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THE BBI JOURNAL



Published Semi-Annually

By Brethren Bible Institute, Pathanamthitta, Kerala



STUDY TO TEACH

A House organ of BBI

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THE BBI JOURNAL is a semiannual publication of Brethren Bible Institute, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, INDIA.

This Journal is devoted to the exposition of the Bible, biblical doctrines, and practical issues from a biblical perspective.

We publish original scholarly unpublished research papers, that focus on biblical exposition and current theological and ethical issues. We invite articles from theologians, Pastor-teachers and serious Bible scholars.

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Message from the President	5
Principal's Desk	7
Editorial	9
1. THEOLOGY PROPER: The False Views on the Doctrine of Trinity By Dr. Joseph M P	13
2. HERMENEUTICS: A Critical Study on the Principles of Interpretation for Understanding the Written Word of God By Dr. Jacob C M	32
3. BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP: "A Biblical Evaluation on the Exemplary Leadership Traits of Four Pillars of Faith: Moses, Nehemiah, Daniel and Paul; A Comparative Analysis" By Dr. Reji Johnson	57
4. SOTERIOLOGY: An Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel By Dr. Varghese John, Trivandrum	77
5. EVANGELISM: Roles and Responsibilities of Women in Evangelization and Assembly Growth By Nithin M Manoj, Trivandrum	94
6. MISSIOLOGY: The Missionary Contributions to the Upliftment and Welfare of Indian Women (1700-1947) By Sam K John, Bangalore	111
7. PNEUMATOLOGY: A Theological Evaluation of Major Views on 'to Teleion' (the Perfect) In 1 Corinthians 13:10 By Thankachen Mathew, Mamoodu	126



Roy Mathews

Message from the President

When we examine the details of Jesus Christ's life, one of the highlights is His firm endorsement of the Scripture. His apparent and consistent use of Scripture is significant. If anyone had the authority to speak apart from Scripture, it was our blessed Lord, yet He never did so.

Jesus always referred to the Scriptures as belonging to God. In Jn 10:35, He called them "the Word of God" and affirmed that they could not be broken. When He spoke about the forthcoming betrayal of Judas, He attributed it to the fulfillment of the Scripture, Jn 13:18.

Soon after His resurrection, He reminded His disciples that all that had happened was in accordance with Scripture (Lk 24:44). In v 45, we read that He opened the Scriptures to them. All His actions and words were in absolute fulfillment of the Scriptures.

In John chapter 17, we find Jesus Christ's high priestly prayer. He prays in verse 14, "I have given them Your Word," and in verse 17, "Sanctify them by Your truth; Your Word is truth." Again, in verse 19, He prays that "they also may be sanctified by the truth." Jesus emphasizes that God's Word has the power to sanctify us, setting us apart from the world for God's purposes. In Romans 12:2, Paul exhorts us to avoid conforming to the world. Occupying ourselves in God's Word transforms and renews our minds, allowing us to develop a biblical perspective on all aspects of life.

In Jn 17:17, Jesus also calls God's Word "the truth." He was not saying it contains the truth or is one of the truths. Instead, He asserts that its very essence is truth. It serves as the absolute, final, and eternal source and standard of truth against which all else is evaluated. God's truth remains constant across all customs; all spiritual and moral truth is found within His written Word.

Our blessed Lord is our pattern to follow. If He depended so much on the Word of God, how much should we be inclined to the Scripture and put in our efforts to understand its essence without losing its value?

Our aim in publishing the BBI Journal is to provide scholarly writings on important biblical topics in concurrence with the Word of God, encouraging serious readers to grow spiritually.

By God's abundant grace, we are pleased to present the Second volume and third issue. We value your encouraging comments and suggestions in the past and invite your continued support for further improvements. We also solicit your continued prayers and support for BBI ministries.

Heartfelt thanks to the chief editor for his steadfast commitment to timely publication.

All honor, glory, and praise belong to God alone!

Joyfully in His service

Roy Mathews

President

Principal's Desk



Dr. K. C. Johnson

This journal stands as a testament to the enduring power of God's Word and our continued pursuit of theological and biblical understanding. In an era marked by rapid change and diverse perspectives, a rigorous and thoughtful exploration of Christian doctrine and practice has never been more essential.

The BBI Journal seeks to equip leaders within our assemblies and institutions to stand firm on the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9). By doing so, we aim to help them entrust these biblical truths to faithful individuals who will, in turn, teach others (2 Tim. 2:2) while living lives worthy of the Lord.

The articles featured in this journal reflect a deep commitment to this critical mission, addressing a range of significant and timely issues. From a careful examination of the doctrine of the Trinity to a critical evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel, readers will encounter diverse viewpoints and methodologies.

We investigate into the timeless wisdom of Scripture, exploring the interpretive principles that guide our understanding of God's message today. Comparative analyses of leadership traits in figures such as Moses, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Paul offer valuable insights for both assembly leaders and those in secular leadership roles.

The journal also highlights the crucial role of women within the assembly, exploring their contributions to evangelism and church growth, and examining the historical impact of missionaries on the lives of women in India.

Additionally, we engage in a thoughtful discussion of theological concepts, such as the meaning of "perfect" in 1 Corinthians 13:10.

These diverse topics reflect the rich and multifaceted nature of Christian thought and the ongoing dialogue within the broader Christian community. Our prayer is that this issue of the BBI Journal will empower readers to offer a reasoned defense of their faith to

all who inquire (1 Peter 3:15). We are deeply grateful to the authors for their well-researched contributions.

We invite you to engage fully with the articles in this journal, challenge your own assumptions, and deepen your understanding of God's Word and its enduring relevance for today's world. May these pages instigate further exploration, thoughtful discussion, and a renewed commitment to living out the Gospel in its fullness.

Dr. K. C. Johnson
Principal

Editorial

Let Us Be Guardians of Truth

Dr. Twinkle Paul

Christian history is a history of the interpretation of the Bible. This is why correct biblical interpretation is of great significance. Truth matters. Progress is built on the correct understanding of God's Word, but unfortunately, churches have been divided because of theology, and there exists a lot of controversy over biblical truth.

The Reformers and Shapers of Christian history understood the importance of theological education. There are enough examples from the history of the Reformation to prove that theological education was important for them. It is crucial to recognize that all the Reformers were highly educated, so they were able to preach and write pointedly.

John Wycliffe, the morning star of the Reformation, was a seminary professor at the University of Oxford and able to fluently write his thoughts in Latin.

John Huss was a rector of Charles University, one of the oldest universities in Europe. Leaders of the Hussites were educated people. The Reformers put education in the forefront as they went to the original sources. Their education and depth of knowledge was documented in their ability to translate the Bible into their native languages. It is well known that Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German from Greek in one year (1522) at Wartburg and then the entire Bible with the help of others by 1534. William Tyndale (1494–1536), an English scholar and a leading figure of the Protestant Reformation, is well known for his translation of the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek texts into English. This was the first English Bible translation from the original biblical languages. Although this achievement cost Tyndale his life, his Bible translation played a key role in the advancement of the Reformation in England and beyond.

In today's Christian world, theology tends to be despised by many people; and, interestingly, this aversion seems to be spreading even within the evangelical churches. Theological education in some circles is unwelcome and regarded as unessential. However, the principal tasks of educators, pastors, theologians, administrators, and Bible scholars are to present a correct image of God, cast a vision, preach, protect against false doctrines and interpretations of the Bible, and care for those entrusted to them. But how can they do these things if they do not correctly understand the important issues? These include the authority of the Scriptures, the nature of God, the plan of salvation, the person of Christ, the centrality of the Cross, the endtime prophecies, hermeneutics, the nature and authority of the church, and questions regarding abortion, divorce, remarriage, homosexuality, stewardship, hell, immortality—to name a few. Addressing all of these topics depends on an understanding of theology and a constant growth in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). We live in a complex world, and people demand meaningful and relevant answers to their issues.

Others formulate their objection this way: What we need in our churches in these last days are pastors with practical skills, not theologians. This is a misunderstanding, because good biblical and theological training is and must be practical. Applied theology is the crown of all theological studies. Even the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek, if rightly taught, are thoroughly practical. It has been said that the most practical thing in life is theory, and here it is demonstrated: Hebrew and Greek are a fountain of theology, and an understanding of these tools helps one to interpret the biblical message. The thoughts of God, the prophets, and the apostles were expressed through language, which provided a mirror of their minds. The vocabulary, grammar, and syntax reflected their thinking, from which springs our understanding of how to live the Christian life. Practically speaking, whatever we say—in our conversations, preaching, articles, books, songs, prayers, and worship—about humanity, life around us, life after death, and the future, reveals our theology. These reflections must be well informed.

C. S. Lewis lamented that many Christians like practical religion but despise theology. He said that he personally escaped this wrong assumption because “any man who wants to think about God at all would like to have the clearest and most accurate ideas about Him which are available.”¹ He continued: “If you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones—bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas.”²

There is a sense in which every believer is a theologian. Theology is our systematic and comprehensive reflection on God’s revelation. It involves thinking deeply about the meaning of the various aspects of life from God’s perspective. It also involves prospection, that is, looking into the future. This reflecting-prospecting process is rooted in the Holy Scriptures, and it must be done with consistency.

Church educators, administrators, pastors, theologians, and Bible scholars as well as all church members need theology. Good, balanced theological education has many benefits, especially in the context of our eschatological hope and task to prepare a people for the second coming of Jesus Christ:

1. Theology helps us to formulate messages centered on Christ in the context of the belief in a triune God.
2. Theology assists in preserving biblical truth through a competent, responsible, and relevant exposition of God’s Word in preaching.
3. Theology helps us to avoid bad scholarship as well as the sensational, emotional, and intuitional Bible interpretations filled with fancy stories and imaginations.
4. Theology equips church members, including leaders, to answer questions intelligently.
5. Theology edifies the church.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1943), p.135.

² *Ibid*, p.136.

6. Theology helps to communicate the full gospel to a wide diversity of cultures and worldviews.
7. Theology gives a big picture of God's revelation, demonstrating how all truth is connected as well as defining the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.
8. Theology equips people to lead meaningful dialogues and contemporary, relevant conversations.
9. Theology brings professionalism, expertise, and confidence to our multifaceted ministry.
10. Theology does not just spell out the importance of what is believed, but also explains why it is relevant and how it should be lived. Thus, it is closely connected to ethics.

This means that theology needs to be a critical but constructive voice in the church. The church needs that function, and educators, theologians, and Bible scholars should not betray or eschew this important role. We need to be guardians of biblical truth. If we do not study diligently and seriously the Scriptures, we open ourselves to bringing or cultivating bad theology in the church. Lack of education enslaves.

1. THEOLOGY PROPER

The False Views on the Doctrine of Trinity

Dr. Joseph M P

Dr. Joseph M.P, is MS. Ortho, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon. He is deeply interested in systematic theology, especially in the doctrine of Trinity, in which he opted to do research work for his PhD. This research included the study of false views on the doctrine of Trinity. The writer is in fellowship with Christian Brethren Church, East Fort, Thrissur.

Abstract

The Holy Bible is the inspired inerrant Word of God, 2 Tim. 3:16. Hence, that Word must be the unique and exclusive guide for teaching and practice, Psalm 119:85, 105. The Scripture is the only means of revelation of the living God. For that, one must be enlightened by Psalm 119:130. The Word of God alone is the only source of understanding the awesome truth of Triunity of the revealed God of Bible. The revelation of the Triune God is progressive, and found expressed in comprehensive Biblical Theological language, the doctrine of Trinity. Apart from Biblical revelation, any finite human endeavour to analyse this infinite Divine mystery in human terms shall err consecutively into the dark cisterns of heresy. This writeup is devoted to identify the heretical views that developed against the Biblical doctrine of Trinity, so that we may remain aware of this heinous treachery.

The first focus is a concise presentation of the Biblical truths that illuminate the reality of the doctrine of Trinity. This mystery is revealed by the Holy Spirit. That truth is accepted in faith. Following this, the inception, and the roots of the origin of the heretical or false views on the doctrine of Trinity will be presented. In this, the names of anti-Trinitarian movements are included to convey their

unbiblical views. Finally, a chart format will be presented for completion.

1. The Biblical Truth of the Triune God¹

- A. God is three persons
- B. Each person is fully God
- C. There is one God.

This statement upholds the scriptural monotheism, means one God, subsisting in a plurality of persons, in eternal real distinctions. This truth is the revelation of the Biblical Triune God. Rev. 22:18, 19 gives that all revelations are included, hence nothing is to be added beyond already what we have. That Scripture reading is fundamental, “Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven” Ps.119:89². This powerful and authoritative verse stresses the eternal origin, truthfulness, and eternal duration of God’s Word.

2. The monotheistic revelation in the O.T.³

Deut. 6:4 and Isa. 44:6-8; these verses assert the uniqueness of the sole Deity of Yahweh. This revelation is the monotheistic frame work of the O.T.

3. Distinctions in the Monotheistic framework of the O.T.

- a) Psalm 110:1⁴, and Psalm 45:6-7.

An obvious point here is that the royal figure addressed as God in verse 6 is anointed in verse 7; This was an obvious mystery in the O. T. times. It cannot be passed unnoticed as Isa. 6:3 ascribed threefold holiness in the realm of the worship of God.

¹ Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (IVP, Leicester, England. 1994)p231 Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *Systematic Theology Vol I.* (Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1993) P283.

² Henry M. Moris, *The Defenders Study Bible*, (word, Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990) P 661

³ NASB, Published by (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000) pp. 293, 1202.

⁴ NASB, Published by (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2000) P1012

b) God as Father in the O.T.⁵

Ex. 4:22-23, Hos. 11:1 read God the Father of the nation Israel, (Jer 3:11, 12) is the one God revealed as YHWH (Yahweh).

c) The Spirit of God in the O.T.⁶

Psalm 139:7 The Spirit of God is identical to Yahweh, and has personal character, Gen 1:2, Ps 33:9, 104:22-30, Ezek. 37:8-10. These verses do indicate the Spirit of God empowering people for God's purposes.

d) The expectation of a future Messiah⁷

Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, Isaiah 40:9-11 refer to the birth of a son, and a child to sit on throne, while Daniel 7:14 indicates the coming of a Divine figure. It did not materialize in their life history but were expectations of future fulfilment.

Decorous Derivation from the O.T. revelation

The O. T. revelation of God enable us to converge on the essential foundation of the Biblical doctrine of Trinity. The revelation of the O.T. personalization of the Godhead contained a clear anticipation of the full revelation in the N. T., substantiating what has been aforesaid is true.

4. The Progressive Revelation of God in the N.T.

The Cardinal evidences are referred from NASB⁸. Matthew 3:16, 17, at the baptism of Jesus Christ, the Trinity is revealed.

⁵ John H. Fish III, *Understanding the Trinity*, (ECS Ministries, Dubuque 1A USA 2006) pp 158-159 William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of Early Fathers*, By Jerome Vol-2, (Theological Publications of India, 1984) pp 180-181. Morey, Robert, *The Trinity* (World Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1996) PP 167-172

⁶Berkhof, Louis, *Systematic Theology Part I* (William B Eerdmans Publishing Company,

Grand Rapids, Michigan 1996) P86

⁷ Morey, Robert, *The Trinity Evidences and Issues* (World Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996) PP 128-134.

⁸*New American Standard Bible* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA 2000) PP 1089, 2172, 1984, 1662, 2052.

Identical references for continuing revelation disclose further the personal distinctions in Godhead as God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as given in Hebrews 9:14, Romans 8:11, Matthew 28:18, 19, 2 Corinthians 13:14. The N.T. truths that abound in the revelation of the God of Bible converge on the one God, the Deity of the three, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and the three in the oneness of God.

5. The statement of faith or creeds.

The N. T. revelations became the backbone of foundational truth of the creeds of the church. The Athanasian creed presented “we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance”⁹. Thus, the doctrine of Trinity does not in one hand assert that three persons are united in one person, or three Gods in one God, nor that God merely manifests Himself in three different ways, but that there exist three eternal distinctions in the one essence or substance of the revealed one and only God of the Bible.

6. Biblical truth and heresy

While the revealed truth of the Triune God became the Biblical faith of Christians, the heresy is on either side of the path of the truth. The heresy has deeper ramifications which are recognized in each word used to formulate the Trinitarian creed. Those words addressed and enshrined refutation of heresy from different facets.

7. The Roots of Heresy

After the command of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, Matt. 28:19, the gospel was proclaimed, Jesus is “the Son of God, with power” with His resurrection from the dead, Rom 1:4. The Apostles preached the resurrected Jesus, and that led a large chunk of human beings to own Him as Lord and Saviour, Acts 4:12, 32. They confessed Jesus Christ to be the Lord, having the same nature as

⁹ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *Systematic Theology, Vol 1* (Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1976) pp 283-284

Besnier, Calvin E. *God in Three Persons* (Living studies, Tyndale House, Wheaton, Illimol's 1984) pp 26-42.

God the Father Acts 2:33, 36; 3:20, 21. Thus the orthodox doctrine of God is that which enshrined the exclusive revealed truth that honour the God of Scripture perfectly.

a) The orthodox scriptural faith of God.

Jesus Christ is Lord, fully Divine, and Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person¹⁰; He is the pre-existent Son of God. The Holy Spirit is fully God and on equal level with the Father and the Son, with personal distinction¹¹. Thus, the orthodox faith is that, the Father is not the Son, the Father is not the Holy Spirit, the Son is not the Father, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, there is only one God. In other words, there is one God, eternally and necessarily existing as Trinity in unity, in oneness of essence, and cannot be other than He is, where the truth of God of Gen 1: 1, 2 is fully revealed. The wording is highly precise, so as not to allow any heretical element in defining the Triune God of scripture.

b) Off The Track of Faith

Alongside the faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, there were people who were not willing to accept Jesus Christ with clear definition as Lord. At the same time, they were not willing to abandon Christ altogether. Hence, they devised different views about God, Christ and Holy Spirit¹². The diverse and diverging views that developed, formed the pabulum for heretics of Christian

¹⁰ Benjamin, Breckinridge Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Phillipsburg-NJ, 1950) pp 58-71

Wainwright, Arthur. W, *Trinity In The New Testament* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, Eugene, 1962) pp 53-74.

¹¹Beisner Calvin. E, *God in Three Persons*, (Living Studies, Tyndale Howse Publishers, Wheaton Illinois 1978)

PP 103-142

1. Robertson Alexander, 11 Donaldson James, (Ante-Nicene Fathers VOL . 1,1996) pp 329, 330, 574, 576.

¹² Noll, Mark A. *Turning Points*, (Baker Accademic, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1997) p129

Letham, Robert, *The Holy Trinity*, (P&R Publishers, New Jersey 2004) pp 11-13

history¹³. Defending the truth of the one and only revealed God who is Triune, were the decisive moments in identifying heresies as false and untrue¹⁴.

c) The Orthodoxy and Heresy

Heresy was instrumental in reflection of the orthodox faith that was from the beginning. Heresy is heard easily, but the orthodoxy had preceded it. The Christian faith is based primarily on the person of Christ, which is the corner stone of the faith of the church that is once delivered to the saints, Jude:3.

8. The Apostolic Confession and the defense of faith

The apostles declared one true God, and Jesus Christ the resurrected Lord as the Son of God, and they experienced the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit evidently. These realities ascribe divine title to Lord Jesus Christ, other than the Father. The question was how God can be one and at the same time three. This was taken as a riddle¹⁵. Because the Roman and Greek Gnostics of the time did not receive this as it clashed with the creation and the doctrine of Christ. The Christian theology had to be developed in reaction to Gnosticism. Disciple John's writings, Paul's Colossians, Galatians, and Corinthian epistles identified and refuted these Gnostic heresies. The early Christians and apostles had to struggle hard to delineate the revealed doctrine of Trinity against the heretics¹⁶.

9. Identification of heresies.

In the history of Christianity, many facets of anti-Trinitarian heresies can be identified. I like to present them in precise identity as 1) Crass Monarchianism, in its present-day version is Unitarianism, which denies all distinctions of Persons in the Divine Nature of God.

¹³ Wainwright, Arthur W, *Trinity in The New Testament* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene 1962) pp53-74

¹⁴ Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies*, (Hendrickson Publishers Peabody, Massachusetts 1988) pp 76-94

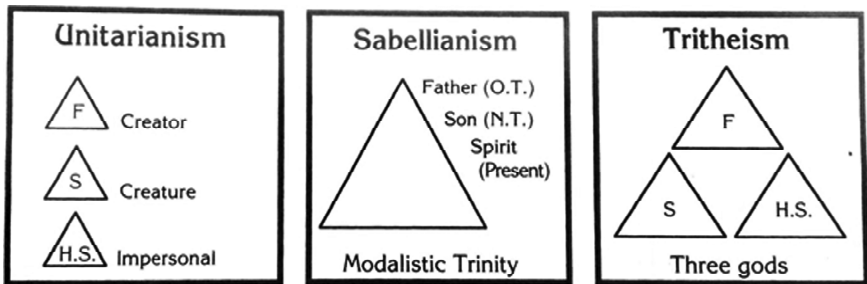
¹⁵ Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies* (Haudrickson Publishers, 2003) p 49.

¹⁶ Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History Of Christian Thought*. (Abingdon Press, Nashville 1970) pp 61-70, 121.

2) Modalism, which admits trinity of persons, but holds that the difference between them is not real. Hence, nearly a nominal or model variety is synthesized known as Sabellianism or Modalism.

3) Subordinationism grants that the three divine persons are really distinct, but insist that they are not coequal, but subordinate one to the other (Arianism, Macedonianism, and Tritheism are examples¹⁷). Apostle Paul gives a strong blow to these arguments by placing in 2 Cor 5:16, “wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh, Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh yet, now henceforth know we Him no more”. This is the absolute and total faith in Christ, the Son of God, Savior and Lord. The Apostolic Fathers defended the scriptural revelation; Irenaeus specifically confessed the Deity of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, being the unique truth of Triune God¹⁸.

A Diagrammatic Representation of mater Trinitarian Heresies, in Absolute Form.



Adapted from House, H. Wayne, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*.

These three anti-Trinitarian diverge and converge at certain details to achieve a common end that deny the Biblical doctrine of Trinity. These will be described under three separate headings

¹⁷Rev. Fr. Dr. Sebastian Chalakkal, *An Introduction to Christology* (Oriental Institute of Religious Studies Vadavathar INDIA 2011) pp 19, 157, 158.

Rev. MSGR. Joseph Phole, *The Divine Trinity* (B. Herder Book Co. ST. Louis, MO 1919) pp 113-132

¹⁸I Robertson, II Alexander, 11 James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers VOL1*. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus (WM B. Eerdmans Publishing company, Grand Rapids Michigan 1996) pp 319, 343, 344

William A. Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers VOL.2*. Theological Publications in India, Bangalore 2005) pp 95, (12(7) 4) 1134, 96.

Mc Grath, Alister E. *An Introduction to Christianity* (Blackwell Publishers Ltd 2001) pp 108-114

1) Unitarianism.

This name indicates a spectrum of beliefs. The main stay is that they stress the oneness of God. But in their argument, they deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. These denials expose several tenets of Unitarianism, and some may have parallel understanding with Islamic monotheism. While Unitarians uphold the unipersonality of God, Jesus Christ is fully and solely human in status. They rejected the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, denied His Deity, and denied the worship of “the man Jesus Christ.” Hence the belief in strict incommunicable Divinity of one God can be classed as real Unitarians.

¹⁹Unitarianism as it stands became the name of a distinct religious tradition. But it is to understand that Unitarianism is not just a non-Trinitarian sect. In their conviction Unitarians keep uniqueness than the other known non-trinitarian systems such as oneness Pentecostalism, United Pentecostal Church international, the Jesus Church and Biblical Unitarianism²⁰. In the past and in the present scenario, the Unitarian universalism had encroached into the initial Unitarian concepts. This resulted in an admixture of non-theistic members, whose theistic denials overshadowed the initial Unitarian teaching totally. All Unitarians reject the doctrine of Trinity, the way it is revealed in the Bible.

a) Arianism

An early century precipitation with the Unitarian teaching is Arianism. It is the name given to the teaching of Arius a presbyter in the Alexandrian Parish. He was instrumental in teaching contrary to the Biblical truth concerning Jesus Christ. He came up with his erroneous views by 318 A.D.²¹. He begins from the absolute uniqueness of God who communicated his essence to none other.

