the theory of prosperity. As highlighted in the previous section, some Christians and preachers that support the theory are often quick to cite and quote the bible to justify their claims about prosperity. The increased use of bible verse to justify this theory has led to the establishment of five critical assumptions that act as a base for their belief in prosperity. The first assumption is that material possession is a good thing, as it signifies the Lord's love and approval<sup>11</sup>. Secondly, the failure of people to accumulate wealth should be interpreted primarily as the repercussions of lack of faith in the Lord<sup>12</sup>. Thirdly, only individuals who ask for good health and happiness achieve them and illness is an indication that one is not faithful to God<sup>13</sup>. Fourthly, a true believer must continue to pray until he receives the possessions he desires. A person who gives up on his prayers is guaranteed to fail<sup>14</sup>. Lastly, Jesus, contrary to popular belief lived on earth as a wealthy man

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<sup>9</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, David W., and Russell S. Woodbridge. *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.

<sup>12</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.

<sup>13</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.

<sup>14</sup> Huggins, Jonathan. 2014. "The Providence of God in the Acts of the Apostles". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*. 113: 1-10.

and he wants his followers to be rich as well. These assumptions have provided the strong base for the increasing belief in the prosperity theory.

### **Application of Prosperity Theory and People's Belief about Labor**

As highlighted in the previous section, proponents of gospel theory believe that God wants them to be materially wealthy, physically healthy and personally happy. Based on this belief, most Christians have attempted to apply the prosperity gospel in different ways in their lives. Some proponents tend to pray for and demand wealth from God, even going to the extent of fasting for several days in an attempt to ask God to grant their request for wealth. Most of the people who pray for long hours often follow the teachings of best known spokesmen of the prosperity theory today such as Robert Tilton who encourage them to believe that it is God's will for them to prosper not because they work for someone else, but because they believe in the Word<sup>15</sup>. In light of such teachings, these Christians have come to believe that they do not need to become employees of other people; they just need to believe in the Word. As such, Christians and spokespersons of the theory do not believe in hard labor or working for other people for wages instead, they believe that God wants them to prosper and become wealthy by simply having faith in Him. In this regard, they commit themselves to seek for special prayers from religious leaders in an attempt to seek God's blessings in terms of wealth.

Conversely, some Christians are made to believe that they must make financial contributions to the church in order to receive blessings from God in terms of prosperity. In particular, these Christians are encouraged to first pay tithes. The word tithe means one tenth of one's possessions. Once an individual has paid his/her tithe, s/he can request God for wealth. Some churches even go to the extent of keeping detailed financial reports on their members. These churches ask their members for their task records in order to verify that they have paid their full tithes. Some spokespersons of John Avanzini, an American televangelist, have often cited failure to tithe as the main reason why the Lord failed to bless or return money to believers. Avanzini in his ministry often asserts that believers who tithe and have sufficient faith will be rewarded with money and property. To this end, congregants of Avanzini's church mainly apply the theory by making regular financial contributions to the church in the form of tithe, believing that God will bless them once they express their willingness to express faith by giving back their possessions to God.

In most cases, in churches that promote the prosperity Gospel, confessions are often tailored to various positive outcomes such as "supernatural debt-cancellation" or the arrival of "blessed billfolds that multiplied miraculously its contents" in the mailboxes of believers. In particular, testimonies of financial miracles or sudden infusions of wealth often dominate the discussion

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<sup>15</sup> Jones, David W., and Russell S. Woodbridge. *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011.

in these churches. More congregants at such churches therefore start to believe that, if they follow the same directions followed by those individuals making these testimonies, they would also experience similar or better outcomes. In other words, believers of the prosperity theory view financial contributions to church as a way of expressing their faith and obedience to God. In turn, they expect God to bless them by giving them more wealth or material possessions. Most scholars agree that the provision of tithe to enhance blessings from God is the most common application of the theory of prosperity today.

Conversely, some Christians who believe in the prosperity theory tend to apply the doctrine of “first fruits” in order to achieve full blessings from the lord. This doctrine was first introduced in the early 1960s and rapidly became a standard classification of donation to churches. For instance, an individual who has been employed for the first time and is on a salary of 500 dollars per month is encouraged to donate the first 500 dollars to God. Conversely, a person that receives a raise of 50 dollars per month donates the first 50 dollars to God. Christians that apply the doctrine of first fruit believe that tithe alone cannot guarantee that heaven’s gates would stay open for them; therefore, they go to the extent of expressing their faith by giving all their first earnings to God in order to receive more favors from Him.

In addition, today, most churches that promote the prosperity theory often attempt to encourage their congregants to affix their donations, tithes, or offerings with specific wishes for that which they wish to receive from God. Oral Robert, an American Methodist-Pentecostal televangelist and advocate of the prosperity gospel dubbed this practice “naming your seed”. In line with this observation, in some churches the application of the theory could be seen in circumstances where congregants whisper their desires as they place their envelopes (containing tithe or donations) in the offertory. This application has resulted in the promotion of the phrase, “Name it, Claim it,” in which believers in the prosperity gospel justify their request to God.

Other believers go to the extent of writing down their wishes on a piece of paper then taking them to their pastor with their donations or offerings. In studies researchers demonstrated that believers with checking accounts from these churches often have their checks printed with bible verses about blessings or with their desires. In essence, most individuals that believe in the prosperity theory apply it by adhering to the belief that in order to get more wealth from God, they must give the little they have to God through tithes, donations and offerings. In addition, they apply the theory through regular prayers and fasting, as well as by consulting religious leaders to assist them in requesting God for health. These Christians believe that these practices help to reinforce their faith that God is capable of making them prosper in life.

Such practices, however, do not provide a true reflection of the teaching of the Bible. Inarguably, several verses in the Bible promote the practice of tithing and providing offerings to God. For instance, in Genesis 28:20, while praying, Jacob vowed that if God gave him clothes to wear and food to eat, then he will serve him fully and commit a tenth of his possessions to Him.

Equally, In Genesis 14:19-20, Abraham after receiving blessing from the Lord gave Him a tenth of his possessions. However, these verses do not necessarily justify that tithing and offering should be made in order for God to make people prosper in terms of wealth and material possession. Put differently, prosperity in the bible has more to do with making the Lord happy and pleasing Him than obtaining wealth so that one can experience personal happiness. In 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 God tells his followers that the primary purpose of wealth is so that believers can finance the spread of God's covenant in the world; thus, wealth received from God is not necessarily for personal gain and happiness. For that reason, prosperity concepts such as "Name it, Claim it" or the act of tithing in expectation of blessings from God in form of material possessions, do not accurately reflect the main purpose of tithing.

In addition to tithing, the Bible teaches Christians that they should invest wisely (Matthew 25:27), avoid burdensome debts that causes their wealth to depreciate (Proverbs 27:7), create their business plan (Luke 14:28), and be honest in their business dealings (Luke 16:8)<sup>16</sup>. In light of such Bible teachings, it is apparent that tithing alone is not a justification for obtaining wealth from God; instead, one has to work hard and with honesty in one's business dealings in order to become successful. Therefore, the act of giving out donations and finances to God in anticipation of miraculous blessings in the form of wealth is not only a sign of laziness, but also a sign of misguided belief. Contrary to the belief of supporters of the prosperity theory, the Bible encourages people to work while adhering to the teachings of the Lord in order to acquire their wealth and properties.

### **Bible Teachings on Labor and Business**

The Bible does not support the notion that the relationship between God and humans is a contractual relationship that involves people having faith in God in exchange for blessings in form of material possessions<sup>17</sup>. Instead, the Bible teaches that individuals should work and engage in honest dealings and business in order to obtain their wealth and possessions. This teaching is expressed right from the beginning, as seen in Genesis 1:28, which states that God commanded Adam and Eve to work through cultivation and tending the earth. The Bible clearly reveals that God wants Christians to work and engage in business activities in line with the biblical principles and teachings of God. Grudem, in his study, demonstrated that God does not want Christians to be poor; instead, he wants them to achieve success through hard work, honesty

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<sup>16</sup> Bowler, Kate. *Blessed A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Watchman Fellowship. *How the Health and Wealth Gospel Twists Scripture*. *Watchman Fellowship*, 2015.  
<http://www.watchman.org/articles/other-religious-topics/how-the-health-and-wealth-gospel-twists-scripture/>

and obedience<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, every believer must understand that the key to becoming successful is through hard work and determination, not just through obedience and having faith in God.

Praying and having faith in God in anticipation of miraculous blessing does not amount to work; instead, as stated in Psalms 128:1-2, one shall only eat the fruit of their labor. Put differently, one cannot become successful without putting any effort into one's work. Proverbs, 10:4-5, which states that enrichment can only come through labor, help to reinforce this statement. Besides, throughout the Old and the New Testament, men, some working as servants and other working in their fields, engage in labor in an attempt to enhance their wellbeing and to support their families. Individuals that work their land would have plenty of food whilst those who are lazy would be filled with poverty, Proverbs 28:19. Therefore, one must work in order to prosper.

Grudem also justifies the observation that one can teach people to work by demonstrating that one can possess material goods or have people work for them, provided one does not exploit those working for one<sup>19</sup>. The connection between labor and business, in line with the teachings of the Bible, is perfectly reflected by Grudem who demonstrated that conducting business is acceptable provided that individuals use their business to Glorify God<sup>20</sup>. To that extent, unlike the prosperity theory, which does not have any concrete foundation in the Bible, the concept of business and labor is highly supported and most verses mainly seem to focus on how individuals should conduct their business in fulfilling their wellbeing and in glorifying the lord. Jesus himself talked extensively about Labor and its importance. For instance, In John 5:17, Jesus mentioned that even God and Jesus himself were committed to working. Only those individuals who work hard in their endeavors are able to receive the blessings of God.

Besides, contrary to the belief that happiness comes when an individual expresses his belief in God, the Bible, in Psalms 128:2 clearly state that an individual shall only become happy when he eats the labor of his hands<sup>21</sup>. Faith alone, therefore, cannot guarantee happiness or wealth and Christians must ensure that they incorporate labor in their endeavors in order to achieve success and happiness. In line with the teachings of the Bible, the concept of labor can also be justified by the fact that most individuals in both the new and old testaments were involved in various businesses. For instance, in Acts 18:1-3, Apostle Paul talks of Aquilla and Priscilla, a married couple that was successful in their tent making business. The Apostle Paul himself was in the tent business and he knew Aquilla and Priscilla through the tent business. Aquila and Priscilla had been taught to make tents when they were young, growing up to become successful traders in the tent business. Making tents,

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<sup>18</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Business for the Glory of God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Business for the Glory of God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Business for the Glory of God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> What does the Bible say about the prosperity gospel? <https://www.gotquestions.org/prosperity-gospel.html>.

however, did not distract them from worshipping God, as they played an important role in teaching others about the ways of the Lord.

Besides, Aquila and Priscilla could move with their business from one place to another to spread the ministry and swerve the Lord, Acts 18:18. In essence, this couple provides a very good example of how Christians could be engaged in business while serving and glorifying God. Jesus himself was raised in a family of business, as his father Joseph was largely involved in the business of carpentry. In essence, the Bible is clear about the meaning and importance of labor as well as the significance of conducting business. Christians should not rely on other congregants for a living. They should focus in performing labor and engaging in business in line with the teachings of the Lord. Put differently, the bible not only supports, but also defends business and work, as long as one demonstrates integrity, honesty and a godly heart.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the discussion presented in this article, one can argue that the prosperity theory is based on arguments that are wholly contrary to God's intent for humanity. The theory is unacceptable, especially because it corrupts and misleads some Christians into believing that wealth will come to them because they have faith in God and not because they are willing to work or invest in business. When God talks about being prosperous, he talks not only about money, but also about having healthy relationships with one another, about maintaining a connection to God and living in divine health. In addition, as highlighted in 1Corinthians 12:4-11, people should strive to become rich in terms of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, which God offers as a gift of the Spirit. As such, Christians needs to stop justifying their laziness by supporting the theory of prosperity. They should focus on working and conducting their business with honesty and by using their wealth to glorify God. In summary, labor is highly praised in biblical teachings. God created man and placed him on earth for the specific purpose of performing labor. In fact, the first commandment that God gave to man was concerning how man should perform labor. A man shall labor in six days of the week and on the seventh day he shall rest, Exodus 20:9. This was a positive commandment given to humankind to perform good, honest work in order to reap the benefits thereof.

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# Money: Root of All Evil or Solution to Problems?

Ana Claudia Ferreira Sobral Vailant

Among many famous sayings, one that is known by everyone is “money is the root of all evil.” Perhaps, it is time to reassess this thought and consider whether money is not being blamed for something it does not do. Money in the form as it is known today did not emerge suddenly. Before the emergence of money the trade was made on the basis of exchanging products, being replaced later by coins made of gold, silver and copper. Only later would money be made of paper and it came in the format that is still being used in present days, representing the “power” of purchase. And maybe this is the root of the problem.

Since the beginning of the world, people have been seeking for power. Eve, for example, ate the forbidden fruit in order to have the same power of God. Generally, money and power go hand in hand. The administration of both must be done in a careful way so that greed does not make people lose the notion of what is right and wrong using both, money and power in a wrong way, leading to money being reputed to be the root of all problems. “Money has always been associated in varying degrees of closeness with religion, partly interpreted in modern times as the psychology of habits and attitudes, hopes, fears and expectations.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Old Testament, the first reference to money is in the history of Abraham (Genesis 17:12). Knowing that he lived around the year 2000 B.C., one comes to the conclusion that his money consisted of silver and gold, being the financial transactions made by the weight of these materials. And so it continued through the times of Joseph of Egypt, Moses, the Judges, the Kings, until the exile in Babylon, giving space then to the minted coins, for example the coins of the King Darius (Ezra 2:69).

Joseph of Egypt, can be used as a great example of administration because by imposing tax on agricultural production in Egypt (Genesis 42:34), whose payment would be in the form of merchandise to be kept for the years of scarcity that were to come, he was giving life to a savings model. Joseph thus left an important lesson. One should never spend everything he or she owns, but should save a portion to use when necessity arises.

It is a mistake to believe that the financial aspects mentioned in the Bible are very different from those nowadays. There are in the Bible the references to practices quite similar to those of today, differing only by the existence of technology nowadays, but with concepts comparable to today. It is possible to

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<sup>1</sup> Bank, J. H., & Davies, G. (2002). *History of Money: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (3rd ed.). University of Wales.

find in the Scriptures many ideas about money (Genesis 17:12); coins (Matthew 22:19); offering (Exodus 20:24); rent (Exodus 22:15); salary (Genesis 29:15); profit (Ezekiel 22:14); loan (Exodus 22:25); debt (Proverbs 22:7); payment (Deuteronomy 24:15); default (Psalms 37:21); interest (Exodus 22:25); tax (II Chronicles 24:9); bribe (Psalms 15:5); corruption in government (Acts 24:26); poverty (Genesis 45:11) and wealth (Genesis 31:1).

Dr. Wayne Grudem in his book, *Business for the Glory of God* purposes to undo the negative impression most people have about money and business. It is complicated to establish a connection between business and God and it is even harder to explain how business can be used to “glorify God”, since this expression is automatically linked to church, worship and evangelism but never business itself. According to Dr. Grudem:

The only long-term solution to world poverty is business. That is because businesses produce goods, and businesses produce jobs. And businesses continue producing goods year after year, and continue providing jobs and paying wages year after year. Therefore if we are ever going to see long-term solutions to world poverty, I believe it will come through starting and maintaining productive, profitable businesses.<sup>2</sup>

In the business world there are some different types of business organization, such as, sole proprietorship, which consists of one individual doing business, partnership, which consists of two or more individuals together in a business and corporation, which is a legal entity owned by shareholders that elect a Board of Directors to oversee and make decisions for the organization. Corporations can be not-for-profit or for-profit. Siegel explains that, “A nonprofit entity...is organized and operated under the laws of a particular state, usually pursuant to state statues governing nonprofit corporations...not all nonprofit organizations are charitable organizations.”<sup>3</sup>

A non-profit organization can be seen as an organization that has purposes other than profit making. The purpose can be scientific, literary, educational, religious, and charitable, among others. However, it is a mistake to say that a non-profit organization does not need money to operate. A non-profit organization uses money received through donations from corporations or private entities. These donations can be made in cash, services or products. There are innumerable non-profit organizations around the world and the USA is no different. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), there are more than 1.5 million non-profit organizations presently registered. American Bible Society, 4KIDS and HOPE are examples of them.

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<sup>2</sup> Wayne A Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God: The Bible's Teaching On the Moral Goodness of Business*. (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 849, Amazon Kindle edition.

<sup>3</sup> Jack B. Siegel, *A Desktop Guide for Nonprofit Directors, Officers, and Advisors: Avoiding Trouble While Doing Good* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006), 24.

The American Bible Society is a non-profit organization that has as a mission “to make the Bible available to every person in a language and format each can understand and afford, so all people may experience its life-changing message.”<sup>4</sup> It was founded in 1816 and since then has been publishing, distributing and translating the Bible. During these more than 200 years it can be said that many achievements have been made. In 1817 the American Bible Society provided the first Bibles for the U.S. Military. In 1843 the first Bibles were produced for the blind. The first Bible-Based TV and Radio Programming were launched in 1948. In 1976 the Good News Translation (GNT) Bible was concluded. Eleven years later, in 1987, the first Bible was printed in China. Most recently in 2012 the Digital Bible Library became available.

However, according to the American Bible Society, there are around 1 billion people around the world that until the present day has no knowledge about the Word of God and 89 million people in the United States do not read the Bible. The American Bible Society, believes that by translating the Bible where there are no translations yet, distributing Bibles to people that have never had one, and equipping local leaders to share the Word of God with those people, can be the solution to reach people all around the world. They have as their goal for the next 10 years to work with partners in order to translate 100 percent of all the languages and to “see 100 million people in the U.S. actively engaging with God’s Word by 2026.”<sup>5</sup>

With a vision, “A Home for Every Child”<sup>6</sup> and a mission of “Providing Hope... For Kids in Crisis,”<sup>7</sup> the 4KIDS is also a non-profit organization that is located in South Florida and for over 19 years has been helping children to find a home. According to them, there is “a half a million orphans-children living on the streets, in group homes, and in foster care. South Florida is no exception: every day, seven kids in South Florida are removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect.”<sup>8</sup> Children from newborns to 17 year olds that are removed from their families due to abuse, neglect or abandonment that are brought to 4KIDS receive love and care until the day they find a new permanent home. During this transient phase, these children are received by a foster care family or are at family-style homes, giving them the opportunity for siblings to stay together. Nonetheless, if one of these children does not find a home until they turn 18, 4KIDS, provides assistance through the Independent Living program that offers a 2-year Transitional Independent Living residential program.

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<sup>4</sup> “American Bible Society,” accessed March 26, 2017, <http://www.americanbible.org>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> “A Home for Every Child,” 4KIDS south Florida, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://www.4kidsofsfl.org>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> “A Home for Every Child,” 4KIDS south Florida, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://www.4kidsofsfl.org>.

The numbers presented by 4KIDS for the assistance provided in 2016 is spectacular proof of effort and success. According to them,

1,778 children, teens and young adults experienced love, protection, and for many, a home and family... 346,196 meals were served...1,078 children were given refuge at SafePlace Broward & Palm Beach. 238 foster families served a total of 613 children.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, there is another group of people that should never be left behind. Children need help but also many adults are in need and HOPE South Florida is a Christian non-profit organization that provides assistance to thousands of homeless families, veterans and individuals. Having as a vision, "HOPE for the hopeless and homes for the homeless,"<sup>10</sup> and as a mission, "Providing hope for homeless and hurting families through services and partnerships with the Christian community."<sup>11</sup> This organization has been operating since 2010 transforming lives of many people in need.

The HOPE Ministry is based on assisting families and individuals that experience homelessness by bringing them to the Christian community and helping them to transform their lives and relationship with God and society. They are blessed for restoring hope and to see the transformation that occurs for more than thousands of men, woman and children. At least five days every week, HOPE offers with the help of volunteers, meals for more than 150-200 people. There have been over 31,850-shared meals through the Shared Meal program. Through the program Faith in Action emergency overnight shelter is provided for families that are forced to sleep on the street or even in their cars. They also provide housing solutions through restorative housing programs supported by families from local churches and partnership with landlords. Yet there is a Family Support Team (FST) where there are people with "wisdom, knowledge, experience, information and perspective to foster the personal growth of another."<sup>12</sup>

In the book *Good Boss, Bad Boss*, one can find a type of definition of the words respect and integrity, characteristics that can be easily found in these organizations and in many other non-profit organizations. Sutton mentioned that

Respect: We treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. Ruthlessness, callousness and arrogance don't belong here.' And 'Integrity: We work with customers and prospects

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> "Hope South Florida," accessed March 26, 2017, <http://hopesouthflorida.org>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> "Hope South Florida," accessed March 26, 2017, <http://hopesouthflorida.org>.

openly, honestly and sincerely.’ These are excerpts from Enron’s sixty-four-page ‘Code of Ethics.’<sup>13</sup>

However, these characteristics should not be found only in a non-profit organization, but in all organizations. Within the ambit of the profit organization there also are the known Christian organizations.

