
THE BLUE BANNER

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For Christ's Crown & Covenant

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In this Issue.

The Way of Covenanting with God, and of obtaining Justification before Him, by James Durham ❀ The Nature of Christ's Death, by James Durham ❀ Letters from Myanmar ❀ Hebrews: Who was the Author? By W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.

by Richard Bacon

his issue of *The Blue Banner* contains two articles by James Durham from his Commentary on Revelation. The first sets forth, among other things, the meaning and relationship between faith and works in the Covenant of Grace. The second, on the nature of Christ's death and whether it is properly a 'Satisfaction,' serves to introduce a longer article on the extent of the atonement which will appear, D.V., in the next issue.

Also in this issue is a collection of letters I sent back from Myanmar in January, when I was there on a missions journey. Due to "deadline" considerations, the letters have not been edited very much. The trip was quite successful in the sense that we accomplished virtually everything we wanted to do. There is still much work remaining in that country. Although the gospel has been in the area for nearly two hundred years, it is only in recent years that there has been what might be called a "solid" reformed witness to the truth. The Mission to Myanmar hopes to establish a foreign language institute in the next few years in order to prepare seminary students and others in English, and eventually in Greek and Hebrew as well. If you would like to help in this endeavor (either by going or by helping in some other way), please contact us at the Blue Banner address on the back page of this issue.

Completing this issue is an article by W. Gary Crampton defending the Pauline authorship of the Book of Hebrews. Although many in recent years have rejected the Pauline authorship of this book, none have been able to present convincing evidence that anyone else wrote the book. It is not altogether without precedent to accept a book as canonical without knowing who the author was, but knowing the authorship of Hebrews is not an unimportant exercise. Crampton presents a convincing case for the historically accepted view of Pauline authorship. For those who are interested in studying the book of Hebrews in greater depths, over 200 hours of expositional preaching from the book is available on the FPCR Blue Banner website (<http://www.fpcr.org>) and by mail order, using the order form on page 36. ❀



The Way of Covenanting with God, and of a Sinner's obtaining Justification before Him.

This text is edited from an excurses appended at Lecture III on Revelation chapter three in "A Complete Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation," by James Durham.

By James Durham



his last epistle directed to the church of Laodicea,¹ contains a short sum of the gospel, and God's way of engaging sinners to him. It will therefore be meet [*suitable*] to take some more particular consideration thereof. For here: 1. We have man described in his sinful condition, as *miserable, naked, poor*; and withal, *blind* and *ignorant* of the same. 2. We have the remedy proposed, viz. *Gold* and *white raiment*, etc. That is, Christ and his righteousness, which is the great promise of the covenant of grace, as the mids [*means*] leading to the enjoying of God. 3. There is the condition on which this is offered; that is, believing, expressed under the terms of *buying, opening to him, hearing his voice*, etc. 4. There are motives whereby the acceptance of this offer upon such terms is pressed, and that both from the necessity thereof, and hazard if it be slighted, and from the many advantages that do accompany the accepting thereof. 5. We have the duties that are called for upon this acceptance, viz. *zeal* and *repentance*, which are comprehensive of all.

This holds forth God's way of covenanting with a sinful person, whereby the guilt of his sin, and the curse following thereupon, are removed: which we may conceive in this order:

1. Man is supposed not only to be sinful, but also obnoxious to the curse of God, and in his appearance before God's justice, to have that sentence standing against him.

2. There being no remedy possible upon man's side, as a satisfaction to that justice, there is an external righteousness provided, viz. the

satisfaction of the Mediator, which being imputed to the sinner, is in law to be accepted as satisfactory for him by virtue thereof, he is to be absolved, and discharged as if he himself had satisfied: this is the meritorious cause of our justification.

3. This satisfaction of the Mediator is not imputed to all, nor to any, but upon the terms agreed upon, viz. that it be received, and rested upon; therefore the gospel is preached; and this righteousness is not only revealed therein, but offered thereby to all, who shall, by faith, receive the same: in which respect, the gospel, as it is contained in the word, and the preaching thereof, is commonly called the external instrumental cause of our justification.