¹⁹Ferguson, Sinclair B, *New Dictionary of Theology* (IVP, Leicester, England 1991) pp700, 701.

²⁰Martin, Walter Ralston, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Bethany House Publications 2003) pp 337-344

²¹Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies*, (Hendrickson Publishers, Messachcelts2003) pp 104-142

The supreme being is God the Father. The Son is a created being by the Father, a creature in status, or son is a lesser god than the Father. Thus, Arianism denied the full deity of the Son of God, and His pre-existence. In addition, they denied the deity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a lesser created being after the Son. Thus, they denied the scriptural revelation of the doctrine of Trinity. This teaching was condemned in the church council of Nicaea 325 A.D.

b) Jehovah's Witness

The Arian teachings did not die out and disappear totally after condemnation in 325 AD. The same heresy surfaced at times. The Jehovah's Witness sect became a separate heretic group who are indebted to Arian teachings to formulate their theology.²² In the year 1961 AD, Jehovah's Witness, came up with their own translation of Bible. This version is the New World Translation. In this version, they distorted the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ to be the God's first creation. The Holy Spirit is God's invisible active force, without any personal identity. They denied the deity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as well as totally denied the Holy Spirit. They are the arch heretics against the scriptural revelation of the doctrine of Trinity.

c) Christadelphians.

A so-called group existed after John Thomas 1844-1871 A.D. They denied the essential doctrines of historic Christianity. To them, Trinity is not Biblical; they denied the deity of Jesus Christ the Son and His pre-existence. They denied that the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father. Their denial centered primarily on the revealed truth of God as Trinity and the subsequent truths rendered as Biblical doctrines for practical Christian living and faith. They use the same Bible as orthodox Christians but follow disastrous interpretations

²²House, H. Wayne, *Charts of Religious Movements* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000) pp 149-160. Martin, Walter Ralston, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Bethany House Publishers 2003) pp 87, 95-114, 147

2) Monarchianism.

The name indicated that God is a single Monad, the sole monarch of the universe. This view developed to preserve the Monotheism of the O.T. against the pagan polytheism. In this effort, two branches of Monarchian views became evident a) Dynamic Monarchianism and b) Modalistic Monarchianism.

a) Dynamic Monarchianism

This view is Ebiomism or Adoptionism of the previous century. In this, Christ the man is influenced by the ‘Dynamis’ means ‘Power’ of a Monarchial. Dynamis resided in the man Jesus and departed while he was on the cross,²³ “into Thy hands I commend my spirit”. Paul of Samosata, who was the bishop of Antioch 200-275-AD was a proponent of this view.

He was condemned as a heretic at a Synod in Antioch 268 AD. Dynamic Monarchianism stressed A) Oneness of God, B) Denied the deity of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and affirmed the humanity of Christ. C) The Holy Spirit is only a power. The same error surfaced as heresies, where rationalistic interpretation of the Bible is opted to maintain monotheism.

b) Modalistic Monarchianism.

The synonymous words like Modalistic Trinity or Sabllianism indicate one and the same heresy. This teaching upholds the oneness of God as well as the divinity of Jesus Christ. The first teacher was Praxeas of 2nd C. A.D. He taught that Jesus Christ is the Father. In this view, the Father himself suffered, died, and resurrected himself. Praxeas tried to avoid “God the Father died” by making a distinction between the man Jesus and Christ. In this, the integrity of Christ’s body was made Docetic. Thus, a man suffered and died and God did not.

The Monarchian heretic disorder reached its zenith in the 3rd century after the stalwart Sabellius 198-220 AD. He taught that

²³Ferguson, Sinclair B. *New Dictionary of Theology* (1VP, Leicester, England 1991) pp 440 -442

Jesus Christ is divine, but held the docetic view regarding humanity. Next, he developed a method to unite the Deity of the Son and the Oneness of God. He resolved to assume the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as modes or expression of manifestation of the one and the same God.²⁴ He stressed that the names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are clearly Biblical. But these names must be understood as the one and the same being revealing in successive three distinct operations or modes. This teaching is known as Modalism by Sabellius. Thus, he denied the Divine Triunity of persons within the Godhead. In this derivation, while asserting the oneness of God, the Deity of Christ is affirmed, but they denied the humanity of Christ and reduced the Holy Spirit to a mode of God's existence. This teaching clearly denied the Biblical revealed truth of Trinity.

The Modalistic Monarchianism is survived through the teachings of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) that emerged out of Pentecostal Movement. From then, new oneness churches were formed as the Apostolic church of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel's church in Jesus Christ, and Pentecostal Ministerial alliance. These groups later formed a new body, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the world. They all compromised with the Biblical truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the pre-existent Son of God. The UPCI core teaching and other oneness Pentecostals join hands in rejecting Biblical Trinity. Instead, they believe that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are different manifestations of the one and the same God. UPCI insist that one must repent and be baptized "In the Name of Jesus" and receive the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by speaking in tongues as in Acts 2:38. They reject the resurrected Lord's teaching of Matthew 28:19,20 and disregard the scriptural baptismal formula to express allegiance to Oneness Pentecostalism.

²⁴Bray, Gerald Lewis, *Creeeds Councils and Christ* (Intervarsity Press, Leicester, England 1984) pp 180, 181.

Harold O.J. Brown, *Heresies* (Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts 2003) pp 98-103

3. Tritheism

This term indicates an explanation of the doctrine of Trinity as Tritheism. This view envisages three gods in Trinity, so much so that it amounts to Polytheism. In the history of the church, there were rare instances of Polytheistic tendencies because their understanding and teachings drifted away from the revealed truths of the God of Bible basically.

a) Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints²⁵

Their teaching is supposed to be Polytheistic. They refer, believe and teach their position regarding Trinity being composed of three separate gods, in the light of the other LDS Scriptures because they claim that the Trinity consist of three separate gods. According to the interpretation of the book of Mormon, known as their authorized Bible, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit originated at different times and at the different places or occasions. One may note the misleading similarities, in the book of Mormon, having parallel passages from the authorized version, were clearly plagiarism. Mormons have three gods and many more to our astonishment. They denied the revealed truth of the Trinity of the Holy Bible. Also, they perverted the meaning of the term. They do not believe in a redeemer which is central to Biblical soteriology. Still, they claim to be true Christians and followers of Jesus Christ.

The Subtle Demeanor of the Heretical Mask

Beyond the major divisions of heresies on the orthodox doctrine of Trinity there are some heretical views under the mask. They are contradictory teachings against the Christology and Pneumatology as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Here the writer likes to present few charts finally that show how the false views wriggled out silently but caused schismatic confusion in the church. Though condemned as heresies by the church, at times the time old venomous residues spring up to misguide many. I like to present the charts showing heretical views against the revealed doctrine of Trinity.

²⁵ House, H. Wayne. *Charts of cults, sects and religious movements* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids Michigan 2000) pp. 57-63.

Origin of Christological and Trinitarian heresies in the history of the church.		
Heresy	Proponents and period	Salient Features
Gnosticism	Peak period in the second century A.D. The first identified Gnostic is Simon Magnus, followed by Cerinthus of the first century A.D. Basilides, Saturninus, Marcion, Valentinus and Tatian belonged to the second century.	Finds its roots in Pagan philosophy. They thought themselves to be possessors of revealed knowledge for rescue from evil of matter. They tried to dilute the Christian faith with the Greek philosophy of Dualism. To them the matter and the material world is inherently evil. This view formed the basis of several defective Christological views.
a) Docetism	Prevalent in the New Testament Times. Distinguished between spirit and matter, hence essentially dualistic; was phantasmal. They denied the real humanity of Christ.	First of Christian heresies. Because of dualistic Tenet, pure spiritual being Christ can never become flesh and suffer as a man. Hence, Christ's human appearance
b) Cerinthus	Cerinthus of Ephesus, first century A.D.	Jesus was only a man. At baptism, divine Christ (as spirit person) descended into His being and departed from him at Crucifixion. God can never become flesh, hence denied incarnation.
c) Dualism	Marcion of 140. A.D., Rome	First of the great heretics. He viewed the Jewish God of O.T as Malign. God revealed by Jesus Christ is good and loving. But God can never become flesh which is evil. Hence, he denied incarnation and Jesus only appeared as a human being.

d) Ebionism	Ebionites are a sect of Jewish Christians of Palestine belonging to the late first century and early second century A.D.	Jesus was Son of Joseph, Jesus attained a measure of divinity to be Messiah, when the Spirit came upon Him at baptism. They denied the virgin birth and incarnation.
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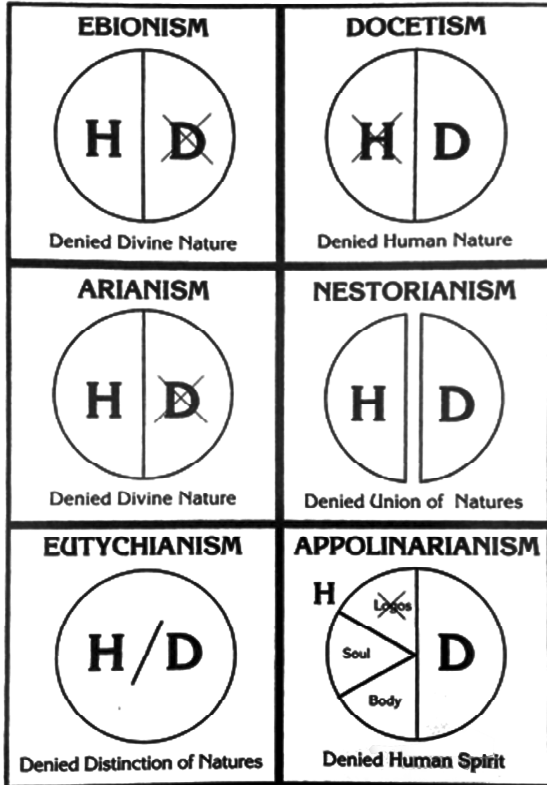
Adapted from the PhD thesis by Dr. Joseph M P, Thrissur.

CHART SHOWING TRINITARIAN HERESIES		
Heresy	Proponents and periods	Salient Features
Monarchianism	Second and third century A.D.	Conviction that God is one.
a) Dynamic Monarchianism (or) Adoptionism	190 A.D., Rome Theodotus of Byzantium and Paul of Samosata	Jesus is a mere man. He became Christ by the penetration of His being by the divine logos at Baptism. At His resurrection, he adopted to the divine sphere. They preserved the unity of Godhead by sacrificing the Deity of Christ.
b) Modalistic Monarchianism, Sabellianism, Patripassianism	200 A.D., Rome, Praxeas, Noetus of Smyrna, Sabellius.	Upholds Deity of Christ, but failed to see Him as a distinct person other than God the Father. Instead, Jesus Himself is the Father, born in time. Thus, one God revealed himself as Father in creation, as Son in Jesus Christ, and as Holy Spirit after Christ ascension. Denied essential Trinity to safeguard unity of Godhead.
Arianism	250-336 A.D. Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Eunomius	Christ is the first created being. Arianism totally denied Deity of Christ.

Semi-Arianism	340-380 A.D. Basil of Ancyra, Gregory of Laodicea	Christ is of similar nature as the Father, but is subordinate to Him.
Macedonianism Pneumatomachism	341-360 A.D. Macedonius	Denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.
Tritheism Mormonism	1820-1844 Smith, Joseph Jr.	There are three Gods. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. They are against Trinity. Present day Mormonism is Polytheistic with a Tritheistic emphasis.

Adapted from the PhD thesis work by Dr. Joseph M P, Pages 289-290

Chart of False Views of the Person of Christ



Condemnation of the heretic views.

1. Ebionism- Overwhelmed by establishment of Scriptural truth.
2. Docetists - Overwhelmed by establishment of Scriptural truth.
3. Arianism - Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325.
4. Nestorianians - Synod of Ephesus, A.D. 431
5. Eutychianism - Condemned at Council of Chalcedon, A.D.405; defended by “Robber Synod” of Ephesus, A.D. 449; condemned by Chalcedon, A.D.451.
6. Appollinarianism - Council of Antioch, A.D. 378, 379. Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381.

(H= Human Nature, D= Deity)

Adapted from the PhD thesis work of Dr. Joseph M P. Page 313.

The condemnation of the Monarchian Heresy

Controversy	Major Proponents of heresy	Leaders of orthodox faith	Relevant Councils
(A) Trinitarian Controversy Monarchians	Theodotus of Byzantium, Paul of Samosata, Noetus, Praxeas, Sabellius	Hippolytus of Rome, Tertullian, Dionysius	Synod in Antioch, 268 AD and 325 AD Nicaea Condemned as intolerable heresy.

ACCEPTED CONCLUSIONS OF THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS AFTER THE SCRIPTURAL REVELATIONS

Controversy	Conclusions
Trinitarian Controversy	Nicene Creed-Christ is “of the same substance with the Father.” Father, Son, and Spirit are “coeternal, consubstantial, and coequal.”
Christological Controversy	Chalcedonian Definition- Christ is “one person in two natures, unmixed, unchanged, undivided, inseparable.”

Adapted from the PhD thesis work of Dr. Joseph M P. Page 314-315

CONCLUSION

The revealed truth of the God of the Bible is progressive one, the doctrine of Trinity. If the Biblical interpretation of the Word of God is followed, one will not err. If the interpretations lean towards philosophy, Gnosticism and intellectual methods, the results will be disastrous.

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2. HERMENEUTICS

A Critical Study on the Principles of Interpretation for Understanding the Written Word of God

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Abstract

This study explores the need for interpretation and the rules governing it, along with the principles of Biblical hermeneutics, to better understand the written Word of God. The aim of this study is to critically examine the challenges and possibilities essential in the interpretive process, while recognising the role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating God's Word. This illumination is a process where human thought is aided by divine grace, enabling the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened.

I. INTRODUCTION

Biblical Hermeneutics is both the art and science of interpreting Scripture. It is considered a science because it is guided by established rules within a structured system, and an art because applying these rules requires skill and discernment rather than mere mechanical imitation. As one of the most important branches of

theological study, Biblical hermeneutics focuses on the accurate interpretation of the Bible. The concept of interpretation is present in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word “Pater” means to interpret, and “Pithron” refers to an interpretation. Most occurrences of these terms relate to the interpretation of dreams, which were often symbolic and not immediately clear in meaning. In the New Testament, in passages like Luke 24:27, we see the risen Lord walking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He *“beginning from Moses and all the prophets, interpreted (or expounded) to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”* The Greek word translated here as “interpreted” or “expounded” is “*diermeneu*”. This word connects directly to the practice of Biblical hermeneutics. The etymology of the English word “hermeneutics” comes from the Greek word *Hermes*, the Greek god, and according to Greek mythology, they considered Hermes to be the messenger of the gods to mortals.

II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of hermeneutics is to determine the meaning of the written Word of God, while its secondary purpose is to bridge the gap between the mind of the reader and the minds of the Biblical writers.

The rationale for this study is as follows:

1. The practice of allowing everyone to preach and teach in the church promotes inclusivity but often exposes a lack of adequate preparation and proper Biblical interpretation skills.
2. Even seasoned preachers sometimes struggle with interpretation, frequently resorting to spiritualizing Scripture to forge connections that resonate with the audience or imposing their own interpretations on the Word of God in an effort to impress.
3. Conversations with recent theology graduates have revealed that many still struggle to interpret the Word of God, demonstrating a lack of proficiency in Biblical hermeneutics despite their formal theological education.

4. Recent debates in the field of Biblical hermeneutics have sparked a growing eagerness among believers to learn the proper method of interpreting Scripture. This passion for understanding Scripture has particularly ignited interest among the younger generation, reflecting a renewed desire for accurate interpretation.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this critical study are as follows:

1. To validate the need for interpretation and the principles of Biblical hermeneutics in understanding the written Word of God.
2. To explore the historical development of Biblical hermeneutics and conclude with the correct method for interpreting the Holy Scripture.
3. To equip believers, teachers, and preachers with the basic knowledge and skills necessary to interpret the Word of God.
4. To deepen the understanding of Bible interpretation among Bible students and teachers, emphasizing the discipline of Biblical hermeneutics.
5. To enhance the effectiveness of preaching and teaching ministries, ensuring the Word of God is communicated accurately and truthfully.

IV. THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

The Holy Scripture is the absolute source of our understanding about God. It is the textbook of divine truth and the guide to everlasting life. The Bible is known by several titles, such as the Book, the Scriptures, the Writings, and the Word of God (Luke 4:17, Mark 12:10, Matthew 22:29, and Hebrews 4:12). The Holy Bible contains 66 books, which are divided into the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books), and this written Word of God is referred to as “Holy Scriptures”. The standard set of books in the Bible, known as the “canon of Scripture,” was established through a process that spanned centuries. Books

categorized as apocrypha or deuterocanonical are not considered part of the Holy Scriptures. The written Word of God (Holy Bible), the spoken Word of God (rhema), and the incarnate Word of God (Logos) are all theological terms that refer to different ways God communicates with humanity, each with distinct roles in Christian theology. The written Word of God refers to the Holy Bible, the sacred scriptures in which God's message is preserved in written form, which is inspired, inerrant, infallible and complete. The spoken Word of God refers to God's direct communication, often through prophets, apostles, and others, in verbal form and recorded in the holy scripture. The incarnate Word of God refers to the person of Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God made flesh, as detailed in the Gospel of John (John 1:1, 14). Jesus, as the incarnate Word, is considered the ultimate revelation of God to humanity, because in His life and actions, God is fully revealed.

V. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Ancient Jewish Exegesis

The history of Biblical hermeneutics, or the interpretation of Scripture, has deep roots in the events surrounding the return of Israel from the Babylonian exile. After the Jewish people were exiled for several decades, the understanding of their sacred texts had become obscured. Nehemiah 8:1-8 records that Ezra read from the Book of the Law (likely the first five books of the Old Testament) to the assembled people in Jerusalem. The passage emphasizes that Ezra and the Levites "made it clear and gave the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read." Ezra's approach to interpreting Scripture appears to have been literal in the sense that he sought to explain the meaning of the text in a straightforward, accessible way. The scribes who followed Ezra in preserving the Scriptures did indeed hold the text in high regard, believing it to be divinely inspired in every detail.

School of Alexandria

The Alexandrian method of interpretation was an edition of the method of Philo, a Jewish scholar who lived from BC 20 to AD 55. His approach was to allegorize the text and the basis of

Philo's approach to interpretation were continued in the Christian School of Interpretation. One of its first leaders was Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215). He believed that the holy scripture has different levels of meaning, namely, The Historical and Literal Sense, The Doctrinal Sense, The Prophetic and Typological Sense, The Philosophical Sense and the mystical or Allegorical Sense (Grant and Tracy). This base approach was continued by Origen (AD 185-254), who probably was the greatest mind of the ancient Church. His approach of interpretation has three levels. A Bodily or Literal Sense, A Soulful or Moral Sense and a Spiritual or Allegorical/Mystical Sense. (Grant and Tracy). The hermeneutics of Alexandria held influence over most of the Church in Scripture interpretation until the time of the reformation. This can be characterized in its developed form by Augustine (AD 354-430) as in the four-level interpretation.

The Literal – Teaches historical events

The Allegorical – Teaches what you should believe

The Moral – Teaches what you should do

The Mystical – What you should hope

This method of interpretation is famous for importing meaning into the text (Eisegesis), forcing a hidden meaning into every text, putting forth fanciful and far-fetched interpretation, not allowing words and sentences to bear their obvious, normal meaning and allowing human bias to govern the plain message of the original author.

School of Antioch

The School of Antioch played a pivotal role in shaping early Christian Biblical interpretation by emphasizing the literal and historical reading of Scripture. Antiochene scholars argued that the literal sense of Scripture was both sufficient and primary for understanding its meaning. They emphasized that the Bible should be interpreted in a manner that respects the historical context and the natural meaning of the text. This was grounded in the belief that the Scriptures were written to convey specific, understandable messages, particularly regarding the historical events of Israel's past

and God's dealings with His people. The Antiochene school strongly rejected the allegorical interpretation that was championed by the School of Alexandria. They insisted that the Bible's message should be rooted in its literal sense and historical context, rather than abstract or allegorical interpretations that disconnected the text from its historical foundation. While the Antiochene school rejected allegorical interpretation, it did not deny that there could be a spiritual sense to Scripture. However, they believed that any spiritual meaning must arise from the literal sense of the text. The Antiochene interpreters placed a strong emphasis on the practical and moral applications of Scripture. Most exponents of the Antiochene School were Lucian of Antioch, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuetia. The School of Antioch had a significant influence on the development of early Christian theology, particularly in how Christians approached Scripture. In summary, the School of Antioch made a substantial contribution to the tradition of historical-literal interpretation of the Bible, providing a foundation for interpreting Scripture in its original context while recognizing its spiritual dimensions.

New Testament Period – Jesus and Apostles

Jesus and the apostles treated the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God, with an emphasis on its historical accuracy and divine authority. Jesus consistently referred to Old Testament figures and events—such as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David—as historical facts. These references were not treated as myths or legends but as real people and actual events. For instance, in Matthew 12:40, Jesus likens His time in the grave to Jonah's time in the belly of the great fish, clearly treating the account of Jonah as a historical event. Similarly, He referred to Noah's flood (Matthew 24:37-39) and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:29) as historical precedents for future judgment. Moreover, Jesus criticized the religious leaders of His time for elevating their traditions over the commandments of God, which demonstrates His commitment to the authority of Scripture. In Mark 7:6-13 and Matthew 15:1-9, He challenges the Pharisees for their oral traditions that nullified the direct commandments of God. This reinforces

the idea that Jesus regarded Scripture not just as a spiritual or moral guide but as a binding, authoritative record.

The apostles, following Jesus' example, also maintained that the Old Testament was divinely inspired. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul writes that "all Scripture is God-breathed" and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. Peter similarly affirms in 2 Peter 1:21 that "prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." In Acts, the apostles routinely referenced Old Testament figures and events, showing their deep belief in the historical accuracy of these records. For example, in Acts 7:9-50, Stephen recounts the history of Israel, including the story of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, as foundational to understanding God's work in history. Similarly, in Acts 13:16-22, Paul speaks about the history of Israel, including the reign of David and emphasizes how it points to Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises.

In conclusion, both Jesus and the apostles consistently treated the Old Testament as a historically reliable and divinely inspired authoritative Word of God.

Medieval Exegesis

Little original scholarship was done during the Medieval Ages; most students of Scripture devoted themselves to studying and compiling the works of the earlier Fathers. Interpretation was bound by tradition, and the allegorical method was prominent. The fourfold sense of Scripture articulated by Augustine became the standard for Biblical interpretation.

Reformation Exegesis

The Renaissance highlighted the necessity of knowing the original languages to understand the Bible. Erasmus helped this study by publishing the first edition of the Greek New Testament, and Reuchlin by translating a Hebrew grammar and lexicon. The fourfold sense of Scripture was gradually abandoned and replaced with the principle that Scripture has but a single sense. Luther believed that faith and the Spirit's illumination were prerequisites

for an interpreter of the Bible. Luther also maintained that the church should not determine what the Scriptures teach, but rather that Scripture should determine what the church teaches. He rejected the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture. According to Luther, a proper interpretation of Scripture must come from a literal understanding of the text. The interpreter should consider historical conditions, grammar, and context in his exegesis. He also believed that the Bible is a clear book, in opposition to the Roman Catholic dogma that the Scriptures are so ambiguous that only the church can uncover their accurate meaning. One of Luther's major hermeneutical principles was that one must carefully distinguish between the Law and Gospel. Luther believed that recognition and careful maintenance of the Law-Gospel distinction was crucial to proper Biblical understanding.

Perhaps the greatest exegete of the Reformation was John Calvin, who regarded allegorical interpretation as an invention of Satan meant to obscure the meaning of Scripture. "Scripture interprets Scripture" was a favourite phrase of Calvin, which alluded to the importance Calvin placed on studying the context, grammar, words, and parallel passages rather than importing one's own meaning onto the text. In a famous sentence he stated that "it is the first business of an interpreter to let the author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say." Calvin probably surpassed Luther in aligning his exegetical practices with his theory. He did not share the opinion of Luther that Christ is to be found everywhere in Scripture. Despite some differences, the hermeneutical principles articulated by these Reformers became the major guiding principles for modern orthodox Protestant interpretation.