Unlike the non-profit organizations, the profit organizations as the names suggest, are aimed at making a profit that can be seen as a villain because of the misinterpretation of the meaning of the word. Profit is nothing else than selling one product for more than it cost to be produced. In business its profits show that people are willing to pay more for the product offered. As Dr. Grudem mentions, “Profit is thus an indication that I have made something useful for others, and in that way it can show that I am doing good for others in the goods and services that I sell.”<sup>14</sup> However, here is where temptation may arise. Profit preventive from the quality or the risk taken is fine, but when it comes from the exploration because of the necessity, someone will not please God at all. Jones makes it clear that “God has nothing against wealth. He made Solomon the richest man in the world.”<sup>15</sup>

Among many others, there are three Christian organizations that can be good examples of how a profit organization can be a way to Glorify God; they are Hobby Lobby, Interstate Batteries and Chick-fil-A. The Hobby Lobby is a Christian organization founded by David and Barbara Green in 1972 in Oklahoma. David Green was the only son that did not follow in his father’s steps. When his brother followed their preacher father to the church, David went to do business. And through this business he found this religious calling. According to *The Blade*, “the Greens were already considered a first family of Pentecostalism because of their largesse and the example they set as Christian business owners. Hobby Lobby, based in Oklahoma City, has about \$3 billion in yearly revenues and donates millions of dollars in profits.”<sup>16</sup>

The Hobby Lobby closes their stores on Sundays in order to let the employees go to the church or spend time with their families. There is no Christian requirement to be admitted in the stores, however, Mr. Green believes that the stores have a positive environment thanks to the biblical principles. As Zig Ziglar declares, “According to the April 28, 1986 issue of

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<sup>13</sup> Robert I Sutton, *Good Boss, Bad Boss: How to Be the Best and Learn from the Worst.* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2010), 129

<sup>14</sup> Wayne A Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God: The Bible's Teaching On the Moral Goodness of Business.* (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 419, Amazon Kindle edition.

<sup>15</sup> Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, Inc. an Entrepreneur's Guide to True Success.: The Visionary Path* (New York NY: Crown Business, 2001), 123.

<sup>16</sup> “For the Green Family, Which Owns Hobby Lobby, Business, Religion Are Inseparable.,” *Blade*, July 6, 2014, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://www.toledoblade.com/Retail/2014/07/06/For-the-Green-family-which-owns-Hobby-Lobby-business-religion-are-inseparable.html>.

*Fortune* magazine, 91 percent of the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies apparently learned their values, ethics, and morals from the same source - the Bible and the church.”<sup>17</sup> Nowadays, Hobby Lobby has close to 600 stores spread across 47 states and employs more than 13,000 workers that are full time workers receiving \$15 per hour. Furthermore, the organization donates a tenth of its profits to charity.

It is usual for the family to be harassed for having connected business and religion, but they do not give up. Mr. Green also declared that Jesus is too important in his life and that he cannot have fear of mentioning His name. In the mid-1990s, they bought full-pages in the newspaper to spread his message and also offered a toll-free help line for spiritual aid. The family spent millions of dollars buying buildings, land and campus to offer to churches and religious colleges. David’s son also helped to save the Oral Roberts University, the Pentecostal school in Oklahoma, from its debt because he believed that if ORU goes down, all the Christian colleges could be affected. They did not stop; the latest step was to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to create a Bible museum in Washington that will hold the family’s collection of biblical artifacts. Through their commitment of honoring the Lord in all they do managing the company based on biblical principles, is for sure a good way to glorify God.

A good job, nice car, big house and a beautiful wife, makes life look complete, but to Norman Miller, this comfortable life lost the meaning when he found out he was an alcoholic. Norman Miller started his career working at his father’s Interstate Batteries Company in 1962 and one morning in March 1974 he woke up with a terrible hangover, he felt he lost the control of his life because he was an alcoholic. So, “He cried out for help, ‘God, help me! I can’t handle it!’ God took away his addiction right then and there. Norm Miller committed his life to Christ.”<sup>18</sup> According to the Interstate Batteries web site, in 1978 he assumed the president and the chairman roles and today the company has more than 200,000 dealers across North America.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding to purpose, according to Interstate Batteries “To glorify God and enrich lives as we deliver the most trustworthy source of power to the world – now, and for generations to come.”<sup>20</sup> Their values are love; have a servant’s heart; excellence; courage; fun; team and integrity. To fulfill these values, the company feeds people that are hungry and homeless and they also write letters to military personnel abroad. Interstate Batteries also has many projects that are used to help those in need and the Angel Tree Christmas

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<sup>17</sup> Merrill J. Oster & Mike Hamel, *The Entrepreneur's Creed: the Principles and Passions of 20 Successful Entrepreneurs* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 127

<sup>18</sup> “Norm Miller - Interstate Batteries,” Giants for God, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://www.giantsforgod.com/norm-miller-interstate-batteries/>.

<sup>19</sup> “Purpose and Values,” Interstate Batteries, accessed March 26, 2017, [http://corporate.interstatebatteries.com/purpose\\_values/index.asp](http://corporate.interstatebatteries.com/purpose_values/index.asp).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

project is one of these. The purpose of this project is to offer clothes and toys to the children that have no possibility to have anything on this special date. With the same purpose, Interstate supports the Children's Medical Center sending a team of volunteers to help where it's needed. The team distributes packets that include snacks, coloring books and games for families of hospitalized children. Through the Military Ministry, Interstate employees are allowed to spend a few hours writing letters to the U.S. soldiers to let them know how their sacrifice is appreciated.

Norman Miller, "A born-again Christian who believes religion not only belongs in the workplace but is an essential part of business success"<sup>21</sup> has been a good example of the importance of applying God's teachings inside the business. As well as Norman Miller, Herman Cain the chairman of Godfather's Pizza believes that success is directly connected to God and he declares:

The secret of my success is no secret,' he says, ' it is my belief in Jesus Christ. I give God all the glory for what's happened in my life. I believe we are put on earth to make a difference and to serve others. As I have prayed and sought God's guidance, he has given me some wonderful opportunities to do that. It's not because I'm so great but because he's so good.'<sup>22</sup>

After working seven days a week in restaurants, Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A, saw the importance of closing on Sundays in order to let the employees rest, enjoy the family, and worship the Lord if they wanted to. This is only one of many interesting practices of these well known Christian businesses. In 1946, Truett Cathy and his brother opened their first restaurant in Atlanta. In 1964 he created the original chicken sandwich that two years later would be the star of the new restaurant named Chick-fil-A. Today it is one of the most famous fast-food stores in the United States with more than 2,100 restaurants across the 46 states and the District of Columbia.<sup>23</sup>

Chick-fil-A has been having a very positive influence on hundreds of thousands of employees, especially teenagers. As Dan Cathy, Truett's oldest son said:

The essence of why we're in business, 'emphasizes Dan,' is capture in our corporate purpose statement: 'To glorify God by

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<sup>21</sup> Merrill J. Oster & Mike Hamel, *The Entrepreneur's Creed: the Principles and Passions of 20 Successful Entrepreneurs* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 69.

<sup>22</sup> Merrill J. Oster & Mike Hamel, *The Entrepreneur's Creed: the Principles and Passions of 20 Successful Entrepreneurs* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 64.

<sup>23</sup> "Chick-fil-a," CHICK-FIL-A, accessed March 26, 2017, <https://www.chick-fil-a.com/About/Who-We-Are>

being a faithful steward of what's entrusted to us and to have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A. This includes our corporate staff, our operators, our team members, and the public at large.<sup>24</sup>

Chick-fil-A established a college scholarship program in 1973 for restaurant team members and believed that their restaurants should be a place to develop future leaders. Their first scholarship given was in the 50's when Cathy helped to collect money to send Eddie, an employee, to go to college. According to his employees, Cathy was a person that never raised his voice. He also did not argue with anybody and never told anyone to do something, but instead, he asked them if they would do it. Chick-fil-A's philosophy is, "Everyone's job at Chick-fil-A is to serve. No matter our title or job description, our reason for coming to work is to generously share our time and talents. Whether it's treating customers like friends, or serving our communities like neighbors, we believe kindness is a higher calling."<sup>25</sup>

Those are some stories of being successful, as well as making money. There is nothing wrong with being successful. Laurie Beth Jones mentioned,

"All our activities and behaviors stem from and return to that core word and value: Success. Some people might say that Jesus had no desire to be successful. They would be wrong... Jesus' definition of success was 'to do the will of God'"<sup>26</sup>

After she mentioned these good examples that exist among various others around the world, it would be unfair to say that businesses cannot be used in this way to glorify God. As Dr. Grudem mentioned, "God created us with such needs because he knew that in the process of productive work we would have many opportunities to glorify him."<sup>27</sup> There are many ways to apply the teachings of the Bible in a business but some people feel uncomfortable owning something in a world where many people own nothing. But when God says, "You shall not steal" (Exodus 21:15), He is making it clear that it is not wrong to own, but is wrong to steal. In the same way God takes care of the world, which He owns, one should take care of the possessions God provides. In this case one is imitating God. Sharing possessions with the ones in need is also another way to please Him. However, one has to be aware of temptations by using those possessions foolishly and wastefully when many are in need.

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<sup>24</sup> Merrill J. Oster & Mike Hamel, *The Entrepreneur's Creed: the Principles and Passions of 20 Successful Entrepreneurs* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 125.

<sup>25</sup> "Chick-fil-a," CHICK-FIL-A, accessed March 26, 2017, <https://www.chick-fil-a.com/About/Who-We-Are>.

<sup>26</sup> Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, Inc. an Entrepreneur's Guide to True Success.: The Visionary Path* (New York NY: Crown Business, 2001), 24

<sup>27</sup> Wayne A Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God: The Bible's Teaching On the Moral Goodness of Business*. (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 272, Amazon Kindle edition.



Employment is another aspect that can be misunderstood by one that compares it to exploration. Jesus said, “the laborer deserves his wages” (Luke 10:7). This expresses that He approved the payment of wages to employees. Some people sell products, others sell services, and in any case it is necessary that there is an employee presence. The relationship between employer and employee should be honesty, fairness, kindness, and beneficial for both parties, then this will glorify God. Temptations will exist and one should not let this relationship be based on oppression, humiliation, carelessness in work, jealousy, theft or underpayment. According to Dr. Grudem, “Employer / employee relationships, in themselves, are not morally neutral but are fundamentally good and pleasing to God because they provide many opportunities to imitate God’s character and so glorify him.”<sup>28</sup>

Distribution of clothing and food or even money to those in need is with no doubt a noble act, but it is not a solution to the poverty problem at all. However, through the business, it is possible at least to soften this sad reality lived in the world. Having a job makes people believing for a better future and also to fight to realize their dreams. There is nothing wrong with having a business. People have to stop thinking about business as an evil thing. As Dr. Grudem says, “In every aspect of business there are multiple layers of opportunities to give glory to God, as well as multiple temptations to sin.”<sup>29</sup> Businesses cannot be about earning profits by exploiting employees and increasing the inequity of possessions, but through the business transactions one has to be fair, truthful and obey the teachings of Jesus.

An Entrepreneur should have a good relationship with the employees by being a good leader. In the book *The Entrepreneur’s Creed* there is a very interesting creed that should be followed by every entrepreneur, it says:

I believe in God as the First Principle. I believe in the power of dreams and visions. I believe in using my God-given aptitudes for excellence. I believe in work as vocation, as saying yes to an authentic life. I believe in giving back to build a better community. I believe in moving beyond success to significance. I believe in taking calculated risks. I believe in win-win relationships. I believe in the values of values. I believe in lifelong learning.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Wayne A Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God: The Bible’s Teaching On the Moral Goodness of Business*. (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 352, Amazon Kindle edition.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 171

<sup>30</sup> Merrill J. Oster & Mike Hamel, *The Entrepreneur’s Creed: the Principles and Passions of 20 Successful Entrepreneurs* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 3.

However, an entrepreneur must be aware of the temptations that money provides. For example, an employer should never use authority with cruelty or oppression or even underpay the workers. On the other hand, employees should avoid temptations such as laziness, dishonesty, theft or jealousy. The entrepreneur should think about those who work for him or her as being of equal value, because both employers and employees are human beings made in the image of God. God makes no distinction between them, He loves both in the same way. Furthermore, a Christian entrepreneur should never be corrupt in his or her business dealings, but be just and honest by not lying to suppliers or customers. Besides this, wealth can be an easy way to fall into temptation since this wealth is used ostentatiously while it could be used to help those in need. Thus, since money carries power and value, it constantly leads people into temptation. Money is not the root of the problems but the love for money is the root of evil. This happens when there is an accumulation of money and it is not being used for good. "You cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24). Money, believe it or not, provides many opportunities to glorify God. It is impossible nowadays to live in a world without the presence of money. Money is a tool used to acquire products and services indispensable for survival. Money provides many opportunities to glorify God if it is used wisely and one excellent way to earn money is through an honest business.

Using those non-profit and profit organizations as examples make it clear that businesses can be operated using biblical principles and Christian conduct. American Bible Society, taking the Word of God throughout the world especially to those who do not have easy access to it; 4KIDS, giving children an opportunity to have a family and helping to find a good future; HOPE, providing assistance to those that lost their homes and their hope to feel loved again and trusting in a better future; HOBBY LOBBY, they have been spending a huge amount of their profit to fight to maintain Christian Colleges and to bring God's message using newspapers and recently with the construction of the Bible museum; Interstate Batteries led by a man that chose the Word of God instead of the alcohol addiction. He also uses his company to spread the Word of God and to give to charity; and finally Chick-fil-A, they have been influencing positively many workers by being an example of a Christian family and by giving opportunity to many others to become entrepreneurs like them, always using the teaching of Jesus as the base of their business. There is no doubt that money is definitely not a root of all evil, and the combination of business and money can be the solution to problems and an excellent way to glorify God.

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# Can Biblical Principles be applied to Present Day Government Budgeting?

Anita Fain Taylor

According to [usgovernmentdebt.us](http://usgovernmentdebt.us), today's national debt is nearly \$20 trillion and growing. Each political party that take national office presents a plan for solving the country's economic shortfalls with minimal results. In the Old Testament, God provided the Israelites with laws regarding land, labor, and capital. This paper will research the similarities and differences on biblical and today's government approach to taxes, debt, and caring for the underprivileged; and research if biblical principles are applied to modern-day government, would it result in a healthier economy.

In the Old Testament, there are examples of the census being used to number or register people for the purpose of military service, land allotment, and workforce distribution. In the Book of Numbers, there are two instances where the population was counted for military purposes:

1. At the beginning of their wilderness experience in Numbers 1 – God told Moses to count the people to determine the number of men twenty (20) years old and over who could serve in the military. “A year after Israel’s departure from Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses in the Tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai. On the first day of the second month of that year he said, ‘From the whole community of Israel, record the names of all the warriors by their clans and families. List all the men twenty years old or older who are able to go to war’” (Numbers 1:1-3 NLT).
2. At the end of their wilderness wandering in Numbers 26 -- the Israelites were preparing to enter the Land of Promise. “From the whole community of Israel, record the names of all the warriors by their families. List all the men twenty years old or older who are able to go to war.’ So there on the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River, across from Jericho, Moses and Eleazar the priest issued these instructions to the leaders of Israel: ‘List all the men of Israel twenty years old or older, just as the LORD commanded Moses.’” This is the record of all the descendants of Israel who came out of Egypt” (Numbers 26:1-4 NLT).

The Bible indicates that each census resulted in a population of over 600,000, and the count was organized by households, clans, and tribes. According to Exodus 18:21, there were rules for each unit of ten, one hundred and one thousand Israelites. “The numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred, except the report from Gad, which is rounded off to fifty (vv. 24-25). The total number of warriors from age twenty and upward was 603,550 (v.46). Except for Joshua and Caleb, all these men died during Israel’s years of

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wandering in the wilderness. The second census totaled 601,730 men (26:51), and army that entered the land and claimed the inheritance.”<sup>1</sup>

The census was not only used for military purposes. Although the lot was used in the initial Promised Land allotment, population was also taken into consideration. “When the land had been conquered and God had given His people rest, Joshua, Eleazar, and the ten tribal representatives (Num. 34:16-29) would cast lots to determine each tribe’s portion of the land (Josh. 14-19). Naturally, the size of the tribe would help to establish the amount of land that would be assigned.”<sup>2</sup>

King Solomon used the census for workforce distribution. 2 Chronicles 2:17-18 indicates, “Solomon took a census of all foreigners in the land of Israel, like the census his father had taken and he counted 153,600. He assigned 70,000 of them as common laborer, 80,000 as quarry workers in the hill country, and 3,600 as foremen” (NLT).

There are some similarities between the Biblical census and the reason why the United States Census was created in 1790. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the original census “...listed the head of household, and counted (1) the number of free White males age 16 and over, and under 16 (to measure how many men might be available for military service), (2) the number of free White females, all other free persons (including any Indians who paid taxes), and (3) how many slaves there were.”<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the Israelites’ census that was organized by leaders, the first U.S. Census took eighteen (18) months to complete, and it was completed by U.S. Marshals (and their assistants) who used their own paper, books, etc. to collect the data. The current census has expanded well beyond seeking numbers for military service, and the number of Whites and slaves. This information is used for a variety of purposes:

Ever since 1790, the population census statistics have been official figures used every 10 years to compute the number of congressional representatives allowed each state, and also in conformity with the Supreme Court’s 1965 one-man-one-vote ruling, to align congressional district boundaries so that each member of Congress represents approximately the same number of people. For the same reason, the census figures are used in redistricting state legislatures and other local governing bodies. In recent years, many Federal, state, and local government plans, grants-in-aid, and revenue-sharing programs have been based on factors calculated from census statistics for population, per capita income, geographic distribution, and other items.

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Counted, Living the Life that Counts for God, OT Commentary, Numbers*. David Cook.

Colorado Springs, 2010, Page 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Page 153.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Factfinder for the Nation*, May 2000.

Likewise, census data of all types, population, housing, and all of the economic subjects, including transportation – are crucial for market analysis, for planning new services and facilities, for affirmative action programs, for studying environmental impact, and for basic research in many academic fields. Thus, it is even more important now than it was in 1790 that every person and business establishment be counted and that the information about each be accurate and complete.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned above, the information obtained from the census provides supporting documentation for programs and services to communities across the country. In the Old Testament, what started as a system to number or register Israelites for military service, also expanded into a system of governance for its people. After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the Canaanites remained in the land after the conquest. As a result, this led to a cycle of disobedience and deliverance of the Israelites through judges, and ultimately a monarchy. “The most prominent tasks undertaken by the judges were military in nature...There is very little civil function mentioned for the judges, though it is generally assumed that disputes would have been brought to these persons for resolution.”<sup>5</sup> After a continued cycle of unfaithfulness and deliverance by God, the Israelites cried for a King. The prophet Samuel spoke these words to the people:

Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, “This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle<sup>[c]</sup> and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.’ (1 Samuel 8:10-18 NIV)”

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Factfinder for the Nation*, May 2000, Page 3.

<sup>5</sup> Hill, Andrew and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. Zondervan. Grand Rapids, 2009, Page 242

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God's word still rings true today as it relates to governance. The remaining chapters will reveal the similarities and differences between Biblical and modern day taxes, debt, and caring for the underprivileged.

### Taxes

The Bible does not appear to provide any comprehensive documentation of a formal taxation system in Israel. However, there is Scripture where taxation is implied. In Robert Oden, Jr.'s *Taxation in Biblical Israel*, he defines taxation as "tax is a compulsory payment, in currency or specie, exacted by a public authority, for the purpose of satisfying the latter's own needs or those of the public, or part of the public."<sup>6</sup> He described the following types of taxation was evidenced in Hebrew Bible:

- A. Forced Labor
- B. The Royal Taxation System
- C. Emergency Tribute Levy
- D. Head/Poll Tax
- E. Sabbatical Year, Jubilee Year, and Gleaning Rights
- F. First Fruits and Other Offerings
- G. Tithes

Some of the taxes listed above are still relevant in modern-day society. The following will compare taxation in the Hebrew Bible to the United States of America.

### Forced Labor

According to Oden, forced labor was one of the ways in which national projects were financed in biblical Israel. In fact, King Solomon used forced labor to build the temple. 1 Kings 5:13-14 reads, "Then King Solomon raised up a labor force out of all Israel; and the labor force was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts: they were one month in Lebanon and two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the labor force." Later in 1 Kings 12, after the death of King Solomon, the people revolted against Rehoboam because of his decision to increase forced labor.

If one can see forced labor in Israel, is there any evidence of it currently in the United States? In the early 1900's the United States introduced Chain Gangs was a form of punishment and a deterrent to crime. "Chain gangs were groups of convicts forced to labor at tasks such as road construction, ditch digging, or farming while chained together. Some chain gangs toiled at work sites near the prison, while others were housed in transportable jails such as railroad cars or trucks. The improvements they made to public roadways had

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<sup>6</sup> Oden, Robert A. Jr. *Taxation in Biblical Times*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1984, Page 163.



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significant impact on rural areas, allowing planters to more quickly and more easily transport their crops to market.”<sup>7</sup> Due to corruption, violence, and public outcry, Chain Gangs were disbanded in the 1950s. However, chain gangs have been reintroduced by a few law enforcement officials in the United States. Arizona’s Maricopa County Sheriff “has had male chain gangs since 1995, female chain gangs since 1996, and chain gangs for juveniles convicted as adults since 2004.”<sup>8</sup> There are three other known counties that use chain gangs (Bristol County, Massachusetts; Butler County, Ohio, and Clallam County, Washington). As late as 2013, a Florida Sheriff reintroduced the program but not without criticism. All of the officials indicate that the inmates “volunteer” to participate in the chain gang and most of the inmates are not assigned heavy construction projects. They basically clean up roadways and parks.