4. When by the power of God's Spirit the sinner is brought to receive this offer, and to rest upon this righteousness as the only ground of his peace, and his whole defense against the law, before the justice of God, then, according to the offer, he becomes interested in this righteousness, and Christ becomes his righteousness, who is, by this receiving of him, put on by the believer; and by this he may plead absolution from the challenges of the law before God's justice, as a debtor may plead absolution from his debt upon his instructing the cautioner to have paid it. And in this respect, faith is called the condition of the covenant; because it is upon this condition that justification is offered to us therein, and upon this condition, God becomes our God, and Christ our Righteousness. And it is also called the instrumental cause of our justification, because it acts by receiving Christ as he is held forth in the word; and if that be justly called the external instrumental cause, which offers him for our righteousness, then may faith well be called the

¹ The text has been edited against both the 1788 and the 1799 editions. See also the recent new edition published by Old Paths Publications.



internal instrumental cause, because it receives him for that same end, and because by this receiving, he becomes our righteousness, upon which our justification is grounded.

Hence 5. Upon this receiving of Christ, and presenting of his righteousness for our defense before God's justice, that righteousness and satisfaction is imputed to us, and accounted for ours; and upon this, our sins are pardoned and we absolved before God. And this is that wherein formerly our justification consists, and this is the end why this counsel is proposed, that by receiving of this offered righteousness, this may be attained. This way of restoring sinners by grace is often set forth by way of mutual bargain, as in *covenanting, treating by ambassadors, marrying, buying*, and such like; all which do import a mutual closing of a bargain upon mutual terms. And thus it is expressed to show, not wherein formally our justification consists, but to show the way and terms by which we may come at it, and upon which we close with God. And, in this respect, faith is called the condition of the covenant of grace, because it supplies that place, and has in it that which ordinarily a condition has, that is proposed in making of a mutual bargain.

Sometimes also, it is set forth under legal expressions as to libel an accusation against, to charge and arraign a sinner before justice, and then to absolve him from that charge in opposition to condemnation. And thus sin is called debt, and to punish for it is to exact or require satisfaction; and Christ in that respect is called the cautioner or surety, and his suffering, satisfying, the pardoning of the sinner, is called justifying, or absolving, in opposition to condemning; and the deriving of this from Christ is called imputation, or to repute the sinner righteous on Christ's satisfying for him; or, it is the reckoning of Christ's satisfaction on the account of the sinner. All which expressions are borrowed from the way of legal and judicial procedure before men. The first way shows how we become friends with God, viz. by covenanting with him in Christ Jesus. The second way shows a prime benefit which flows from that friendship, viz. our justification. These two are not to be conceived different things, or successive in time, much less to be separated; but as they be different ways of holding forth the same thing, whereof the one does especially relate to the

means, the other to the end, and that so as grace and justice may be seen to go alongst in this great business, and that a sinner may be helped to conceive of the same the more distinctly, when he has it molded in the terms and forms used among men, and that under divers considerations; that so he may the more satisfyingly comprehend this mystery of free justification. Concerning which, in the general, we say:

1. That the immediate meritorious cause of our justification is Christ's righteousness, we take for granted. For it is the gold here that makes rich, without which the *dyvour* [*beggar; debtor*] could not pay his debt. It is the raiment which covers our nakedness. And therefore the righteousness of the saints must be all put on, communicated, external and imputed righteousness; so that, supposing a man to be pursued before the bar of God's justice, there is no defense can be proposed but Christ's satisfaction, which only will be a relevant exception in that court; which in Paul's example is clear (Phil. 3:9). As if it were asked, Paul, 'what wilt thou flee to in that day?' *Only to be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is by the works of the law, but that which is by faith in Christ.* Thus, Christ is our righteousness, and we are righteous in him, as he was made sin for us. For, that opposition [in] 2 Cor. 5:21 evinces this; but our sins were imputed to him, and so were the immediate ground upon which he was found liable to justice. In that same manner, therefore, his righteousness must be the immediate cause of our being absolved, seeing his righteousness must be transferred to us, as our sins were to him, as is said.

2. That this righteousness of the Mediator is immediately imputed to us, has also been accounted a truth amongst the orthodox hitherto. That is, that as a cautioner's paying of the debt, being instructed in a court, is sufficient for absolving of the debtor from the creditor's pursuit; because, in the law, the cautioner's paying in the debtor's name, is reckoned as if the debtor had paid it; and so it is imputed to him, and accepted for him; so it is here. And this way of imputing Christ's righteousness immediately, serves exceedingly:

(1) To humble the sinner, when that whereby he is justified, is not in himself; this being certain, that we are more proud of what is supposed to be



in us, than of what is imputed to him for his absolution, than if by his industry he had procured something to pay for himself, although the stock had been freely bestowed on him by the cautioner.