Modern Hermeneutics

Rationalism in philosophy laid the basis for liberalism in theology. While in previous centuries revelation had determined what reason ought to think, by the late 1800s reason determined what parts of revelation (if any) were to be accepted as true. Where in previous centuries the divine authorship of Scripture had been emphasised, during this period its human authorship was the focus.

For many, inspiration no longer referred to the process whereby God guided the human authors to produce a Scriptural product that was His truth. Rather, inspiration referred to the Bible's ability to inspire religious experience.

VI. PURPOSE OF THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

Since the Bible is the authority for our faith and practice, it is imperative to understand and apply the Word of God to every area of life. The key question we must continually ask is, "*What does the Scripture say?*" (Romans 4:3). The primary purpose of the Holy Bible is to make mankind wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15). After a person has received this salvation, we are then told that "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*" which is the second purpose of the Holy Bible. "*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Most of the writings in the Bible are directed at the children of God, especially for their growth in knowledge, holiness, and spirituality. Doctrine and theology, in their primary intention, aim to transform sinners into saints and immature believers into mature followers of Christ. The study of the Bible is a primary requirement for every believer in order to live an effective, faithful, and genuine Christian life.

VII. WHY WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

Faith and obedience are the twin foundations for the spiritual life a true Christian believer. To grow strong in faith, a knowledge of the promises of God is required. Similarly, to obey the Lord, a knowledge of the commandments of God is required. Since the root of faith and obedience recline in Holy Scripture, it is important to understand the scripture properly and apply it to the Christian life for the spiritual growth and development of a Christian believer. In this context, spiritual growth of a believer means understanding the Word of God at a personal level and development means applying the word of God in personal life. One is inward effect and

the other is outward result. Understanding is the second stage in the process of learning and learning is never complete without the practical application. Therefore, whatever we learn from the Word of God must be applied in our practical Christian life. The four levels of Learning are the following:

- i. **Knowing:** Means to know the subject. In Mathew 22:29 *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”* John 20:9 *“For as yet they knew not the scripture”*. Knowledge is important to avoid mistakes.
- ii. **Understanding:** To understand the subject in its full and real meaning. Luke 24:45 *“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures”*. Hebrew 11:3 *“Through faith we understand”*. Hosea 14:9 *“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”*
- iii. **Wisdom:** Spiritual wisdom is a gift from God. *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit* (1 Cori 12:8). *God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.* (Eph. 1:17). *Apostle Paul says, we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ* (Col 1:28).
- iv. **Discernment:** Discernment is the fourth level of learning where we are able to differentiate between the good and evil. *Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil* (Hebrews 5:14). Good teachers and preachers require discernment to teach and preach the word obviously and not as an opinion.

Understanding and obeying Scripture are the foundations of a godly life. Understanding the scripture in its full and real meaning and obeying, both should be balanced. A godly life produces

further desire to study God's Word. From study to application and back to study and on to further application in a mounting spiral to reach up to the master; this is the basis of spiritual growth and stability. So, it is important to understand the written Word of God to lead a life of true disciple.

VIII. METHODS TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD

To understand the Word of God, there are generally two primary methods: meditation and teaching.

Meditation

Meditation is the best method to understand the Word of God. The psalmist says in Psalm 119:99, "*I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.*" Through meditation, one will understand the Scripture personally, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Meditation connects a person to God on a spiritual level, fostering a deeper relationship with Him. The purpose of meditation is to understand the true and real meaning of the Word of God, thereby discerning God's will for our lives and cultivating a closer fellowship with Him. The inner man (spirit) requires meditation. *Holy Spirit shall teach (John 14:26), Holy Spirit will guide and direct into all truth, ... and he shall shew you things to come (John 16:13) and will help to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).*

Teaching

In teaching—whether through Bible classes, sermons, exhortations, etc.—we understand the Scripture through another person as the teacher. This represents a physical level of relationship. In Acts 8:30, we see Philip teaching: "Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" In Luke 24:27, we see the resurrected Jesus teaching two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded (interpreted) unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning*

himself.” The Bible can be studied through the chronological method (Biblical theology), which consists of twelve main chronological stages of Bible history from Genesis to Revelation, or the theological method (Systematic theology), which includes an analytical study of twelve major doctrinal schemes. The purpose of teaching is to understand the truth and to love the Lord by applying and obeying it in our practical lives. The outer man (the body) requires teaching. However, a danger exists in teaching: if the teacher is a false teacher (one who has not learned the truth), the learner may receive incorrect teachings. Apollos was an eminent orator, but there were limitations in his understanding of Christ.

IX. QUALIFICATION OF THE INTERPRETER

The basic requirements for the correct understanding of the Word of God is that the interpreter should be a born-again child of God, with a passion to know God’s Word, must have always a deep reverence for God and His Word. Utter dependence on the Holy Spirit is required, and they should read and meditate the word of God daily, prayerfully, reverently, lovingly, systematically and resolutely. Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit in helping the believer understand the Word of God. Teaching and preaching are a spiritual gift for the benefit of the body of the Christ, but the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The born-again child of God, who leads a holy life will have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

X. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

It is important to know the basic principles to follow in interpretation before applying any methods to interpret the Word of God. The three basic principles are defined below:

1. Divine Nature of the Written Word of God

Because Bible is a divine book, without the illumination or insight from the Holy Spirit, we cannot understand it correctly. Paul says to Timothy “*Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things*” (2 Timothy 2:7). Prayer is an absolute

necessity to understand the Holy scripture and then the Holy Spirit will teach us.

2. Human Nature of the Written Word of God

The Holy Scriptures are given for the benefit of human beings and were written by human beings with divine inspiration. So, the Bible is also a human book, and to a certain degree it must be interpreted like other books. This brings us to the principle of common sense. For example, the grammatical and historical method of studying the Scripture instructs us to look at the passage cautiously to see what it says literally and to understand a Biblical statement in light of its historical context. We recognize a historical statement as a straight forward statement and do not alter its literal grammatical sense. This is common sense. An example of the common-sense principle is John 15:7, which says Christians can have anything which they ask? Common sense tells us that there must be some limitations. The common-sense principle can be dangerous, but if it is guided by the Holy Spirit, it is a valid principle for understanding the Word of God.

3. Ask Right Questions

We understand the Word of God properly when we learn to ask right questions to the text. Many people do not know what the right questions are or they are too lazy to learn.

XI. FOUR STAGES OF UNDERSTANDING – THE OIEA PRINCIPLE

The OIEA principle is a simple guidance to follow four key words – Observation, Interpretation, Evaluation and Application to understand the Word of God. Through these four steps of Scripture interpretation we are ready to understand the Bible correctly. According to this principle, understanding the Bible correctly is a two-step process. First, we must discover the what the text meant in the day and age of the author. Then we must discover its meaning for us in today’s culture. Observation and interpretation apply to this first step. Evaluation and application apply to the second step.

A. Observation

The question asked in this stage is, do I understand the basic facts of this passage? Do I know the context before and after this passage? Do I know the meanings of all the words? Do I understand the general flow of the discussion? Do I understand the cultural back ground? It is necessary to clear up all the factual problems before moving into the theological meaning of the passage.

Example: 1 Cori. 8:13

“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend”.

In this passage, the Apostle Paul discusses eating meat that had been offered to idols. What is the background? When meat was sacrificed to an idol, any portion that was not consumed by the priest was sold in the marketplaces. Some believers in Corinth said it was permissible to eat since idols are not real god but wood and stone. Others thought it was not tolerable because it might appear they were still involved in pagan worship. Only after understanding these facts can we move on to the next stage of interpretation.

Interpretation

At this stage, the text can be interpreted following the exegetic method, significant rules and principles of Biblical hermeneutics. It is important to understand the context of the verses based on book, chapter and paragraph and interpret according to literal, historical and grammatical background. If the book is prophetic or poems, parables or apocalypse in nature, then special Biblical hermeneutics need to be considered as appropriate to apply. Spiritualizing the written Word of God by forcing our own meaning into the verse for the benefit of attractive sermons is not acceptable. The significance and need of interpretation is well defined by Lord Jesus himself (Luke 24:27) and Philp (Acts 8:31) and also apostles Paul (2 Timothy 2:15) and Peter (2 Peter 3:16).

B. Evaluation

The stage of evaluation asks, what this passage means in today's culture. It is the question of whether a passage applies to us today or if it is limited to culture in which it was originally written and addressed.

Example 1 Corinthians 8:13

"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standish, lest I make my brother to offend". Is this verse prohibiting eating meat? It is a cultural expression because it is understandable only within those cultures that offer meat to idols. In today's culture we normally buy meat from the markets which is not offered to idols.

C. Application

Up to this stage the process of understanding was academic or theoretical. But it is essential to distinguish that the purpose and goal of understanding the Word of God is holy life. Learning is not complete until we put into practice what we have learned. The question to ask at this stage is, how can I apply what I have learned to how I live my life. The application always related to the main truth. The theoretic knowledge and the practical life values are thus bonded into a meaningful approach to the message.

XII. METHOD OF INTERPRETATION – EXEGEIS AND EISEGESIS

Generally, there are two methods of text interpretation. The first method is called Exegesis. Ex is a Greek preposition meaning "out of". In this method, the interpreter listens to what the text itself is saying and draws the meaning out of the passage. The second method is called Eisegesis. Eis is also a Greek preposition meaning "into". In this method the interpreter forces or reads his own meaning into the passage. Eisegesis approach is treacherous and many preachers and teachers use this method for spiritualising the word of God to present messages as they wish to make a point and for their benefits.

XIII. SIGNIFICANT RULES OF INTERPRETATION

The rules given below are considered as three significant rules in Biblical hermeneutics for finding and expressing the true sense of the inspired writings. They are: -

1. Contextual Interpretation

The primary rule of Biblical interpretation is contextual. Let a passage speak for itself within the context of the paragraph, chapter, book. The basic question asked in this rule is what did the author mean in his own historical setting? To get an answer to this question there are two further questions that need to be asked.

- i. What does the passage actually say? Often many times teachers and preachers forget to look carefully at what a passage says.
- ii. Does the context help to define the meaning of the passage?

2. Let Scripture Interpret the Scripture

The second rule of Biblical Interpretation is, let the scripture interpret the scripture.

Example: In Mathew 6:16 “When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites”

Does Jesus’ statement demand that His disciples fast? No, because Mathew 9:14 says that Jesus’ disciples did not fast while He was alive. The Scripture in Mathew 9:14 helps to interpret Mathew 6:16.

3. Original Language

Scripture must be interpreted according to the language in which it was originally written. Otherwise, interpretation may be influenced by possible translation errors. The Holy Scripture has been translated into many languages from the Biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. With many versions and translations of Bible available today, it can be challenging to choose the right one to follow for reading and interpretation. Translations of texts can be influenced by the translators’ assumptions, opinions,

and beliefs, as translators are often affiliated with a specific Christian denomination or community.

Mainly there are 4 methods used in Bible translations. They are:

1. **Formal Equivalence** is a method to translate the original language in as close to a word for word manner as is possible.
2. **Closest Natural Equivalence** is the method to translate the original language in as close to meaning for meaning.
3. **Dynamic Functional Equivalence**, here the translator considers the thoughts behind the original text and attempts to convey the thoughts to the reader of the target language.
4. **Paraphrase** is more of a commentary than a translation. This method takes only the ideas from the original text, and is not bound by specific words and phrases.

XIV. DIVISIONS OF HERMENEUTICS

There is no set number of divisions to study of hermeneutics. Most persons follow two-fold divisions as General Hermeneutics and Special Hermeneutics. This understanding will help the interpreter to understand the nature of the Bible verse while reading.

1. GENERAL HERMENEUTICS

General hermeneutics is again divided into different types according to the method applied like contextual, literal, historical, grammatical, typological, prophetic, interpretations. They are briefly explained below.

a. Contextual Interpretation

The primary rule of Biblical interpretation is contextual. Let a passage speak for itself within the context of the paragraph, chapter or book. Observe the context above and after the verse in the paragraph and the general flow of discussion in that chapter and book. The basic question asked in this stage is, what did the author mean in his own historical setting? What is the meaning of this verse and its implication in this present day for application?

b. Literal Interpretation

The literal method of Scripture interpretation is that method which gives to each word the same exact basic meaning when used in writing, speaking or thinking. It is vital to remember that literal interpretation should be done with the original language in which the Bible is written. If the words are used in their natural and primitive meaning, the sense which they express is the appropriate literal sense.

c. Historical Interpretation

It is the process of determining the setting in which a writing took place, by analysing the total historical, geographical, religious and cultural environment of the times, and the factors and circumstances involved in the writing, such as the author, readers, date, place, occasion, and purpose, and how these factors influence the meaning of the text. The meaning of a text cannot be interpreted with any degree of certainty without historical-cultural and contextual analysis. Historical-cultural and contextual analysis can be done by asking three basic questions.

1. What is the general historical environment in which the writer speaks?
2. What is the specific historical-cultural context and purpose of this book?
3. What is the immediate context of the passage under consideration?

d. Prophetic Interpretation

Prophetic interpretation is required to understand prophetic statements. Here the rule “let the scripture interpret the scripture” applies. There are two facts to remember when interpreting prophetic statements.

1. What the prophet foresaw as one event may actually be two or more.
2. Although much Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in the New Testament, few of them were full filled in the Old Testament period and then again in the New Testament Period.

3. There are few prophecies which are not fulfilled yet or are partially fulfilled and it will be accomplished in the future

Example - Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name Him Immanuel”

Contextually, Literally and Historically this is a promise given to King Ahaz, King of Judah at the time of the war and historically it is fulfilled as per the promise. Prophetically, this statement is related to the birth of Jesus Christ as quoted in Mathew 1:23.

e. Grammatical Interpretation

Another major consideration in Scripture interpretation is the grammar of the language in which the passage was originally written. This of course cannot be done apart from a knowledge of the original languages. This involves understanding the meanings of words that make up sentences, which in turn form paragraphs. Words should be studied etymologically, historically, and chronologically. Significance should be given to study the syntax of a given passage. We must bear in mind the unity of the Bible, because it came from one mind, the mind of God. Therefore, there can be no contradiction in the Bible. John Knox said “The word of God is plain in better itself and if there appear any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, which never contraries to himself, explains the same more clearly in other places.”

f. Typological Interpretation

Bernard Ramm defines Typology as “the interpretation of the Old Testament based on the fundamental theological unity of the two Testaments where by Something in the Old shows, prefigures Something in the New.” To make it clear we could say the pre-ordained representative relation which certain persons, events and institutions of the Old Testament bear to corresponding persons, events and institutions in the New Testament. Typological interpretations deal with types and symbols. Generally, there are six kinds of types like, Persons, Institutions, Offices, Events and Actions. Adam is a type of Christ; the sacrifices are type of the Cross, especially the Passover prefigures our redemption in Christ. Moses as a prophet and Aaron and Melchizedek as high priest are types

of Christ. Paul writes that the things which happened in the wilderness wanderings were types for our benefit (1 Cor 10:6-11). A knowledge of typology is essential to understand certain portions of the Word of God. The validity of typology is based on the interpretation detailed in the scripture. The rule here is let the scripture interpret the scripture. The extreme of a fanciful typology that knows no bounds and admits of no regulation is to be rejected. A few examples of valid typology are given below.

Tabernacle was a symbol/figure for the present time - Hebrews 9:9, 10:1

Ark of Noah was figure of Baptism - 1 Peter 3:21

Cloud, Sea and Spiritual meal was figures of Baptism and Lord's Table - 1 Corinthians 10:1-11

Passover Lamb is a type of Christ – 1 Cori 7:7

Lifted Serpent in the wilderness is a type of Christ – John 3:14

2. SPECIAL HERMENEUTICS

The Holy Bible also uses figures of speech and different types of literature that can be hard to understand. These call for special rules for the interpreter. Different forms of literature fall into different categories and have their own rules of interpretation. Special hermeneutics can be again divided into different categories according to the methods applied like hyperbole, metaphor, Anthropomorphism, parable, poetry and apocalyptic interpretations.

a. Hyperbole

A hyperbole is an extreme exaggeration used to make a point. Obviously, it is not literally true but an over statement used for an effect. Most hyperboles are easily recognized because we use them all the times. But at times they are not. If these are taken literally, one will misinterpret what the scriptures say.

For example, this verse is a hyperbole, an exaggeration for effect:

“You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”
Matt. 23:24

It is not too difficult to determine that this is a hyperbole, an exaggeration. Most English-speaking people know the real meaning of that phrase: “You pay close attention to little things but neglect the important things.” But sometimes they are not, For example: John 21.25

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”

It is a graphic picture of how much Jesus did, but the author painted it in hyperbolic fashion.

b. Metaphor

Metaphor is one of the most common literary devices, it can be found in almost any text, and the Bible is no exception. Metaphor is a figure of speech like simile making a comparison by using a word such as “like”, for example life is a like a circus. A metaphor is a similar comparison excluding the word “like”. The metaphors recorded in the written Word of God like “I am the door” (John 10:9) “I am the Light” etc., are easily recognized. But what about Jesus’ words at the last supper “This is my body” (Luke 22:19)? Jesus probably intended this statement to be understood metaphorically rather than literally or physically. Some of the Churches wrongly interpreted this verse and developed the doctrine of transubstantiation and consubstantiation.

c. Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism, also referred to as personification, is the attribution of human characteristics to inanimate objects, animals, forces of nature, and others. Anthropomorphism in Bible describes non-human objects as though they have human characteristics.

Example: Psalm 98:8 “Let the flood clap their hands”. It is obvious that river do not have hands to clap.

d. Parables

Parables are another form of literature in the Bible. To interpret them properly, we should picture the story as if we were living in Jesus’ time, focusing on the one main point and avoiding the

temptation to assign meaning to every detail. Many interpret parables allegorically by giving meaning to each and every element of the parables. The difference between allegory and parable is that an allegory is a total made up story, even the details of an allegory may be important. But parables are stories taken from nature, everyday life to teach some common truth and most of the parables teach only one main point as narrated in holy scripture. There are few parables, which have allegorical elements, like the parable of the Sower (Mathew 13:3-23). Sower, seed, ground, birds, sun and weeds all stand for something else like Jesus, the Word, Satan, persecution and cares of this world. As a general rule, we should always look for the one central truth the parable is attempting to teach. Many times, the central truth is clearly stated in the context of the parable.

e. Poetry

Quite a large section of the Bible is written in poetic form: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs, Job, Lamentations and different parts of the prophetic books. Therefore, it is necessary to know something about Hebrew Poetry, which does not concentrate on rhythm. It expresses itself by parallelism. Two phrases are united so that the second repeats the first with dissimilar words. Figurative Language and Imagery and Hebrew Parallelism are the two characteristic features of Hebrew Poetry:

Mainly there are five different kinds of parallelism in the Bible.

- a. **Synonymous Parallelism:** In synonymous parallelism, the thought of the first line is repeated in the second line. Ex. Ps. 1:5; 50:19; 140:1.
- b. **Synthetic Parallelism:** In synthetic parallelism, the second line amplifies and compliments the first line. Ex. Ps. 1:3; 19:7-10; 33:4.
- c. **Antithetical Parallelism:** In antithetical parallelism, the thought of the first line is contrasted in the second line. Ex. Ps. 1:6; 30:5; 52:1, 37:9.
- d. **Climatic Parallelism:** In climatic parallelism something is added to the first line to express a climax or to expand the same. Ex. Ps. 22:4; 29:1.

- e. **Emblematic Parallelism:** In emblematic parallelism, the thought of the first line is explained with an example in the second line. Ex. Ps. 7:1,2.

There are two important factors that must be borne in mind when we seek to recognize and understand poetic writings which are to pay attention to the couplets and not to each line or sentence and to recognize figurative language and seek to find out what it is figurative of.

f. Apocalyptic

Apocalyptic is the type of literature in the Bible which is mostly misunderstood by interpreters today as it is no longer used. The key to interpreting these figures lies in the book of revelation itself (Rev. 1:13-20). The seven stars are interpreted as representing the seven angels and the seven lamp stands stand for the seven churches. Again, in Rev. 17:9-10 the seven headed beasts stand for the seven hills. Therefore, to comprehend apocalyptic literature and Revelation in precise we must interpret the imagery as very figurative as explained in the scripture. The images are describing things and spiritual truths in figurative language. The Books of Revelation, Daniel, and Ezekiel require careful interpretation as most of the apocalyptic statements are recorded in those books. Let the scripture interpret the scripture rule applies for apocalyptic interpretation.

XV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The summary of findings related to the objectives of this study are the following: -

- a) The need for interpretation and the principles of Biblical hermeneutics in understanding the written Word of God is justified.
- b) The correct method of Biblical hermeneutics for interpreting the Holy Scripture are contextual, literary, historical and grammatical. Prophetic statements should be evaluated based on historical analysis and let the Scripture interpret Scripture.

- c) Interpretation should be done in the original language in which the books of the Bible are written.
- d) Special hermeneutical rules are applicable for Poetry, metaphor, hyperbole, apocalypse, parables.
- e) Importing meaning into the text (Eisegesis) to make a point or forcing a hidden meaning into every text for fanciful or intentional interpretation should be rejected. Spiritualizing the written Word of God by forcing our own meaning into the verse for the benefit attractive sermons is not acceptable.
- f) Believers, teachers, and preachers should be equipped with the basic knowledge and skills necessary to interpret the Word of God to enhance the effectiveness of preaching and teaching ministries, ensuring the Word of God is communicated accurately and truthfully.
- g) The role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating God's Word should be recognized, where human thought is aided by divine grace, enabling the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened.

XVI. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study is mainly limited to the need for and rules of interpretation, along with the principles of Biblical hermeneutics, for understanding the written Word of God considering the written Word of God are the 66 of books of the Holy Bible. Canonization of Holy Scripture and rejection of Apocrypha, deuterocanonical books are not studied here. Due to the constraints in word limitation, case study examples in general and special hermeneutics are limited.

XVII. CONCLUSION

Preachers and Teachers are ambassadors of Christ and they minister on behalf of Christ, and the Lord speaks through them (2 Cor. 5:20). Faithful ministers do not adulterate the Word of God with word of men. Study to shew thyself approved unto God a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

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3. BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP

“A Biblical Evaluation on the Exemplary Leadership Traits of Four Pillars of Faith: Moses, Nehemiah, Daniel and Paul; A Comparative Analysis”

Dr. Reji Johnson

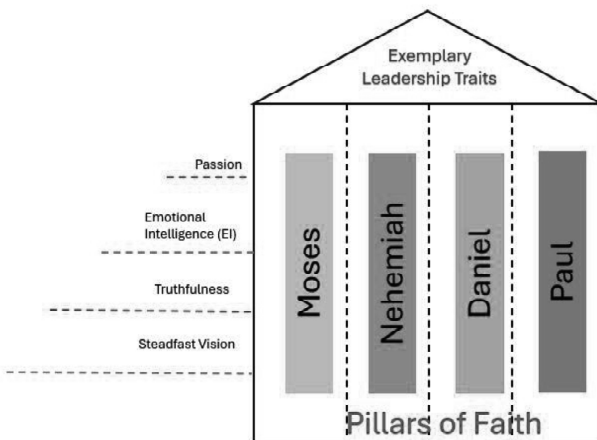
Dr. Reji Johnson, a retired professor of strategic and operations management, has dedicated his post-academic career to exploring the intersection of biblical principles and management practices. With extensive experience in both areas, he is uniquely positioned to identify connections between the two, offering insights that can be applied to practical Christian living. Currently, he serves as a faculty member at the Brethren Bible Institute in Pathanamthitta and is actively involved in various church ministries. Dr. Johnson is in fellowship with the Rehoboth Christian Brethren Church at Varayanoor, Pullad and can be reached at email ID: a.rejjjohnson@gmail.com

Abstract

This study conducts a comparative STEP analysis (Selfless Vision, Trustworthiness, Emotional Intelligence, and Passion) on the leadership traits of Biblical figures, Moses, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Paul. The paper examines Moses' visionary leadership, Nehemiah's compliance in adversity, Daniel's wisdom and faith, and Paul's transformational attitude. Each leader endorsed unique traits that contributed to triumphantly crossing hurdles, led by strong faith and purpose-driven leadership.