Chain gangs are government sanctioned. There is an illegal form of forced labor that occurs in the United States and abroad. The Polaris Project is a non-profit organization whose mission is to eradicate modern slavery. One area that they focus upon is Labor Trafficking. “Labor traffickers – including recruiters, contractors, employers, and others – use violence, threats, lies, debt bondage, or other forms of coercion to force people to work against their will in many different industries”<sup>9</sup> According to their Labor Trafficking statistics in the United States:

- Since 2007, the National Human Trafficking Hotline, operated by Polaris, received reports of more than 5,400 labor trafficking cases inside the United States.
- In a 2014 study from the Urban Institute, of 122 closed cases of labor trafficking, Hidden in Plain Sight, seventy-one percent of the labor trafficking victims in the study entered the United States on lawful visas. These victims paid an average of \$6,150 in recruitment fees for jobs in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Polaris, as well as other organizations, have joined the fight to end Labor Trafficking in the United States.

Based on the information listed above, it appears that ancient Israel and modern day United States have some commonality in the area of forced labor. In Israel, they used forced labor for building projects. In the United States, in early 1900s chain gangs were used for construction projects to less labor-intensive property maintenance projects. In essence biblical principals were applied in this area.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/chain-gangs/](http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/chain-gangs/)

<sup>8</sup> Ford, Andrew. *Florida Sheriff Reintroduces Chain Gang*. USA Today.

<sup>9</sup> Polaris. *Freedom Happens Now*. [Polarisproject.org/labor-trafficking](http://Polarisproject.org/labor-trafficking).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

## The Royal Taxation System

This form of taxation was most prevalent during the reign of King Solomon. “This is presented in 1 Kings 4:7-19, where we learn that the land was divided into twelve administrative districts, each under the control of a governor or ‘prefect’ (*nissab*) and each responsible for providing supplies to the king and his household for one month a year.”<sup>11</sup>

In New Testament times, taxes were also a matter of discussion. When Jesus was asked if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, he responded, “...Render therefore Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21 NKJV). Even Paul spoke to paying taxes in Romans, 13:6-7:

“For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom to fear, honor to whom to honor.”

Although not a royal tax, the federal income tax system more closely resembles this tax system. As in King Solomon’s days where districts were divided, the United States is divided among fifty states. Within these states, citizens pay an annual income tax to the federal government to support its operations. According to the Tax Policy Center, Urban Institute and Brookings Institution, “The individual income tax has been the largest single source of federal revenue since 1950, amounting to 46 percent of the total and 8 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2014. In recent years, individual income tax revenue has climbed as high as 9.9 percent of GDP (in 2000) at the peak of the 1990s economic boom and dropped as low as 6.1 percent (in 2010) following the 2007-2009 Great Recession.”<sup>12</sup>

It may be argued that our federal tax system is the modern day Royal Taxation System of biblical Israel.

## Emergency Tribute Levy

This appears to be a tax that is used on an as-needed basis. “The Hebrew Bible contains, several very brief accounts of taxes raised in the crisis situations of war, taxes meant to enable the kings of Israel to pay a tribute exacted of them by an enemy.”<sup>13</sup> In 2 Kings 23:33-35, Jehoiakim taxed the land to give money to Pharaoh Necho.

So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh;

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<sup>11</sup> Oden, Robert A. Jr. *Taxation in Biblical Times*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1984, Page 166.

<sup>12</sup> Tax Policy Center. [www.taxpolicycenter.org/](http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/)

<sup>13</sup> Oden, Robert A. Jr. *Taxation in Biblical Times*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1984, Page 167.

he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from everyone according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho.

In times of war, there is no evidence that the United States government imposes additional taxes to support the military conflict(s). A 2015 Time Magazine article, *The True Cost of the Afghanistan War May Surprise You*, reported the cost was between \$4 to \$6 trillion. “This fuller accounting includes ‘long-term medical care and disability compensation for service members, veterans and families, military replenishment and social and economic costs, Harvard economist Linda Bilmes calculated in 2013.’”<sup>14</sup> Preliminary research seems to indicate that military conflict is paid through debt, which will be addressed later in this document.

### Head/Poll Tax

This form of taxation uses a census. “Each person had to pay exactly the same amount in this case, which economists would call a ‘head tax,’ because the exact same amount was collected from each person (each ‘head’) in a nation.”<sup>15</sup> Exodus 30:11-16 provides that this system was used by the Israelites to support the Temple, priestly officials, and ritual activities:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when *you* number them. This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs). The half-shekel *shall be* an offering to the LORD. Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the LORD. The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when *you* give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves. And you shall take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.”

As mentioned previously, in the United States information obtained from the census (head count) provides supporting documentation for programs and services to communities across the country.

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<sup>14</sup> Thompson, Mark. *The True Cost of the Afghanistan War May Surprise You*. Time Magazine. Jan. 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994, Page 292.

## Sabbatical Year, Jubilee Year, and Gleaning Rights

Since they are being imposed, Oden interprets these as taxes as they “result in the loss of revenue for certain groups, and in benefits to other groups.”<sup>16</sup> According to Exodus 23:10-11, “Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and when they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner, you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.”

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, farmers practice crop rotation and in some degree, allow the ground to remain fallow over time. “Tillage and crop rotations are production practices that influence soil health in ways that impact both long run productivity and environmental outcomes, such as nutrient run-off and carbon sequestration. These practices can also be adjusted in response to evolving weather and climate patterns in farmers’ production environments.”<sup>17</sup>

In the Jubilee year, the practice goes much farther than the resting of land. It also requires that all Israelites are to return property that had been previously sold. B.Z. Wacholder, author of *Sabbatical Year*, labels these laws as “the most radical social legislation prior to the twentieth century.”<sup>18</sup> He indicated that “The provisions for the Sabbatical Year, the Jubilee Year, and the gleaning rights all represent welfare taxation systems according to which landowners and slave owners are required to give up income they might otherwise expect for the benefit of those classes otherwise without protection in ancient Israel.”<sup>19</sup>

In *The Politics of Jesus*, John Howard Yoder indicated that the Sabbatical Year was meant to liberate people, not to enslave them. The United States government does not provide for Sabbatical and Jubilee Years. Some may argue that our current income tax system provides a way to collect more taxes from higher income earners. Below are the 2016 rates for income for a single person and for a married couple filing jointly:

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<sup>16</sup> Oden, Robert A. Jr. *Taxation in Biblical Times*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1984, Page 168.

<sup>17</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service.

[www.ers.usda.gov/topics/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/)

[farm-practices-management/crop-livestock-practices/soil-tillage-and-crop-rotation/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-practices-management/crop-livestock-practices/soil-tillage-and-crop-rotation/)

<sup>18</sup> Wacholder, B. Z. *Sabbatical Year. The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*

Nashville: Abingdon. 1976. Page 762.

<sup>19</sup> Oden, Robert A. Jr. *Taxation in Biblical Times*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1984, Page 168-169.

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Single	
Taxable Income	Tax Rate
\$0—\$9,275	10%
\$9,276—\$37,650	\$927.50 plus 15% of the amount over \$9,275
\$37,651—\$91,150	\$5,183.75 plus 25% of the amount over \$37,650
\$91,151—\$190,150	\$18,558.75 plus 28% of the amount over \$91,150
\$190,151—\$ 413,350	\$46,278.75 plus 33% of the amount over \$190,150
\$413,351—\$415,050	\$119,934.75 plus 35% of the amount over \$413,350
\$415,051 or more	\$120,529.75 plus 39.6% of the amount over \$415,050

Married Filing Jointly or Qualifying Widow(er)	
Taxable Income	Tax Rate
\$0—\$18,550	10%
\$18,551—\$75,300	\$1,855 plus 15% of the amount over \$18,550
\$75,301—\$151,900	\$10,367.50 plus 25% of the amount over \$75,300
\$151,901—\$231,450	\$29,517.50 plus 28% of the amount over \$151,900
\$231,451—\$413,350	\$51,791.50 plus 33% of the amount over \$231,450
\$413,351—\$466,950	\$111,818.50 plus 35% of the amount over \$413,350
\$466,951 or more	\$130,578.50 plus 39.6% of the amount over \$466,950

The information above is derived from the (Internal Revenue Service). According to Wayne Grudem, author of *Politics According to the Bible*, he "...can see no justification in the Bible for a "progressive" tax rate. Many societies and nations have adopted a progressive tax rate, but the justification for it will have to come from somewhere other than the explicit patters of taxes and tithes found in the Bible."<sup>20</sup> Due to strict property rights, there is not documentation found that Gleaning Rights legally exist in the United States.

### First Fruits and Other Offerings

In his book, *The Principles of Jewish Law*, Menachem Elon indicated, "an imposed duty to contribute toward the needs of an individual or of the public, then all biblical offerings qualify as taxes."<sup>21</sup> Most individuals would not consider first fruits and other offerings as an imposition. In *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*, it defines a taxes as, "to exploit; to tax, harass." I Hebrew, it is defined, to drive (animal, a workman, a debtor, and army); by impl. To tax, harass, tyrannize – distress, driver, exact (-or), oppress (-or), x raider of taxes, taskmaster."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. Page 292.

<sup>21</sup> Elon, Menachem. *The Principles of Jewish Law*. Jerusalem: Keter. 1975. 663-664.

<sup>22</sup> Strong, James. *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1996. Page 448.

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Within our current personnel system, unless a person is a private contractor, federal income taxes are withheld from gross of each paycheck (along with other deductions like health insurance), and the employee receives the remaining balance or net. The total income taxes collected by the employer is to be remitted to the federal government within a specified time period. In essence, the Federal Government is getting the employee's first fruits.

### Tithes

Although there are income tax benefits to tithing, modern day tithes are not considered "taxes" and are connected to biblical obedience and generosity. Oden considers Israel's tithe to be the most comprehensive and productive taxes. He defines a tithe as "the tax representing 10 percent of the total produce of farming and cattle breeding."<sup>23</sup> According to Grudem, the tithe is considered a "flat tax."

In such a system, the wealthy would still pay much more than the poor in absolute terms. To use modern American equivalents, a farmer whose one-year crops were worth \$30,000 would pay \$3,000 for his tithe, while the farmer whose crops were worth \$300,000 would pay \$30,000 for his tithe. The wealthy man would pay ten times as much as the poor man.<sup>24</sup>

As of today, most Christian churches preach or teach about the biblical obedience of tithing, ten percent of what you gain. Teaching and acting upon the teaching varies. According to the Barna Group, a non-profit group that provides insights about faith, culture, leadership and vocation, only five percent of adults qualify as having tithed, which is defined as giving ten percent or more to church or non-profit organizations.

In 2009, before the financial crisis, tithing was 7%, then dipped to 4% in 2010 and 2011. (Note: Barna calculates this 'tithing' rate based on total giving divided by household income, not by asking survey respondents to estimate percentage.) Among born again Christians, which includes both evangelicals and non-evangelicals, 12% tithed in 2012, which is on par with the average for the past decade.<sup>25</sup>

There is evidence that tithing still exists among believers today. As such, this biblical principal is still applied today.

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<sup>23</sup> Oden, Robert A. Jr. *Taxation in Biblical Times*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1984, Page 170.

<sup>24</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. Page 292.

<sup>25</sup> Barna Group. [www.barna.com/research/american-donor-trend/2013](http://www.barna.com/research/american-donor-trend/2013).

## Debt

There is nowhere in the Scripture where incurring debt is encouraged except when it pertains to love. In Romans 13:8 Paul wrote, “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law” (NKJV). On the other hand, there are numerous Scriptures about refusing to become indebted and repaying what is owed:

“And if a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it becomes injured or dies, the owner of it not *being* with it, he shall surely make *it* good” (Exodus 22:14 NKJV).

“For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you” (Deuteronomy 15:6 NKJV).

“The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow” (Deuteronomy 28:12 NKJV).

Debt is also mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer when God is asked to forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Once again, this is not a monetary debt. This prayer is stating if one pardons other’s offenses, God will pardon their offenses as well. “Thus the ‘Our Father’ is genuinely a jubiliary prayer. It means ‘the time has come for the faithful people to abolish all debts which bind the poor ones of Israel, for your debts toward God are also wiped away (for that is the gospel, the good news).’”

Unfortunately, the United States governments did not follow biblical principles concerning debt. According to U.S. Government Debt. By the end of 2017, the total government debt is projected to be about \$23.2 trillion.

China’s holdings of U.S. Treasuries declined to the lowest in more than six years as the world’s second-largest economy uses its currency reserves to support the yuan. Japan overtook China as America’s top foreign creditor, as its holdings edged down at a slower pace.

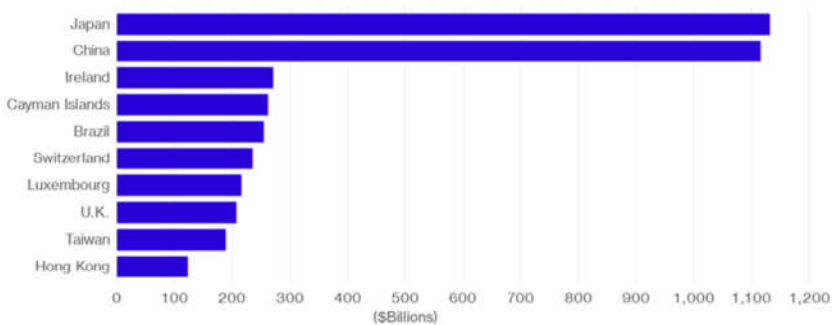
A monthly Treasury Department report showed China held \$1.12 trillion in U.S. government bonds, notes and bills in October, down \$41.3 billion from the prior month and the lowest investment since July 2010. The portfolio of Japan decreased for third month, falling by \$4.5 billion to \$1.13 trillion, according to

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the data. Collectively, the two nations account for about 37 percent of America's foreign debt holdings.<sup>26</sup>

The chart below provides a list of America's debtors:

### Top 10 Holders of America's Treasuries



Treasury Department, October data

Bloomberg

Economist indicate that if debtors called in their debt, the demand for the dollar would plummet. This would disrupt international markets, causing a financial crisis.

The Bible is clear about debt (what one owes). There are also Bible roots in our current consumer credit law. Research has shown that early civilizations did regulate lending and credit practices.

Ancient Israel was no exception; its legal codes contained many rules on lending practices. While these rules were not nearly as complex as our modern rules, they did address a remarkably wide range of issues which we would identify today as consumer protection issues. As part of a larger body of humanitarian laws and customs designed to protect against undue hardship, the rules on credit practices were similar in principle to our modern consumer laws in that they reflected a sense of responsibility toward the poor and the most vulnerable members of society.<sup>27</sup>

Examples of these laws are in the following Old Testament scripture:

“If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that *is* his only covering, it *is* his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in?

<sup>26</sup> McGregor, Sarah. *Japan Overtakes China as Largest Holder of U.S. Treasuries*. [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-12-15](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-12-15)

<sup>27</sup> Rasor, Paul B. *Biblical Roots of Modern Consumer Credit Law*. *Journal of Law and Religion*. Vol. 10, No. 1 (1993-1994). Page 157.



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And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I *am* gracious” (Exodus 22:26-27 NKJ).

“You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD your God” (Exodus 24:13 NKJV).

“If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,’ and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land’ (Deuteronomy 15:7-11 NKVJ).

These biblical principles provide a level of protection for the poor or underprivileged. The Federal Trade Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection, is a government office designed to stop unfair, deceptive and fraudulent business practices. They collect complaints, conduct investigations, and sue companies and people that break the law. The Bureau also educates consumers and businesses about their rights and responsibilities.

The federal government also passed the Fair Credit Reporting Act which provides a summary of rights and promotes accuracy and fairness in credit reporting. Although the federal government does not apply biblical principles regarding debt, they do attempt to provide a level of protection for consumers.

### Caring for the Underprivileged

The Old and New Testaments are filled with scripture about caring for the less fortunate. In fact, the underlining motives of some of the taxes and offerings (e.g. Sabbatical Year, Jubilee Year, and Gleaning Rights) were aimed at supporting the needy. In 1 John 3:17, it is written, “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet chooses his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him” (NKJV). In Acts 2, the Bible tells how the members of the early church sold their possessions and goods and

gave them to anyone in need. In *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, by Craig L. Blomberg, statistics on “those in need” are alarming.

At least one billion out of the more than five billion people in our world today fall below any reasonable poverty line. Within a few years, the percentage is estimated to top 25% of the global population. While indigence, false religion and corruption certainly account for some of this plight, many of the poor are the victims of natural disasters, famine or drought. Overseas farmers often cannot make an adequate living from their small and infertile fields. Many in cities are chronically unemployed in places where there are no jobs or are underemployed in jobs which do not pay adequate wages...In addition to suffering from a sheer lack of income, the poor are often uneducated or afflicted with physical sickness, political oppression and/or religious persecution.”<sup>28</sup>

Does the need exceed giving by evangelicals? In a survey, Barna discovered the following information about giving patterns of Evangelicals. The report indicated that “...about two-thirds of evangelicals (66%) who make charitable donations give to their church. Evangelicals are also the least likely (28%) to donate to a non-profit organization...donors who are atheists or agnostics are more likely to donate to a non-profit organization (82%) than to a church (4%).”<sup>29</sup>

As it pertains to giving in America, the report indicated the following: 55% donated \$500 or less (33% donated between \$100 and \$500; 22% donated \$100 or less); 20% donated \$500 up to \$1,000 (12% gave between \$1,000 and \$2,500; 8% gave \$2,500 up to \$5,000); and 5% donated more than \$5,000.

There are strong opinions in the evangelical community about government assistance and the poor. Many believe this type of assistance leads to a sense of entitlement and ultimately cripples the poor. It is not addressed in Scripture, and evangelicals believe that it does not solve the problem. Grudem wrote, “...I do not think there is any passage in Scripture that justifies the idea that government has the right to compel rich people to help the poor or to ‘take from the rich and give to the poor,’ apart from using general tax revenue (from all taxpayers) to provide for very basic needs...”<sup>30</sup>

Grudem believes that the longer term solution to elevate people from poverty is by teaching employable skills to get productive jobs. He further

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<sup>28</sup> Blomberg, Craig L. *Neither Poverty nor Riches*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999. Page 17.

<sup>29</sup> Barna Group. [www.barna.com/research/american-donor-trend/2013](http://www.barna.com/research/american-donor-trend/2013).

<sup>30</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. Page 283.

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explains that God intended for people to be economically productive. “He put Adam in the garden of Eden ‘to work it and keep it’ (Gen. 2:15) before there was any sin or evil in the world, which shows that need to work in a productive way is an essential part of how God created us as human beings.”<sup>31</sup> In the New Testament, Paul also wrote about being productive:

“that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,<sup>12</sup> that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 NKJV).

“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10 NKJV).

In conclusion, the Bible provides that we are to care for the poor. The federal government does so through public assistance program. The question remains that if this assistance is a blessing or a curse.

### Conclusion

It appears that biblical principles have been applied to present day government budgeting with varying success in that area of taxes, debt, and caring for the poor. Seven area of taxes were explored: Forced Labor; The Royal Taxation System; Emergency Tribute Levy; Head/Poll Tax; Sabbatical Year, Jubilee Year, and Gleaning Rights; First Fruits and Other Offerings; and Tithes. Forced labor has been applied today with limited success due to public outcry for human rights. The Royal Tax closely mirrors our current income tax system. The Head/Poll Tax resembles the government’s census system on how it provides supporting documentation for programs and services to communities across the country. The Sabbatical Year, Jubilee Year, Gleaning Rights, Other and the Tithe cannot be applied to government budgeting. However, the First Fruits can be applied to the way that employers deduct federal income taxes from pay checks.

In the area of debt, although it is clear that the United States does not follow biblical principles, it should. However, with an anticipated \$23.2 trillion debt anticipated by the end of 2017, where would one begin.

As it pertains to caring for the poor, biblical principals have been applied in part. However, the government has not developed a system where the poor can become more independent.

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<sup>31</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Politics According to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. Page 283.

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There is evidence that biblical principles can be applied to government budgeting, and in some instances, it should. However, there are also areas where these principles could have a negative impact.

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# John 4:20 and 2 Maccabees 6:1-2 in the Context of Judeo-Samaritan Relations

Patrick Simon

*Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their fathers and cease to live by the laws of God, and also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim the temple of Zeus the Friend of Strangers, as did the people who dwelt in that place. (2 Maccabees 6:1-2).*

This passage is historically situated in the period known as Second Temple Judaism, more precisely in the aftermath of the conquest of Palestine by the Seleucids after their victory over the Ptolemies, at the dawn of the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty. The passage mentions two temples: the Jerusalem temple rebuilt after many exiled Jews decided to return to their homeland of Judea, and the temple on Mount Gerizim in the North. The latter temple served as the place of worship for a hybrid people known as the Samaritans. They came from relations between Jews and heathens from Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. They were brought to the land by king Sargon II after the demise of the northern kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. 2 Kings 17 document fairly well the fall of the kingdom of Samaria and the subsequent social changes that took place.

## Historical Context of the Passage

Verse 1 refers to some dramatic events involving the traditions and cultus of the post-exilic Jewish people. Antiochus III's victory over Egypt gave rise to two rival camps among the Jews, the pro-Egyptian "house of Onias" and the pro-Syrian "house of Tobias." However, after a string of military reversals starting with his defeat by the Romans at Thermopylae, Antiochus died in

187 while conducting a military operation. His son came to power as Antiochus IV Epiphanes after some brief years of continuous political turmoil during the reign of his brother Seleucus IV Philopator.<sup>1</sup>

During its existence, the Jerusalem temple encapsulated the very essence of the Jewish people and Judaism. Besides customs and traditions such as Sabbath keeping, circumcision, and dietary laws, the Temple stood as the spatial marker and the common point of reference for all the Jewish people. To subjugate the Jewish people and to assimilate them in the Greek culture,

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<sup>1</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times*. (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1965), 32.

Antiochus IV embarked on an aggressive campaign. However, the amount of resistance he encountered from a Jewish faction called Hasideans, who were fiercely loyal to their traditions, impeded his efforts. Antiochus IV responded by desecrating the Jewish temple in 168 B.C., outlawing Judaism and forcing Greek pagan traditions upon the Jews.