(2) It serves to commend Christ, and to bound all boasting and glorying in him, who is our *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, etc.* (1 Cor. 1:30), for this very end, *That he who glorieth, might glory in the Lord.*

(3) This rides marches² [*notes the line or difference*] between the righteousness of the two covenants, that the one is inherent, and consists in works; that is, as the apostle speaks [in] Titus 3:5, the righteousness, or somewhat which we ourselves have done; the other, is without [*outside*] us, and comes by imputation, and so is not only distinguished from our own righteousness, but opposed to it (Phil. 3:9). And although this truth be misrepresented by many; yet we judge it to be impregnable; and that in the great day the decision will be found favorable thereto, when only happy shall they be that be thus found in Christ. Thus, therefore, we are to conceive the terms of the gospel, as if a debauched dyvour were ready to be apprehended, having nothing to pay, suppose one should offer to undertake for him, and pay the debt, so as he might be liberated, upon condition that he should acknowledge his benefactor, and plead ever his defense against the pursuit upon the cautioner's payment, and the discharge procured by him: in this respect, the cautioner's payment is the meritorious cause whereby such a man is absolved, viz. because that payment is reckoned for him, or imputed to him. Yet his pleading that defense, or producing of that discharge, immediately, may be said instrumentally to procure it, because it is not the cautioner's payments simply that is sustained, as a relevant defense in judgment, till that be instructed, and except the defense be founded thereon; for so the law provides. So it is not Christ's satisfying simply, but his satisfaction, pleaded by faith, and

fled unto, that justifies; for so the law of faith has enacted. Yet the producing of such a discharge merits nothing, but gives a legal ground of right to the cause that merits, and so to what is merited. And the Lord has appointed this to be the condition of justification, viz. the pleading of Christ's satisfaction before the bar immediately. For (1) That stops all mouths; and none can produce that satisfaction, but they must necessarily acknowledge emptiness in themselves, justice and grace in God, and love and fullness in the Mediator. (2) The pleading of this shows a complete, perfect, equal, evangelic righteousness; or, that one man has better ground to be justified upon, and a better righteousness than another.

3. That faith is necessary for justification, so that none can expect to be justified but believers, has been also hitherto almost amongst all uncontroverted, till that of late Antinomians have opposed it. But the scripture is very express: (1) In limiting all the promises of pardon to a believer. (2) In cursing all that believe not, and declaring them to be under the curse. (3) In placing faith correlatively taken, in the room that works had in the first covenant, which must be in reference to justification itself, and not the sense thereof only. (4) In asserting that we believe that we may be justified (Gal. 2:16. etc). So that there needs not much speaking to this, beside, that many things spoken of repentance, may be applied here.³ And if it be found that faith is either the condition of the covenant of grace, or the instrumental cause of justification, this will necessarily follow, that there is no justification without it. I know there are some divines that use different expressions here; yet seeing they also oppose Antinomians, we will not now stick on that.

There is more difficulty in conceiving of the manner how faith concurs: that there is some eminency in it, is acknowledged both by Papists, who account it a radical grace, having influence on all other graces, and so having special influence on that which they call justification; and also by some others, who, making works with it to be conditions of the new covenant, do yet acknowledge a special aptitude in it, for applying of Christ's righteousness; and that therefore it is the principal condition, and other things, less principal, in this. Indeed, these of the last opinion

² Ed. *Marches* — Borders. As in "*Riding the marches*, a practice retained in various boroughs, especially at the time of public markets. 'It is customary to *ride the marches*, occasionally, so as to preserve in the memory of the people the limits of their property.'" *Jamieson*. This is a phrase often used by Durham. See *Lectures on Job* (chapter 3 & 24), *Sermons on Isaiah 53* (Sermon 20), *Lectures on Revelation* (1.5; 3.1-3; 5.2; 8.2; 9.2; 11.3; 12.1&3; 22.3), and *Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, 10th Commandment.