Introduction

Moses, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Paul were all outstanding leaders who harmonized their lives to the harmonious tune of heaven covering approximately 1450 years in Biblical history, each holding the centre-stage of explicit leadership traits. Moses showed humility and perseverance, leading Israel through difficult circumstances. He listened to God and acted as an intercessor, guiding the Israelites toward their promised land despite their disobedience. Nehemiah was a visionary leader with great determination. He rebuilt Jerusalem's walls despite opposition, demonstrating courage, organizational capability and a servant's heart, always relying on prayer. Daniel displayed faithfulness and integrity, even under foreign rule. His wisdom and strong moral character earned him respect and influence in the Babylonian court, yet he remained committed to God above all else. Paul was a zealous and resilient leader, displaying his leadership traits throughout his missionary journeys. His fearless determination in spreading the Gospel and molding early believers and local churches, despite persecution, reflected his fortitude, adaptability and strong determination. Together, these leaders exemplify humility, perseverance, integrity, vision and faith, making their leadership qualities timeless and applicable across different contexts. Their extraordinary lifestyle for the God of eternity is examined utilizing a STEP Analysis.



STEP (Steadfast Vision, Truthfulness, Emotional Intelligence, Passion) Analysis

A. MOSES

(1) The Selfless Vision of Moses

Selflessness is loving other people – it is being patient and kind, it is not being envious of what other people have, it is not rude to other people. Being impatient, rude, and envious are all signs of selfishness because they put you first. These traits mean you care more about yourself than the person you love. However, in his leadership and his relationship, Moses is portrayed as a humble and self-sacrificing servant of God, who consistently places the needs of others before his own. Thus, Moses' selfless vision is best portrayed by the following:

I. Reluctance to Lead but Willingness to Serve (Exodus 3-4)

When God first calls Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he initially hesitates, unsure of his abilities, citing his poor speaking skills and insecurity (Exodus 4:10). Despite his reluctance, Moses ultimately obeys God's call, setting aside his comfort and concerns to serve a greater purpose. This shows his selflessness; as the daunting task for the sake of his people, even when he felt inadequate was his fundamentally selfless goal. Moses, however, who encountered God on the mountaintop (whether Sinai, Horeb, or Nebo) represented the possibilities and the limits of those who are fully human in the overwhelming face of divinity, no matter how transformative that encounter was thought¹.

II. Endurance in Leadership:

There arose a situation when the anger of God blew against his people when they disobeyed the command and smelt for themselves a golden calf; it is here we see Moses weeping for these people and even permitting his name to be blotted out of God's book if it would save the Israelites. This behavioral pattern of Moses' deep love and his willingness to sacrifice his legacy for the people reveals his endurance in leadership (Exodus 32-32). It must have

¹ CALAWAY, JARED C. "Abbreviations to Ancient Sources." In *The Christian Moses: Vision, Authority, and the Limits of Humanity in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, 2:xiii–2. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvscxtck.4>.

been hard for God to forgive him. But he looked at him compassionately, appeared to him, and asked him “to feed his sheep” (cf. Jn 21:15-17).²

Despite all contentions, Moses remained committed to leading and his patience and long-suffering demonstrate his selflessness, without seeking personal gain or recognition. Moses with his multidimensional leadership skills thus stands out for his endurance in leadership during the old era. He headed thus a race comprising slaves, and led them out of servitude in Egypt in what were exceedingly trying circumstances, to their promised land.³

III. Rejecting Personal Privilege (Numbers 12:3)

The Bible describes Moses as “more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). He never sought personal privilege or power, and he often downplayed his role, pointing the people to God as the true source of their deliverance. Even when his position was questioned by his own family, Moses did not defend himself but left the matter to God, thus displaying his meekness and selfless character.

IV. Refusing Entry into the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34)

Moses’ final act of selflessness is seen in his acceptance of God’s judgment that he would not enter the Promised Land due to his disobedience at Meribah (Numbers 20:12). Even though he had faithfully led the Israelites for 40 years, Moses accepted the consequence without complaint.

V. Divine Calling and Purpose

Moses’ leadership was grounded in a solid sense of divine calling. During his meeting with the Lord at the burning bush and commission to the role of leadership, he realized his higher calling. His patience and perseverance emphasized fairness, justice, and the need to restore the dignity of a people who had been enslaved for generations.

² L. B. Jones, *Jesus, CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership*

³ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281544986_An_analysis_of_theological_and_strategic_management_perspectives_of_Moses_as_a_leader

VI. Establishment of a New Distinctiveness

A significant aspect of Moses' leadership is in getting a new identity for the Israelites. He guided them not only physically but also spiritually, giving them the laws and commandments like the Ten Commandments; thus, transforming the Israelites from being Egyptian slaves to a nation.

VII. Empowering Future Leadership

Moses understood that leadership is about continuity. The vision of Moses extended beyond his timeline when he empowered Joshua to take over the reins as he was about to move on to a better heavenly land. Moses mentored Joshua to be able to take over and to be able to sustain his (Moses') vision for the people to enter the promised land.

(2) Trustworthiness

Moses is a central figure in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, where he is portrayed as a highly trustworthy and faithful leader. His trustworthiness is established through various narratives that highlight his obedience to God's commands, his leadership, and his moral integrity. Here are some key aspects of Moses' trustworthiness in the Bible:

I. Obedience to God:

The Burning Bush Encounter (Exodus 3-4). Despite his doubts about his abilities, Moses trusts in God's plan and agrees to take on the monumental task.

Deliverance of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). Moses faithfully conveys God's laws to the Israelites, emphasizing his role as a trustworthy mediator between God and His people.

II. Leadership and Advocacy:

Leading the Israelites (Exodus 7-14): He follows God's instructions precisely, even when it requires confronting Pharaoh on numerous occasions.

Intercession for the People (Exodus 32:11-14): When the Israelites sinned by worshiping the golden calf, Moses pleads with

God on their behalf, showing his dedication and loyalty to the people. His intercession averts God's wrath, showcasing his trustworthiness as a mediator.

III. Moral Integrity:

Humility (Numbers 12:3): The Bible describes Moses as the most humble man on earth, highlighting his moral character. His humility contributes to his trustworthiness, as he does not seek personal gain but rather serves God and his people faithfully. This is again reinforced in Hebrews 11.

Faithfulness (Hebrews 3:2): In the New Testament, Moses is praised for being faithful "in all God's house." This reinforces the idea that Moses was a trustworthy servant of God who carried out his duties with dedication and integrity. For Moses, that consciousness created humility and a deep trust in God, rather than arrogance or resentment.⁴

IV. Challenges and Growth:

Hurdles and Surrender (Numbers 20:1-12): Even when Moses makes mistakes, such as striking the rock at Meribah instead of speaking to it as God commanded, he continues to trust in God's plan. In the Exodus narrative, this study explores various struggles that Moses faced as he led the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt. During the journey, the people complained, not only because of the hardship in the wilderness but, at times, they rebelled against Moses' leadership and challenged the institutions he put in place.⁵

(3) Moses' Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Moses' leadership in the Bible reflects a remarkable level of emotional intelligence (EI), which is best revealed through his following qualities:

I. Self-Consciousness

In Exodus 4:10, Moses admits his consciousness about himself and his environment, saying, "I am slow of speech and tongue."

⁴ <https://rachelstarrthomson.com/2016/02/02/the-shadow-life-of-moses-and-how-we-know-we-can-trust-the-storyteller/>

⁵ https://www.academia.edu/97975262/Moses_and_Leadership_Struggles_in_the_Exodus_Narrative

This reveals his emotional intelligence being conscious of his perceived weaknesses, honestly.

II. Self-Regulation

Moses faced numerous stressful situations yet remained composed when faced with interior rebellion from the people and exterior threats from the nations they passed through. This led to his placing his grief before God instead of letting his human compulsion control him. Wildavsky discerns four distinct regimes for the Israelites during Moses' lifetime: the regime of slavery under Pharaoh, the regime of anarchy once they were out of Egypt, the regime of equity in response to the idolatrous worship of the Golden Calf, and the regime of hierarchy after Korah's rebellion.⁶ Each regime is presented as a model with its salient characteristics.

III. Empathy

Moses' empathy is one of Moses' leadership traits. He is pained when his people are pained, best exhibited in the case of the fight between the slaves (Exodus 2:11-12). His willingness to stand in the gap and on another occasion to intercede for the people is a classic case of his EI.

IV. Social Skills and Conflict Management

Moses' ability to mediate with leaders of the tribes when there were conflicts, and to cut deals with kings en route was a highlight of his social skill. He had to manage conflicts from within his family from both Aaron and Miriam, and he handled the conflict with the sons of Korah with wisdom and power from above (Numbers 12). He was able to steer conflicts with humility and did not let pride or anger be a spanner in the wheel. On another occasion, when there was conflict from the sons of Korah (Numbers. 12), his calm and controlled handling of conflict are other markers of his emotional intelligence.

⁶ Wildavsky, Aaron B. *The nursing father: Moses as a political leader*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1984.

V. Self-Learnable and Willingness to Delegate Responsibilities

Additionally, he was a learnable person as we see that his father-in-law Jethro taught him to delegate responsibilities among the leaders to troubleshoot their problems within themselves (Exodus 18:17-24).

(4) Moses' Passion

Moses' passion in the Bible is marked by his unwavering commitment to lead the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. Despite initial reluctance, Moses obeyed God's call at the burning bush and confronted Pharaoh with boldness, demanding the release of God's people. His zeal was evident in his intercessions for Israel, often pleading with God for mercy despite their repeated disobedience. At Mount Sinai, Moses received the Ten Commandments, solidifying his role as the lawgiver. His dedication was fueled by a deep love for God and his people, but his passion sometimes led to moments of anger, like striking the rock at Meribah. Moses' life exemplifies faith, leadership, and the cost of carrying out God's will with passion.

B. NEHEMIAH

(1) The Selfless Vision of Nehemiah

The selfless vision of Nehemiah is demonstrated through his forgetting about "self" and racing towards his commission of rebuilding the fallen and burnt walls of Jerusalem. This selfless vision is demonstrated through his following traits:

I. Zeal for His God, His People, And Their Welfare

Nehemiah sacrificed his comfort zone and concentrated on the needs of his people. As cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes, he dwelt in a comfort zone; but when he heard of the broken and burnt condition of the walls of his city, he became wretched and wept for his land and his people (Nehemiah 1:1-4). His genuine desire to restore the dignity of the people to his God, made him forsake all the benefits of his position to restore the walls (Nehemiah 5:14-19). Understanding the exploitation of the richer Jews by way

of ‘interest’ he confronted them to cancel the debts of the people and return their land (Nehemiah 5:6-13). This zeal shows his enthusiasm for the well-being of all, particularly the helpless.

II. Leadership through Pattern

Hands-On Leadership: Like other godly leaders, Nehemiah is concerned and responsive to problems, constantly in prayer, identifies with the failures of others, and is strengthened by the promises of God. He is assertive, learns to wait on God, respects authorities, practices a lifestyle of prayer, has a valuable team, plans carefully, works hard, motivates others, and expects opposition.⁷ (Gregory 2015). Nehemiah didn’t just command, he swam with the current and enthusiastically participated and worked alongside the people (Nehemiah 4:6). This motivated the people to work tirelessly, remain vigilant, and committed to their mission (Nehemiah 4:16-18). He was a sincere trailblazer, not a seeker of compromise but a molder of compromise.

III. Focuses on God’s Glory, Not His Own

Prayerful Leadership: his prayerful and God-centered selfless leadership is composed of love, accountability, and reasonability.

IV. Established in Team Spirit

Nehemiah’s team efforts in rebuilding the walls and reforming the thought process of the returned exiles were best achieved by ensuring and concreting a team spirit among the people, discarding those who would not cooperate, and personally motivating these exiles. Thus, Nehemiah’s selfless vision came to fruition when the walls were completed in just 52 days, a remarkable achievement that showed the power of trust, solidarity, and determination. Nehemiah’s strategy is not only an example of a godly leader, who has the fear of God but whose aim and objective is the betterment of the people.

(2) Nehemiah’s Trustworthiness

I. Integrity and Leadership:

Nehemiah’s trustworthiness and leadership are seen in his deep commitment to God and the welfare of his people; this is best

⁷ https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-61996-1_4

displayed in Nehemiah's leadership style which is marked by transparency and accountability. His focus was on serving the community rather than benefiting personally, a sign of his honesty and trustworthiness.

II. Self-Management (Perseverance and Patience)

Nehemiah's trustworthiness is noticeable when he does not let fear dictate his actions. He presented his case calmly and respectfully. He didn't react impulsively or retaliate emotionally. Instead, he continued to motivate the people to complete the wall, showing self-discipline and persistence (Nehemiah 4:13-23).

(3) Nehemiah's Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Nehemiah displayed remarkable emotional intelligence (EI) throughout his leadership journey; emotions include feeling, thought, nervous system activation, physiological changes, and behavioral changes such as facial expressions. Emotions seem to dominate many aspects of an individual's life as recognizing and responding to important events related to survival and/or the maintenance of prosperity, therefore, emotions serve various functions⁸.

I. Self-Conscious

Emotional Self-Insight: Nehemiah was deeply in tune with his emotions and the emotions of others. When he heard about the destruction of Jerusalem's walls, he wept, mourned, and fasted for days (Nehemiah 1:4).

II. Spiritual Sensitivity

He was aware of his dependence on God and prayed fervently before taking any action. This level of self-consciousness enabled him to seek guidance and strength, understanding that he couldn't solve the problem alone.

⁸ Athanasios S Drigas and Chara Papoutsis, "A New Layered Model on Emotional Intelligence" 8 (2018): 1-17, <https://doi.org>

III. Socially Conscious

Empathy and Compassion: Nehemiah's concern for the people of Jerusalem was a key motivating factor. He empathized with their suffering, and his prayers often reflected his deep concern for their well-being (Nehemiah 1:6-7). He saw the situation not just as a physical challenge but as a spiritual and emotional crisis for his people.

IV. Relationship Mentor

Effective Communication: Nehemiah was an excellent communicator; he showed no difference between the haves and the have-nots. His EI ensured that their teamwork was goal-orientated in the reconstruction of the 'Sheep Gate' and did not have any higher privilege than those who cleaned and repaired the dung gate (Nehemiah 4:14). Those who were not willing to put their shoulders were either motivated or removed.

V. Conflict Management

Nehemiah got the people to openly trust and willingly listen to his ideas. He had a godly leader's priorities, cultivating a life of celebration, characteristics of revival, how a godly leader responds to discouragement, conflict, prosperity and promotion, the tactics of the enemy, and much more⁹.

(4).Nehemiah's Passion

Nehemiah's passion for his land and the temple of God is seen in his heart throb as he wept, fasted, and prayed, seeking God's guidance. His fervor led him to take decisive action, leaving his position as cupbearer to the Persian king to lead the rebuilding effort. Despite intense opposition, Nehemiah remained resolute, motivating the people to work with zeal. His leadership was marked by integrity, prayer, and reliance on God. Nehemiah's passion extended beyond construction; he also focused on spiritual revival, ensuring the people returned to the covenant with God. His life exemplifies commitment to God's purpose, unwavering faith, and a heart for restoration.

⁹<https://www.everand.com/book/334959101/Nehemiah-Becoming-a-Godly-Leader-The-Bible-Teacher-s-Guide>

C. DANIEL

(1) The Selfless Vision of Daniel

Initially Daniel is seen being bold enough to understand King Nebuchadnezzar's problem; thereafter, he is fearless in being appointed to discern the dream; following which he informs his three teammates and thereafter they together seek the Lord's wisdom and finally the meaning of the dream is revealed to them. When this happens, they praise God and deliver the answer to Nebuchadnezzar, and thus both their God and their team are honoured. Eventually, Daniel's God and Daniel's commitment become the talk of the town.

(2) Daniel's Trustworthiness

I. Integrity and Faithfulness

Daniel and his friends refused to defile themselves with the king's food, choosing instead to adhere to their religious dietary laws (Daniel 1:8). Thus, demonstrating his commitment to his faith and his trustworthiness in upholding his beliefs.¹⁰

II. Credibility Among Leaders

Daniel earned a reputation for when his enemies could find no guile in him because he was trustworthy, and neither corrupt nor negligent Daniel 6:4. His honesty and dedication made him stand out among his peers and earned him favor with kings, including Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, and Cyrus. God's favor and protection are best displayed when the lions' mouths are shut to protect God's honored servant (Daniel 6:22). His prophetic role also portrays Daniel's trustworthiness. God entrusted him with visions and revelations about the future, including the rise and fall of empires and the coming of the Messiah (Daniel 7-12).

III. Motivational Among Masses

Daniel's motivation throughout his life is that he wanted to keep in step with the God of his fathers and obey the commands

¹⁰ <https://www.mbcmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Introduction.pdf>

of his God which ultimately flowed down to the king and those who had initially set their minds to hurt him. He motivates the king through his prophecies of different periods in history and the same has been recorded for the benefit of those who love the Lord over the ages.

(3) Emotional Intelligence (EI) Of Daniel

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI) “Emotional self-control— delaying gratification and stifling impulsiveness- underlies accomplishment of every sort”.¹¹ It can rightfully be said that “our emotional mind will harness the rational mind to its purposes, for our feelings and reactions— rationalizations— justifying them in terms of the present moment, without realizing the influence of our emotional memory; which is displayed in the EI of Daniel”.

I. Self-Conscious

Daniel does not panic before the king or in the lions’ den. Instead, he calmly seeks wisdom from God. His prayers in private (Daniel 2:17-18) reflect his ability to process his emotions and seek divine guidance. His consciousness of his dependence on God shows his understanding of his limitations.

II. Empathy

Daniels’s interaction with the court officials and the eunuchs shows his ability to understand their concerns and negotiate in a way that benefits both parties while remaining true to his faith. His empathy was because of his excellent social skills which can be best seen when though in captivity he remains in the good books of five kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus, and his skills of negotiation both with officials and eunuchs has the same bandwidth.

(4) Daniel’s Passion

The Biblical passion of Daniel is a story of unwavering faith and courage in the face of adversity. Daniel, a Jewish exile in Babylon, rose to prominence due to his wisdom and ability to

¹¹ <https://strategiesforinfluence.com/daniel-goleman-emotional-intelligence/>

interpret dreams. Despite being favored by King Darius, Daniel faced persecution for his refusal to abandon his devotion to God. When forbidden to pray, Daniel continued his prayers to the one true God, leading to his arrest and being sentenced to the lion's den. Miraculously, God sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths, sparing Daniel's life. His faithfulness not only saved him but also led King Darius to acknowledge the power of Daniel's God. The story reflects the triumph of steadfast faith over fear and opposition.

D. PAUL

(1). Paul's Selfless Vision

Paul who was originally known as Saul, later transformed from being a persecutor of Christians to one of the most influential apostles, presenting himself with one goal that the gospel of Christ should shine forth in all circumstances. This can be best displayed in:

I. His Transformation and Humility

Before his conversion, Saul a zealous Pharisee, fanatical in the persecution of early Christians (Acts 8:3) was transformed after his encounter with Christ on the highway to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19) to be Paul with a set goal to reach everyone with the cross of Christ. Not once did he use his position for personal gain, but surrendered all realizing that his weakness was a purpose of God to enjoy the grace of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

II. His Willingness to Suffer for the Gospel

Paul endured diverse hardships, like physical beatings, being held in captivity, stormy seas, and near-death experiences, all for the sake of preaching of the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). His sacrificial life, displayed that his mission was of spreading the gospel above his comfort and safety. His act of leadership was displayed in working with his own hands as a tentmaker and not being a financial burden to others.

III. His Desire to Reach All People with the Gospel

Through his three missionary journeys, he was able to reach people with the gospel, mend the brokenhearted, restore

fellowship, and reprove those who had drifted away. Being a great communicator both by word of mouth and his letters, he was able to touch many. Being a man of great learning, he was able to adapt to various cultural requirements and prove that the God of his fathers had sent His Son as the Messiah to save sinners. Not only did he preach Christ but he also ensured that churches were planted and watered, emphasizing the importance of unity and the correct understanding of Biblical doctrine among believers. He dealt with problems of division, morality, and application of law, furnishing navigation for maintaining a doctrinally knitted sound community. Paul's ultimate act of selflessness was his willingness to die for the sake of the Gospel. Tradition holds that Paul was martyred in Rome under Emperor Nero. Throughout his letters, Paul expressed his readiness to die if it would further the cause of Christ.

(2) The Trustworthiness of Paul

The trustworthiness and vision of Paul is one of a great degree; he was focused like Abraham on his goal, to get others to know and grow in Christ. His epistles are exemplary Spirit-filled teaching to church doctrine. His trustworthiness can be viewed from multidimensional perspectives:

I. Biblical Description

- a. **Conversion Experience:** Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19) is often cited as a key moment that marks his trustworthiness. His transformation from a persecutor of Christians to a devout follower of Christ is seen as evidence of the authenticity of his faith and mission.
- b. **Consistency in Teachings:** Paul's epistles are consistent in their message about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the importance of grace, and the ethical conduct expected of believers. This consistency lends credibility to his teachings.
- c. **Apostolic Endorsement:** Despite initial skepticism, Paul was eventually accepted by other apostles like Peter and James (Galatians. 2:9). Their recognition of his apostleship and his contributions to the early Church support his trustworthiness.

II. Theological Perspective

- a. Divine Inspiration: Many Christians believe that Paul's writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit, making them trustworthy as part of the Bible's canon. His letters are considered authoritative teachings for Christian doctrine.
- b. Impact on Christian Doctrine: Paul's teachings on grace, justification by faith, and Christian ethics are central to Christian theology. His influence on the development of Christian thought and practice is immense, which bolsters his credibility within the Christian tradition. The above truth implies that any leader among God's people must submit to Christ to lead in the right direction and with the right set of values. Gene Wilkes articulates, "No servant leader would ever act or speak in contradiction to Christ's teachings and actions." Paul trumpeted a clear call to follow Christ. He consistently called people to hear the core story of Jesus and to trust Him as the rescuer and leader of their lives.¹²

III. Historical and Academic Perspective

Authenticity of Letters: Of the thirteen letters traditionally attributed to Paul, most scholars agree that seven are authentically Pauline (e.g., Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians). These letters are considered trustworthy historical documents that provide insight into the early Christian movement.

Criticism and Controversy:

Some critics argue that Paul's teachings diverged from the original message of Jesus or that he introduced ideas that were not present in early Christianity. However, many scholars and theologians defend Paul as a faithful interpreter of Jesus' teachings, adapting them to the Gentile context.

(3) Paul's Emotional Intelligence (EI)

The Apostle Paul, a key figure in the New Testament, exhibited high emotional intelligence throughout his ministry. Emotional intelligence involves self-consciousness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation, and Paul demonstrated many of these

¹² Gene Wilkes, *Paul on Leadership: Servant Leadership in a Ministry of Transition* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2004), 112

qualities in his interactions and writings. Here's how Paul's emotional intelligence is reflected:

I. Self-Consciousness

Paul was deeply aware of his own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses. In several of his letters, he acknowledges his past mistakes, particularly his role in persecuting Christians before his conversion (Acts 9, 1 Timothy 1:13-16). He recognized his shortcomings and relied on God's grace rather than his strength (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). This self-consciousness allowed him to grow spiritually and emotionally.

II. Self-Regulation

Paul had a remarkable ability to manage his emotions, particularly in challenging situations. Despite facing persecution, imprisonment, and suffering (2 Corinthians 11:23-28), he maintained a sense of peace and purpose. For example, while in prison, he wrote the letter to the Philippians, encouraging them to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4). His ability to stay focused on his mission, despite his personal trials, shows great emotional control and resilience.

III. Empathy

Paul consistently demonstrated empathy, particularly in his letters where he addresses the struggles and needs of various Christian communities. In Romans 12:15, he encourages believers to "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." This shows his ability to understand and share in the emotions of others. His letter to Philemon is another example where he pleads for the forgiveness of Onesimus, a runaway slave, showing concern for both Philemon's feelings and Onesimus' situation. The challenge of ethical leadership is enormous. Ciulla (2014) lists the many ethical challenges leaders face as ranging from "the temptations of power, the problems of ego and self-interest" to "the burdens of being responsible for the welling of groups, organizations, or nations that consist of people who have a variety of needs and interests"¹³.