Verse 2 mentions both the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and the Samaritan temple on Gerizim. According to the verse, it seems that Antiochus IV's zeal to stamp out Judaism did not spare the Samaritans in spite of a substantial degree of hellenization existing in their community.<sup>2</sup> He even renamed the Gerizim temple Zeus Xenios (Zeus-the-Friend-of-Strangers) after the Greek god Zeus. In recounting the story, the author of 2 Maccabees emphasized Antiochus IV's contempt for Judaism, even in the diluted and syncretistic form that was practiced by the Samaritans.

### **Religious Context**

Peaking at 2849 feet, Mount Gerizim is one of many mountains of Palestine<sup>3</sup>. The Canonical Old Testament mentions Mount Gerizim at least four times. According to the Samaritans, it was the place where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac, and where he met the king of Salem, Melchizedek, and where Jacob built an altar, then dug a well at its base. However, the New Testament never mentioned it by name. Nevertheless, in John 4, Jesus encountered a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, and an important part of their dialogue centered around Mount Gerizim. At that time the location stood merely as a shrine bearing the ruins of a razed building. It was the site of the temple built by Sanballat the Horonite, the governor or satrap of Samaria.

A Jewish Priest named Menasseh, brother of the High Priest Yadoa, son of Joiada, and grandson of Eliashib, married the governor's daughter in defiance of the prohibitions against mixed marriages. (Neh. 13:23-28). Menasseh's refusal to end the marriage resulted in his expulsion from the priesthood and his exile from the Jewish community. Sanballat responded by obtaining permission from the new Macedonian ruler of the world, Alexander the Great, to build a temple in the region of Samaria, according to Josephus.

Because the temple was the dwelling place of God, and given the frictions with their southern neighbors, the Samaritans needed to have their own temple. Nevertheless, the need for a temple did not originate with the emergence of the Samaritans. Ever since the schism that followed Solomon's death, the people of the northern region recognized that their diminished access to the Jerusalem temple represented an obstacle to the profession of

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<sup>2</sup> Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*. (Canada: Collier Macmillan, 1985). 179.

<sup>3</sup> Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Ann Harbor, MI: Servant Books, 1980), 9



their religion. In 1 Kings 12:25-33, Jeroboam seized on the situation to build shrines at the Eastern and Western extremes of Bethel

and Dan, and coaxed the people into idolatry. Later, the people transplanted from Babylonia and northern Syria introduced the cult of their gods, respectively Adamilki and Nergal who according to Bickerman was “the demon of pestilence and the patron saint of Cutha.”<sup>4</sup> When the Samaritans adopted monotheism remains unclear.

Scholars differ widely on the chronology of the events leading up to the erection of the Mount Gerizim temple at Shechem (modern-day Nablus in the West Bank area). Relying on sources with Samaritan origins, some dispute Josephus’ account on the ground that the Sanballat who built the temple is different from the adversary of Nehemiah<sup>5</sup>. However, the temple stood for a few centuries until by John Hyrcanus destroyed it in 168 B.C. To the Samaritans Mount Gerizim was the legitimate site of God’s holy temple, not Mount Zion in Jerusalem. In John 4:20, the woman at the Sychar (probably a variation of Shechem, and meaning “drunkenness”)<sup>6</sup> well seems to affirm the Samaritans’ belief that the correct site of worship is not Jerusalem: “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews *say* that the place where one must worship is in Jerusalem.” One rationale for that position lies in Deuteronomy 11:29 and in 27:12 where the people who received blessings pronounced by six of the twelve Hebrew tribes stood on Mount Gerizim. In Judges 8 31-35, the people standing on Mount Gerizim responded with an “Amen” to the reading of blessings of the law by Joshua. In Judges 9:7, Jotham, the only survivor of the massacre perpetrated by Abimelech on Gideon’s sons, issued a stern rebuke to the Shechemites from Mount Gerizim.

## **Implications for the New Testament**

When Jesus first asked the woman for a drink, her answer described the state of relations between Jews and Samaritans at the time. For most of their coexistence, the two groups have experienced a steady decline in the quality of their relationship. Beside their ethnic differences, the focus of contention laid in ‘purity of worship’ as both sides claim exclusive orthodoxy and correct liturgy. According to Frederick J. Murphy, “both groups claimed to worship the same God, but each denigrated the worship of the other.”<sup>7</sup> John J. Collins added that in spite of the strained relations between the two communities “the identity of both groups was still grounded in the same biblical tradition.”<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel-Rops, 40

<sup>7</sup> Frederick J. Murphy, *Early Judaism: The Exile to the Time of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002) 285

<sup>8</sup> John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000) 48.

Jews regarded their Samaritan neighbors as ceremonially more unclean than heathen foreigners. Even though Ezra 4:2 indicates that the Samaritans understood that they worshiped the same God as the Jews, in the eyes of many Jews they were idolaters. According to Daniel-Rops, a proverb in the Talmud summarizes Jewish feelings toward the Samaritans: “a piece of bread given by a Samaritan is more unclean than swine’s flesh.”<sup>9</sup>

Another incident reported in John 9:51-56 tells about the level of contempt that Samaritans held toward their Jewish neighbors. Because Jesus set his face on Jerusalem, a Samaritan village refused to receive him. Then James and John –Curiously called ‘the sons of thunder’- asked him for permission to command fire from heaven, and burn down the village and its inhabitants.

The religion of the Samaritans rested on a set of beliefs: belief in the one God, in Moses, in the Holy Law, in Mount Gerizim, in the day of Vengeance, and Recompense.<sup>10</sup> However, to highlight the alien ethnic component of the Samaritans, the Jews preferred to name them Cutheans. The Samaritans responded by calling themselves Sidonians, referring to the old Canaanite city, ipso facto connecting themselves to deeper indigenous roots in the land. They claim as their own Melchizedek who was of “the race of Sidon and Canaan,” and who officiated on Mount Gerizim, and giving it preeminence over Mount Zion.<sup>11</sup> The woman’s answer to Jesus in John 4:20 echoes a dismissive tone of the notion that the Jerusalem temple is the legitimate place of worship. Again, her attitude is traceable to the Samaritan view of Mount Gerizim as the chosen place for God’s earthly temple.

When the exiles returned to Judea and decided to rebuild the Jerusalem temple under Zerubbabel, they encountered treacherous opposition from the Samaritans and their governor Rehun who even sent a letter to a Persian satrap denouncing the project as a treasonous plot.<sup>12</sup> The Jews returning from Babylonia always regarded themselves as superior to their fellow Jews who never left Judea. (2 Kings 24:14). Compared to the Samaritans, they felt even more superior. Such attitude fueled an animosity between the two communities which, at times, would turn violent. We have already mentioned the brutal conquest of Samaria and the subsequent destruction of the Samaritan temple. Likewise, Samaritans massacred many Jews at Engannîm after bribing the Roman procurator Cumanus (48-52 C.E.) in order not to intervene.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel-Rops, 41.

<sup>10</sup> John Bowman, *The Samaritan Problem: Studies in the Relationship of Samaritanism, Judaism, and Early Christianity*, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series Number 4 (Pittsburgh, The Pickwick Press), 30

<sup>11</sup> Bickerman, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony J. Tomasino, *Judaism Before Jesus: The Events & Ideas That Shaped the New Testament World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003) 56-57.

<sup>13</sup> Hershel Shanks, ed. *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism* (Washington, D.C.: BAS, 1992) 6.

The verbal exchange between Jesus and the woman confirms the state of hostility still smoldering between the two groups. To the Jew, the Samaritan is an outcast, a religious pariah, alien to the covenantal promises of Yahweh. To the Samaritan, the Jew has corrupted the Scriptures by adding the writings and the prophets. The woman's report to her villagers about meeting a prophet indicates that the Samaritans did not deny the validity of the Hebrew prophets. Where the Samaritans disagreed was in their view that the Prophets should not be elevated to the same level as the Torah.

For the Jews, Judea was the center of Judaism, and Jerusalem the place chosen by God for His sanctuary. They never fully approved of other Jewish temples erected in Elephantine by a faction of the Egyptian diaspora, or in Leontopolis by Onias IV. However, to them, the temple in Mount Gerizim was an abomination, an anathema, a snag to religious orthodoxy. In fact, Josephus wrote in *Contra Apionem*: "We have but one temple for the one God." If we accept John Hyrcanus as the destroyer of the Samaritan temple in 128 B.C., then what took place was an act of religious cleansing.

Since the demise of the northern kingdom, no prophet came to the Samaritans. To the woman, Jesus probably hit a chord which echoed the prophecy found in Deuteronomy 18:15. One important tenet of Samaritanism was the expectation of Moses' return as the "restorer" or "returning one" (*taheb*)<sup>14</sup>. This observation entails particular relevance in light of the earlier eschatological mishap involving a self-declared prophet named Dositheus, who applied the prophecy to himself in the first century A.D. A faction of Samaritans gave their endorsement to the event because it seemed to vindicate their stance as the authentic people of God. Just like second temple Judaism, Samaritanism did not remain monolithic. To that effect, history mentions at least two groups: the Dositheans and the Sabbuæans.

## Conclusion

The scarcity of documents from Samaritan sources in the post-exilic period makes it difficult to reconstruct events and to understand Samaritanism and its tumultuous relation with Judaism better. Josephus wrote substantially about Samaritans, but his prejudices ineluctably taint his account. However, a careful examination of the documents at hand makes it possible to elucidate their role in shaping and explaining certain features of the New Testament. Sufficient knowledge of events and traditions among Jews and Samaritans help to shed a bright light on the pericope of John 4:1-23. Acts 1:8 reveals a radical change in the way both communities stand in God's new dispensation. The New Testament introduces a shift where the body of believers is united in Christ regardless of racial, ethnic and gender differences. Moreover, true worship is

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<sup>14</sup> Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of Old Testament Background* (Downing Grove, IL: IVP, 2000) 1059.

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no longer centered around an earthly shrine on a mountain, but on God, the Father of all in Jesus Christ. Forever freed from the shackle of a physical location, true worshipers can and must worship solely in spirit and in truth.

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# The Controversy of Genesis 12

Mike Blanc

Genesis 12 is important because it sets the foundation of the Abrahamic Covenant. Most theologians agree that understanding the book of Genesis, specifically concerning verses one, two and three, is crucial in understanding and analyzing biblical revelation but not everyone agrees on the fulfillment of the covenant. I have chosen to discuss this topic because of the large impact this passage has and the controversy it causes within Christianity. The purpose of this paper is to explain and discuss Genesis 12:1-3 and the disagreement that surrounds these verses, such as when and by whom the covenant was fulfilled and who will reap the benefits of God's promises. I will present two different arguments scholars defend, the Literal Approach and Replacement Theology, and I will also explain and justify my stance on which argument I believe to be true. Both arguments provide specific scriptures and interpretations of those scriptures that support their beliefs.

To understand the arguments that arise, we must first understand the passage in its entirety. These verses describe a promise God made to Abraham and the people of Israel. It is considered by many to be one of the main pillars in the foundation of the Holy Bible. God promises to Abraham three things land, seed, and blessing.

*“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.’<sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’ (Genesis 12:1-3, NIV) ”*

This Scripture is paramount because not only is it the first recorded speech God makes to Abraham but it reveals the foundation of the Abrahamic Covenant: that God will make Abraham into many nations, bless him and make his name great. This covenant is of great significance because God offers these things unconditionally to Abraham through faith. Later in Genesis the Lord elaborates on the promise of making Abraham a great nation. “<sup>5</sup>He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the sky and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.<sup>7</sup> He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” (Gen. 15: 5-7 NIV). God promised Abraham offspring as numerous as the dust on earth and the stars in the sky. Abraham becoming a great nation was undeniably fulfilled in Exodus when Pharaoh acknowledged that the Israelites had become “far too numerous” which led to his harsh rule over them.

## **Main Arguments of the Abrahamic Covenant**

All theologians agree on the fulfillment of Abraham's personal blessings and the fulfillment of Abraham into a great nation. The debate of Genesis 12:1-3 presents itself when concerning the fulfillment of God's promise to bless the nation of Israel with land (Canaan). Questions rise about who is Israel? Is this Israel referring to the ethnic Jews or referring to the Church? Who are the true beneficiaries of the covenant God made with Abraham? Is the land that will be inherited a literal Canaan or a figurative/spiritual Canaan? These questions present a huge disagreement in Christian Theology.

When this discussion is presented there are two main approaches are used by theologians, a Literal Approach and Replacement Theology. The Literal Approach believes that the Israelites, the actual descendants of Abraham will be the ultimate inheritors of the covenants promises and blessings. The Replacement Theology approach believes that the Church, which includes anyone who believes in God and belongs to him, will be the inheritors of the covenants blessings. This disagreement between Christian theologians will probably not agree solution until the end of time when everything takes place as God has ordained.

### **Argument for the Literal Approach**

Some theologians believe that it is only appropriate to take a literal approach to understanding the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant in the Old Testament. They believe that the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's lineage will be reestablished to a right relationship with God and will receive the blessings of the covenants. Literal Approach defenders believe that if you begin interpreting a passage literally you must finish interpreting it literally, in the same way if you begin interpreting a passage figuratively / spiritually, you must finish interpreting it in the same manner. They will also argue the extreme point of view that their opponents, replacement theologians, believe that God has completely shut out old Israel and replaced them with the Gentiles.

One verse that offers support to the Literal Approach advocates is in Romans 11:16-24. The Bible gives an image of an olive tree that has "natural branches", which represent ethnic Jews, and "wild branches", which represents the Gentiles. This passage is often used to explain the literal belief of the fulfillment of the covenant because in this imagery, the "natural branches" and the "wild branches" are distinct from each other. Even though they are all part of the same olive tree and both reap benefits from that tree, the "natural branches" reap different benefits.

Another passage that is often used in the literal argument is in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 30. This passage states: "<sup>3</sup>then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. <sup>4</sup>Even if you have been banished to the



most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. <sup>5</sup>He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. (Deuteronomy 30:3-5, NIV)” This presents a strong case for the literal approach theologians because it hints strongly towards the position of Israel. The Israelites, who were greatly blessed by God with “fortunes”, even after abandoning God (by not believing in Jesus Christ) and are “scattered” all over, God will still recognize them as his people and have “compassion” on them in the end times. It can be interpreted that God is speaking directly to Israel and not the Church.

## Argument for Replacement Theology

Although Replacement Theology seems to be the less popular approach among Christian theologians and ministries, some theologians adamantly advocate for it. Replacement Theology generally affirms that the Church has replaced Israel and will inherit God’s covenant with Israel; the covenants, then, will be fulfilled in a spiritual manner. There are several verses in the New Testament that provide convincing support for the Replacement Theology approach.

In the Old Testament God speaks to Abraham saying, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a *multitude* of nations." On the replacement side of this argument defenders will say that this statement alone opens the blessings bestowed upon Abraham to more than just the Jewish nation when it says multitude. This passage suggests that the seed of Abraham will include all and not be restricted to the Jewish nation. He will be the father of all nations who belong to God and believe in Him.

Another verse that strongly supports Replacement Theology is in the New testament in the book of Matthew. <sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’ <sup>43</sup>‘Therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.’ (Matthew 21:42-43, NIV)” It seems that this verse blatantly answers the questions of which theological approach is correct. The builders referenced in this passage represent the ethnic Jews or old Israel. The builders are the Sadducees and Pharisees that are learned in the Word of God (the stone) and have rejected the cornerstone, which is Jesus Christ. Here, Jesus states obviously that the kingdom of God will be taken away from those who have rejected him by choosing not to believe in his divinity.

## My Understanding

After researching this topic and investigating each side of the arguments on the fulfillment of the covenant, I agree most closely with Replacement Theology. I believe that God’s covenant with Abraham and Israel is fulfilled

in the New Testament with Jesus Christ and that the Church, those who believe in Christ (ethnic Jews and Gentiles alike), are included in the covenant and will reap the blessings of the covenant. The teachings of the apostle Paul are pivotal in understanding God's promises to Abraham in the Old Testament and how it is relevant to Jesus Christ and the New Testament. This transition is best explained in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Paul explicitly states that regardless if we are ethnic Jews or Gentiles we are all divine descendants of Abraham through our faith in God. <sup>23</sup>"Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. <sup>24</sup>So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. <sup>26</sup>So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3: 23-29 NIV)." The New Testament calls Gentile followers "the seed of Abraham" because it explains that Jesus Christ is the "Seed" who fulfills the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant.

In the same statement, Paul makes the clarification our inclusion into the covenant comes from our faith in God, which points out that being an actual, physical "seed" of Abraham does not guarantee partaking in the blessings of the covenant. This is proven first in Genesis 17:14 where God explains that if any male is uncircumcised then he has broken the covenant and will not partake in these blessings. It is then again paralleled in the New Testament when Jesus Christ says in the Luke, <sup>29</sup>"People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup>Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last. (Luke 13:29-30 NIV)" God's covenant with Israel that was previously indicated with circumcision, with the fulfillment of Jesus' birth, ministry, death and resurrection, is now represented as baptism in the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

Though there are many credible arguments for restoration of the Jewish people, I believe scripture holds true that God's redemption of this children was through their faith in His son Jesus Christ. After researching this topic Replacement Theology has presented and clarified the most convincing argument. It should be obvious, as we look at the promises of the God made to Abraham, that they find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This covenant promises Abraham personal, national, and universal blessings. While some of God's promises to Abraham have already been fulfilled, the complete and final fulfillment of the covenant anticipates the future coming of Christ Jesus and the blessings that will be bestowed upon those who believe in Him and have accepted Him as their one and only Lord and Savior.

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# Replacement Versus Dispensational Theology

John T. Stevenson

A term that has come to be used by Dispensationalists to describe those who do not hold their view that all of the promises of the Old Testament must necessarily be fulfilled to a restored physical nation of Israel is that of “Replacement Theology.” In scholarly circles, this designation is substituted for the term “supersessionist,” coming from the two Latin words *super* (“upon”) and *sedere* (“to sit”), but the terms seem to be more or less synonymously. Though other terms have been suggested as alternatives, Vlach is likely correct when he quips that “the horse is already out of the barn” and the term “replacement theology” is here to stay (2009:58).

It is true that Jesus confronts the leaders of the unbelieving nation of Israel and says to them, “*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it*” (Matthew 21:43). It is evident from His words that the kingdom was to be taken from the generation of that day and to be given to someone else.

The question is, who is this other nation? Peter suggests the answer when he says to believers that they are *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy* (1 Peter 2:9-10). One perhaps begs the question to ask to whom Peter is addressing. Is it only and exclusively to a Jewish audience? If so, then we would puzzle over his words in verse 10 that they *once were not a people*. I would maintain, instead, that the words of Peter are directed and applicable to the church at large, made up both of Jew and Gentile who are a part of one body.

Does this mean that we are to view the church as replacing Israel as the chosen people of God? In his epistle to the Romans, Paul describes the process, not so much as a replacement, but as an ingrafting. He describes the people of God as a tree from which branches have been both broken off and to which branches have been grafted.

The Dispensationalist looks at this passage and wishes to see two separate and distinct branches that remain separate and distinct. Thus while national Israel has been broken off because of her unbelief and that which an unnatural branch has been grafted in, the Dispensationalist holds that this unnatural branch will be “raptured” and that a future national Israel will be regrafted. Thus the promises that were first given to national Israel are to be recapitulated to a future national Israel, even though the church is described in the same terms of being *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession*.

By contrast, those who hold to a “Replacement Theology” would see the

church as replacing the place of Israel in a clean break. They would point to Matthew 21:43 as predictive of the way national Israel was taken away in unbelief and replaced with “another nation.” Are these the only two options? It seems to me that both of these have missed the way in which Paul describes the relationship with Israel, the church and the promises of God -- that is, the description of a remnant.

<b>Not DISPENSATIONAL Theology</b>	<b>But a REMNANT Theology</b>	<b>Not REPLACEMENT Theology</b>
Views the church merely as a parenthesis in which the plan of God for His chosen people is paused while the church age is culminated after which there is a return to the law and to dealings with national Israel	Sees the church as made up of a believing remnant of Israel into which Gentiles have been ingrafted and into which Israel can also be ingrafted should she come to believe the gospel	Views the church as replacing Israel as God’s chosen people so that Israel is, both now and in the future, necessarily excluded from all of God’s promises
Israel and the church are two separate and distinct entities	Gentiles have been ingrafted into that which was Israel	The church has become the Spiritual Israel

Paul asks the question in Romans 11:1, “Has God rejected His people whom He foreknew?” Has God rejected His covenant nation of Israel? Has God rejected physical Israel? The answer is an unqualified negative.

*I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He?  
May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of  
Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. (Romans 11:1).*

For a Gentile to say the things that Paul says in Romans 9-11 would smack of anti-Semitism. But he is Jewish. An Israelite. A descendant of Abraham. This is not merely spiritual Israel. This is a reference to the physical descendants of Abraham. He is an Israelite from one of the twelve tribes of Israel and he stands as proof that God is still dealing with Jews.

Paul says in no uncertain terms that *God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew (Romans 11:2a)*. If God’s foreknowledge is complete and inerrant (and it is), then God knows the end of the story regarding Israel’s future. If God foreknows that a person is going to be saved, then that person will be saved. Such salvation is not independent of faith in Christ, for God foreknows the

means as well as the end. By speaking of “His people” in the collective sense, Paul shows that what is true of individuals is also true of Israel as a people. God’s foreknown and forechosen people have not been permanently rejected, even if it looks as though permanent rejection has set in.

*God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? <sup>3</sup> “Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.” <sup>4</sup> But what is the divine response to him? “I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”*

*<sup>5</sup> In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a **remnant** according to God's gracious choice. (Romans 11:2-5).*

Paul uses the example of the situation in Elijah’s day. Elijah lived in a day that was in some ways similar to the conditions in the first century. Just as the people had rejected the Lord in Elijah’s day, so also national Israel had largely rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah in His day. Yet in both cases, there is to be seen a believing remnant.

Who is this remnant? It is believing Israel. In the case of Paul’s day, it is the church and, more specifically, the Jewish church. Remember that, at its beginning, the church was exclusively a Jewish phenomenon. It is not until Acts 10-11 that we see Gentiles recognized as having received the Holy Spirit apart from circumcision and becoming a proselyte to Judaism. Even then, the situation was not universally recognized short of a full scale church council, the results of which are reported in Acts 15. It was only at this point that the church was officially recognized to be composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

The fact that Gentiles have been grafted into which has previously a purely Jewish entity is described in Romans 11 as the ingrafting of the limb of a wild branch. A wild branch can be grafted into an olive tree, but that does not stop the olive tree from being an olive tree. It has only been changed in the sense that it is now an olive tree with a rather unusual branch. The point is made that, if a wild branch can be grafted into a tree, how much easier is it to graft back in the natural branch that was broken off?

When he comes to Romans 11:12, Paul points out the joyous possibilities for the church and for the world should physical Israel turn to the gospel: *Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!* Paul sees the possibility, and he considers it to be a hopeful possibility, that physical Israel will indeed return in faith and be ingrafted into that same tree from which she was broken off.

*Now if their transgression is riches for the world and*

## Replacement Versus Dispensational Theology

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*their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! (Romans 11:12).*

This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the Jewish rejection led to the evangelization of the world, then what great things will come about if the Jews believe? There are glorious possibilities. Paul implies that Israel has the potential to turn to God and, if they ever do, they will turn the world upside down.

*For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Romans 11:15).*

This is a movement from the bad to the good and from the good to the better. The worst that could happen is Israel's rejection of their Messiah. That was bad. But that bad thing resulted in the world being reconciled as the world received the gospel and believed.

Israel's Rejection	Result s in...	The reconciliation of the world
Israel's Acceptance		Life from the dead

If the result of the very worst possible scenario resulted in reconciliation for the world, then how much better will be the outcome of the very best possible scenario? We Gentiles ought to pray for and to desire the conversion of Israel because this will bring about the very best for the world.

*If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too. 17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. (Romans 11:16-18).*

Paul uses two illustrations in verse 16. The first is of a lump of dough. The second is of a root.

If the First Piece of Dough is holy...	The rest of the lump of Dough is also holy.
If the Root is Holy...	The branches are also holy
If Abraham is holy...	His descendants, the Jews, are also holy

If God had a special purpose for Abraham in which He promised that all the world would be blessed through him, then God also has a special purpose for the descendants of Abraham, even though they have for the present time rejected God. Paul then goes on to take the second illustration and to expand upon it.

Symbol	What it Represents
The Tree	God's People
The Root	Abraham
Some of the Branches	The unbelieving nation of Israel
Wild Olive grafted in	Believing Gentiles

Throughout most of the history of the Old Testament, the repository of faith was to be found exclusively among the Jews. When a Gentile wished to come to God, he must go to Israel. The place of worship and of sacrifice was the Temple in Jerusalem. Sacrifices must be administered by a Jewish priest. The words of God were written in Hebrew by Jewish prophets and taught in Jewish synagogues by Jewish rabbis. There were two classes of people, the Jews and the pagans. But now there has been both a breaking off and a grafting in. The Jews have now become the pagans. Those who were pagans have now been grafted into the promises of Abraham.

Paul issues a warning. The warning is to remember from whence you came. Remember your spiritual heritage. The Gentiles had no spiritual heritage of their own. And this is the point Paul wants them to remember. They cannot be proud of their heritage because they have none of which to be proud.

This attitude of spiritual pride has become evident in the church. Church history shows us that Christians have often forgotten that Christianity has Jewish roots. We have at times acted as though we are the only branches which have every graced the tree of God. It is like a flea being proud of the dog on which he rides. "Look at this dog which I have been given. Am I not a magnificent flea to have such a dog?" Paul goes on to warn against such conceit:

*You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."*

*Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; <sup>21</sup> for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. (Romans 11:19-21).*

Paul anticipates another objection from the mouth of the Gentile believer. "It is true that I cannot be arrogant of any spiritual heritage because I have no spiritual heritage, but I can be arrogant because God broke off His



relationship with the Jews so that He might make a new relationship with me!” He points out that this fact does not push us to conceit but to fear. Rather than being arrogant, we should be humble. What happened to Israel can also happen to the Gentiles if we do not continue in faith.

The breaking off of the one branch and the grafting in of the other has nothing to do with the worth of the branch. There is really no difference between an unfruitful “natural” branch and a worthless “wild” branch. It is the case of the “pot calling the kettle black.” The issue is not the Gentile branch’s works or its worth, as compared to the other Jewish branch. The issue is faith. The Jewish branch was removed because of unbelief. The Gentile branch was grafted in because of faith. The Gentile branch is in error by comparing itself to the Jewish branch when the Gentile branch should be looking to the trunk -- God.

Here is the principle. Salvation by grace gives no believer any basis for pride. Blessings bring greater responsibility, but they do not indicate superiority. Israel in the past was given great blessings. The church today has been given even greater blessings. These blessings are the result of God’s grace and not an evidence that we are better than others. Our response to these blessings is to be one of humility and thankfulness as we realize that grace is always unmerited and undeserved. Arrogance flies in the face of grace. It is a perversion of grace. Grace is given only to the undeserving, never to the self-righteous who think they are better. Thus the answer is to focus upon both the kindness as well as the severity of God:

*Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.*

*And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.*

*For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? (Romans 11:22-24).*

There is a warning here. It is a warning to continue in faith. Paul is not trying to teach that those who are saved can lose that salvation. He is saying that those who are saved should remember they are kept in the same way they are saved, by trusting in God. It is a warning against self-sufficiency. With this warning comes a promise. This promise is given to Israel. It is given to those who will repent of their self-sufficiency and who will return to the Lord. It is a promise that, even if they have been broken off by their unbelief, they can still repent and come back to the Lord and believe and be grafted in again.

Gentiles	Jews
Wild olive branch	Natural olive branch
Was grafted in through faith	Was broken off because of unbelief
If you continue in faith, you will remain	If they do not continue in unbelief, they will be grafted back in
<i>You were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree</i>	<i>How much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?</i>

God is no respecter of persons. The Jew comes to God in the same way that the Gentile comes to God. He comes through faith.

*For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery -- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation -- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; <sup>26</sup> and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. <sup>27</sup> This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” (Romans 11:25-27).*

Paul now reveals a mystery. The Greek term is a μυστήριον — a truth which is now being revealed for the first time. The Greeks were big on mysteries. There were an entire series of “mystery religions,” each having its own hidden secrets which were only known to the initiated. Now Paul reveals a Christian mystery. It is that the unbelief of Israel is only temporary. It will continue until “*the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*”

1. The hardening of Israel is only partial.

Paul has already pointed to himself as an example of this. He is an Israelite and also a believer in Jesus Christ. The hardening which hardened Israel has not hardened him. Throughout the history of the church there have been and will continue to be Jewish believers.

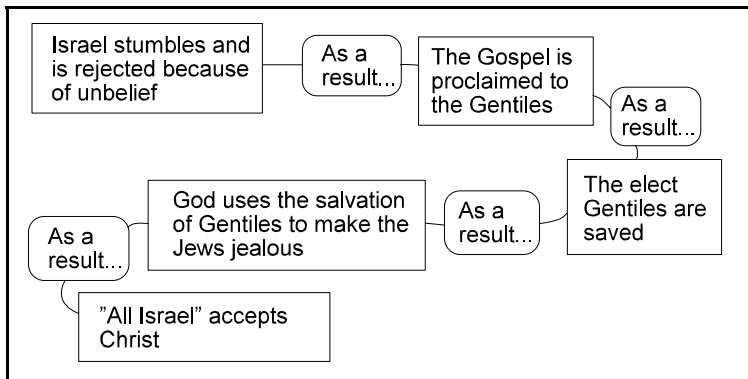
2. The hardening of Israel is to continue for a season.

This is implied by the fact that Paul’s statement that it will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

3. The hardening of Israel can eventually pass away.

When Paul says that it will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, the implication is that after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, the hardening will pass away. At such a time, the prophecy will be fulfilled that *all Israel will be saved*. Does this mean that each and every Jewish person shall receive Christ? Not necessarily. But it does mean that the people of Israel will no longer be characterized by a rejection of Jesus. This can be seen to have been accomplished in one of two ways. First of all, it may be that we shall yet see a great return to Christ among the Jewish people. I personally know many Jews who have confessed Jesus as the promised Messiah. Secondly, Paul’s statement that “all Israel will be saved” is accomplished when we realize that “all Israel” refers to all of the branches that have been grafted into God’s tree, whether they were natural branches or wild branches. The force of this is seen in Romans 11:26 when Paul says, “And thus all Israel will be saved.” The phrase “and thus” is a translation of the Greek *καὶ οὕτως* and carries the force of “an in this manner” (a survey of Paul’s use of this phrase in particular and its general use throughout the New Testament will show that this is so). Thus the fulness of the Gentiles, the grafting of Gentiles into the tree, is the very thing that allows “all Israel” to be saved.

Notice the flow of thought: The end result of this entire flow is seen in verse 27 - the Lord’s covenant with Israel is fulfilled as He takes away their sin.



This brings us to a question: What is this “*Fullness of the Gentiles*” of which Paul speaks? It is from the Olivet Discourse. Jesus told His disciples that they would see Jerusalem surrounded by armies and that this would mark the advent of a great destruction that would come upon the city. Jerusalem would fall

and be “trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). Are the “times of the Gentiles” the same thing as the “fullness of the Gentiles”? They seem to be connected. That means we as Christians should see the Jewish people as God sees them:

*From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; <sup>29</sup> for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:28-29).*

Throughout the history of the church there has been an enmity between Israel and the church. It began with a Jewish persecution of the church. But as the church grew in power, the tables were turned and most of that history is a story of the church persecuting the Jews. Somewhere along the line the church forgot to have an attitude of regrafting. Paul calls for such an attitude in this passage.

Physical Israel	
From the Standpoint of the Gospel	From the Standpoint of God's Choice
Enemies of the Church	Beloved for the sake of the Fathers

Why do the people of Israel continue to be “beloved” from the point of view of God? It is because *the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*. Those who are Israelites after the flesh have a standing of being *beloved for the sake of the fathers*. They have a family heritage that has become a blessing to the church and it is a heritage for which we ought to continually be thankful.

There is an important point to be made here. It is that there is no place within Christianity for anti-Semitism. For a Christian to engage in anti-Semitism is for him to bite himself. Our Lord and Savior took on Jewish flesh and we have entered into something that is of Jewish origins. Rather than having an attitude of anti-Semitism, we are called to have an attitude of regrafting. We desire to see Jewish people return to the Lord and to be regrafted into a right relationship with Him. Indeed, we have a vested self-interest in seeing such a thing as Paul reminded us back in verse 12: *Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!*

*For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup> so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.*

*For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. (Romans 11:30-32).*

The enmity between the church and Israel ought not to exist because they are alike both in the fact of their disobedience as well as in their need for mercy. Notice the comparison.

<b>Gentiles</b>	<b>Israel</b>
Were once disobedient to God	Has now been disobedient
Now have been shown mercy because of Israel's disobedience.	Because of the mercy shown to Gentiles, they may now be shown mercy
All shut up in disobedience All shown mercy	

There was a time when all Gentiles were hopelessly lost in their sins to the point where it looked as though there were no hope for them -- at least, that was the opinion of the Jews. In Paul's day, the Jews were becoming increasingly hardened to the gospel so that it may appear to the Gentiles as though the Jews are hopelessly lost in their sins to the point where it looks as though there is no hope for them. Are the Jews without hope? No more than the Gentiles are without hope. The truth is that all men are equally without hope apart from the power of God. And so as all have been shut up in disobedience, all will be shown mercy.

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# Holiness in the Book of Hebrews

James T. Cater

Holiness is not an elective but the principle ingredient in a multitudinous array of spiritual commands incumbent upon believers. Both the OT and NT contain God's declarative imperative: "Be holy, for I am holy." However, the command to be holy has generated an impressive array of notions and confusions throughout the church age.<sup>1</sup> Correspondingly, the pursuit of true holiness persists to elude the church today. Admittedly, true holiness is important to the Christian life and testimony.

Despite conceded and cautious limitations with construing a theology of holiness within one book of the Bible, notwithstanding, a fairly good understanding of holiness is portrayed in the epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews' nominal, adjectival, and verbal usages of holiness seem to provide substantial definition and distinction. Because of the church's current and conceding loss of biblical truth about holiness, the epistle to the Hebrews strongly mitigates this loss by its rich treasury of allusions to holiness and how this divine work upon believers is sought from the beginning to end of spiritual advancement. Therefore, discovering Hebrews' theme of holiness in its kaleidoscope dimensions can offer a richer application to the life of the "saint." Indeed, holiness within Hebrews can demonstrate that one of the only transcendent truths to a believer is this vital and central ingredient called holiness.

## The Necessity of Holiness

Warren Wiersbe has said, "In God's kingdom, holiness isn't a luxury; it's a *necessity*." <sup>2</sup> Doubtlessly, holiness is not a peripheral truth but central. It was J.I. Packer who said something similar, "The historic Christian teaching on holiness has been largely forgotten, and that is a pity, for it is central to the glory of God and the good of souls."<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, holiness cannot be ignored or imagined away. Christianity rises or falls on its ability to make an indelible impact in a world filled with darkness. The light of Christian testimony is at stake when holiness disappears.<sup>4</sup> Once again, J.I. Packer can assist us with any equivoque by stating, "In reality, holiness is the goal of our redemption. As Christ died in order that we may be justified, so we are justified in order that we may be sanctified and made holy."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, sanctification can only be the umbra of justification."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, God has said, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."<sup>7</sup> These commands appear so that the believer is not duped into thinking that holiness is not important.<sup>8</sup> The theme of holiness covers all of Scripture and cannot be removed or reduced. It occupies a space of infinite value and vibrancy. As J.C. Ryle once said about sanctification, "It is not an enemy, but a friend."<sup>9</sup> Unmistakably, "holiness is not a luxury," as Warren Wiersbe has reminded us, for "without which no one will see the

Lord.”<sup>10</sup> Consequently, Packer comments, “Holiness...is genuinely necessary for one’s final salvation.”<sup>11</sup>

## The Nature of Holiness

From the outset, to muckrake all the literature on holiness or sanctification and to extract the doctrinal fundamentals is not our concernment and it is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>12</sup> However, all is not lost, because the quest for definition is not inexorably tied in boundless tomes of systematic theologies of holiness. Nonetheless, along with its necessity, it is important that an attempt in understanding the *nature* of holiness be achievable. The vital importance to Christians understanding holiness, namely, sharing in God’s attribute of moral rectitude, can be accentuated in George Bernard Shaw’s sardonic comment, “Christianity might be a good thing if anyone ever tried it.”<sup>13</sup> The stakes are high. A world shrouded deeply in darkness and depravity begs for a light that penetrates with a cure. How a Christian lives in this world is indispensable. Thus, holiness must be defined. Anthony A. Hoekema defines it this way:

“We may define sanctification as that gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which He delivers us as justified sinners from the pollution of sin, renews our entire nature according to the image of God, and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to Him.”<sup>14</sup>

This is a good working definition but perhaps a bit lengthy. If it can be synthesized, it may be said to contain three elements: set-apartness, synergism, and submission to his will. In other words, the nature of holiness consists of a divine/human participation, a putting off the old man/putting on the new man, and placing oneself under his loving will. Simply put, holiness is the making holy of someone. Steven Porter defines it succinctly and vividly as, “*the nature of maturation from the time of regeneration to the time of glorification.*”<sup>15</sup>

This captures the essence, nature, and concept of holiness and sanctification quite well. Notwithstanding, holiness consists of three critical phases: positional, progressive, and perfective. In other words, the believer’s maturation (perfective) process consists of an inauguration (also called definitive sanctification),<sup>16</sup> continuation (progressive), and culmination (perfective), degrees of glorification (2 Corinthians 3:18).<sup>17</sup> Thus, from a broad perspective, the nature of holiness consists of “three time perspectives”<sup>18</sup> that describe the Christian’s life conforming to the image of God and Jesus Christ from start to finish. These are both necessary and natural to holiness biblically.

## The Nexus of Holiness

The contemporary confusion about holiness can hardly be overestimated. As R.C. Chapman notes from Bernard Shaw's previous comment, "Shaw's sarcastic wit exposes one of our most stubbornly persistent problems—not living what we profess to believe."<sup>19</sup> Herein lies the nexus of holiness, namely, the Christian's testimony and test of his soul. J.C. Ryle says, "If the Bible be true, it is certain that unless we are 'sanctified,' we shall not be saved."<sup>20</sup> In theological language, "There are three things which, according to the Bible, are absolutely necessary to the salvation of every man and woman in Christendom. These are justification, regeneration, and sanctification."<sup>21</sup> The relationship between justification and sanctification is largely the problem today where justification is overemphasized over sanctification.<sup>22</sup> Yet, "the concept of sanctification could be considered the alpha and omega of redemption."<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, one must be willing to confess, "Heaven is only for the holy man, and the holy man is only for heaven: heaven is a garment of glory, that is only suited to him that is holy. God...hath said it, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Mark that word 'no man.'"<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the impact a Christian has on the world is proportional to the impact salvation has had on their soul. Summarily, "Those who are justified are always sanctified, and those who are sanctified are always justified. God has joined them together, and they cannot be put asunder,"<sup>25</sup> as Ryle poignantly said. Both effects of justification and sanctification bear upon the believer. The believer cannot acknowledge rightfully a release of guilt (justification) without the transformation (sanctification) of the soul. One cannot be saved and not sanctified simultaneously. The point then is that holiness is intimately related to the unity of distinctions between the doctrines of justification and sanctification.<sup>26</sup>

## The Concept of Holiness in the Old Testament

A necessary propaedeutic to any topic of study in the Bible should always begin with the Old Testament (OT). The old covenant provides a foundation. Also, any foundational truth in Scripture has, as its bedrock formation, the very character and nature of God. Thus, the concept of holiness commences in the OT. God from the very beginning established holiness ideas. In Genesis, one finds God sanctifying (making holy or setting apart) the seventh day.<sup>26</sup> The OT term/s for the idea of "being set-apart" appear in verbal, nominal, and adjectival forms throughout the pages of the old covenant. This is an undeniable reality revealing both the central and crucial nature of the concept of holiness.<sup>27</sup>

Strictly speaking, then, no formal nor heuristic understanding of the concept of holiness can truly be established without the OT. Beginning in Exodus 3:5 the concept of holiness is accentuated with God's own statement,



“you are standing on holy ground.” The point is God establishes what is holy and what is not.<sup>28</sup> The ground Moses was to stand on, without his sandals, was no different than the ground five feet before where God did not designate “holy ground.” Accordingly, this emphasizes that the demarcations of holiness belong to the Lord. This ground “sanctified” by God was now to be used for sacred purposes, this is the teaching of holiness, being set-apart. Leviticus 11:44-45 tells us, “and be holy, for I am holy” in this example God is the very standard of “set-apartness.” In other words, God chooses those he wills to use for sacred purposes. He sets them aside, and they become His possessions.

### Holiness in the book of Leviticus

Of all the books of the OT, Leviticus can be designated the “book of holiness.” It furnishes the reader and Christian with the earliest manual on holiness concepts. It reveals the character and nature of God in the most striking ways especially God’s central attribute of being holy. Allen Ross succinctly adds, “*The holiness of God is undoubtedly the main emphasis in the book of Leviticus.*”<sup>29</sup> In many ways, it describes holiness like no other book in the OT.<sup>30</sup> Several times the book declares that we should “be holy” (set apart) because God is holy.<sup>31</sup> The grounds of a believer’s holy character should be the Lord’s. In Leviticus 21 the Lord declares that the priests are to be holy or “set apart” for His use.<sup>32</sup> The term/s used in Leviticus for “holy,” “sanctify,” and “holiness,” are positional and progressive terms relating to the concept of “set apartness” or “otherness.” Indeed, as Wenham elucidates, “*Holy*’ (*qadosh*) and its cognate terms, e.g., ‘sanctify,’ ‘holiness,’ occur 152 times in Leviticus (about 20 percent of the total occurrences in the OT).”<sup>33</sup>

Leviticus describes, then, the people of God in motion from consecration (initial sanctification) toward a glorious future sanctification.<sup>34</sup> The Israelites, chosen by God, were to carry out their “separateness” via a “religious system which was the living expression of faith.”<sup>35</sup> Their whole system consisted of holy people, holy places, holy objects, holy rituals, and holy seasons.<sup>36</sup> They united faith and obedience through physical activities motivated by inward spiritual inclinations. Therefore, Wenham adds, “Leviticus stresses that there are two aspects to sanctification, a divine act and human actions. God sanctifies and man sanctifies. Only those people God calls to be holy can become holy in reality.”<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the luciferous foundational function of Leviticus’ holiness concepts enriches the New Testament. The book calls the people of God to respond to the divine side of sanctification. The book stresses the divine work (God’s redemptive act of delivering them from bondage) and the people’s contribution to sanctification (Israel’s faith and obedience in carrying out the Law and rituals). Nevertheless, Leviticus grounds holiness concepts found later in the New Testament. In sum, both the OT and Leviticus demonstrate that God sanctifies<sup>38</sup> through an inner transformation accomplished supernaturally by the Holy Spirit that initiates a process maintained by both God and the believer

through God-given means<sup>39</sup> where the Spirit, Scripture, and Self coalesce in musical harmony.<sup>40</sup>

## Holiness Established for True Worship

The very nature of holiness concretized in both the OT and Leviticus segues into the very concept of worship. Christians have been “set-apart” positionally, progressively, and ultimately perfectly (complete or consummate holiness such as glorification) to worship God. In John 4:23 Jesus told the woman of Samaria that “*an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.*” God “seeks His worshipers.” Embedded in the concept of holiness in Leviticus is “how can a sinful people approach a sinless God?”