¹³Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership 9, no. 1 (Fall 2019), 76-86

IV. Social Skills

Paul was a master communicator and knew how to build and maintain relationships. His letters are filled with personal greetings, expressions of gratitude, and encouragement (e.g., Romans 16). He also adapted his message depending on his audience, whether he was speaking to Jews, Gentiles, or Roman authorities, showing great cultural and social adaptability (1 Corinthians 9:20-22). His ability to connect with diverse groups of people was essential for spreading the gospel.

V. Motivation

Paul's emotional intelligence is also evident in his motivation. He was driven by a deep sense of purpose and commitment to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite facing numerous hardships, Paul remained steadfast and passionate about his mission. In Philippians 3:14, he speaks of "pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus," reflecting his intrinsic motivation and resilience. Emotional intelligence is popular because of the historical conflict between emotion and reason combined with the tendency to devalue feeling when compared to rational thinking.¹⁴

(4) Paul's Passion

The Biblical passion of Paul refers to his unwavering commitment and suffering for the spread of the Gospel. Originally a fierce persecutor of Christians, Paul's life transformed after encountering Christ on the road to Damascus. Following his conversion, Paul dedicated himself to preaching Christ's message, enduring severe hardships: imprisonment, beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, and constant threats to his life. His passion for Christ drove him to establish churches, write letters (epistles) to guide believers, and defend the faith even before rulers. Paul famously declared, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Despite his trials, his zeal never wavered, ultimately leading

¹⁴ Goleman, D. (1998). Working with emotional intelligence. New York: Bantam Books

to his martyrdom in Rome under Emperor Nero. Paul's passion continues to inspire Christians even today.

FINDINGS

The leadership traits of Moses, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Paul exhibit common inter-relationships grounded in their unwavering faith, courage, and dedication to serving God's purpose.

Faith is a fundamental trait found in all four leaders. Moses demonstrated faith in God by leading the Israelites out of Egypt despite overwhelming challenges (Exodus 14). Nehemiah displayed trust in God's provision when rebuilding Jerusalem's walls amidst opposition (Nehemiah 2:20). Similarly, Daniel's faith was evident when he maintained his devotion to God even when faced with the threat of death (Daniel 6:10). Paul's faith guided him through perilous missionary journeys to spread the Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

Courage interconnects their leadership. Moses faced the powerful Pharaoh and led the Israelites through harsh conditions. Nehemiah exhibited bravery by confronting adversaries during the reconstruction project, risking his life to fulfill God's mission. Daniel's courage was on full display when he refused to bow to the king's edict, knowing it could lead to his execution. Paul, too, showed immense courage, continuing to preach the Gospel despite imprisonments, beatings, and threats.

Vision and purpose were clear in their leadership. Moses, directed by God, led the Israelites toward the Promised Land. Nehemiah saw the restoration of Jerusalem as essential to God's plan. Daniel's wisdom and prophetic insight guided nations, while Paul's missionary zeal aimed to establish churches and spread Christianity across the Roman Empire.

These traits—faith, courage, and vision—united these leaders, demonstrating how divine guidance shapes and sustains leaders in their mission. Each leader remained steadfast in their commitment to God's will, influencing their followers and shaping history.

CONCLUSION

The leadership traits of Moses, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Paul showcase a powerful blend of faith, resilience, and strategic vision, which can be seen as timeless qualities for effective leadership.

Moses demonstrated humility and a deep reliance on God, leading the Israelites through challenges with patience and perseverance. His ability to delegate tasks and mentor others, as seen with Joshua, reflects the importance of nurturing future leaders and trusting a team to accomplish a greater mission.

Nehemiah exhibited extraordinary focus, courage, and determination in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls despite fierce opposition. His strategic planning, clear communication, and ability to inspire others to unite around a shared vision show that effective leadership requires both foresight and the ability to galvanize people toward collective action.

Daniel's leadership was marked by his unwavering faith and integrity, even in the face of persecution. He maintained his principles while navigating the complex politics of Babylon, proving that moral leadership and wisdom are critical in environments where ethical challenges are present.

Paul's leadership was transformative in the early Christian church, driven by passion, adaptability, and a clear sense of mission. His ability to connect with diverse audiences, mentor emerging leaders like Timothy, and endure hardships for the sake of the Gospel underscores the power of conviction and vision.

Collectively, these leaders exemplify traits like faithfulness, resilience, strategic thinking, and the ability to inspire and empower others. Their stories remind us that true leadership is rooted in service, integrity, and a commitment to a higher purpose.

4. SOTERIOLOGY

AN EVALUATION OF THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

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Abstract

This article aims to expose the truth about the prosperity gospel. Where did the gospel of prosperity come from? What are its distinctive features? To what extent is it theologically sound? The following discussion will show how the advocates of this gospel misinterpret the Scriptures. The correct interpretation of the passages of Scripture that the prosperity preachers use to teach their false doctrines are also provided.

Introduction

“It is never God’s will for a Christian to be poor or sick.” Have you ever heard this? This statement may sound like music to your ears, and may even sound Biblical. We often hear this stuff from the famous Tele-Evangelists of the day. They bombard our ears with more and more promises of health, wealth and success allegedly drawn from the Bible. They are taking advantage of people’s greed in attempts to attract more followers.

Rather than glorifying the grace of God in salvation, this new brand of “gospel” focuses on human potential for successful living, emphasizing health and wealth. This is a clear shift from Theocentric providence to anthropocentric prosperity. Advocates of the prosperity gospel claim that it is God’s will for every believer to be materially prosperous. The implication is that a sick or poor believer

is outside God's will for his life. Thus, the nature of God's will for believers is distorted. ¹

A. The Advent of the Prosperity Gospel

Prosperity Gospel is not a denominational doctrine, or a tradition, or even a school of thought. It is a broadly based, multicolored movement that overlaps both the charismatic and non-charismatic sections of Christendom. It seems to be a mixture of the positive thinking principles of Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller and the faith healing ministry of Oral Roberts. It certainly has a charismatic colour to it but is by no means limited to Pentecostalism. It borrows heavily from the materialistic emphasis of affluent, suburban Christianity. ²

Some of the prominent personalities of prosperity thinking include Kenneth Hagin, pastor of the Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, founders of Kenneth Copeland Ministries in Fort Worth, Texas; Bob and Marte Tilton, founding pastors of the Word of Faith Church, Farmers Branch, Texas; Late John Osteen, pastor of the Lakewood Church, Houston, Texas and so on. ³

B. An Explanation of the Prosperity Gospel

“Be healthy, wealthy, and wise.” Perhaps, rewording this old maxim can best summarize the major doctrines of this movement. In this case, the good news of the prosperity gospel is that Christians can always be **healthy, wealthy, and demon-free**.

In the theology of this prosperity or faith movement (sometimes called so), material prosperity is seen as evidence of God's blessing, while poverty is seen as a sign of spiritual failure. Tilton sums up

¹ Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 329–330.

² Michael D. Fortner, *The Prosperity Gospel Exposed*, 2000, <http://www.firefromheaven.net/prosper2a.html>

³ Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 330

the thinking of many “prosperity teachers” with the words: “Being poor is a sin.” The concept of sowing and reaping is popular in their circles. Such texts as “For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7) are often employed to justify this teaching. Using this text, they explain that by planting a financial seed into a ministry, the believer can name what it is that they want in return and believe that they shall receive it. It is invariably linked to the belief of positive confession. However, rather than a get rich quick formula, in Gal. 6:7 Paul speaks about the universal law of consequence in the context of God’s wrath. It cannot be used to support the seed-faith concept of the prosperity Gospel. (Gal. 6: 9-10).⁴

Let us now consider each component of the prosperity Gospel briefly: **Health, Wealth, and Freedom from demons.**

1. Health

According to the prosperity gospel, the provision of healing, is found in the Atonement. Three Scripture passages is used to support this notion.

The first is **Isaiah 53:5**: “By His stripes we are healed.” This is interpreted to mean that Christ was the divine Substitute for all forms of physical illness, so that through the death of Christ on the cross (Atonement), healing is as readily available as forgiveness of sin. Matthew 8:16-17 presents Jesus’ healing ministry as fulfilling what Isaiah the prophet had said (Isa. 53:4). The conclusion is drawn that since Jesus healed all who came to Him in His day (Matt. 8:16), He still does the same today. A spokesman in neo-Pentecostalism, Dennis Bennett writes, “Everybody knows Jesus is tender hearted, and would never want anyone to be sick.” The third reference is 1 Peter 2:24, “By His wounds you were healed.” At first glance this seems to teach that physical healing was provided through Christ’s sufferings as a substitute. But the context of Is. 53:5, which is alluded here shows that sickness is a reference to sin.

⁴*An Evaluation of the Key Doctrines in the Health and Wealth Faith Movement*, © Spotlight Ministries www.spotlightministries.org.uk
<http://www.spotlightministries.org.uk/faithmov.html>

Underlying this argument, of course, is the assumption that it is never God's will for anyone to be sick. The following unambiguous assertion from Kenneth Hagin illustrates this point: "Don't ever tell anyone sickness is the will of God for us. It isn't! Healing and health are the will of God for mankind. If sickness were the will of God, heaven would be filled with sickness and disease"⁵ (Kenneth E. Hagin, *Redeemed from Poverty, Sickness and Death*).

The attaining of healing is through the exercise of faith. The approach to faith can best be understood by the phrases "name it and claim it" or "believe and receive." In defense of its view of faith, the prosperity movement depend too much on the hyper-literal interpretation of Mark 11:23-24: "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them (NKJV)." The proponents of faith movement interpret these verses in the most literal and unrestricted sense ignoring the hyperbole that Jesus used. Thus, they overstress faith at the expense of the object of faith or the person in whom one has to believe.

Faith is defined as speaking or confessing something with authority in the full anticipation that what is spoken will happen. As the Hunters have expressed it:

TALK TO THE DISEASE! Speak with authority and then believe! SAYING is a command to be healed! CONFESSING is believing for a future act or manifestation of the healing . . . both confessing and saying are calling into being something that does not exist at the present time (Charles and Frances Hunter, *To Heal the Sick*).⁶

⁵ Kenneth E. Hagin, *Redeemed from Poverty, Sickness, and Death* (Tulsa: Faith Library publications, 1983), pp. 11 –14, cited in Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 331.

⁶ Charles and Frances Hunter, *To Heal the Sick* (Kingwood, TX: Hunter Books, 1983), p.64, cited in Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 332.

The problem of not receiving what one believes for is apparently overcome by patience and persistence. Dennis Bennett has given the following counsel to those not immediately healed:

It just means they're not yet open to receive the particular healing they need. . . We need to continue to break through the barriers that keep us from receiving (Dennis Bennet, "Does God Want Everybody Healed").⁷

2. Wealth

The purpose of wealth is humanitarian; that is what the teachers of the prosperity Gospel claim. Each one has to give away his material benefits to help meet the needs of others. According to Kenneth Copeland, "True prosperity is the ability to use God's power to meet the needs of mankind in any realm of life." (Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity*). This compassionate use of resources is based on what is considered to be a spiritual law, called by Tilton the law of compensation (Tilton, *God's Laws of Success*).

The promise of wealth, the basis for the whole prosperity movement, is seen in a number of Scripture passages interpreted from a prosperity point of view. The clarion call to prosperity is Joshua 1:8, which refers to God's promise to Joshua: "...For then you will make your way **prosperous**, and then you will have good **success**." Of course, they won't give much importance to the first part of the verse that speaks about the condition of that promise. Further support is found in 2 Chronicles 20:20, "Believe His prophets, and you shall prosper" and Nehemiah 2:20 "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us." Psalm 1:3 states that the righteous man will prosper in whatever he does, and Psalm 35:27 indicates that God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servant. The most prominent New Testament verse on the subject is 3 John 2: "Beloved, I pray that you **may prosper in all things and be in health**, just as your soul prospers" (emphasis added). Prosperity

⁷Dennis Bennet, "Does God Want Everybody Healed?" *Christian Life*, January 1982, pp. 53-54, cited in Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October - December 1986): 332.

supporters often quote this verse as a declaration of God's will for all believers.

Knowing, obeying, and believing one can possess the wealth provided through the Abrahamic Covenant. First there must be knowledge of the promise before the promise can be claimed. As Jerry Savelle, a prosperity evangelist puts it, "If a person doesn't know it is God's will for him to prosper, it is highly improbable that he will prosper." The believer who is unaware that prosperity is his is like the passenger on a cruise ship who ate only cheese and crackers because he did not know that meals were included in the price of the ticket (Copeland, *Laws of Prosperity*).

Obedience is a second key to receive wealth. "If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity" (Job 36:11). Many in the prosperity movement view the Covenant with Abraham as conditional. The conditions must be met before financial blessing can come. It has even been suggested by Copeland that the Israelites could have freed themselves from Egyptian bondage long before Moses if they had known and kept God's covenant with Abraham (*The Laws of Prosperity*).⁸

The third element, **faith**, is exercised in the same way as in achieving divine health. Faith amounts to claiming authority over the financial resources already guaranteed by God. Here is a straightforward account of how this "faith" is put into action given by Copeland:

If you make up your mind . . . that you are willing to live in divine prosperity and abundance, Satan cannot stop the flow of God's financial blessings. If you are willing and obedient divine prosperity will come to pass in your life.⁹

Of course, the hundredfold return is not automatic. One must "believe it in." The "force of faith" must be continually exercised,

⁸Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): pp. 333–335.

⁹Copeland, *God's Will Is Prosperity*, pp.37-38, cited in Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 336

and if the pressure of faith reduces, the return will stop flowing in. Faith is the means of collecting the amount owed from the hundredfold return. According to Kenneth Copeland, “When a man makes deposits with God, he has a right to call upon these deposits and make withdrawals” (Copeland, *Laws of Prosperity*). No wonder the motto of the prosperity movement is, “You can have what you say!”¹⁰

3. Freedom from Demons

Freedom from the presence of demonic activity in the lives of people (mainly believers) is an important plank in the prosperity platform. The tendency is to allege anything out of the ordinary or not readily understandable to the influence of demons. They have concluded that evil spirits cause all incurable diseases. Demons not only inhabit people, but also homes, cars, and other mechanical devices.

The process of casting out demons solves the believer’s “demonic dilemma.” Whenever a believer experiences demonic affliction, he has to claim 1 John 4:4, “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” He is also to bear in mind that Jesus has given him authority to cast out unclean spirits (Matt. 10:1). This gives the individual believer authority over the world of evil spirits.

In the procedure for casting out demons, Satan is bound by the authority of Jesus so that he cannot render aid to his evil associates. Then the demon is addressed by speaking to the demon-possessed. Then asked to name himself, and commanded to go away from the victim. Since demons can do such things as planting seeds of disease and stopping the flow of financial wealth, the casting out of demons is necessary to insure continued health and prosperity.¹¹

Prosperity Theology insists that Jesus has delegated all his power to Christians. The Christians are obliged to use this authority

¹⁰ Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 336

¹¹ *Ibid.*

on all things that seem evil to humanity: disease, poverty, suffering, and misfortune. Similarly, this authority can be used to all threats of war and leftist political adversaries. All of these problems have a spiritual reason, i.e. the work of demons. Even Jesus depends on the Christians making use of the authority He has given them power over the demons, for Jesus cannot help any more than he has already done by delegating his authority to those who believe.¹²

C. An Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel

The prosperity gospel is too diverse to have anything similar to a system of theology. However, for the sake of convenience, some of the primary divisions of theology are used in evaluating certain prominent teachings that the movement maintains. The following seven steps of evaluation are mainly taken and paraphrased from the article, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel” by Ken L. Sarles.

1. Bibliology

Perhaps the most fundamental issue that is to consider in the evaluation of any movement is the basis of authority. This is applicable to “prosperity gospel.” The two areas where the view of Biblical authority is seriously compromised are the extent of revelation and the method of interpretation.

Prosperity writers never challenge the verbal, plenary, inspiration of the Scripture. They accept the text of the Bible in all its particulars as revealed truth from God. The problem is not the inspiration of the text, but **inspiration beyond** the text. According to those in the movement, special verbal revelation did not cease with the closing of the New Testament canon but continues today. The implication is that they share the same status with Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles as spokesmen of progressively revealed truth.

¹² *THE WORD OF LIFE OR PROSPERITY THEOLOGY An Analysis of False Charismatic Movements*, © Dialog Center International, Katrinebjergvej 46, DK-8200 Aarhus N, Denmark, 1998, <http://www.nccg.org/nccm/prosperity.html>

Prosperity hermeneutics also is defective. The method of interpreting the Biblical text is highly subjective and arbitrary. Bible verses are quoted in abundance without attention to literary and historical context. The result is a set of ideas and principles based on distortion of textual meaning. One critic has analyzed the problem well. The “plain meaning” of the text is always the first rule, as well as the ultimate goal of all valid interpretation. But “plain meaning” has first of all to do with the author’s original intent; it has to do with what would have been plain to those to whom the words were originally addressed. (Gordon Fee, “The ‘Gospel’ of Prosperity”).¹³

In Mark 10:29-30, the promise of the hundredfold return also was not monetary in nature. Jesus was preparing His disciples for their apostolic itinerant ministries in the midst of persecution. Since the disciples left their houses for the sake of the gospel, Jesus said to them that they would be given access to homes owned by fellow believers who would share with them as they moved from place to place preaching the gospel. Likewise, when the disciples forsook their families for Jesus’ sake, they entered new associations in the family of God that were a hundred times as great.¹⁴ Moreover, Jesus says the person will receive 100 times as much. How can one receive 100 mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers? The very nature of the language shows that it refers to our brothers and sisters in Christ. It does not refer to receiving great material wealth like the get-rich preachers teach today!¹⁵

3 John 2 is an often-quoted verse as mentioned earlier. The term “prosper” here does not refer to financial wealth but simply means, “to go well with someone.” The New International Version renders the verse, “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good

¹³ Fee, “The ‘Gospel’ of Prosperity,” p.40, cited in Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 338.

¹⁴ Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 338.

¹⁵ Michael D. Fortner, *The Prosperity Gospel Exposed*, 2000, <http://www.firefromheaven.net/prosper2a.html>

health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” This combination of wishing for “things to go well”, and for the recipients’ “good health” was the standard form of greeting in a personal letter in ancient times. To extend John’s wish for Gaius to refer to financial and material prosperity for all Christians of all times is totally strange to the text.¹⁶

2. Christology

As already noted, the prosperity gospel claims that both physical healing and financial prosperity have been provided for in the Atonement. On the question of health, the passage noted earlier, Isaiah 53:4-5, does not support the belief that healing of all diseases is guaranteed in the death of Jesus on the cross. The context of the passage, which consistently refers to transgression and iniquity, supports the interpretation that sin rather than illness is primarily in view.

In Is. 53:5, sin is equated with disease. That metaphor is used in Is. 1:5,6 also. If “sickness” in this verse is sin, then the healing referred here also is from the sickness of sin and it is the spiritual healing. Matthew found an **analogical fulfillment** of this prophecy in Jesus’ healing ministry (Matt. 8:17) not an actual fulfillment. Sickness is the judicial result of sin. When Jesus healed the sick people, he was removing the consequence of sin from the life of people. If Christ can save (heal) from the consequence of sin, He can save (heal) men from sin also. Thus, the passage in Matthew has to do with alleviation of suffering rather than the atonement for sin.

The present benefits of crucifixion do not involve physical healing. However, as a future benefit, believers will receive physical healing. At glorification, we will be absolutely free from sickness and grief (Phil. 3:20) just as much as we will be free from the presence of sin.

¹⁶ Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 339.

The main verse used to defend the view that financial prosperity is provided for in the Atonement is 2 Cor. 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” If Paul was referring to material wealth, then he was promising the Corinthians something he himself did not possess. In 1 Cor. 4:11 he reported that he and the other apostles were hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, and homeless. 2 Cor. 8:9, indicates that spiritual rather than material prosperity was in Paul’s mind. He also discussed the abundance of the Corinthians themselves, but it was the abundance of their faith, knowledge, diligence, and love, not their material abundance (2 Cor. 8:7).¹⁷

3. Theology Proper

The supporters of prosperity have gone off track concerning the doctrine of God in at least two aspects: the will of God and the sovereignty of God. The title of Gloria Copeland’s book “God’s Will Is Prosperity” expresses the sentiment of those in this movement. But has God decreed that every believer in every civilization in every generation will be economically successful? Neither the experiences of the saints who lived in the past nor the doctrines of the Scripture give credibility to such a concept. Clear examples of those who did not prosper while in the will of God appear in the great “hall of faith” in Hebrews 11. They were tortured, mocked, scourged, imprisoned, sawn in two, put to death with the sword and so on. This description of faithful ones who were in the will of God hardly conform with the prosperity teacher’s assertion that the Bible promises material prosperity and success to all believers at all times.

Jesus’ own life adds eloquent testimony that the will of God does not always include material comforts. He grew up in a poor family (See Luke 2:24 and Lev. 12:8). During His years of public ministry, He told His disciples that He had nowhere to lay His head (Matt. 8:20). He had to perform a miracle in order to pay the two-drachma temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27). In spite of all these adverse

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 339-340

circumstances, no one would dare suggest that Christ was out of harmony with the will of God the Father.

The two New Testament passages that specifically state the will of God for all believers define it in moral rather than economic terms. God's will for believers is their sanctification and abstention from immorality (1 Thess. 4:3), as well as their giving thanks in everything (1 Thess. 5:18). The will of God as revealed in Scripture is far more concerned with who believers are than with what they have. Consequently, less attention should be focused on outward circumstances and more on inward attitudes and character qualities.

The sovereignty of God is also greatly destabilized in the outworking of the prosperity gospel. Indeed, what emerges is a new view of God. First, even God Himself has failed. As Tilton puts it in his book *God's Laws of Success*, "God hoped for things. He had a plan. He had desires. He hoped they would come to pass, but they failed." In other words, God was hoping that His dreams would be fulfilled for man in the Garden of Eden, but His plan failed as a result of the Fall and He had to go to "plan B." Second, God cannot inspire man but man can inspire God. No one has said it more pointedly than Tilton: "Success is here and readily available . . . It is up to us to come and get it. If you are not a success, it is your fault, not God's." ¹⁸

This denies God's sovereign rule and also places a tremendous responsibility on the individual to act on behalf of God. The simple presentation of this view of God robs God of all His authority. No matter how much success is gained through the prosperity gospel, it cannot go in harmony with the God of the Bible who is the omnipotent ruler of the universe who "works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11).¹⁹

¹⁸ Tilton, *God's Laws of Success*, pp. 28, 60 cited in Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 342.

¹⁹ Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 342.

4. Anthropology

In the prosperity scheme of things, God's sovereignty loses and human sovereignty gains. Believers are considered as "God-like creatures" and "supermen" (Tilton). After all, a sufficient authority base has to be established for believers to perform the incredible deeds of faith expected of them. God Himself delegates the believer's authority, and not even God will hamper with it. The absurd conclusion of this view of human authority is that a believer should be able to live perpetually in health and never die! However, it is strange that none of the prosperity leaders themselves have yet exercised their authority to that extent!

Nonetheless, these same leaders instruct others how to exercise their authority. Each Christian is considered a king in God's kingdom. This means he can decide what he wants and then decree it just as a monarch would:

A decree is a legal proclamation . . . of one's will . . . you decide something and then it can be backed up by law. In our case, it is a spiritual law. Sickness is illegal. . . Sickness has to obey the king's decree, and because we have been given the power of attorney by Jesus, we have full authority to enforce our King's decree.²⁰

5. Hamartiology

In the prosperity gospel, little is said about the curse of the Fall of man, the horrific effects of sin, or man's constitutional depravity. True, confession of sin is encouraged for a believer to remain in fellowship with the Lord and remain in fellowship to receive physical or financial blessings. But the corruption of fallen human nature that remains even in the redeemed is totally ignored. By contrast, the total freedom of the will is everywhere emphasized, not only in salvation but also in claiming miracles leading to a healthy, wealthy and successful lifestyle. The ability to decide what one wants and

²⁰ Tilton, *Dare to Be a Success*, p.131, cited in Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 342.

then to demand it from God goes ahead of the most radical form of Pelagianism. Human sin has been replaced with human sovereignty!