Being “set-apart,” then, is this “positional” God-given acceptability and approachability status a believer possesses before God that enables true worship. The Christian can approach God acceptably and appropriately only through the trusting the “once for all”<sup>41</sup> sacrifice of Jesus, the culmination of the OT ritual sacrifices. Worship is set in motion due to the supernatural initial, positional, or definitive sanctification accomplished by God. Therefore, the OT and Leviticus function to elucidate the importance of God’s actions in justifying (imputed righteousness), namely, accepting us; where practical sanctification (experiential righteousness), or worship, by necessity ensues.<sup>42</sup> It is impossible to worship God without being “set-apart” for holy use. Every Christian has been sovereignly chosen and set-aside as a vessel with God-given powers to progress in holiness and true worship.

## The Concept of Holiness in the New Testament

Considering the OT grounding work on the theme of holiness, namely, propounding on the positional, progressive, and worship dynamics to holiness, it's no accident that the New Testament (NT) would build upon this foundation. Therefore, in addition to the fundamental contributions the OT and Leviticus make to the nature and character of holiness understanding, the New Testament offers a certain continuity. Turning now to the pages of the NT, many passages beginning with the Gospels plainly provide more to the topic at hand. What the OT accomplished in fundamentals, the NT further elaborates. As one considers the theme of holiness in both testaments, it becomes clearer that concepts of holiness work in tangent with each other.

In the NT, “holy,” “holiness,” “sanctification,” “saints,” and “sanctify” are found a little under 280 times.<sup>43</sup> The word distribution for the verbal, nominal, and adjectival aspects of this word group undergird the concept of holiness in the NT as it does in the OT. In fact, Greek *hagios* translates Hebrew *qadosh* in the Septuagint almost 100 times.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, its basic meaning in the NT is a crossover from the OT *qadosh*, namely, “to

make holy,” “to be set-apart for God,” “to dedicate, separate.”<sup>45</sup> Trench aptly defines *hagios*, “*Its fundamental idea is separation, and, so to speak, consecration and devotion to the service of Deity*”<sup>46</sup> The idea of separation or consecration is widespread of things, of persons, of angels, and of God and Christ.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, the NT as a whole has an extensive permeation of the concept of holiness through its use of the *hagios* word group. The notion of holiness, then, mirrors that of the OT due to its frequent use of similar words that define holiness in the same way. The Christian has been enriched by these textual affinities.

### Holiness in the Gospels

The Gospels form part of this NT network. They contribute to holiness ideas as well. The distribution of the *hagios* word group is widespread as well. The adjective is found in the Gospels in the phrase, “Holy Spirit” 26 out of the 62 times in the NT corpus. The minuscule version “holy” is found 41 times in the Gospels, and it describes various things, persons, and places. For example, Matthew 4:5 relates, “Then the devil took Him into the *holy* city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple.” In other words, *holy* here is said to describe “Jerusalem” as dedicated, sacred, or set-aside for God. In Matthew 7:6 Jesus tells the multitude, “Do not give what is *holy* to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” Here in relating to the Pharisees, Jesus did not mince his words but directly indicted their foolish unbelief with the *holy* truth and it was not received by them. Here *holy* and *pearls* are juxtaposed and describe the truth in terms of *pearls* or *sacred*. Conversely, the disciples did not reject the truth but believed it. In John 6:69 they relate, “We have believed and have come to know that You are the *Holy* One of God.” The apostle John declares here that Jesus is the “*Holy* One of God.” This statement “Holy One of God” (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ)<sup>48</sup> is extraordinary. This phrase describes Jesus as the very set-apart, dedicated one, or sacred one of God. In John 10:36 it describes Jesus as, “whom the Father *sanctified* and sent into the world” This is the Gospels presenting the very example of a sanctified (Greek, *ἡγίασεν*)<sup>49</sup> man. This Gospel small sampling reveals that holiness, namely, being set-apart is consistent with the NT tenor and with the OT passages. Indeed, Jesus said, “*Sanctify them in the truth*” (John 17:7). Here the verbal form is used to express the idea of separation.

### Holiness in Pauline Literature

As one moves through the NT corpus gleaning the fields ripe with holiness bullet points, one finds that not only does the Gospels portray the concept of holiness using a similar connotation, but it proceeds into the Pauline corpus without skipping a beat. Thus far, the OT usage of the word

*qadosh*, the NT usage of *hagios*, and the Gospels usage of *hagios* form lexical links of a chain. They are customary to the vocabulary of Scripture writers to describe someone who is called to be holy or sanctified. Paul uses the noun form of *hagios* often. The nouns *ἁγιωσύνην* (*hagiosunee*) and *ἁγιασμόν* (*hagiasmos*) both are spread throughout Paul's letters. In Romans 6:19 Paul tells the Christian, "For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification." Here the noun "ἁγιασμόν" The believer here is exhorted to exercise their will for righteousness, literally moving towards holiness using "eis" (εἰς) to express result. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 Paul states, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Here Paul utilizes the other term/noun "ἁγιωσύνην" to instruct the Corinthian Christians of their active role in pursuing holiness. The Corinthians here were exhorted to perfect "ἁγιωσύνην," namely, to finish or complete your being set-apart.<sup>50</sup> The Christian, then, in the Pauline corpus is encouraged to live in a way that their being *set-apart* reflects *holiness* in practice not just in status or a static condition. Paul elsewhere uses these synonyms (Romans 1:4; 6:19, 22; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3, 4, 7; 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Timothy 2:15).

Furthermore, the verbal form is used by Paul as well to describe a believer's need for sanctification (set-apart, separateness). In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Paul offers this benediction, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here the verb is *ἁγιάσαι*, literally, to *set-apart*. Once again, the idea is to separate, set aside for God's purposes. This verse envisions the whole process of sanctification being brought about from beginning to end at the consummation. The believer's anticipation is that his whole being, "entirely," is brought to its intended end (perfection). The spirit, soul, and body will be totally preserved when Christ returns. This is a great expectation. Christians can be strengthened and comforted that their comportment now will not resemble the final version. One can be assured that Christ at his coming will transform (sanctify) the believer entirely. Paul uses the same verb in Ephesians 5:26 where he uses it of the church: "so that He might sanctify her."

Paul naturally uses these terms because they convey the Scriptural truth of holiness, namely, to be set-apart for God; to be a sacred and special vessel for the Master's purposes. These are goals, to be set-apart in the present, that every believer can and should yearn for because of what God has done through the process of sanctification. God started and accomplished this in the past. This event of *inaugurated* sanctification is revealed in Scripture with the past tense of the verb: sanctify (*hagiazō*). Paul indicated this when he told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:32, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the

inheritance among all those who are *sanctified*.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, the process of sanctification or holiness begins with an initial permanent setting apart accomplished by God where the effects continue or progress unto completion. As Mayhue elucidates, sanctification is “a salvific work of God that prompts a holy response of biblical obedience from those who are genuine saints.”<sup>52</sup> For this reason, Paul describes the supernatural event in the past tense: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were *sanctified*, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). The past tense does not negate the synergistic efforts between God and the Christian. The past tense work of God in sanctification empowers the believer to pursue the process. Later in this paper more details to the positional, progressive, and perfective aspects will be developed using Hebrews, but for now this writer is developing the gradually these ideas throughout the Bible. Therefore, the tripodal aspects of holiness Paul clearly illuminates: Past: 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Present: John 17:17; Romans 6:19; Perfective: 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23. This will be explored more in Hebrews.

### Holiness in the General Epistles

Now, not only is holiness a concept developed using the *hagios* word group in both the NT and the Pauline corpus, but it can be fleshed out in the general letters as well. However, the tripodal aspects are not entirely found in the general epistles. For example, Peter states, “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the *sanctifying* work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” (1 Peter 1:2). Here the believer is said to have been saved “by the *sanctifying* work of the Spirit.” This is a past accomplishment. Peter again uses this term in the passage often cited, 1 Peter 1:15-16, where he says: “but like the Holy One who called you, *be holy* yourselves also in all *your* behavior; <sup>16</sup>because it is written, “*You shall be holy, for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:15-16). Here the reference is to Leviticus 19:2 and the same idea is reiterated that a believer must progress in holiness and imitate God.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the progressive aspect of holiness is brought out in this passage.

The culminative or perfective aspect of holiness is not found in the general epistles. This is not surprising since so much of the NT is Pauline. Nonetheless, John seems to have an allusion to this aspect in Revelation 20:6 where he declares, “Blessed and *holy* is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” Implied here is the fact that only *holy* people can experience the eschatological first resurrection.

This is a culminating and perfective event. Thus, the tone and use of *hagios* can be traced through the epistles ever so slightly. Again, this is because Paul wrote extensively. Conceptually speaking, the NT, Pauline

literature, and the general letters teach that holiness is both necessary and natural to the people of God. Detected in the texts are traces of the tripodal aspects of holiness. There are three time perspectives<sup>54</sup> that Scripture teaches in both OT and NT writings as demonstrated thus far. Further exploration of these three-time perspectives can be brought sharply into focus in the book of Hebrews.

### The Concept of Holiness in Hebrews

Having briefly surveyed that the word group *qadosh*<sup>55</sup> and *hagios* form a central idea to the concept of holiness from an OT and NT perspective, one can be assured that the notion of being *set-apart* can be discovered in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews extraordinarily accentuates the concept of holiness because it weaves together a conceptual kaleidoscope of holiness ensconced in OT imagery and allusions, and NT progressive revelation. The book of Hebrews is a literary masterpiece invested with OT cultic and legal terminology. It provides the reader with the best of Christian literature. It is no small thing then that Paul Ellingworth describes Hebrews in a most vivid way:

"Hebrews is more than a work of art, and before we finish, we shall need to pass through its language to the substance of its distinctive message. But before we reach that point, it is good to recognize that Hebrews is also a work of art, which can be helpfully compared with other works of art. For example, with a Wagner opera, in which a tiny motif may appear in passing early on, and be revealed later as an essential support of the whole structure; or with an impressionistic painting, in which a fleck of contrasting colour in a corner, nothing much in itself, points towards the heart of the composition; or, if your artistic tastes are more plebeian, in a detective novel, in which cunningly de-emphasized details appear later as vital clues."<sup>56</sup>

Thus, Hebrews has many glorious truths especially the concept of holiness. One of the most striking features of the Book concerning the theme of holiness, is that it uses a variety of Greek terms. Alongside the word group *hagios* it adds another very rich NT term, namely, "*teleios*."<sup>56</sup> This term is found in the NT often and in many contexts. It's meaning is varied but has a controlled semantic range.<sup>57</sup> It furnishes an added dimension to the *hagios* group insofar holiness is concerned. These two distinct word groups illustrate comprehensively the vast landscape found in the book of Hebrews on the concept of holiness:

	teleioo teleios	hagiozo hagiasmos hagios hagiosunece
<b>Past</b> ( <i>positional</i> , inaugurated or definitive sanctification)	<p><u>Hebrews 2:10:</u> “to <i>perfect</i> the author of their salvation through sufferings.”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 2:11:</u> For both He who <i>sanctifies</i> and those who are <i>sanctified</i> are all from one Father”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 5:14:</u> “But solid food is for the <i>mature</i>, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 6:1:</u> “Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to <i>maturity</i>”<sup>58</sup></p> <p><u>Hebrews 7:11:</u> “Now if <i>perfection</i> was through the Levitical priesthood”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 7:19:</u> “(for the Law made nothing <i>perfect</i>)”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 9:9:</u> “which <i>is</i> a symbol for the present time. Accordingly, both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper <i>perfect</i> in conscience”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 10:1:</u> “For the Law...can never...make <i>perfect</i> those who draw near”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 10:14:</u> “For by one offering He</p>	<p><u>Hebrews 2:11:</u> “For both He who <i>sanctifies</i> and those who are <i>sanctified</i> are all from one <i>Father</i>”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 3:1:</u> “Therefore, <i>holy</i> brethren”</p> <p>Hebrews 6:10: “in having ministered and in still ministering to the <i>saints</i>. (lit., holy ones)</p> <p><u>Hebrews 10:10:</u> “By this will we have been <i>sanctified</i> through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 10:14:</u> “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are <i>sanctified</i>”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 10:29:</u> “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was <i>sanctified</i>, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?”<sup>60</sup></p> <p><u>Hebrews 13:12:</u> “Therefore, Jesus also, that He might <i>sanctify</i> the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 13:24:</u> “Greet all of your leaders and all the <i>saints</i>.”</p>

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	<p>has <i>perfected</i> for all time those who are sanctified”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 12:2:</u> “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and <i>perfecter</i> of faith”<sup>59</sup></p>	
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<p><b>Present</b> (<i>progressive</i> continuous sanctification)</p>	<p><u>Hebrews 2:10:</u> “to <i>perfect</i> the author of their salvation through sufferings.”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 2:11:</u> For both He who <i>sanctifies</i> and those who are <i>sanctified</i> are all from one Father”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 5:9:</u> “And having been made <i>perfect</i>”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 12:2:</u> “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and <i>perfecter</i> of faith”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 12:10:</u> “For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He <i>disciplines us</i> for <i>our</i> good, so that we may share His <i>holiness</i>.”<sup>61</sup></p>	<p><u>Hebrews 12:14:</u> “Pursue peace with all men, and the <i>sanctification</i> without which no one will see the Lord.”</p>
<p><b>Future</b> (<i>perfective</i> or culminative sanctification)</p>	<p><u>Hebrews 5:9:</u> “And having been made <i>perfect</i>”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 7:28:</u> “Appoints a Son, made <i>perfect</i> forever”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 11:40:</u> “because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made <i>perfect</i>.”</p> <p><u>Hebrews 12:23:</u> “and to the spirits of the righteous made <i>perfect</i>”</p>	<p><u>Hebrews 12:14:</u> “Pursue peace with all men, and the <i>sanctification</i> without which no one will see the Lord.”<sup>62</sup></p>

The above chart helps to visualize the frequent use of the Greek doublets, namely, *teleios* and *hagios*. The two dyads demonstrate forcefully the full-orbed dimension of holiness concepts. The idea of perfection (e.g., perfect, perfecter, perfected, or perfection) provides the connotation of



completion, bringing to an intended end, maturity, or fulfilling. These renderings try to capture the meaning of the *teleios* semantic range. One thing they have in common is the idea of starting and finishing something. They illustrate a process, namely salvation and redemption, from a standpoint of positional to perfective developments. For example, Hebrews 7:19 says parenthetically, "(for the Law made nothing *perfect*).” Contextually, chapter seven contrasts the continual permanent benefits of the new priest, namely Jesus, “according to the order of Melchizedek,” which establishes that perfection can only be achieved through the final priestly and sacrificial atonement (Hebrews 7-10) of Christ’s priestly work. This perfection is associated with a believer’s conscience and positional status of sanctification. In other words, Christ work when believed and trusted upon by faith establishes an initial (positional or definitive) *perfection* like that of being *sanctified* demonstrating the initial salvific work of God in a believer.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, perfection in Hebrews is a "bringing to an intended end," if you will, of the priestly and sacrificial system through the work of Christ. When a person places their trust on Christ's sacrifice, they subsequently enjoy a *perfection* that the Law could not achieve, especially in a *positional* or *definitive* way.<sup>64</sup>

Accordingly, perfection in Hebrews elucidates the *salvific* and *sanctifying* aspects possessed by a believer through the concept of *perfection*. Therefore, *perfection* language and cognates (complete, finish, or mature) elaborates biblical sanctification. Hebrews poignantly describes the inability of the Levitical priestly and sacrificial system to enable true permanent sanctification (Hebrews 7:11, 19; 9:13; 10:1-3).

Therefore, *perfection* and *sanctification* language as seen through the illustrated pattern in the chart form a deuce. When one hears these terms in Hebrews, the reader must keep in mind the salvific overtones. In one way, a believer is said to be *perfected* (conscience clear of any guilt sharing affinities with justification) through the blood sacrifice of Jesus. This means that the cross atonement, once trusted upon, can cleanse the *conscience* (Hebrews 9:9). This is something the Law was useless to do (Hebrews 7:18).

### Overall Positional, Progressive, and Perfective Nature of Holiness in Hebrews

In sum, the *teleios* and *hagios* word groups share similarities in Hebrews but expand the colors of meaning in the salvific suitcase we carry as believers in this life leading to ultimate perfection, sanctification, and salvation. As travelers journeying through this world, the Christian is said to be both *perfected* and *sanctified*; both *being perfected* and *being sanctified*; and ultimately in the future, we will experience a glorious and *final* (restorative Romans 8:18-25) perfection and sanctification. Perfection language in Hebrews is a tripodal-life experience. Jesus is accomplishing this on the believer’s behalf (Hebrews 12:2). This is because Jesus is the

Christian's *forerunner* (Hebrews 6:19-20) and has led the path to perfection himself (Hebrews 5:8-9). The positional, progressive, and perfective time-perspectives are brilliantly presented in this Masterpiece book called "the Epistle to the Hebrews."

## The Contribution of Hebrews to a Theology of Holiness

The contribution of Hebrews to a theology of holiness can hardly be overestimated. The book endorses and sanctions a vibrant view of sanctification. The theology of holiness in the book keeps in step with the rest of the Bible yet adds its own complementary truths. First, it adds the unique picture of Jesus in his humanity as a living example of going through his own mysterious sanctification process. As was mentioned before in John 10:36 concerning Jesus' statement: "do you say of Him, whom the Father *sanctified* and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming, because I said, I am the Son of God?'" This statement clearly ascribes to Jesus his own unique sanctification. Hebrews adds to this in Hebrews 5:8-9 by stating, "and having been made perfect" (i.e., having been sanctified fully). Hebrews 2:10 adds further that Jesus went through a unique sanctification process of his own.<sup>65</sup> Some of this Christology perhaps needs more exploration since there is little mentioning of this in typical systematical theological works.

Second, it furnishes and highlights for the reader the interactions between *hagios* and *teleios*, two important terms in the theology of holiness. Specifically, *teleios* where this term is widely used by other NT writers, especially Paul. Paul uses the word in association with sanctification in various passages: 1 Corinthians 2:6; 14:10; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; 4:12. These passages clearly demonstrate the intricate relationship the *teleios* word group has with the theme of holiness. James uses it in James 3:2.

Mathew uses it in the now infamous lynchpin passage for the "Perfectionists" advocates in Matthew 5:48: "Therefore you are to be *perfect*, as your heavenly Father is *perfect*."<sup>66</sup> But this verse seems to indicate rather an alternative way of stating what Peter declares in 1 Peter 1:15-16: "but like the Holy One who called you, be *holy* yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, 'You shall be *holy*, for I am *holy*.'" These passages seem to strongly argue for the synonymical nature of the *hagios* and *teleios* word groups. Once again in these examples one can observe the interrelatedness between these terms.

Third, Hebrews contributes to holiness doctrine by demonstrating continuity in the three-time perspectives as charted through the book's ample examples of verses. The three-times perspectives found in the doctrines of salvation are also found in the doctrines of sanctification. A reader is assured by reading Hebrews that it stands in the tradition of holiness apostolic creeds. The Christian can detect the positional holiness, the progressive holiness, and

its perfective holiness by gathering all the Scriptural data, analyzing it, and then allow the Scripture to speak for itself.

In sum, Hebrews offers the Christian a rich lexical treasure that, if brought together, forms a compelling case for its own theology yet in continuity with Gospel, Pauline, and general epistolary concepts of holiness. In fact, the believer has many things to consider while gleaning from the book. The Christian can look for encouragement in their own sanctification by meditating on Christ's own sanctification on earth. The saint can apprehend and claim the promises that the book offers for their own maturing, perfective, and completing growth in holiness sharing in Jesus' humanity (Hebrews 5:7-9).

### The Conceptual Identity of Holiness in Hebrews

Hebrews in a variety of ways is unique to the rest of the NT.<sup>67</sup> Even though perfection language is used in many other NT writings,<sup>68</sup> Hebrews employs the *teleios* word group uniquely by expounding on the significance of the new covenant over and above the old covenant.<sup>69</sup> How does Hebrews accomplish this?

First, the book details a thoroughgoing dualism between imperfection found in the OT system and the now NT perfect system. What is punctuated uniquely in the book is the landmark comprehensive exposition of the significance of accomplished redemption. In other words, what the rest of the NT teaches about Christ's work on the cross in succinct statements, Hebrews gives the *entire basis* behind the work through its detailed explanation of the entire priestly and sacrificial accomplishment of the both mediator and victim, Jesus. Therefore, Hebrews conceptual identity of holiness in many ways highlights, not exclusively, the grounds of a Christian's positional sanctification like no other book.

A few observations can be made from this statement above. When Paul says, "and in Him you have been made complete (Col. 2:10),"<sup>70</sup> what he means is that a believer's standing positionally is on the basis of all that Hebrews extensively teaches of Christ's mediatorial work of both priest and sacrificial lamb. Proleptically, John affirms Paul's terseness by stating, "Jesus said to him, 'he who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, *but is completely clean*; and you are clean, but not all of you'"<sup>71</sup> (emphasis mine, John 13:10). These passages show succinctly that a Christian's positional sanctification rests on the finished work of Christ on the cross (John 19:30) without elaborating all the details that Hebrews eloquently explains.