The only sin given attention is doubt or unbelief that prevents the attainment of one's full potential. Doubting of any kind is anathema to the person seeking prosperity because it produces "the power of negative thinking." In the words of Tilton, "I feel sick. I look sick. I must be sick.' When you agreed with those thoughts which are contrary to the Word of God it entered in" (Tilton, *God's Laws of Success*). In other words, negative thinking creates a negative reality. Prosperity proponents offer untold riches to the faithful and at the same time offer a simple explanation (your faith is insufficient) whenever those riches do not materialize.²¹

6. Angelology

Without question the prosperity movement is distinguished by an obsession with the demonic. The reality of God's use of secondary means and causes in the physical realm has been replaced with a sensational concept of demonic causation. A remarkable illustration of the extremes to which this view can go is found in Frances Hunter's explanation of how demons cause cancer:

Let me show you how I understand the operation of a demon of cancer. He cannot get into your spirit if you are a Christian, but he can certainly come into and attack your body and your mind. A demon takes a look at a woman and says, "Wow, I think I will lay a little cancer on her. She looks like a real good victim." So, he jumps into her body (not her spirit) and before long the woman discovers that she has cancer of the breast . . . The doctor says, "We will cut that cancer out." The demon goes right along into the operating room, and probably sits there laughing at the doctor . . . Three years later the woman goes back, and they find cancer on the other side. Why? Because the

²¹ Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): pp.343-344.

demon has not been cast out, and you can't cut a demon out in surgery.²²

This irrational supernaturalism goes off track the Biblical demonology and serves only to arouse the fear and frustration of the cancer patient by holding out the promise of a “quick fix.”

Prosperity thinkers are as deceived about the role of angels as they are about Satan and the demons. They think man can direct angelic obedience. Myriads of angels are, so they say, standing at the beck and call of believers: “Your words put the angels to work on your behalf to bring to pass whatever you say . . . The angels are waiting on your words . . . They will not work without words” (Copeland, *God's Will is Prosperity*). Scripture passage cited to support such an argument is often misinterpreted. Perhaps, the classic reference is Hebrews 1:14, which identifies angels as ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation. However, it is God, who in His sovereignty sends angels to carry out what He has ordained for each life, not the individual who issues orders to angels as if he were in the place of God. The angelology of these “prophets of profit,” like the other divisions of theology studied thus far based more on wishful thinking than on accurate exegesis.²³

7. Soteriology

The Biblical texts used by prosperity gospel adherents to defend the conditional nature of the covenant with Abraham and the extension of personal blessing is taken out of context. The blessing and cursing enumerated in Deuteronomy 28 are indeed based on obedience to the Mosaic Law. But they were historically conditioned, having been fulfilled in the history of the nation Israel as recorded in the Old Testament. The blessing and cursing relative

²² Charles and Frances Hunter, *To Heal the Sick* (Kingwood, TX: Hunter Books, 1983), p.64, cited in Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 344.

²³ Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 345-346.

to the nation of Israel living under the Law cannot be extended to New Testament saints. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace.

The other passage often mentioned in this connection is Galatians 3:14, which states that through Christ the blessing of Abraham may come to Gentiles. What is usually overlooked, however, is the remainder of the verse: “**so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**” This signifies that the spiritual blessings given to Abraham, not his financial blessings, are communicated through Christ. Galatians 3 is discussing eternal, spiritual benefits, not temporary, material benefits.

Perhaps the greatest distortion in the prosperity gospel is its concept of human faith. Faith is defined as a positive force. Listen to Copeland:

Faith is a spiritual force, a spiritual energy, and a spiritual power. It is this force of faith, which makes the laws of the spirit world function . . . There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in God’s Word. Faith causes them to function. They will work when they are put to work, and they will stop working when the force of faith is stopped.²⁴

According to this definition human faith has intrinsic value apart from its object. Faith becomes a power exerted by individuals. By contrast, the Bible teaches that faith is a confident reliance on and trust in another, obviously God. Instead of being something that is exerted, Biblical faith constitutes a resting or repose. The value of faith is extrinsic, not intrinsic. The significance of faith is found in its object, namely, God.²⁵

Conclusion

A theological evaluation of the prosperity movement shows that it is a heresy. Now the big question is: What is the reason for

²⁴ Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity*, p. 19, cited in Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 348.

²⁵ Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 # 572 (October – December 1986): 349.

the emergence and increasing popularity of the prosperity gospel? The answer is so obvious. The main attraction of the prosperity gospel is that it is a man-centred philosophy rather than a theological system. It is something designed by the man and for the man. Therefore, it suits to the taste of men. After the advent of Pentecostalism, subjectivity replaced objectivity; experience took priority over doctrines. These attitudes and trends later have culminated in the prosperity gospel.

Let me make it perfectly clear before the close of this article that the Bible does in fact teach that God wants us to prosper. Nonetheless, “Biblical prosperity” is not what the ‘prosperity gospel’ promises. God does not promise to make each of us wealthy, instead He promises to meet all our needs. “All these things” in Matt. 6:33 when understood in the proper context (See 6:31, 32) refers to the basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. Moreover, Phil. 4:19 promises that “And my God shall supply all your **need** according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” God hasn’t promised to meet all our selfish desires but definitely our needs.

Sometimes God does make some people rich because he wants to use them as a channel of blessing to many others through a ministry of sharing with others in need. But it is not applicable to all the Christians alike. If someone happens to prosper materially, remember, it’s not for his own enrichment, but for helping his fellow brethren who are in need, God gave such a blessing to him. There are many in need throughout the body of Christ today, and if God gives us more income than we need, it is for the spreading of the Gospel message and for helping those who are in need. Whether we prosper materially or not, we all must prosper spiritually. That is God’s ultimate concern for each believer.

5. EVANGELISM

Roles and Responsibilities of Women in Evangelization and Assembly Growth

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Abstract

This article discusses the duties of women in assemblies which are entrusted and commanded by the Spirit of God through the scripture. In this article he examines the passages of the New Testament, analyzing the different ministries done by the women in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Before God, there is no discrimination or inequality between men and women, but God made a clear distinction between men and women pertaining to their responsibilities. The Bible clearly says that we are all going to stand before the judgement seat of Christ to receive the reward according to our works, so the Bible is not excluding anyone from their God-given responsibilities. There are some misconceptions among believers that women have no responsibility towards Assembly and Gospel. Conservatives opine that women are to be excluded from all kinds of assembly ministries (outdoor and indoor) which are conducted by the Assembly. This work examines the Bible to understand what the Bible teaches regarding the roles and responsibilities of women. Some teach that women have no place and no ministry in the assembly. What is their role? What all ministries can they involve in? This study attempts to examine all these notions and questions in the light of Scripture. It is the duty of every believer to be aware of their responsibilities toward God.

Assembly is the bride of Christ; the ones chosen before the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God. It was revealed by Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry and was established on the day of Pentecost; thus, God's programme, 'the Assembly' officially began. At Calvary, Jesus Christ paid the price for the assembly by shedding his own blood. The apostle Paul warns the elders of the assembly from Ephesus saying, "Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the sheep, among which the Holy Spirit has put you overseers, to feed the assembly of God that He gained with His own blood" (Acts. 20:28). This warning is directed against false teachers.

The contemporary environment is the fertile ground for a progressive mindset, where liberal theologians gain sway in public discourse. They teach believers to make concessions to the world and twist God's message to fulfil their own agenda. In the Assembly, they seduce Christians to rebel against the administration and organization that God has established and assigned, because they were unhappy with it. Liberal theologians teach their own views about the place of women in the Bible and their responsibilities in the Assemblies. As a result, it led to the formation of divisions among Christians. The major divisions are as follows: 1) the non-evangelical egalitarians, 2) evangelical egalitarians, and, 3) the Complementarians.

Carl B. Hoch defines these groups thus: The non-evangelical egalitarian does not accept the Bible as the authoritative guide to faith and practice, viewing scripture as androcentric and this to be handled with hermeneutical suspicion. The evangelical egalitarians accept Bible as the infallible standard of faith and ethics, but hold that the texts used by the traditionalists to keep women in a limited role of ministry have been misunderstood. Most such text are considered historically-conditioned ad hoc passages that are not universally applicable to current ecclesiology. The complementarians' position affirms that scripture teaches hierarchy for the home and the assembly. Role of differentiation, however, is not seen to imply that there is an ontological difference between male and

female; the two are essentially equal while maintaining different roles in a function of responsibilities.¹

This article will consider the following: (1) Biblical perspective towards women (2) Roles and responsibilities of women in evangelization with Biblical examples (3) Roles and responsibilities of women in Assembly growth with Biblical examples

I. Biblical Perspective Towards Women

a. The Old Testament Perspective

The basic Old Testament view of men and women is that they were created in the image of God and called to show forth that image in their daily lives (Gen. 1:27; 2:24). The book of Exodus teaches that honour be given to both mother and father (Exodus 20:12).

Women participated in every aspect of community life. Women freely engaged in commerce (Proverbs 31) as well as in manual labour (Exodus 35:25; Ruth 2:7; 1 Samuel 8:13). They were not excluded from Temple worship. Women played music in the sanctuary (Psalm 68:25), prayed there (1 Samuel 1:12), sang and danced with men in religious processions (2 Samuel 6:19, 22), and participated in music, festivals, and weddings (Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:11). Women were included when God instituted the Mosaic covenant (Deuteronomy 29:11) and were present when Joshua read the Torah to Israel. Their presence was not just an option; they were required to be present for the public reading of the Scriptures during the feast of tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:12).

Women were not limited to private roles during those centuries. Several exercised leadership roles over Israel. Miriam, the sister of Moses, led the women of Israel in worship (Exodus 15:20, 21); Deborah was a judge and a prophetess (Judges 4:4), and the scriptures specifically mention that she was a wife and mother as well. Huldah was also a prophetess whom King Josiah consulted

¹Carl B. Hoch, "The Role of Women in the Church: A Survey of Current Approaches," *Grace Theological Journal* 8.2 (Fall 1987), p. 241.

(2 Kings 22:14-20). The Bible gives evidence of God rewarding a woman who decided to serve the God of her mother-in-law. That's none other than Ruth. Alice Mathew writes: Ruth made a choice on a dusty road between Moab and Bethlehem. She chose to give her loyalty to God and His people. That choice may have seemed insignificant, but it changed Naomi and it changed history.²

The wise woman of Tekoa was sent to persuade David to lift the ban on his son Absalom (2 Samuel 14). Many more wise and gifted women found their way into the pages of the Old Testament, and they are still honoured today. From all these verses from the Old Testament scripture it is clear that women were not suppressed or excluded by anyone. Comparing the ancient cultures of Assyria and Babylon with Israel, Dr. John B. Hurley says: If we compare the general status of women in Assyrian and Babylonian cultures, we find two to be similar. The Assyrian laws continue the leadership of the family by the patriarch and reveal the role of women as property as well as companions and clan members. The Assyrian laws are visibly harsher than the Babylonian and grant to the husband wider powers of retribution and punishment. As we turn from these cultures to the Old Testament, a significant difference will appear. The Old Testament law is theologically based; this in turn affects the understanding of personal relations and circumscribes individual rights.³

Comparing with other ancient cultures, women were honoured and they enjoyed civil rights in Israel. Except in the Temple priesthood, God used some of them in different ways. Concerning temple priesthood, God chose Levites and assigned them for the services in Tabernacle. Proverbs 16:4 says "God made everything with a place and purpose". Likewise, the Old Testament admits the functional difference of women. In the Old Testament, God did not ordain women to do priestly ministry in the Tabernacle and

²Alice Mathews, *A Woman God Can Use: Lessons from Old Testament Women Help You Make Today's Choices* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1990), p. 78.

³James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), pp. 29-30.

they were not permitted to become the High Priest. Some of the evangelical feminists like P. K. Jewett and Mollenkot say that this is because of the inferiority of women and that the Bible promotes patriarchal system. But when we study the scripture, we can understand everyone in Israel was not chosen by God as high priests. God chose the tribe of Levites among other tribes and separated that particular tribe for His ministry. We cannot say that God had shown partiality there. God has no partiality. He chooses individuals according to His wish and will.

b. The New Testament Perspective

In the Gospels, we can see number of women God appointed for doing different ministries for Christ during His earthly life. Jesus Christ taught men and women. He did not show any partiality, and the teachings of Christ was to anyone with ears to listen. We see Christ directly talking to women on numerous occasions. The woman at the well is perhaps the best known of these. We sense the astounded reactions of the disciples when their teacher was seen talking with a woman. “They marvelled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, ‘What do you seek?’ or, ‘Why are you talking with her?’” (John 4:27). Another occasion is found in the story of Jesus and His disciples at the home of the sisters Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38). Mary, mesmerized by Jesus’ teaching, is caught by her sister Martha sitting and listening to Jesus’ teaching, with the male disciples. This could have been quite a social embarrassment to the family. The role of women was to serve the family and support the education of the men, and Martha becomes very angry at Rabbi Jesus for not enforcing the norms by telling Mary to go help. But Jesus passionately defends Mary’s choice to sit and listen. Through this act, Christ counter-culturally affirms women’s roles as fully-fledged disciples and implicitly invites Martha to join her sister among the disciples. In several other places in Luke’s gospel, we see Jesus publicly associating with women. Some were women of high standing in society, some were women of ill repute, and some even had been possessed by demons. Mary Magdalene, who in great thankfulness was with Him until the moment He died, and she was the first person to whom He appeared after His resurrection.

In Matthew 15:22-28, Jesus spoke with a Canaanite woman. The disciples urged Him to send her away for it was improper for a teacher to speak with a woman, and a foreign one at that. Jesus did not initially answer her request for help. But, as she prevailed upon Him with her great need and even greater faith, He had mercy on her and granted her request. It was often women who were the most appreciative of Jesus. Stephen B. Clark writes: Time after time in the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life, we see Him offering His teachings, healing, and forgiveness to women as well as men. The first proclaimer of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel was a woman: Anna in the Temple (Luke 2:36-38). A woman washed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:37-38) and anointed Him for His burial (Mark 14:3). It was women who were with Him at His execution until the end (Mark 15:47), and women who were the first to come to the tomb (John 20:1) and proclaim His resurrection (Matthew 28:8).

The Apostles followed the footsteps of Christ by including women in their gatherings (Acts. 1:14) and counting them as fellow workers in the cause of sharing his message (Rom. 16:3). It was only fitting that Jesus the Messiah, in His love, shattered the restricted status of women in the times in which He lived. Because of Him, all individuals, Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, can be one and enjoy equal freedom as children of God. Wayne House Writes: It is obvious that women were highly valued by both Jesus and Paul. Those who argue that women are in any way inferior to men have no foundation in scripture. Jesus broke religious and social convention to demonstrate His high regard for women; Paul considered them co-labourers in the task of taking Christ to the world. There is no question that women functioned in important ways in New Testament times.⁴ When we come to the epistles to the different Assemblies, the roles and responsibilities of women were clearly instructed by the Spirit of God. Therefore, in Christ there is no partiality but the functional differences are there.

⁴H. Wayne House, *The Role of Ministry Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), p. 78.

II. Roles and Responsibilities of Women in Evangelization with Biblical Examples

The act of proclaiming Christ and His gospel is known as evangelism. Our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded that the gospel be preached to all nations (Matthew 28:19,20). The TDNT provides the following meaning for “euangelion,” which is the Greek word for evangelism: Among the Greeks, the term is used for the proclamation of news of victory, comes from the field of Battle by ship, by horse, or as a swift runner, and proclaims to the anxiously awaiting city the victory of the army, and the death and capture of enemy. Often the news is sent in a letter.⁵

The scripture teaches various roles of women to perform in evangelization.

a. Roles of Virgins

Unmarried women will come under the title virgins. By abiding by God’s commands, they can live exemplary lives in their families. By placing emphasis on their testimonies, women might live different lives from those of other women who follow the modern lifestyle and worldly pleasures. They are able to adhere to lifestyle evangelism. Young ladies enrolled in colleges or universities can start small prayer groups and invite their friends to join them for Bible study and prayer, which will progressively lead to a greater understanding of Christ. Through these ways, they can reach non-believers and share the love of Christ. Through their lifestyle, they are communicating to people about Christ. They can pray for the suitable life partner for future if they want to do ministry.

b. Roles of Elderly Women

As elderly women, their scope for evangelization is vast. Because elderly women are respected in every society. They consider them as their own mother. There is an invisible authority there to advice and communicate towards men and women equally. They are granted to advice anyone especially the students, and

⁵*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1964 ed., s.v. “Euangelizomai,” by Gerhard Friedrich.

the youngsters want to listen about olden days from the elderly people so along with that they can share the gospel. Another thing, if an elderly woman has no other responsibility, she will get much free time to do various ministries. They can do personal evangelism and they can support the young evangelists through their prayer and encouraging words. They can arrange and teach in Sunday schools, children's clubs, VBS and share the gospel through such meetings.

c. Roles of Wives

Initially, in 1 Corinthians 7:13,14, Paul clearly teaches about the role of wives in evangelization. Here Paul says that if a woman has an unbelieving husband, she needs to stay with him. Through her life she needs to bring him to the knowledge of Christ. It means life-style evangelism through her transformation and way of life. She must influence her husband and bring him to Christ. Secondly, concerning the wife of an evangelist, they need grace to be in that post. The women who have been chosen by God only can be there to do that ministry and to serve God. It's difficult and they need much grace from God. As an evangelist's wife, sometimes, she should travel with her husband, and when he is going somewhere for ministry, she needs to take care of family on behalf of him. So, responsibilities are more. She should pray for the ministry of her husband. She should be a good counselor for her husband. Sometimes an evangelist may have some bitter experience and she also needs to be a part of it. An evangelist's family will not have enough money and the income may be less but that woman must need special wisdom to manage the family budget. These all things she has to do for the smooth machinery of the ministry of her husband.

Ministries Women Can Involve Pertaining to Evangelization

- i. Outreach Ministry:** Women are free to involve in outreach ministries like door-to-door evangelism. They can distribute the gospel literatures like booklets, tracts and other literature.
- ii. Music Ministry:** Woman can involve in music ministry. Especially in assembly gatherings, marriage ceremonies,

funerals, and gospel outreach, etc. They can exercise the music ministry for the glory of God.

- iii. Literature Ministry:** Women can involve in literature ministry by writing gospel tracts and booklets. If a woman is unemployed or employed, she should separate some time for studying scripture and reading books. Through their writings they can communicate the gospel message.
- iv. Media Ministry:** Social media brought great impact and radical change in our world. It opened a new window for global communication. Concerning the gospel of Christ and its proclamation, the media ministry made vast scopes. Based on some statistics published by research agencies, most of the population in this world are spending their time in social media. So, for reaching the youngsters and people, these media opened a new way. But this ministry is lacking with the absence of content and materials, especially in local languages.

Biblical Examples from New Testament Women in Evangelization

1. Priscilla (Rom. 16:3)

Priscilla is the diminutive of Prisca, feminine of Prisca meaning “primitive,” hence, “worthy, or venerable,” as belonging to the good old time⁶. Paul’s greetings in Romans 16 contains commendations. The Bible says that Priscilla was a tentmaker, along with her husband, Aquila. Tents were often used as homes and portable temples. Making tents allowed Priscilla and her husband to earn funds for daily living and travel to teach people about God. Priscilla used her business resources to help further the gospel. While on his second missionary voyage to Corinth, Paul initially got to know Priscilla and Aquila, working with them in their profession of tentmaking. Paul gave them high honours, referring to them as his fellow labourers in Christ Jesus and disclosing that they put their lives in danger. Priscilla was always ready to risk her life along with her husband for the sake of the Gospel.

⁶Herbert Lockyer, *The Women of the Bible: The Life and Times of All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), pp. 121-22.

2. Junia (Rom. 16:7)

Only in Romans 16:7, we read about Junia. Paul appreciates her ministry; she was imprisoned for the sake of the gospel and Paul is appreciating that act. They came to the faith before Paul and weren't ashamed about the gospel. In earlier society and in this contemporary society also to go to jail is not considered to be a good act. But here this woman went to the prison for the sake of the gospel.

3. Lydia (Acts 16:14)

Lydia was born and raised in Thyatira; an Asia Minor city well-known for its purple dyes. She was a purple-dye businesswoman. Moreover, she was a worshipper of God. She feared the Lord. God opened her heart to the Gospel, and the first assembly in Europe was established in her house. Mrs. Chinnamma Baby writes: Lydia served the Lord. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God". She heard, the Holy Spirit opened her heart, which developed forcefulness, and she served the Lord's people. Hospitality to Christians is emphasized in the New Testament many times. Lydia's home became a center of Christian fellowship. The first Christian church in Europe was established in Philippi.⁷

4. Mary, the Mother of Mark (Acts 12:12)

Mary the mother of John Mark had a prominent role in evangelization. She contributed to evangelism through two different ways. Initially, she opened her home for the propagation of gospel. In Acts 12:12, the Herod killed apostle James and caught Peter and put him in jail under safeguards. But the angel of the Lord miraculously delivered him from the prison. During the imprisonment of Peter, the assembly believers gathered in the house of Mary and prayed. The persecution against Christians was strong during that period. But she bravely opened her home for the gathering of disciples for the glory of God. She gave her home for the expansion of the kingdom of God. Luke in Acts of the Apostles and Paul in his epistles write about the service and ministry

⁷Chinnamma Baby, *Bible Women Wise and Foolish* (Omallor: Excel Offset Printers, 2001), p. 199.

done by Mark for the evangelization. He had done it because of the training he got from his mother. God used this Mark to write one gospel in the Bible. Pertaining Mary, she did not travel anywhere but she gave what God gave to her for evangelization.

III. Roles and Responsibilities of Women in Assembly Growth with Biblical Examples

Assembly is the bride of Christ and he founded it through his own precious blood on the day of Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The assembly is the group of called-out ones. Christ is adding people who believe in Christ to His assembly. God has a different purpose and plan about the assembly. God chose Israel as a kingdom of God but they failed to obey Him, so the kingdom was postponed for a time being. God is now dealing with this world through the Assembly.

Different Roles of Women in Assembly Growth

i. Roles of Virgins

The unmarried women have a vital role concerning the assembly growth. Their testimony is important. Acts 21:9 says about the unmarried daughters of Philip, the Evangelist, and Luke is saying they were prophetesses (1 Cori. 11:5). We don't know what they prophesied. But we are not seeing there they had prophesied to any man because God sent another prophet, for revealing His message to Paul. They had good testimony among the disciples. Their father was an evangelist and they were aware about that and they took care of their lives. The testimony of the virgins in our assemblies are important. Another important thing concerning the virgins. They should marry. In first epistle to Corinthians in 7:34, Paul says that her body and spirit should be devoted to the Lord. The dedication and aim of their life are to seek the will of God and lead a life with godliness. In 1 Corinthians 7:9, Paul says that the virgin should marry on the time which is appointed by God. These are the responsibilities taught by the scripture pertaining to the virgins for the growth of an assembly. In the assembly, they are not permitted to hold any office.

ii. Roles of Elderly Women

We see the responsibility of elderly women in the epistle to Titus, in 2:5. They should teach and train the younger women to lead an exemplary life with certain qualities for the growth of an assembly. The qualities are love towards their own husbands and children, self-control, holiness, and do work in home for the glory of God. These major responsibility God gave to the elderly women. Before that they should lead an exemplary life before God and assembly. They cannot go away from this responsibility, and the Spirit of God instructs this commandment to all the family members. For that they should lead a good Christian family life and need good conscience in the presence of God.

iii. Roles of Wives

The role of wives is important in assembly growth. The wives were bound to the man through marriage. Both are not permitted to be apart. As a wife, her duty is to take care of the family, husband and children. God is giving spiritual gifts without any difference according to the will of the Holy Spirit. The woman was created as a supporter of man. In assembly ministry, the wife of an Evangelist, Elder or teacher has important roles. When her husband is going for the ministry especially, visiting assembly believers, she can assist him in that ministry. If she cannot go or she is busy with any other activity, she should separate time for that and need to pray for it. In 1 Timothy 3:11, after explaining about the qualifications of the deacons, the Spirit of God is instructing about the qualifications of their wives. Their three qualifications were mentioned there. Dignified, sober-minded and faithful in all things. Dignified means she should lead an exemplary life among others and need to be respected by others through her act. If she is a slanderer, no one is going to honour her. Sober minded means she must be aware about the things which she is speaking or doing, and she should be careful in her conduct with others.

Finally, she should be faithful in all things. When we see Acts 5:1-2, and, with Sapphira's knowledge Ananias separated some portion of wealth and committed sin against God. She had the

responsibility to say that the sin we committed is not good before God. She became unfaithful. Therefore, they reaped the fruit of that sin. The wives should be faithful to God and to her husband. These are the major roles of wives for the growth of an assembly.

iv. Roles of Widows

The word of God has given clear instruction pertaining the role of widows in an assembly. The Jerusalem assembly also had taken special care for the widows. 1 Tim. 5:5 and 5:9-15 discuss the role of widows. Here, Paul divides widows into two categories. One, widows who are below sixty years, and those above sixty years. Pertaining the younger widows, they should marry for the testimony of the assembly otherwise later it will affect the name of Lord and the assembly. There is a chance for slandering from the adversary. As a widow, she should spend her time in prayers and supplications day and night. She needs to leave everything and focus all her hope in God and continually trust upon Him. Concerning, older widows, some important responsibilities were instructed. They should bring up children, need to show hospitality, care about the afflicted ones and devote to good works. She voluntarily needs to fulfill this work. This kind of act from her side surely will give good reputation about the assembly among the society, and it leads to the growth of the assembly.

Ministries Women Can Involve Pertaining to Assembly Growth

1. Discipleship and Mentoring

Women can involve in the discipleship and mentoring of other women and children. But they cannot teach men because the word of God is not allowing her to teach men or bear any office. She can mentor and teach her own children and other children in an assembly. She can exercise her spiritual gifts through taking classes in Sunday schools and youth meetings. Women can mentor the young women who are preparing for the marriage. She can mentor them because it's a commandment of God. By giving training to

the children and mentoring the young women, they can involve in assembly growth. The women have spiritual gifts but they cannot exercise it over men in an assembly because of the functional difference but she is permitted to teach women of any age.

2. Hospitality and Fellowship

Hospitality and fellowship are another ministry women can involve in. Heb. 13:2 reminds that we should not forget to show hospitality. Accepting the children of God and showing hospitality to them is a ministry. Men have certain limitations to do it but with help of women, they can fulfill it. Preparing food and accommodation for God's servants who come to do the ministry, is a ministry. But nowadays believers are not giving importance to this commandment. Also, new disciples who come to the faith do not know anything. They are beginners, but through this hospitality and fellowship, we can build them up by showing the love of Christ.

3. Counseling and Mental Support

Women can counsel and mentally support the women and children in the assembly and society. The ministry done inside the assembly will cause the spiritual and intellectual growth of the women, and the ministry which is done outside the assembly will cause the numerical growth. In the society, alcoholism and the usage of drugs are increased. Some of the people want to open their hearts to someone for relief. Jesus Christ can only transform and give real peace to mankind. As a Christian woman, she is really enjoying that real peace in her life. She can assist so many young people inside the assembly and outside the assembly, and through this ministry women can contribute to the growth of an assembly.

4. Prayer and Intercession

Another ministry women can involve in is prayer. They can conduct special meetings for women. They can pray for the matters like the evangelization, spiritual growth of the assembly, unity among brethren, love towards each other, etc. Prayer is the backbone of the active assembly. The assembly without prayer will end up in destruction. The absence of prayer and intercession

is the major cause of the emergence of apostasy among assemblies. The future generations will be confused by watching the hypocritical spiritual life. An assembly without prayer will not grow. The prayer of the saints is the oil which accelerates the growth of an assembly.

5. Financial Support

Women can support the various assembly ministries financially. She can do ministry by giving for the Lord. At home, the financial budget planning is vested upon women in most families. Every month she can decide and separate certain amount for the Lord, and she can donate certain amount of money to the assembly or an evangelist. They can regularly support a missionary family or a poor family in their own assembly. Through this way, women can contribute to the assembly growth.

Biblical Examples from the New Testament Women in Assembly Growth

1. Dorcas (Acts 9:36)

Dorcas and Tabitha are the one and same. In Aramaic it is Tabitha and in Greek it is Dorcas. The meaning of her name is “gazelle or deer” in Aramaic. Dorcas was a disciple of Jesus Christ. Her place is in Joppa. It appears as she lived in Joppa and was single. She died but was raised again by Apostle Peter. She was a disciple and her good works were renowned in the midst of the disciples in Joppa. She taught others to do good works for widows and needy through her life. She was compassionate towards the co-believers. In the life of Christ Jesus, He travelled from village to village, healing and teaching the multitude, but in the scripture, we read that when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them because they were faint and scattered. Likewise, in the life of Dorcas while she saw the life of the poor widows, she felt pity about them and she began to help them through her job. Initially she began to help in small scale but later it developed and the fragrance of her activity spread around the entire city. We need such type of women in our local assemblies. People with the heart of Christ. Scripture is addressing her as a disciple.

2. Phoebe (Rom. 16:1)

Phoebe ministered to the saints of the Lord, and she considered that through serving them she is serving her master Lord Jesus Christ. Her life is an example for the contemporary women. She is always ready for the ministry. Scholars say that the epistle to the Romans was brought to Rome by Phoebe. She was willing to travel for the growth of an assembly. She travelled to an unknown place for passing the message and for the growth of the believers. Her life is a good example for it.

3. Eunice and Lois (2 Timo. 1:5)

According to the Davis Dictionary of the Bible, the meaning of Eunice is ‘blessed with victory’ or ‘good victory’ and according to the Unger’s Bible Dictionary the meaning of Lois is ‘agreeable.’ We can learn so many spiritual lessons from the life of Eunice and Lois. Timothy was the son of Eunice, and Eunice was the daughter of Lois. They took and accomplished their responsibility in good manner concerning the growth and education of Timothy. According to Jewish custom, a Jewish boy must study the Torah, the portions of Leviticus and then the rest of the Pentateuch, the psalms and the prophets. They taught him all these lessons. The testimony and faith of the mother and grandmother influenced the life of little Timothy. Eunice became faithful to God through her act by obeying the will of God.

Conclusion

The assembly is the body of Christ. God is communicating to this world in this age through the assembly. In His assembly, God divided the roles and responsibilities to individuals according to His will. The Bible never oppressed women but honored them. Biblical Christianity regards women as worthy of special attention and care because of their creation and functional differences. God does ordain women to fulfill His ministry but does not permit them to hold any office in an assembly. May God enable all sisters to be aware of their responsibilities and come forward for the Lord in the field of evangelization and assembly growth.

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6. MISSIOLOGY

THE MISSIONARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UPLIFTMENT AND WELFARE OF INDIAN WOMEN (1700-1947)

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Abstract

This article examines the impactful role of Protestant Christian missionaries and Indian Christians in transforming the social and educational standing of Indian women during the colonial period, especially Hindu women. It throws light on the interventions and labour of figures such as William Carey, Amy Carmichael, Pandita Ramabai, and Clara Swain, and discusses missionary initiatives in women's education, healthcare, and the abolition of practices like Sati, child marriage, and the Devadasi system. These decisive efforts engendered profound social changes, helped overturn entrenched customs and fostered dignity and opportunities for women across caste and class divides. The lasting influence of these efforts is still evident in modern India, where women benefit from freedoms once denied. The study accentuates the relevance of these noteworthy contributions and encourages Christians today to continue championing against social injustice.

INTRODUCTION

India has experienced many invasions in the past. With every invasion, Indian culture and society underwent several changes. Christian nations entered the Indian territory from beginning of the 16th century. Portugal was the first colonial power to rule India. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch, and Danish. Finally, the Britishers ruled India for about two centuries until independence in 1947 A.D. During the colonial period, Christian missions took place in India sometimes with colonial support and at other times with much difficulty. The contribution of missionaries and Indian Christians towards the development of Indian society during the colonial period is immense. The aim of this paper is to highlight the contributions of Protestant Christian missionaries and their Indian counterparts towards the emancipation of Indian women during the colonial era in India. The Roman Catholics too have done a great work towards the welfare of women. However, this article limits itself to the Protestant work mainly done among Hindu women.

CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS WOMEN EDUCATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The State of Literacy Among Women

The state of literacy was generally low and very much confined to people of higher castes before the colonial era. More pathetic was the state of women's education.¹ In 1834, only one percent of Indian women could read and write. One of the key reasons for this was the ancient belief that educating women was religiously and socially inappropriate, and of little use.² The life of a woman was chiefly confined to homes or *Zenanas*.³ The lack of education,

¹ There were some exceptions in regard to a few women of high castes. Even among high castes, the percentage of women who were taught fell much short of men. S. C. Raychoudhary, *Social, Cultural and Economic History of India* (Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 1981), pp. 58-64.

² Alice B. Van Doren, "The Women of India," in *The Christian Task in India*, ed. John McKenzie (Calcutta: Punthi-Pustak, 1929), p. 46.

³ The word *Zenana* means apartments in which women were secluded, especially those of high caste Hindus. This practice of seclusion of women originated ►

thus, curbed their growth and effective involvement in the society. Moreover, it was the root cause of all suppression and ignorance.

The Pioneering Efforts of the Tranquebar Mission

From the beginning, the Tranquebar missionaries concentrated on education in Tamil Nadu. They started schools for girls exclusively as early as 1707-1708. It is reported that Ziegenbalg himself went to homes encouraging and pleading with parents to send their daughters to schools.⁴

The Serampore Trio

The wives of Serampore missionaries, especially Hannah Marshman took the initiative of educating girls of Calcutta during 1818-1820. Gradually, this effort became successful and resulted in the starting of more girls' schools in Benares, Dacca, and Allahabad.⁵ Moreover, the great educator Alexander Duff started writing in different periodicals and journals in favour of female education.

Educating the Inmates of Zenanas

Some of the Protestant missionaries like, Mrs. Sale, Mrs. Mullens, Mrs. Winters, and others took efforts to reach out to the girls in the villages and *Zenanas* of North and Central India. They couldn't succeed because of the opposition. However, the famine and mutiny of the nineteenth century opened up opportunities for orphanages. The children who were picked up from the streets and huts were given education at mission schools.⁶ Moreover, in

among Hindus probably during Muslim invasion of India out of the fear that they would be stolen by the invaders. Sometimes women themselves preferred to be in *Zenanas* because of the religious sentiments attached to it or they were forced to be in by their Lords. James M. Thoburn, *The Christian Conquest of India* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1906), p. 74.

⁴ Binu John, *A Study on Christian Contribution to the Nation Building* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), p. 11.

⁵ Vishal Mangalwadi and Ruth Mangalwadi, *William Carey and the Regeneration of India* (Delhi: Nivedit Good Books, 1993), p. 23.

⁶ James M. Thoburn, *India and Malaysia* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1893), p. 370.

some places, the missionaries, at times, had to give money to parents to send their children to schools for a few hours daily. Gradually, *Zenana* schools were started to teach Hindu girls in seclusion. A society named the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society was formed in 1868 to support the education for the *Zenanas*.

Higher Education for Women

During the second half of the 19th century, almost every mission agency took up the task of education as its priority. From 1870 onwards, a large number of schools and colleges were established for women by the Protestant Churches and Missions throughout India.⁷ Moreover, individual Christians like Pandita Ramabai and Amy Carmichael became involved in women education in their respective Missions.

The impact of missionaries on the lives and vision of Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savatribai who were inextricably connected to the cause of women's education in 19th century India is an example of the role played by missionaries on the trajectory of education of women in India. Jyotirao was educated in a Scottish Mission High School. He was from the *Mali* (lower) caste and faced discrimination that was rampant at the time. He also saw how disadvantaged the women of the lower castes were. It was at this juncture that he visited the school for girls being run by Cynthia Farrar, the American missionary. It was this visit that fueled his vision to establish a school for girls. He wrote in *Dnyanoday* a periodical started by the American Marathi Mission, "I visited the girls' schools in Ahmednagar which were managed by Farrar madam of the American missionary department. I felt really happy seeing those schools because they were being run really well. Once I returned to Pune, I immediately started a school for girls where subjects such as reading, writing, mathematics and grammar were

⁷ Some of the well-known institutes of this period are Sarah Tucker College, Palayamkottai, Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, Women's Christian College, Chennai. D. Arthur Jeyakumar, *History of Christianity in India: Selected Themes* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), p. 56.

introduced.”⁸ Savitribai who went on to become a leading voice for women’s education was trained under the aegis of Farrar at a teacher’s training institute.⁹

By the dawn of the 20th century, apart from Christian missions, some of the reformed Hindus too began to urge for women education. Indian women owe a lot to these missionaries and individuals who worked tirelessly for the improvement of women. They correctly realised that unless women are educated, their status in the society could not be raised. Therefore, they served and offered themselves for the cause of educating women amidst criticism and opposition.

CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS ERADICATION OF SOCIAL EVILS

Restoring the Dignity of Women

The observance of the caste system and untouchability was widely prevalent during the medieval period in India. Under the religious pretext of the laws of Manu, the lower ranks in caste ladder were treated as lesser humans by the upper castes.¹⁰ As a result of this social evil, women were affected more than men. Low caste women who lived in the neighbourhoods of high caste settlements were often harassed and ill-treated. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, women of the Nadar community were not permitted to carry pots of water on their hips, as was the custom among the higher castes,

⁸ The Satyashodhak Staff, “Jotirao Phule on Why He Started a School for Dalits,” This news item was originally published in *Dnyanodaya* on 15 September 1853. Reprinted in Dhananjay Keer, S G Malshe and, Y. D. Phadke, eds., *Mahatma Phule Samagra Vangmay*, (Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya ani Sanskriti Mandal: 2006) <https://thesatyashodhak.com/jotirao-phule-on-why-he-started-a-school-for-dalits/>

⁹ Savitribai completed her school and enrolled in Farrar’s teacher training course in Ahmednagar. See Anjali Noronha, “Savitribai Phule and Fatima Sheikh: Pioneers of Indian Education,” <https://teacherplus.org/2024/2024/january-2024/bringing-the-margins-in/savitribai-phule-and-fatima-sheikh-pioneers-of-indian-education/>

¹⁰ John, p. 2.

nor were they permitted to cover the upper portions of their bodies.¹¹ Moreover, women were treated like servants in their own homes. They were considered as mere utility-oriented liabilities. Domestic violence against women in many parts of India was common. Overall, the dignity of women was in a state of peril.

Women born in high castes sometimes had the possibility of education and live a dignified life. However, the women of the lower castes were often treated with contempt. One of the ways by which Christian missionaries initiated change was by providing education to the women folk from the lower castes. Moreover, in some cases, Christians directly opposed social evils and influenced the colonial government to pass laws against these evils. One such instance is the 'Upper Cloth Rebellion' of South Travancore.¹² Against the social custom, the LMS missionaries prompted the Nadar Christian women to cover the upper portion of their bodies with cloth. The missionary wives even stitched and provided blouses for the converts. When widespread opposition and agitation arose from the upper caste, the British resident of the place represented the issue to the British Raj, and as a result a royal proclamation was issued in 1859 against this undignified practice.¹³ The missionaries, like Rev. Mead, brought the matter to the notice of Sir Charles Trevelyan, the new Governor of Madras. He then was compelled to write to General Cullen, the Resident to bring to his notice the completely prejudiced nature of the law adopted by the rulers when it came to women of the lower castes. "Under such pressure from the British Government the *Dewan* held important consultations with the Maharajah and wrote the Resident on 17th May 1859, saying that "the Maharajah was prepared to modify the rules relating to the dress of the inferior castes and that he proposed to abolish all rules prohibiting the covering of the upper parts of the persons of *shonar* women and to grant them perfect liberty to

¹¹ Leonard Fernando and G. Gispert-Sauch, *Christianity in India* (Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2004), p. 239.

¹² Jeyakumar, p. 56.

¹³ Fernando and Sauch, pp. 240-241.

meet the requirements of decency any way they deem proper... This was accepted by the Madras Government.”¹⁴

The oppressive breast tax that was exacted from those women who chose to cover their upper bodies was finally abolished after an intensive and unceasing campaign by the missionaries. The government of Travancore issued a Proclamation on April 1855, which totally abolished slavery in Travancore. The Proclamation also abolished the agrestic slavery and a number of feudal levies the depressed classes had to pay such as poll tax, breast tax, cottage tax etc. After a long struggle and also as a result of the interference of the missionaries, the Royal Proclamation was issued on 29 July 1815¹⁵

Christian Missions took up the cause of temperance (abstinence from alcohol) too to curb the abuse of wives at home by drunken husbands. An organisation was formed to look after this in 1896.¹⁶ Similarly, missionaries through their preaching and actions tried to elevate the lives of women. In South India, Amy Carmichael rescued many women from domestic violence through the forming of a small women’s community called ‘Starry Cluster.’¹⁷

Fighting Against *Sati* and Forced Widowhood

The practice of *Sati* was in full swing during the medieval period. According to this practice, the wife of the deceased person had to set herself upon the funeral fire of the husband and die. This was considered as a virtue and sacred rite. This inhuman social

¹⁴ A. Vanaja, “Role of missionaries in upper cloth riot in Kanyakumari district” in *Indian Journal of Research* Volume : 4, Issue : 2, (Feb 2015) p:73 <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=e9f7067f63650a52b579ce0e335afb02f9e19c19>

¹⁵ A. Balakrishnan, “Christian Missionaries and the Oozhiyam services in Travancore” in *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research* Volume 6, Issue 5 (May 2019) p. 476 <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR1905P71.pdf>

¹⁶ Jeyakumar, p. 55.

¹⁷ Janet Bengé and Geoff Bengé, *Amy Carmichael: Rescuer of Precious Gems* (Seattle: YWAM, 1998), pp. 120-130.

evil was more prevalent among the high castes.¹⁸ Widow re-marriage was completely non-existent in Hindu society. Therefore, a widow had just two alternatives — either die with her husband on the funeral fire or live as a lifelong celibate with social stigma.¹⁹ More inhuman was the practice of *Jauhar* among Rajputs. This was practiced during times of battle. Women used to burn themselves in front of their husbands in fear that enemies would take them as captives and molest them if their husbands lose the battle.²⁰

The first effort to end the cruel practice of *Sati* was initiated by William Carey in 1802. However, it could not be abolished immediately. Carey and others continued to bring about awareness through their writings in journals and magazines in the midst of stiff opposition from Hindus.²¹ As a result, some of the Hindus too got enlightened and supported Carey and his team in their efforts to abolish *Sati*. One of the prominent Hindu reformers of the time, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was someone who passionately fought against this evil. He visited Serampore in 1816 to discuss the issue of *Sati* from the Hindu perspective with the Serampore Trio. It was post this meeting that William Carey decided to petition the government in 1817 to enquire “whether the main Hindu scriptures sanctioned the sati... Pandit Vidhyalankar gave his opinion that there is no sanction of sati in Hindu religious literature... this statement strengthened the movement for the abolition of sati.”²²

¹⁸ Raychoudhary, p. 59. Committing *Sati* was believed to earn thirty-five million years of bliss for the dead husband and the woman herself. This prompted women to forbear this cruel upon them. John, p. 3.

¹⁹ In communities where widows were not given to *Sati*, they were made possessions of the home of the deceased husband. She was often made to undergo utter shame and sometimes she became the property of the brother of the deceased through *Niyoga*. Mangalwadi, p. 18.

²⁰ Raychoudhary, p. 60.

²¹ Mangalwadi, p. 17-21.

²² Ameeta Singh, “The Role of Missionaries in abolition of sati custom in India with special reference to Serampore Missionary” in *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 20, Issue 10, Ver. II (Oct. 2015) PP 52-55 <https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol20-issue10/Version-2/H0201025255.pdf>

Lord Cavendish Bentinck after careful study of this social evil declared *Sati* illegal and criminal in 1829. As a continuation of this reform, the Widow Re-marriage Act came into existence in 1856.²³

Caring of Widows and Orphaned Girls

Right from the birth, a girl was considered to be a liability. A girl in ancient days was considered along with *sudra*, the lowest one on the caste ladder. The birth of a girl was not celebrated among many castes. At least in some of the castes, this resulted in female infanticide.²⁴ Similarly, there were a huge number of orphan girls out on the streets living in misery. Not many had compassion towards orphaned girls.

The number of child widows always swelled during times of battles and famines. Their plight was always miserable. The name of Pandita Ramabai stands tall in caring for the widows and orphaned girls.²⁵ In 1896, she started Mukti Mission in Kedgoan near Pune. With motherly love, she went about bringing destitute women and children into her home.²⁶ Her service to the women of India during the famine times in the early 20th century cannot be ignored. She not only brought these widows and orphans into her fold but taught them in schools set up by her Mission. She extended education not just to orphans but also to girls from neighbouring villages. Along with education she also empowered women with certain skills. The many industries she developed for women included vegetable oil presses, brick kilns, weaving industries, and a printing press.²⁷ In order to rehabilitate widows a few other mission societies like British Methodists and London Missionary Society also embarked setting up small scale industries for women in Madras and Thiruvananthapuram.²⁸

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Raychoudhary, p. 60.

²⁵ Jeyakumar, p. 60.

²⁶ S. M. Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai* (Madras: CLS, 1979), p. 27.

²⁷ Pandita Ramabai, *A Testimony of our Inexhaustible Treasure* (Kedgoan: Pandita Ramabai Mukthi Mission, 2001), pp. 1-12.

²⁸ Jeyakumar, p. 58.

In South India, it was Amy Carmichael who provided care to orphans through her ministry. Her mission station attracted many parents to give up their girl children whom they did not want to raise up for various reasons. This indirectly brought down infanticide in the Donavur area during Amy's lifetime. She also started a school for girls.²⁹

Moreover, many of the mission schools started by missionaries had an orphanage attached to them for the care of orphans. Some of the girls, who grew up in these orphanages became university graduates; and some also served in government offices.³⁰

Against Child Marriage and Polygamy

Polygamy and child marriages were commonly accepted practices of the colonial period. Vishal Mangalwadi cites with evidence that sometimes fifty girls were given to one Brahmin man so that the families of girls could boast of their alliance with high caste.³¹ Sometimes, girls of lower ages were given to an old man by poor families to gain economically. Child marriages were also considered legal. Sometimes girls were given as brides as early as five or six. The census of 1901 reported of nearly nine million child wives under the age of fifteen.³² More pathetic was the state of child widows. According to one of the censuses of the 19th century, in and around Calcutta alone, there were ten thousand widows under the age of four, and over fifty thousand between ages of five and nine.³³ As widows were not allowed to remarry, these girls had to spend the rest of their lives as widows in wretched conditions.

Although, missionaries like Carey spoke against child marriages and polygamy, they could not influence the government to stop this practice immediately. However, they began to teach and

²⁹ Elizabeth Susan Alexander, "The Life and Mission of Amy Carmichael," in *Dharma Deepika*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (June, 2001), pp. 71-74.

³⁰ Thoburn, *India and Malaysia*, pp. 323.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³² Thoburn, *The Christian Conquest of India*, p. 75.

³³ Mangalwadi, pp. 21-22.

educate the public about it.³⁴ Child marriages were legally abolished in 1929. As a result of this many girls in the twentieth century resisted society's pressure against getting them married early. Modern Indian women owe a lot to these pioneering efforts for the freedom they enjoy now.

Devadasi System (Temple girls) and Amy Carmichael's Rescue Work

The term *Devadasi* means 'a female slave of god.' This is a Hindu custom in which some girls were dedicated to serve in the temples to sing and dance before gods. These girls were also considered as sacred women, and sex with them was believed to bring purity. The income they got through 'sacred prostitution' went to the temple treasury. Hence, these temple girls were sexually exploited by men, especially of higher castes. Moreover, it also resulted in child trafficking.³⁵

Amy Carmichael was the first known missionary to have been burdened by this social evil that was prevalent in some parts of South India. She meticulously researched the practice and began efforts to trace and rescue girls who were to be dedicated to temple gods.³⁶ Although, there was stiff opposition from the society, she continued to save as many children she could. These children were brought up in the Donavur Fellowship.

CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS WOMEN HEALTH CARE

Poor Medical Facilities

In the Medieval era, even as late as the end of the 19th century, there were no hospitals for women, nor were there special facilities for the medical examination and treatment of women. Custom prevented women from appearing before public, especially before

³⁴ Mangalwadi, p. 18.

³⁵ Richard Cavendish, *The Great Religions* (London: Clapham High Street, 1980), p. 28. Cited in John, p. 2.