Second, Hebrews' own conceptual identity is couched in the OT's cultic practices which provide a rich amount of symbolism informing the positional sanctification of a believer. Everything from chapters 5-10 is an elaboration of a believer's positional holiness ensconced in the elaborate priestly and sacrificial system now fulfilled and completed (John 19:30) in Christ's work. In other words, Hebrews fills in the blanks for all the succinct

and terse statements made by the rest of the NT writers. What is assumed by these writers, what Christ actually accomplished, through brief explanatory declarations; Hebrews does by elaborating from the OT system's minutiae. This unique maneuver on the author's part makes the book stand on its own.

Lastly, the way Hebrews conceptualizes holiness, unlike any other book, is through its substantial binary focus on and utilization of the terms *teleios* and *hagios*. As already mentioned before (see chart), these two word groups dominate the landscape of the letter. The epistle's use of them combines to bolster its significance in the NT corpus. The two terms give the book its own conceptual identity because of their combined force and their unique function describing the believer's holiness or sanctification process. In sum, Hebrews conceptual identity of holiness is significant because it provides the comprehensive grounds for the Christian's positional holiness and it accentuates this positional holiness through its elaboration of Christ's cross-work.

### The Case for a Vibrant Brand of Holiness for God's People

This writer would be remised if nothing was ever said about application of all this to a believer's holiness. A preacher's greatest challenge and yet most important task is to ask, "So what?" Every effort to explain must be coalesced with exhortations and pleas for change. First, what one must gain from this entire treatise is that holiness begins in God. The concept of holiness begins in the very nature and character of God as grounded in the OT use of *qadash* and *qadosh* cognates. From here the trek to here began. Thus, this idea of being *set-apart* can only be a work of God based on his own standards of holiness. Because God is holy, namely, separate and transcendent, this is the believer's standard of holiness and his very pursuit. God's essence, morality, and ethics is the basis for the Christian's own holy walk. Like God's righteousness, one's righteousness should mirror. This righteousness is an imputed Christ's righteousness (Phil. 3:9) positionally which forms the basis for the believer's own pursuit. Christlikeness is the goal or the aim. The fruit of righteousness (Phil. 1:11) is the by-product a believer's union with Christ in baptism and resurrection (Romans 6). The church's challenge to walking in holiness begins with the sinless, perfect, and wholly-other personhood of God. Second, there is no optional track, but a believer must be motivated. A believer must be motivated to conform to Christ's example of living. In this respect, this writer reiterates the necessity of holiness in a believer's life. Since Christ is the very fulfillment of all the OT concepts of holiness ensconced in cultic minutiae, the believer only needs to stand firm on his accomplished work and trust God for the results. As mentioned before, there is both a divine and human part to the whole of sanctification. God provided the Lamb, and all a person needs to do is to respond in faith and repentance to redemption accomplished. It is incumbent on the believer to ask themselves, "where can I mirror Christ in this holiness?" "Where can I become like God?" These

questions form the nexus of holiness, namely, a believer's assurance of salvation and his testimony to a lost world. Therefore, at the forefront of this discussion is the believer's need to understand the focus of holiness, to align oneself with God's holy character where darkness is spread-about.

Thirdly, The pursuit of personal holiness involves "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and *perfecter* of faith," and participating in this truth, "He *disciplines us* for our good, so that we may share His *holiness*." The former verse describes the focus and concentration required by a believer on the race toward completion (entire, or culminative, sanctification). Positionally we move from being accepted through Christ's own righteousness imputed and progressively one then moves toward *perfective* holiness. The Christian in Hebrews is exhorted to do this by keeping his eyes on the humanity of Christ. The fact that Jesus endured the cross and persevered in God's mission for him (John 10:36) is ample motivation for a saint to persevere in faith. The Hall of Faith so vividly portrays the race of faith and the heroes that were commended for fixing their eyes on the prefigured Messiah, Jesus. The latter verse demonstrates the enduring character required to share in *God's holiness*. A saint must be willing to accept and embrace the training brought on by a loving Father. This discipline is necessary for a believer's growth in holiness. Hebrews brings this concept so well. The disciple or learner of Christ is a pupil of the hard-knocks of life. The disciple learns to embrace discipline because it causes them to be purged. This disciplining is another way saying that a Christian undergoes purgation.<sup>72</sup> The believer must understand that one's life begins (Hebrews 2:11) and ends with glorification (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Lastly, the positional, progressive, and perfective dimensions of holiness that have been explored assists the disciple of Christ to envision their life is a vibrant process where God is at work and the disciple responds to this work by "willing and working-out their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12-13)." The manner of living out this faith is always in humble adoration and submissiveness. 2 Corinthians 7:1 tells us, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."<sup>73</sup> The believer is called to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." How can a believer accomplish this? There must be divine motivation, and this is found in the preceding text:

"For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,  
"I will dwell in them and walk among them;  
And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

<sup>17</sup> "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says  
the Lord.

"And do not touch what is unclean;  
And I will welcome you.

<sup>18</sup> "And I will be a father to you,  
And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"  
Says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:16-18)

These promises provide the basis for a believer's motivation and all of this can go back to what this paper has attempted to establish. From the outset, the concept of holiness in the OT can be detected clearly in God making a people and a nation out of the Israelites (Ex. 19:6). This people were to be sanctified unto the Lord (Leviticus 19:2). Consequently, sanctification involved the *setting-apart* of the nation, not merely for right behavior, but for the nation and individually to be the living temple of God and for God to be dwelling in them. In other words, in the OT, the Israelites were *set-apart* so that God can be worshiped. God was to dwell in their temple which was a copy of the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 8:1-6). This promise of God dwelling in them is a foreshadow of the indwelling Spirit, a believer's union with Christ, and the permanent divine empowerment. Sanctification in Hebrews 8:10<sup>73</sup> develops this concept of God dwelling with his people through the application of Jeremiah 31:31-34. Hebrews 8:12 also says the new covenant people are his possession. 2 Corinthians develops the concepts of holiness found in the OT and Hebrews through describing the promises of divine indwelling, and it provides motivation for the believer by stating that God will divinely manifest himself, accept them as his own, and will divinely adopt them.

Pressing ahead with these conclusions, a believer's holiness is solid when he possesses these promises positionally and acts upon them. Admittedly, a believer submits humbly to,

“gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which He delivers us as justified sinners from the pollution of sin, renews our entire nature according to the image of God, and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to Him.”<sup>74</sup>

In summation, Hebrews welcomes a believer to seek God and to progress in sanctification or holiness. Once someone is sanctified, his life is to pursue sanctification until it mirrors the positional completing with the perfective version. A believer's reminder is Hebrews 12:14: “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”

## Endnotes

1. See Gundry, Stanley N. ed. *Five Views on Sanctification*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1987; Alexander, Donald L., ed. *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1988).
2. Warren Wiersbe, *Be Holy, Becoming "Set Apart" for God* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Cook Communications, 2005. 10

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3. J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1992) 12.
4. Matthew 5:13-16; Philippians 2:15; 1 John 1:5
5. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 35
6. See William W. Combs, "The Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification in Contemporary Evangelical Theology." DSBJ 6 (Fall 2001): 17-44; Also, Andrew Snider in "Sanctification and Justification: A Unity of Distinctions." MSJ 21/2 (Fall 2010): 1-20.
7. See Leviticus 11:44; 19:2, 20:7, 26; 1 Peter 1:15-16.
8. It is not "passé" as some would indicate, Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 32
9. J.C. Ryle, *Holiness, Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (Peabody, Massachusetts: 2007) 19
10. Hebrews 12:14; Rev. 21:27. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations from NASB.
11. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 36; "This is the *unum necessarium*, the one thing needful" Thomas Watson, as quoted in Richard L. Mayhue, *Sanctification: The Biblical basics* MSJ 21/2 (Fall 2010) 157
12. Steven L. Porter, "On The Renewal Of Interest in the Doctrine of Sanctification: A Methodological Reminder" JETS 45/3 (September 2002) 415-426
13. As quoted in RC Chapman, *Agape Leadership*, (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers) 7
14. Anthony A. Hoekema, ed., Stanley N. Gundry, *Five Views On Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1987) 61
15. Porter, *On the Renewal of Interest in the Doctrine of Sanctification*, 416
16. Mayhue, "Sanctification," 153-157
17. *Ibid.*, 157
18. *Ibid.*, 153
19. Chapman, *Agape Leadership*, 7
20. Ryle, *Holiness*, 18
21. *Ibid.*, 18
22. Combs argues cogently against any view that sharply separates "saving faith" (justification) and "sanctifying" faith, in Combs, *The Disjunction between Justification and Sanctification*, 29
23. Mayhue, *Sanctification*, 154
24. See Hebrews 12:14
25. Ryle, *Holiness*, 19

26. The debate among evangelicals about the relationship between justification and progressive sanctification rages on and is beyond the scope of this paper, but it does form the nexus (central issue) in holiness controversies. Again Combs and Snyder offer a good history and doctrinal perspective to the details as mentioned in previous footnotes.
27. See Genesis 2:3 for the first mention and use of holiness terminology. The seventh day should not be necessarily construed as having some inherent unique quality other than God Himself setting it aside proleptically.
28. Based on the NASB, the adjective “holy” in the OT appears 416 times; the verb “sanctify” 31 times; the noun 14 times.
29. Wiersbe adds, “The Hebrew word for ‘holy’ that Moses used in Leviticus means ‘that which is *set apart* and *marked off*, that which is different” (emphasis author’s); Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 11.
30. Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academics, 2002) 44
31. *Ibid.*, 45, Ross further says, “From beginning to end, the book reminds people that God is holy and that his holiness is the standard.”
32. See Leviticus 11:44-45 (probably key verse in book); 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:6.
33. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979) 18; See also Mark Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC, An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000) 46
34. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord*, 53
35. *Ibid.*, 53
36. *Ibid.*, 51-58
37. *Ibid.*, 48
38. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 22
39. Michael Riccardi, *Sanctification: The Christian’s Pursuit of God-Given Holiness* (Sun Valley, CA: Grace Books, 2015) 1-28
40. William Barrick, “Sanctification: The Work of the Holy Spirit and Scripture.” *Master Seminary Journal* 21, no 2 (Fall 2010) 179-191.
41. See Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews PNTC* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010) 281; Also see Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 10:10 for Greek: ephapax meaning a definitive and complete work.
42. Andrew V. Snider, “Sanctification and Justification: A Unity of Distinctions,” *Master Seminary Journal* 21, no2 (Fall 2010) 178.
43. George V. Wigram, *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998) 6-8; holy (x167), holiness (x9),



- sanctification (x9), saints (x60), sanctify (x8), sanctified (x15), sanctuary (x3), holies/holy place/s (x6)
44. Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1880) 327-331
  45. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T7T Clark, 1999) 5
  46. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 331
  47. Walter Bauer, trans., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1979) 8-10
  48. Barbara Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1994) 341; See also, W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960) has this comment: "The expression is not Johannine, but the idea of the Messiah as consecrated or set apart is found in [John 10:36](#), ὃν ὁ πατήρ ἡγίασεν. "ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ." This phrase carries a genitive "τοῦ θεοῦ" which normally and generally carries the idea of "belonging to God." Jesus was the set-apart one that uniquely belonged to God. As Christians this a term of endearment for we can also be described in like manner. See David Alan Black, *It's Still Greek to Me* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998) 48
  49. ἡγίασεν is in the aorist form indicating a simple past event, the Father set Jesus apart, He set him aside in order to carry out his mission on earth ("and sent into the world"). Jesus was uniquely separated for the work the Father sent him to accomplish on earth. This is sanctification at its best.
  50. The clause "ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πᾶσιν" contains a perfect passive participle declaring the divine act as a direct function of God of the setting-apart with present results. See Nathan E. Han, *A Parsing Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1971) 277; See also, Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 108
  51. Mayhue, *Sanctification*, 156
  52. John MacArthur, ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Dallas, Texas: Thomas Nelson, 2006)
  53. Paul tells believers to, "be imitators of God, as beloved children" in Ephesians 5:1. This is just another way of saying "be holy," "for I am holy."
  54. Mayhue, *Sanctification*, 153
  55. Mayhue substantiates this by remarking concisely, "The New Testament word group (*hagiazō*) is very similar in usage to the Old Testament word group (*qadash*). See Mayhue, *Sanctification*, 147
  56. The Greek word group appears in its verbal form *teleioō* found 23 times in NT; The other verbal form *teleō* is found 26 times; The adjectival form *telios* is found 17 times; The other forms are: *teleioteēs* X2, *teleiosis* X2, *teleioteēs* X1 (with omega), and *telos* X39. See Wigram, *The Englishman's Greek Concordance*, 727-728

57. Abbott-Smith furnishes this range: “*having reached its end, finished, mature, complete, perfect.*” These renderings of the semantic word group, *teleioo* or *teleios* provides the student of Scripture an array of possibilities within certain perimeters as demonstrated by Abbott-Smith’s entries. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon*, 442.
58. This writer agrees with John Stevenson where he comments the following about this verse: “This passage has been greatly misunderstood. It has been taught that this is a call for believers to grow and to mature and to become more knowledgeable in the Scriptures. But such an interpretation is completely at odds with the context...When the Hebrew readers are told to “go on to maturity” they are being told to hold to Jesus rather than all of the shadows and types of the Old Covenant which merely pointed to Jesus. The opposite of going “on to maturity” would be “laying again the foundation” of all the things listed” in John Stevenson, *Hebrews, The Sufficiency of the Savior*. (Hollywood, Florida: Redeemer Publishing, 2008) 105-106
59. Having the words “author” and “perfecter” juxtaposed only substantiates the three-time perspectives: positional, progressive, and perfective. “*τελειωτήν*” here is a *hapax legoumenon* meaning only found once in whole NT.
60. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the controversial use of the word “sanctified” by the author of Hebrews. This writer prefers to see the word “sanctified” here as less than salvific in nature. For further study, See Herbert W. Bateman IV ed., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2007) 25. Notice the use of other passages using “*hagiazō*” in non-salvific ways: 1 Corinthians 7:14; Hebrews 9:13.
61. “*ἀγιότητος*,” this is a *hapax legoumenon* meaning only occurring once in the NT.
62. This verse seems to possibly imply two time periods: progressive and perfective. See also Hebrews 2:10 which may allude to the perfecting process, namely, Jesus’ life of obedience (Hebrews 5:9), and his being made perfect forever (Hebrews 7:28).
63. Perfection language evinces a three-time perspective as does salvation. J.I Packer comments, “New Testament salvation has three tenses: past, present, and future. It is salvation: 1. from sin’s guilt (The past aspect: exposure to penalty is gone). 2. From its power (the present aspect: sin no longer rules us. 3. Ultimately from its presence (the future aspect: sin will one day be no more than a bad memory). In other words, *perfection* semantics shares an affinity with “justification, a new status, where a justified person (pardoned and accepted); adopted (made God’s children and heirs); cleansed (fitted for fellowship with their holy Creator is a reality. Accordingly, justification shares an affinity with perfection where a cleansing of the conscience from sin is paramount. See Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, 46-55
64. Packer further adds this dimension regarding holiness, “To be cleansed,” (in a way meaning to possessed a cleansed conscience using Hebrews’ terminology) “means that nothing in my past imposes any restraint on my fellowship with God in the present.” Concordantly, the Law failed to move a believer to this permanent status or positional degree.
65. See William E. Goff, “Learning to be a Perfect Christian: An Analysis of Perfection in the New Testament” (paper presented at annual meeting for Evangelical Theological Society, New Orleans, November 19-21, 2009. Goff comments about Hebrews 2:10; 5:8-9; 7:28: “and there are three different ways that Jesus’ being perfected or his work was perfected are presented. The first of these is found in Hebrews 2:10 and 5:8, 9 (cf. Heb. 7:28),

- where the claim is made that Jesus was perfected through his suffering. The obvious meaning of these passages cannot be that Jesus achieved sinlessness through suffering. The context of the chapter, as well as the general message of the epistle to the Hebrews, is that Jesus fulfilled the perfect work of salvation, which was the eternal objective, or goal, in Jesus' suffering and death on the cross."
66. Goff adds regarding Matthew 5:48, "There is considerable similarity in the language used here to that of Lev. 19:2, 'You must be holy for I, the Lord your God, am Holy.'" Goff, *Learning to be a Perfect Christian*, 11
  67. Peter O'Brien says, "For contemporary readers, however, Hebrews is one of the most difficult New Testament books to understand, and as a result it has often been neglected. Old Testament quotations and allusions abound while details about Israel's priesthood and sacrificial system dominate much of the book. Many of the author's arguments employ typological similarities that are difficult to grasp." O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 1.
  68. Cf. Matthew 5:48; Philippians 1:6; 3:12, 14; 4:12; James 1:4; 3:2; 2 Corinthians 7:1. Additionally, Craig Allen Hill adds, "There are fourteen different occurrences of the derivatives of *teleios* and *teleioo* in one form or another in Hebrews." He also adds this footnote: "This accounts for nearly one-third of all occurrences in the NT, making Hebrews the book with the most occurrences of this cognate group in the NT." This is unique to Hebrews. See Craig Allen Hill, "The Use of Perfection Language in Hebrews 5:14 and 6:1 and the Contextual Interpretation of 5:11-6:3" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, No.4 (December, 2014) 727.
  69. Hill once again elucidates, "whenever any term from the *teleios* word group appears in the text of Hebrews, it is making an explicit statement about either the perfection or imperfection of an element (people, symbols, or institution). Regardless of what exactly the concept of perfection means, the author is never unclear what elements (people, symbols, or institution) are considered." *Ibid.*, 730.
  70. This verse uses *pleroo* instead of the *teleios* word group. However, the semantic meanings and range are similar: *to make full, complete, accomplish, finish*. See The Lockman Foundation, *Zondervan NASB Exhaustive Concordance* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1998) 1559.
  71. The Greek word *holos* modifies *clean* giving the word *clean* the idea of whole, entire, and complete. See Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 316.
  72. See William L Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Volume 47B, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2000) 395-430
  73. Hebrews 8:10 says, "I will put my Laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people"
  74. Hoekema, *Five Views on Sanctification*, 61

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# Are There Too Many False Converts?

Warren Kendrick III

*“Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; Depart From Me, You Who Practice Lawlessness” (Matthew 7:21-23).*

These are hard words from such a loving Savior, but we must truly think long and hard on what is being said in these passages. We have a tendency to say things about this passage that are not true. We either say that this is showing us the impossible nature of the life of the Christian, so that we flee to Jesus, but it does not mean I must do the will of the Father, or we think we must do the will of the Father in order to be saved. Neither of those are the correct interpretation. So, what do we get from this scripture? The declaration of “Lord” in the double instance means that these people were at least fervent and passionate about their acknowledgment of Jesus as their Lord. These were not people who hid their Christian beliefs. Most who knew them would have seen them going to church and heard them saying the right things. They might have had the same ideas of Jesus as Zane Hodges, who said, “But although submission to the lordship of Christ is not in any sense a condition for eternal life, it is crucial to the manifestation of that life” (1998:172). Here we get a look at the view of this confused theologian. How can you, as the scripture calls you to in Romans 8:29, be transformed into the image of Christ, like all that are “the called”, according to the passage, without submitting to the only One who can accomplish this work in you, Jesus? There are many that make hearty proclamations, but their heart is not really in the Jesus of those claims. Here we can see a different view of what it means to be saved. These people are in absolute shock because Jesus said, “you do not do the will of My Father”, and they thought that salvation was by grace, is it not? There is a clear misunderstanding of what grace is, and what it is not. Let us take some time and get a better understanding of what we mean when we say, salvation is by grace alone and by faith alone.

## Grace Defined

The word grace simply means favor, or kindness, but in reference to the saving grace of God, it is the unmerited favor of God by which we can neither earn nor payback such a gift. Most evangelical Christians will hold to this clear definition of grace and come to two opposite conclusions as to what it



means. For instance, Zane Hodges said, “The initial drink was sufficient because its results were permanent” (1998:59). This he said speaking of the woman at the well, and his understanding of the teaching in this passage is that you are saved whenever you make a profession of faith in Jesus. He is right, up to a point, and that point is that if you, in faith, believe in Christ, you will be changed from that day forward. Hodges, wants you to believe that the faith that saves you does not change you, and you will continue to look like the rest of the world until you are taught, or come to be a pupil of Jesus. John MacArthur said, “It is typical of false disciples that they get on board with Jesus to get what they want, but when instead of delivering He makes demands on them, they turn away” (1988:115). How can both of these men be proponents of grace? Grace according to Hodges is a free gift that has little to no effect on the person. He hopes they will decide one day to walk with Jesus, but that is not necessary for the person that is saved. This understanding shows clearly in Hodges poor appropriation of his translation of Ephesians 2:10 that says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” The NASB translates the “should walk in them” as “would walk in them”, but which is correct? Both surprisingly. In the Greek, this is a subjunctive verb that is dependent upon the previous clause, meaning that if you are saved by grace and not of works, you will walk in the good works. However, the literal translation of this verb is “should,” but Hodges wrongly appropriates this verb to say that the people that are saved by grace “should” walk in good works, but if they do not, it is fine, too. So, what is this theologian trying to do? Is he trying to have others standing in front of Jesus shocked by what He tells them? John MacArthur said, “Salvation is not for people who want an emotional lift, but for sinners who come to God for forgiveness” (1988:97). MacArthur holds to a grace that is free to all sinners that will come to Jesus for salvation. God saves the lost, the broken, and the hurting. However, God does not leave them in that wretched state, but pours His Spirit into them, enabling Him to accomplish mighty things through them. God does not expect us to accomplish the impossible. Jesus will do what He has always done, and that is accomplish in us what we could never do on our own. We can see grace not only saves the poor sinner, but God transforms us into the image of His Precious Son. From this grace, we receive the gift of faith, but even this term has some theologians all over the place. We are going to clarify some of the different views of faith.