³⁶ Alexander, p. 72.

male doctors. They would rather die of disease than getting treatment from male doctors.³⁷ A high percentage of women deaths during child birth occurred because of the lack of medical attention. Similarly, poor sanitation and poor hygienic conditions put the lives of women always in danger.

Medical Missions

The contribution of Christian missions in the field of medical work is remarkable. Missions to the *Zenanas* brought to light the special need of medical aid for women. Eventually, lady missionary doctors arrived in India.³⁸ One of the pioneers in this field is Clara Swain of the American Episcopal Methodist Mission. She started work in Bareilly in 1870. Swain was able to access the high caste women in the *Zenanas*.³⁹ Medical mission among women progressed with the formation of Zenana Bible and Medical Mission in 1880. They built hospitals exclusively for women and children all over India. Soon, many missionary organisations like Christian Missionary Society and British Methodists began to concentrate on health care for women.⁴⁰

Medical Schools and Colleges

As these medical missions grew and people began to accept the efforts of the missionaries, soon the need for more medical personnel arose. Dr. Edith Brown and Ms. Greenfield founded the first school of medicine for Christian women doctors, nurses, and compounders. This school was later upgraded into a medical college (Christian Medical College, Ludhiana).⁴¹ In the South, a committed lady doctor, Dr. Ida Scudder, began to treat women patients from her home in early 1900. Burdened by the need she saw, she established a small hospital in 1902. In 1918, she started a training institute for women students. Eventually, this developed

³⁷ Adhav, p. 29.

³⁸ Jeyakumar, p. 57.

³⁹ Marthal Nalini, "Dr. Clara A. Swain," in *Dharma Deepika*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (June, 2001), pp. 66-70.

⁴⁰ Jeyakumar, p. 57.

⁴¹ V. Titus Varghese and P. P. Philip, *Glimpses of the History of the Christian Churches in India* (Madras: CLS, 1983), p. 141.

into the Christian Medical College, Vellore, one of the most popular hospitals of India and this is true to this day.⁴² These are just glimpses of what Christians have done for improving the health conditions of women in India.

CONCLUSION

This article barely scratches the surface concerning the great achievements of missionaries towards the upliftment of Indian women. Today, women enjoy greater freedom and almost equal status with men in the Indian society. This was not the situation before the colonial era. Indian women, especially the Hindu women, were living under untold miseries and under the burden of male chauvinistic religious customs. Although, the primary motive of Christian missionaries was to bring Indian people to Christ, their love for people in general motivated them to become involved in social service. They tirelessly worked towards improving the living conditions of the people. Their contribution in the fields of education, health care and eradication of social evils as discussed in the paper is indeed commendable. Many lives have been sacrificed in the process. This generation is reaping the fruit of their hard work. Let us hope that present-day Christians too would actively be involved in the emancipation of the oppressed and voiceless in the society.

⁴²Sudheer Merugumalla, "Dr. Ida Sophia Scudder," in *Dharma Deepika*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (June, 2001), pp. 75-76.

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7. PNEUMATOLOGY

A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF MAJOR VIEWS ON '*TO TELEION*' (THE PERFECT) IN 1 CORINTHIANS 13:10

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Abstract

In 1Corinthians 13:8-11, Apostle Paul predicts the termination of the revelatory gifts and the coming of the perfect when those gifts expected to be discontinued. There are three major views on the meaning of the word perfect, '*teleion*' in present theological discussions. The first view known as the 'Parousia' or Ideal View, understands '*teleion*' as something ideal or of unblemished **quality**. The Maturity View, on the other hand, understands '*teleion*' as the mature state and defines *teleion* as spiritual **maturity**. The final view, the Canon View, or the Quantitative Completeness View, understands '*teleion*' as the completion of the partial revelations that already existed, and focuses on its **quantity**. A careful theological evaluation of these three views and their supporting arguments demonstrates that the first and the second views cannot be sustained in the light of the Scriptural evidences, whereas the Canon View stands as firm convincing theological conclusion to the meaning of the word '*teleion*' in 1 Cor. 13:10.

Introduction

1 Corinthians 13:8-11 is a central passage of today's ongoing debate over the cessation of miraculous gifts, which clearly teaches that certain gifts, such as prophecy, tongues and knowledge will be ceased when the perfect has come. Therefore, this passage has a vital role in the debate between the cessationist and non-cessationist position holders.¹ The obvious questions to be asked here are, why Paul predicts the passing away of certain gifts; why only three gifts are mentioned; when these gifts are going to be ceased; what is the exact meaning of the word perfect, '*teleion*'; does it refer to quality, maturity or quantity? To answer these questions, we must consider the real interpretation of the 'perfect' and exact time at which prophecy, tongues and knowledge will be ceased.

The purpose of this paper is to show that the gifts Paul mentioned here are revelatory in nature, and the coming of *teleion* refers to the quantity of the completed New Testament Canon of Scriptures, and along with the closing of the canon, the miraculous-revelatory gifts have ceased. To conclude this premise, major views on the interpretation of *teleion* have been surveyed and the weaknesses and strengths of these views stated respectively. Finally, the verses found in the immediate context of this passage have been examined in the light of basic hermeneutical principles in order to establish a proper interpretation of perfect and the cessation of miraculous gifts to establish the sole authority and general acceptance of the Canon View, i.e., the Completeness of New Testament revelations.

MAJOR VIEWS ON TO TELEION IN 1COR. 13:10

According to F. David Farnell, there are five main ways in which the word *teleion* has been understood: 1. the death of a believer when ushered into Christ's presence, 2. the eternal state, 3. the completed New Testament Canon, 4. Christ's second advent, and 5. the maturing of Christ's Body through the course of the church

¹The terms '*cessationist*' shall designate the position which holds that miracles or extraordinary gifts were terminated at or near the end of the apostolic age, and the '*non-cessationist*' holds the position that all gifts, including miraculous gifts shall continue till the second coming of Christ.

age.² Believers Study Bible also points out this same interpretational varieties.³ The major views on the interpretation of the *teleion* in 1Cor. 13:10 may be classified under three main headings: The *Ideal View* or *Parousia View*, which consists of five different sub views, the *Maturity View* and the *Canon View*.

I. The Parousia View

The Parousia or Ideal view has been vividly portrayed by Andy Woods as follows: “The ideal view interprets *teleion* in 1Corinthians 13:10 as something ideal, unblemished, or flawless. In other words, the ideal view attaches a qualitative meaning to *teleion*.... ‘a. being entirely without fault or defect; b. corresponding to an ideal standard or abstract concept; c. the soundness and the excellence of every part, element or quality of a thing frequently as an unattainable or theoretical state’.”⁴

Andy Woods goes on to say: “Adherents of this interpretation argue that the perfect refers to some ideal condition following the Parousia, when ‘partial knowledge conveyed by the word of knowledge will be replaced by perfect knowledge; partial insight into God’s wisdom through prophecy will be replaced by a face to face audience with Christ.’ Such a removal of present limitations will take place after the church has been taken away to be with the Lord.”⁵

Even in the Parousia view itself exists five kinds of interpretations and each interpretation holds *teleion* as different eschatological events or state.

1. The Death of a Believer and Entrance to the Presence of God

Thomas R Edgar, a well-known Bible scholar, is the one who holds this view and he argues that the *teleion* in 1Corinthians 13:10 is the entrance of a believer in heaven after his death.⁶

² F. David Farnell, ‘When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?’ *BSac* 150 (April-June 1993); 191-93.

³ W. A. Criswell, ed., *The Believers Study Bible*, Nashville: Nelson, 1991, p. 1639.

⁴ Andy Woods, *The Meaning of ‘The Perfect’ in 1Corinthians 13.8-13*, p.4.

⁵ Andy Woods, p.4.

⁶ Thomas R. Edgar, *Tongues will Cease*, p. 83.

2. The Rapture of the Church

There are certain theologians who teach that *teleion* is the Rapture of the Church, such as Stanley D. Toussaint⁷ and Richard B. Gaffin.⁸ Meanwhile, on the basis of other clear passages in the Scripture, they strongly believe that the miraculous gifts have already ceased by first century itself. Bruce Crompton comments: "... the perfect in 13.10 points to the.... rapture of the church and the perfect knowledge that results when the church is in the presence of the Lord. Yet this does not mean that the gifts mentioned in 13.8 continue until that time. Based on passages... this view concludes that these gifts ceased with the completion of the New Testament canon."⁹

3. The Second Coming of Christ

Bruce Crompton elaborates this view: "... the perfect in 13.10 refers to the return of Christ.... When the church stands before Christ, incomplete revelation involving the revelatory gifts will be replaced by complete revelation and imperfect knowledge with full and complete knowledge. As such, proponents argue that the revelatory gifts continue until Christ returns."¹⁰ Bannet,¹¹ John Parry,¹² Lewis Johnson,¹³ Charles C. Ryrie,¹⁴ Wayne Grudem,¹⁵ F. F. Bruce,¹⁶ Samuel Storms and Douglas A. Oss¹⁷ are some of the adherents who hold this view.

4. General Eschaton

There are some scholars, such as Gorden Fee,¹⁸ Max Turner,¹⁹ and D.A. Carlson²⁰ who do not consider perfect as a particular

⁷ Stanley, *1 Corinthians 13 and the Tongues Question*, pp. 312-14.

⁸ *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? A Cessationist View*, pp. 25-64.

⁹ Bruce, *1 Corinthians 13.8-13 and the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts*, p. 103.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 104.

¹¹ Bannet, *Speaking in Tongues: A Scholarly Defence*, pp. 165-66.

¹² John Parry, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, p. 145.

¹³ Lewis Johnson, *1 Corinthians in The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 633.

¹⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 1744.

¹⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 1033.

¹⁶ F.F. Bruce, *First and Second Corinthians*, p. 128.

¹⁷ Robert L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, pp. 239-283.

¹⁸ Gorden Fee, *The Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 645.

¹⁹ *Spiritual Gifts Then and Now*, *Vox Evangelica* 15, 1985, pp. 7-64.

²⁰ *Showing the Spirit, A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*, 1987.

future event, whereas interpret perfect as the sum of all eschatological events i.e., general eschaton.

5. Emergence of Eternity

Another group of theologians teach that *teleion* is the eternal state in heaven, which would come after the millennial rule of Christ. In relation to the Old Testament saints, this eternal state will begin at the time of the first resurrection as seen in Revelation 20, and for the New Testament believers this eternal state will commence either when they are going to be with the Lord at the time of their death or at the time of the rapture of the Church. The tribulation saints and the millennial saints will enter into the eternal state at their death or at their glorification. Leon Morris,²¹ John F. Mac Arthur,²² Charles R. Smith²³ are the proponents of this position.

Contextual Interpretations

The two illustrations Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:11-12 have been interpreted as Paul compares his childhood with our present state and his manhood with our future state of glory.²⁴ Again, vs.12 further clarifies the time when the *teleion* comes, as the word “then” in verse 12 refers to the time when the *teleion* comes in verse 10. The phrase “face to face” in verse 12 is generally taken as a reference to seeing Christ at His coming and the “face to face” is linked with the idea of “knowing fully”, which can only be a reference to the state of the believer in heaven after his glorification.²⁵

Strength of the Ideal View

The interpretation that *teleion* in 1Cori.13:10 refers to something ideal has to be manifested in the future finds support in Greek

²¹ Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 187.

²² John F. Mac Arthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, pp. 230-32. For MacArthur, the canon is closed. Prophecy and knowledge, although continuing to the eternal state, are non-revelatory. Tongues although revelatory, ceased with the close of the apostolic age, as did the other revelatory gifts.

²³ Charles R. Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective*, pp. 76-81.

²⁴ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, p. 567.

²⁵ Rothaar, *An Exegetical Investigation of 1 Corinthians 13.10*, p. 37.

literature.²⁶ Seeing face to face and knowing fully in verse 12 seem to indicate the Ideal or Parousia view. Some English translations of the Bible, such as KJV and NASB translate *teleion* in idealistic sense.²⁷ Interpreting *teleion* as an ideal state following the Parousia is one of the most prominent opinions among the Bible commentators as well as the most common English dictionary definitions.²⁸

Weaknesses of the Ideal View

Paul has never used the word *teleion* in the sense of imperfection elsewhere in the New Testament.²⁹ Gromacki says that the word *teleion* was never used in relation to eschatological events, particularly related to second coming of Christ, millennial kingdom and eternity.³⁰ This view fails to provide a suitable antithesis to the phrase *ek merous* in verses 9-13 as Paul contrasts *ek merous* with *to teleion*. Since *ek merous* is a quantitative phrase, its antithesis *teleion* must be quantitative in its meaning. It is suitable to contrast two qualitative phrases or two quantitative phrases, but not a quantitative phrase with a qualitative phrase.

It is illogical to argue that the *teleion* in verse 10 indicates to an ideal state is unnaturally to strain the illustration in verse 11 where Paul uses his own adulthood as a picture of the coming of *to teleion*. So, it is difficult to conclude that Paul analogized his current state to the ideal state in 1Cor. 13:11. This view assumes the Church's transition from immaturity to maturity as something that takes place instantaneously at some eschatological event such as rapture or Christ's coming. But, on the contrary the analogy of 13:11 depicts this transition as a gradual process.

Interpreting *teleion* as rapture or the second coming, as the Parousia view does, is grammatically erroneous, since *teleion* is a neuter adjective. It does not refer to the personal coming of Christ which would require a masculine adjective. Finally, the Ideal view

²⁶ Robert L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, p. 124.

²⁷ Thomas, *Tongues will Cease*, p. 83.

²⁸ Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, pp. 123-132.

²⁹ Gerhard Delling, 'Teleios' in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, pp. 75-77.

³⁰ Robert G. Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement*, p. 123.

promotes an open canon notion that all the temporary and revelatory gifts will continue till the rapture or the perfection in heaven. But the Bible explicitly says that the word of God is completed in its revelations (Jude. 3; Rev. 22.18-19).

II. The Maturity View

This view defines *teleion* as the maturity of the Church. Charles Ryrie summarizes the maturity view as follows: “This views the Church as growing up as one body, beginning at its birth on the Day of Pentecost, progressing through various stages of growth, and reaching full maturity at the Second Coming. This encompasses both the stages of verse 11 and the completion of verse 12. Some of the stages would include the completion of the Canon, the settling of key doctrinal issues by various church councils, the Reformation, etc.”³¹

Andy Woods elaborates the view thus: “Some maturity view advocates see the church as passing through three distinct stages of maturity. The church was in the first, or infancy stage when Paul wrote 1Corinthians. During this stage, which lasted until the close of the apostolic era, the church was dependent upon the apostolic revelatory gifts. The second, or relative maturity, stage is conveyed by the illustration of verse 11. During this stage, the church has the completed canon allowing her to enjoy independence (i.e., ability to make decisions without relying on the revelatory gifts) and unity. This stage takes place between the completion of the canon and the rapture. The third, or absolute maturity, stage is reflected in the illustration of 13:12. It takes place following the rapture, when the church is resurrected, glorified, and ushered into the presence of Christ.”³² Robert L. Thomas,³³ Joseph Dillow,³⁴ David F. Farnal³⁵ and Donald Mac Dougal³⁶ are the prominent Bible scholars who argue for this view.

³¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 146, 148.

³² Andy Woods, *The Meaning of The Perfect in 1 Corinthians 13.8-13*, p. 10.

³³ Robert L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, pp. 123-132.

³⁴ Joseph Dillow, *Speaking in Tongues: Seven Crucial Questions*, pp. 127-133.

³⁵ David F. Farnal, *When will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?* pp. 191-95.

³⁶ *Whether there be Tongues They shall Cease, BD Thesis: Talboth Theological Seminary*, 1996.

Contextual Interpretations

This view interprets the temporal indicators in the debated passage to refer to the “now” of the church in its state of immaturity and the “then” of the church in its state of maturity following the completion of canon, the cessation of miraculous gifts, the death of apostles and the events of AD 70. On the basis of the illustrations given in 1 Cor. 13:11,12, the adherents of this view holders assume that Paul foresaw on the one hand, the possibility of the cessation of the miraculous gifts after the church reached maturity, on the one hand the possibility of Christ’s coming in his lifetime. Paul did not know which event would takes place first, thus presented the first option in verse 11 and the second in verse 12.

Strength of the Maturity View

There are certain merits contained in this view. *Teleion* sometimes used in the New testament to denote maturity (1Cori. 2:6; 3:1; 14:20; Heb. 5:13,14). The illustration we see in 13:11 compares the change from childhood to manhood with the early Church gradually passing away with the sign gifts, is commendable. The idea of leaving immaturity and pressing onto maturity can be seen in the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 12-14 chapters. Paul’s use of this word in similar context of Eph. 4.1-16 also demands the meaning maturity.

Weaknesses of the Maturity View

Robert L. Thomas, one of the most popular spokesmen of this view claims that the maturity view stands without an unanswerable objection because the proposed weakness of this view rests on misunderstanding or consists of invalid criticisms.³⁷ Yet, the defects and the weaknesses of this view is evident in the light of clear contextual interpretations of the debated passage. To interpret *teleion* as mature does not provide a proper antithesis to ‘in part’, *ek merous*. Proponents of this view are tempted to resting on other far contexts and neglect the immediate context where Paul is contrasting partial and complete revelations rather than the maturity

³⁷ *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, p. 131.

and the immaturity of the believers, i.e., the Church. The Maturity view has intentionally selected certain criteria in order to argue that the church had reached maturity back in the first century itself which are questionable.

III. The Canon View

The Canon view is also known as the quantitative completeness view. Andy Woods gives us a clear description about this view as follows: “The quantitative completeness view understands *teleion* as completion of something that already exists in part. Unlike the previous two views, this view attaches a quantitative rather than a qualitative meaning to *teleion*. Proponents of this position typically hold that the New Testament canon completes the partial revelation and revelatory gifts that are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12. This position also understands the various temporal indicators in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 to refer to the “now” of the apostolic age (pre-canonical period) and the “then” of the post apostolic age (post canonical period).”³⁸ A number of modern evangelical theologians such as Merrill F. Unger,³⁹ Robert Dean,⁴⁰ Houghton,⁴¹ Kenneth Gentry⁴² and W.E. Vine⁴³ strongly argue for this position.

Contextual Interpretations

According to this view, certain vital points have been put forward to understand the meaning of ‘*to teleion*’. First of all, the partial gifts of knowledge, tongues and prophecy spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 are revelatory gifts. Then, the revelations provided to the early Church by these revelatory gifts were designed to be only partial and were intended to be superseded by something more comprehensive. Finally, if what is in part, *ek merous* refers to the partial revelations brought to the early Church through these revelatory gifts, then *teleion*, which stands in antithesis

³⁸ Andy Woods, *The Meaning of The Perfect in 1 Corinthians 13.8-13*, p. 15.

³⁹ Merrill F. Unger, *New Testament Teaching on Tongues*, p. 95.

⁴⁰ Robert Dean, *Three Arguments for the Cessation of Tongues*, pp. 1-16.

⁴¹ Houghton, A Re-examination of 1 Corinthians 13.8-13, pp. 344-56.

⁴² Kenneth L. Gentry, *The Charismatic Gift of Prophecy: A Reformed Response to Wayne Grudem*, pp. 51-60.

⁴³ W. E. Vine, *1 Corinthians*, p. 184.

to *ek merous*, must refer to the New Testament Canon, which completed and superseded the partial revelations.⁴⁴

The illustrations in verse 11 of adult-child analogy are interpreted as the child, who has incomplete knowledge, represents the pre-canon church which lacked sufficient canon and doctrine to lead the spiritual life, and the adult, who reaches maturity when he is complete with knowledge and skills necessary for life, represents the post canon church which has the completed Canon of Scriptures which is sufficient for every day spiritual life.⁴⁵

The ‘dark glass’ or ‘mirror’ *esoptron*, which is preferable in this context, illustration found in verse 12, has been compared to partial revelation, looking into a dim mirror and the completed canon looking into a clear mirror.⁴⁶ Looking into a partial revelation is equivalent to looking into an imperfect mirror in that the viewer gets only a partial picture of himself. But, after the completion of the New Testament canon, the viewer could look into a perfect mirror and get the ability to see himself clearly as God sees him.

Understanding the phrases ‘mirror’ and ‘face to face’ in this manner is preferable, because the only other place where *esoptron* is used in the New Testament is in James 1:23, where the context deals with the capacity of God’s Word to provide the reader a standard for self-examination.

The canon view interprets the first part of verse 13 as describing the continuation of faith, hope and love into the post canon age after the cessation of revelatory gifts. And the second part interprets as describing the continuation of love even after the cessation of faith and hope following the second coming of Christ (2 Cor. 5:7-8; Rom. 8:24).

Merits of the Canon View

Interpreting *teleion* as a reference to the completed canon has indeed many advantages. The word *teleion* has the meaning ‘whole’ or ‘complete’ elsewhere in Paul’s writings.⁴⁷ Not only that,

⁴⁴ Andy Woods, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁵ Robert Dean, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Houghton, pp. 350-51.

⁴⁷ Joseph Delling, pp. 75-77.

the adjective *teleion* is used elsewhere in the New Testament to describe God's Word. Paul may be aware of this usage of *teleion* which seems likely because of the early date of composition of the book of James (Jam. 1:23; cf. Ps. 19:7). This view does not exclude a quantitative concept, *ek merous* against a qualitative concept as the other views do. It permits both perfect (*teleion*) and part (*merous*) to be understood quantitatively. So, the view of completed Scripture fits the best antithesis to the partial revelations given through the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge, because both phrases interpret as in the quantitative sense.

Supposed Weaknesses of the Canon View

The Canon view also has some supposed weaknesses and objections raised by its opponents. The first and the foremost objection is that, the phrase 'face to face' refers to the events related to the Parousia, because it clearly expresses a believer's future direct fellowship with God. But in fact, 1Cor. 13:12 does not speak about seeing God face to face in anyway, since the word 'see' (*blepomen*) is not there in the original Greek Text. Besides this, the phrase 'face to face' is often used of revelation from God in the Old Testament Scriptures (Exo. 33:11, 23; Num. 12:6-8).

Moreover, the phrase 'face to face' cannot refer to seeing God without damaging the mirror analogy, since a person looks at the reflection of himself in a mirror rather than at someone else or at God.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is vivid that the phrase 'face to face' in 1 Cor. 13:12 refers to a person seeing his own reflection rather than to fellowship with God.

The second objection is that it is unnatural to interpret the phrase 'but then I shall know just as I also am known' in 1 Corinthians 13:12b as believers knowing themselves through God's Word just as God knows them. Such kind of knowledge can only be attained in the eternity future. This objection has been rightly responded by Houghton: "However, the problem does not go away if these words are interpreted eschatologically. In eternity, will believers really know fully just as they have been full known? To

⁴⁸ Robert Dean, *Three Arguments for the Cessation of Tongues*, p. 10.

answer this question seems to be, ‘Yes, but only in some limited qualified sense.’ If that answer is acceptable for the eschatological interpretation, then it ought to be acceptable for this writer’s ‘completed canon view’ as well.”⁴⁹

The final objection to the canon view is that the idea of a completed canon view was not in Paul’s mind at the time of writing the Corinthian epistles. However, as far as concerned with Paul, the idea of a completed canon would not have been strange to him, since he was already familiar with a completed Old Testament canon as he was from a Jewish background. Not only that, Paul indicates about a finite collection of New Testament writings in 1 Timothy 6:20; 1:12,14, as well as his longing for the parchments in 2 Timothy 4:13. Peter also had the same awareness of a limited collection of New Testament writings (2 Pet. 3:15).

Conclusion

Among the three views on the interpretation of *to teleion* in 1Corinthians 13:10, the completed canon view best fits the debated passage unlike the other two views. It allows an interpretation to the *teleion* in accordance with both grammatical and theological evidence and gives a quantitative meaning to ‘*to teleion*’ in contrast to ‘*ek merous*’. It also interprets prophecy, tongues and knowledge consistently with the larger literary structure as the revelatory gifts. The canon view also fits well with the illustrations followed in verses 11-13 and gives an apt exegetical interpretation to the passage and interprets Paul’s analogies in harmony with the immediate and far contexts. The Canon view allows an exposition of faith and hope in this passage in accordance with what Paul says elsewhere about the virtues of faith and hope. Therefore, in the quantitative completeness canon view would be most preferable theological interpretation to ‘*to teleion*’ which is found in 1Corinthians 13:10.

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