### Faith Defined

Saving faith is the belief that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior for lost sinners, and all that run to Him, trusting in Him, will be saved. We are actually practicing faith everyday as we get into our car, or go into a restaurant, we expect everything to work out even though we really do not know what is going to happen on the road, or what the cook is doing to our food. Faith is easily overlooked in these various situations because, we are used to things

going fine. What is the worst that can happen to us? Faith in Jesus is so much different than these other things, in some ways, and not in others. For one thing, there is no more important decision that a person can make than to decide where you will go for all eternity. Zane Hodges said, "People know whether they believe something or not, and that is the real issue where God is concerned" (1998:31). What he continues to elaborate on with this description of faith is actually an understanding of the facts concerning the historical Jesus. If someone believes that Jesus is the Son of God, that He lived the perfect life, and that He died to save sinners, then that person believes the gospel. James 2:19 says, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." What God is clearly saying through the pin of James here is that true faith is more than just believing facts about God and Jesus, it is trusting everything for eternal life into the faithful hands of Jesus, not just what I can get from Him, but what He has purposed for me in His plans. In reality, the so-called truth that Hodges claims that people know whether they believe something or not goes against the very passage that we are currently looking at. These people said to Jesus you are our Lord, and Jesus said, "I never knew you". Clearly, these people thought they believed something, and they were dead wrong. The last term we will put under the lens of magnification is salvation, what is it?

### Salvation Defined

Salvation obviously means to be saved from something, someone, or both. This is not as clear as we might think when it comes to the Biblical understanding of what salvation is. What are we saved from? What does it mean to be saved? Speaking of Luke 14:29-30, Hodges said, "The simple fact is that the New Testament never takes for granted that believers will see discipleship through to the end. And never makes this kind of perseverance either a condition or a proof of final salvation from hell" (1998:80). There are some problems here, first, we will consider here why he thinks we are going to be saved from hell. Jesus did not come here and live the perfect life, and die a criminal's death in order to save you from hell. We have all thought this at one time or another, but this is not a concept that comes from scripture. Jesus came to free us from the bondage of sin, and in a real sense that includes the penalty of sin, but that is never the focus. As we can clearly see from Romans 6, that we were all once slaves to sin, but now we are alive together in Jesus Christ. So, if it is not hell we were saved from, but the bondage of sin, as Romans 6 concludes, how can we still walk after that sin? This is similar to the prison warden opening our cell, so that we can leave, however, we enjoy ourselves so much that we stick around until we die. The truth that needs to be faced is that if we have never left the cell, the chances are good that we are still in prison. As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." Paul here speaks of the urgency of examining the life of the

believer, in order that he might not find himself without hope, and without Christ. How contrary is this line of reasoning to those who were calling out, "Lord, Lord," but paid no attention to the commandments of God?

### Many will be Lost

We are not saved by keeping the commandments of our God, but if we are saved it will be our greatest desire to walk in obedience to our Savior. We were born in great darkness and stumbling around we fell all over ourselves, we did not see the law rightly. We have a sin nature that wars against God, but if He has saved us, He gave us the Holy Spirit in order that He might overcome this wicked flesh of ours. God's will is not the problem, once our eyes have been opened, we can clearly see that His way is best. The obstacle arises when we as redeemed sinners still struggle to overcome adversities. This is not the case with the people we see in Matthew 7:21, they have a clear proclamation of Jesus as Lord, but they do not know the sweet fellowship, or earnest trusting this beautiful Savior. We might be hoping that surely this has got to be a small group, but unfortunately, we can see plainly in Matthew 7:13-14, that there are many who are walking according to the prince of this world, not caring for the things of God. Many will stand before our Lord Jesus, and be in utter amazement and horror at the sound of His testimony towards them. They will point to many things that they have done in the church gathering, like their long-term teaching ministry. They might claim that they have taught the scriptures, to the best of their knowledge. The problem lies in that very statement, their knowledge is not good enough to be leading the people of God. Some will forcefully state that they have been casting out demons in the name of Jesus, or doing some other great work in the name of our Lord. The Lord does not need your works of spiritual power. There are more than a few descriptive verses about Jesus and the disciples casting out demons, but there is not one clear command to do it. The last descriptions of this very large group points to the miracles that they performed in His name. This group desires to show off all that they have done in the name of Jesus. The miracles that are done in this way by many, do not even try to give God the glory. Most of these people are too busy pointing to themselves to give anyone else the glory. Selling the grace of God to line their pockets is a devastating tragedy, but throwing those same trinkets in the face of Jesus Himself is enough to make any true Christian sick. Jesus' response was heard loudly, and it echoed with the ringing of the ears and minds for all eternity. May we realize the gravity and the horror of this event as we remember our call to share the authentic gospel. The Lord continued to speak both incisively and attractively about the proper foundation.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:24-27, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds

blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell---and great was its fall.”

## The Hearers

There are two very distinctive groups here, both in every traditional sense heard the words spoken by Jesus, but only one group truly heard Him. What does it mean to truly hear Him? We believe that if the sound makes it to our eardrums, that we have received the message, but Jesus says something completely different from that in Matthew 13:15. Jesus proclaims that because their hearts have become insensitive they cannot hear, and that it has not been given for them to hear. In this explanation, we are going to consider what this passage is saying about those that have built a firm foundation, and those who have not. The truth that we all understand that if we are in an emergency situation, and we speak to people within the sound of our voice, and in a language and tone that can be understood. If that person does not react to what you tell them, the clear assumption must be made that they did not or could not hear, because of their response. This is the visible situation in this story told by Jesus of these two people. So, what can we say about the people here that do not respond to Jesus, who is truly conveying the only true words of life. The group of people that hear Jesus' Words and moves quickly to walk in obedience, these are the people that have truly heard Him. The people that are stubborn and move slowly in the direction for which Jesus has called them, also have heard His Words. The people that have been to the best seminaries in the country, and studied under the most prolific teachers, may claim to have heard. The person reading different scripture translations, and study many commentaries on those verses of scripture, even the people that have studied the original languages for years, may claim that they have heard. If all of our study, and all of our learning in this passage to which Jesus is referring, or to any other scripture as Matthew 5:17 perfectly indicates, the whole scriptures will not go away until all is accomplished. If these studies do not lead us to a place of earnest desire to walk in obedience, and some practical steps in that direction, we have not heard Jesus' Words. This is the true difference between the wise man and the fools. When building a house some people want to take a shortcut and just clear out an area, so that they can build their house on the sand, in the day that Jesus is referring, it was much simpler to put the house on the top sand rather than digging down to the rock bed. That was the desired place to lay a foundation. In the same respect many people, Jesus calls them fools, would rather build their house with less effort, not expecting problems. Some people however, took the time and dug down to the rock to build a firm foundation, not expecting problems, but being ready for them, just in case. We are just like the people of that time, if we can build it quick and easy, that

works for us. Jesus however, describes later in Matthew 13, in the parable of the sower, that His Word finds people in many different situations, but the good soil receives the seed and produces a crop. It is God who prepares our hearts to be that good soil. We would all fall by the scorching heat of the sun, the ravenous birds, or by the worldly weeds of thorns and thistles that choke us out, if not by the grace of God. So, what is the benefit of taking the extra time and work to build on the solid rock? What could possibly happen if we build on sand and not worry about tomorrow? These two questions are the ones that separate the wise man from the fools, the wheat from the tares, and the goats from the sheep. The person that only prepares for today with no cares for what can happen tomorrow, like Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:32, "If from human motives I fought with wild beast at Ephesus, what does that profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Do not be deceived." If this is where our thoughts take us, we have no need to worry about a strong foundation, the house is good for today, but what is truly the case when storms come, and they do?

In 2006, Hurricane Charley came through South Florida as a category 4 hurricane, it was the worst hurricane to make landfall in that region since Hurricane Andrew hit Miami in 1992. The strength and power of these furious storms caused extreme property damage and some people lost their lives. These storms caused building code changes and the emergency management teams worked around the clock to get everything back to normal, but the damage was in the millions of dollars, and some people would never recover what was lost in these storms. Most people however, would eventually recover and get back to life as they normally carried on. These are the people whether by desire or code enforcement built their house on a foundation of solid rock. This was not the case in October of 2016, when Hurricane Matthew a brutal category 4 hurricane made landfall on the coast of Haiti. The storm ripped through the countryside like a plow cutting through soft dirt, from the very beginning of this storm there was almost no contact with the rest of the world, they were cut off from all outside sources. When the storm cleared, the devastation was unimaginable, many people were killed by the storm and many others were affected by the harsh conditions the storm left behind. The results of this storm were heartbreaking for most of the regular residents that lived or currently live there. The crops were ruined and cities decimated, and the reported number of deaths in Haiti were in the hundreds. The people that are from that storm torn nation say that the number of unreported deaths from this storm is in the thousands. This unfortunately is the result of many buildings being built on sand, not by choice, but because of means and regulatory enforcement, or lack thereof. How much more so in the storms of life? We know that these storms have a tendency to shake us at our very core, far more than any physical storm could. In 2008, the economy took a major hit, and many people lost their job and only means of provision. This is a storm that comes to many people across this country, and for that matter the

world. In these circumstances people react in different ways, some just want to get away from the pain of the loss, while others though not all smiles, are going to be fine. The difference between the two groups is that one group has the strong foundation on the rock of trusting in Jesus, and the other group is trusting the sand of this world. Some storms are harder than others, but with God we can overcome any situation. Jesus said these Words in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” These are comforting words to those that are His, and their hope is built on the sure foundation that can overcome any storm, the foundation of trusting in Christ and walking in knowledge and aspiration to accomplish His Words. What about the same storms that face those who have built their house on the unsure foundation of sand, preparing for the moment, but not planning for tomorrow? The storm will be devastating, and the fall will be felt for all eternity.

This is what has come to pass, for the person that has not trusted in the only Savior for lost sinners, a category that we have all found ourselves in at one time or another. Words fail me when trying to describe this catastrophe, truly our minds as infinite beings cannot really grasp the idea of eternal damnation. The book of the Revelation 9:6 describes this horrible plight, “And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.” This is a horrifying prospect, that people will desire any escape, but none will be possible. We need to consider this realistically, this is the reality for not a few, or some, but most. The thought that there are many who have sat in church buildings across the world or church gatherings, and will one day hear from Jesus that clearly, “You are not Mine”, is a sad prospect and the dilemma is real. If someone is trusting in external religion and not the faith that is only possible from the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, that in all ways walks according to Christ, you have built on sand and the results will be forever! What can we say to such a demonstrative and piercing instruction from our Lord. Matthew 7:28-29 brings this teaching to a close saying, “When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not their scribes.”

## The Response

Jesus spent a great amount of time teaching the entire message of the portion of Matthew between chapters 5 and 7 and it has come to this, the culmination of the instruction on true believers and false converts, He has stayed with them. Jesus does not leave anything out in this proclamation of His truth. He tells them plainly that the gates are narrow that lead to life. He also reminds them that the one that hears Him plainly, and follows Him will be saved. The response was not a long line of people ready to devote their life to

Him. They saw this as something to be listened to and thought about, even marveled at. They were grateful for having heard the words of Jesus, but they really did not even hear what He said. They were astonished by the way that He spoke, but did not care about the things He said. This is somewhat like going to a concert with the music turned up too loud, you like the beat, but cannot make out the words. They saw that Jesus spoke with authority, and not like the scribes or Pharisees, however, no one asked how can this man say these things. This may be from listening to teachings of prophets that spoke for God, but when it came down to the truth, they just plain missed it. Jesus never said, “Thus says the Lord”, and no one here wants to know why. He speaks as the One that has authority, because he is the only One that truly has authority. The Pharisees got something right when they heard Him speak, and that is Jesus speaks like He is God. John MacArthur writes about this, “The faithful will be more than shocked, more than amazed, more than admiring---they will be obedient” (1988:218). If they really had heard Jesus, the results would have been greater, for they would have found the long-awaited Messiah and confessed like Peter, “You are truly the Son of God” Matthew 16, but yet they were amazed and walked away, may we not do the same.

### Conclusion

These passages and the authors that put forth their opinions about salvation must first check their assumptions by the Holy Bible. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, but the faith that does not do more than declare Jesus as my only Lord and Savior, is not a faith that is Biblically sound. In Matthew 4:17 Jesus says, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”, this is a clear statement that when you come to Christ, you will repent. Some might say that this is salvation by works, and to those people we would say that according to Romans 2:4, God’s grace leads us to repentance. Repentance in itself means more than we usually ascribe to it, the Greek word “μετανοεω” literally means to perceive afterwards, which means in a sense to change your mind. If our minds have truly been changed toward the things of God. We will not only hear Jesus clearly, but desire to walk in obedience to the call that He has set before us. We will build our house on the firm foundation of trust in Jesus alone, that we might accomplish all that He has prepared for us to do.

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# The Broken Hallelujah

## A Literary Analysis on Repentance in “Hallelujah”

Sky H. McNeill

Why does a good and loving God allow evil into the world? How can someone who claims to love God be guilty of sin to the magnitude of adultery and murder? How can such a person be redeemed to the point of being called a man after God’s own heart in the Scriptures? These questions plague society as stumbling blocks to faith for

those who believe that spirituality and religions are made up of perfect people or at least those that pretend to be. But the hard truth is that there is no church, no synagogue, no temple with even one perfect person on the face of the earth. Where there is sin, there is pain and heartbreak, no life or love that has been spared its thorns. Like so many in modern society, Canadian poet and musician, Leonard Cohen, was heavily influenced by multiple religions throughout his lifetime. He was born Jewish and raised attending synagogue each week. He was influenced by the Christian Messiah and became a Buddhist monk upon entering a Zen center outside Los Angeles. His constant struggle with his own sin and search for redemption led him explore a wide range of spiritual questions. The song “Hallelujah” written by Cohen, is a poignant view into the spiritual journey that sinful man undergoes as he struggles with sin, bears the weight of shame and consequences, and then broken, comes to that moment of true repentance before a Lord who forgives.

The original lyrics by Leonard Cohen were later changed by Jeff Buckley to its more popular format. This article focuses on the original lyrics and the way they serve as a social and spiritual commentary on our culture. (Editor).

*“I’ve heard there was a secret chord  
That David played, and it pleased the Lord  
But you don’t really care for music, do you?”*

Saul, the first king of Israel had a terrible track record of continually disobeying God’s commands, from offering the sacrifice to keeping the plunder and sparing the king of a foreign, evil nation. Not only would the kingdom be torn from his grasp, but even the Spirit of God had abandoned Saul because of his sin. “Now, the LORD’s Spirit had left Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.” (I Sam. 16:14) God had already chosen His new king, a young shepherd boy, but David’s first duty was not

kingly in stature, but in serving and bringing peace to the current, troubled king.

*It goes like this, the fourth, the fifth  
The minor fall, the major lift  
The baffled king composing Hallelujah*

From the fields to the royal court, David composed music in praise, in fear of the onslaught of enemies, and even in repentance. As this young anointed king ministers to Saul, David does not realize that he is preparing for his own repentance. During David's service to Saul, from playing and singing soothing music to warrior in his army, David witnesses Saul's continual struggle with sin and a hardened heart. David, bearing the brunt of Saul's wrath, flees for his own life, but even though David had opportunity to strike back against Saul, he refuses to attack God's chosen. Instead he pleads with Saul to repent and turn back to the will of God. In leading Saul to the Lord, David sets a precedent in his own life of repentance and a heart that follows God no matter the circumstance.

*"You saw her bathing on the roof  
Her beauty and the moonlight overthrew you"*

David ascended the throne as a mighty warrior king who led his people into victory after victory. However, in the opening of II Samuel 11 we see David sitting at home while his men are on the battlefield "at the time when kings go out to battle." One has to wonder if the reason that David finds himself in temptation is because he is not where he belongs. The writer of II Samuel makes the contrast, "But David stayed in Jerusalem"(11:1). Inquiring about the beautiful woman bathing, David discovers that she is the wife of one of his soldiers fighting David's war. There is no indication how David wrestled with his conscience, but the choice was made. "David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her" (II Sam. 11:4).

*"She tied you to a kitchen chair  
She broke your throne, and she cut your hair  
And from your lips she drew the Hallelujah."*

David was not the first to be broken by his lust of a woman forbidden to him. God's mightiest judge, Samson, was broken by Delilah, a collaborator of the Israelites enemies, the Philistines. By her entreaties of love, Delilah is able to coax the secret of Samson's strength, and God's commands to keep the laws of the Nazirite are broken. "She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair (Judges 16:19). Samson awoke to failed strength and the abandonment of the Lord's Spirit.

With the pregnancy of Bathsheba, David awakes to the fear of the shame of betraying both his own mighty men and his Lord. The power and love of the people of Israel for David is tainted with the stench of sin.

*Baby, I've been here before  
I know this room, I've walked this floor  
I used to live alone before I knew you*

Bathsheba enters the palace for the second time not with the excitement of royal splendor, but rather with the sorrow of a widow. The narrator never gives any hint as to Bathsheba's feelings and willingness as David calls her the palace the first time. According to the Midrash, Bathsheba is a modest woman who bears no guilt in the adulterous affair with the king. "The main issue of the narrative is to be sought in David's conduct towards Uriah – his efforts to conceal the consequences of his adultery and his order to have Uriah killed in battle" (Bar-Efrat 1980). Since that first fateful night where Bathsheba became pregnant, her life has been turned upside down. After sending word to David about her pregnancy, David devises a plot to cover up his sin. Uriah is brought home from battle to give word to the king on the "state of the war" but then David sends Uriah home so that in laying with his wife, he would cover David's sin. Uriah's values provide a sharp contrast to David as Uriah refuses to go into the comfort of his home and his wife's bed, since he found it dishonorable to take such pleasure while his fellow soldiers were camping in the field and risking their life in battle.

*I've seen your flag on the marble arch,  
but love is not a victory march,  
It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah!*

One popular Jewish thought maintains that David was foreordained to marry Bathsheba, but that he did not take her in the time or manner that God had originally planned. Another holds that David did not commit adultery since Bathsheba was no longer married, but had been divorced when Uriah went to war. "Under the house of David, whoever went forth into battle would give his wife a letter of divorce" (Sternberg 1986). This would only make David guilty of wife stealing as Uriah had planned on marrying his wife again when he returned home from the battlefield. However that is not how God sees this arrangement according to the prophet Nathan. "Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon" (II Sam. 12:9). As Bathsheba returns to David's palace, now as a new bride, it is not without the heartache knowing that her king and husband in her bed has won by deception and evil.

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## The Broken Hallelujah

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*“Now maybe there’s a God above  
But all I ever learned from love  
Is how to shoot someone who outdrew you.”*

Scripture does not contain many details about the man who was Bathsheba’s husband. Uriah is described as a Hittite, from a pagan nation to the north of Israel in the land of Anatolia. As a Hittite, Uriah would not have grown up in the covenant of God, and yet he has allied himself to God’s people and king. We are never told how Uriah left the Hittites and came into the company of David, only that he is listed among David’s mighty men in II Samuel 23. As such there is a love that one has for his leader, his king. A willingness to lay down one’s life in service is born out of such devotion. And yet the love a king should have for those that obey, for that one that would give up everything is perverted as David sends the letter that contains Uriah’s death sentence in Uriah’s own hands back to those that will put him to death.

*“It’s not a cry that you hear at night  
It’s not somebody who’s seen the light  
It’s a cold and it’s a broken Hallelujah!”*

Hallelujah, or alleluia, is a transliteration for “praise the Lord.” אלהל is praise from a Jewish prayer found in the Psalms. The יה refers to the first two letters of the tetragrammaton, or the letters that comprise the name of God as given to Moses. Hallelujah contains the feeling of thanksgiving and praise in times of blessing. But there is a greater blessing that comes from the utter hopelessness leading to repentance. When man can no longer hold onto his own self-righteousness, when one’s sin is laid bare and standing naked without pride or religiosity to hide behind, man clings to the mercy of a perfect God knowing that it is the only thing left saving him from an eternal darkness. You cannot be proud and be broken, but only by being broken can you ever truly become whole. David is broken by his sin, and by the tiny life required to pay for it, but his brokenness led to a life that truly changed, “because David did *what was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” (I Kings 15:5) True repentance leads to a completely changed life. In search for light and redemption, Cohen contended,

“Because we confuse this idea and we’ve forgotten the central myth of our culture which is the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This situation does not admit of solution or perfection. This is not the place where you make things perfect, neither in your marriage, nor in your work, nor anything, nor your love of God, nor your love of family or country. The thing is imperfect. And worse, there is a crack in everything that you can put together, physical objects, mental objects, constructions of

any kind. But that's where the light gets in, and that's where the resurrection is and that's where the return, that's where the repentance is. It is with the confrontation, with the brokenness of thing" (Gerry 2008).

In Cohen's poem Anthem, he again echoes the sentiment that amidst the turmoil of this world, light will get in, not by the façade of perfection, but by the broken. "*Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.*" (Cohen 1993) Just as man is broken in repentance, one had to be broken in order to attain mercy. When David sinned, a life was required, but not a lamb, a baby. And generations after David was laid in the grave, another baby would come with the purpose to die, to die that mankind may have mercy, may have hope, may have life. In Matthew 1:6, "David and her who had been the wife of Uriah" are mentioned in the very genealogy of the one who would come to lay down His life so that all in repentance could sing "Hallelujah."

*"And even though it all went wrong  
I'll stand before the Lord of Song  
With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah."*

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