³ See "Concerning Repentance," another separate lecture or digression in Durham's *Commentary on Revelation*.



seem to differ from us: (1) That they place faith, repentance, and works in one and the same kind of casualty in reference to justification. (2) That this casualty is but to account them all causes *sine quibus non*. (3) That all instrumentality is denied to faith. (4) That faith is not alone the condition from any respect to its immediate acting on its object Christ, but as other graces are. (5) That Christ is not our immediate evangelic righteousness, but faith properly taken, and that as comprehending all other duties and graces under it; and so it is both properly taken, and improperly. (6). That therefore we may be said to be justified by works as by faith, faith being taken largely for all. Although, where the thing is clear, and Christ is rested on in justification, and his satisfaction, acknowledged, as is in this case, there needs be no great debate for words and terms of *Condition, Imputation, Instrument*, etc; yet these being still used among divines, we conceive there is no just reason to cast [*discard*] them, the use of them having now, of a long time, made them to pass in this matter, without mistake or strict binding of them to the acceptations wherein they are used in other matters. Much less is there reason to cry down the matter expressed by them; and it cannot but be sad, that such new controversies should be moved. We are persuaded that the reflecting on many worthy men, the obscuring of the trodden path by new questions and objections, the confounding of readers by proposing, as it were, of a different strain of the covenant, from what formerly has been preached, the giving of an open door to men to propose new draughts in all things, and that not in expressions only, but also, as is alleged, in fundamental material things, etc. shall be more prejudicial to edification, nor [*than*] the bringing forth of this shall be useful. For if by this all the former doctrine of justification be enervated, where are we till now? If it stand so as the followers thereof may attain heaven: what is the use of this so full a new mold, with so much professed danger in, and dissatisfaction with the former? Will it not be welcome to Papists, to have Protestants speaking in their terms, and homologating them in condemning the former language of the most eminent reformers! And though *unlearned*, or *unread divines*, be the epithets of the opposers of this doctrine, yet possibly experience may show that such may most readily be the embracers of it. I say, again, when the church is overwhelmed with controversies already, it is not fit to contend

for words, seeing there is some agreement in the nature of faith, and in the necessity of works; and, we are sure, where both these are, there can be no hazard. Yet, if under this new model, another matter be comprehended, than formerly has been intended by other expressions in the writings of others, it cannot be so easily approved, lest we should condemn the generation of God's people, who have gone before us. Laying by therefore prejudice and contention for words, we shall a little, so far as our scope permits, inquire into the truth of faith's peculiar concurring for the application of Christ's righteousness in the covenant of grace, and what may be said of works. In reference to which, we would permit:

1. That this way of covenanting is borrowed from the practice of man with man, to set forth somewhat of a spiritual nature betwixt God and man: for which end the similitudes of *covenanting, marrying, treating, accusing, justifying*, etc. are borrowed as has been said.

2. That though all mutual covenants have their conditions; yet are they to be distinguished, because sometimes the covenant is such, as entering into it entitles to the benefits comprehended in it, as in a marriage-covenant, entry thereunto entitles the wife unto the husband, and all that is his. Sometimes again, the relation must not only be entered, but all the terms thereof actually performed, before there be a right to the thing promised; thus is the covenant betwixt a master and a servant. For though the servant be the master's servant at the first instant of the agreement, yet has he not a right to the covenanted hire, till he has performed the service, and accomplished his term. In the first of these covenants, that which enters one in that relation, is the condition, not so in the second.

3. Hence we may distinguish the condition of a covenant. Sometimes it is taken materially (to say so) and more largely, viz. for all the duties that are required of one in that relation, and so a wife's dutifulness to her husband after marriage, and an adopted son's dutifulness to his father after adoption, etc. may be called conditions of the marriage-covenant, and of adoption. Sometimes again, a condition is taken more strictly, and, to say so, formally. That is, for such a thing as makes up the relation, and entitles one to, and instates him in, the privileges covenanted. So formal consenting in marriage, is the condition;



and a son's actual accepting of the offered adoption, and engaging himself to be dutiful, do instate him in the privilege of a son, although he has not yet actually performed all that he is engaged unto. And in this respect, the actual performing of some duties, is rather the duty of one in such a relation, than the condition required to the upmaking of it.

4. There is a difference betwixt these privileges and benefits of a covenant that flow from it as such, and to all in such a relation. Thus all wives, as such, have interest in their husbands; all adopted children in their parents, whatever years they be of, etc. and these benefits and privileges of a covenant, which are but conditionally promised, even to these within such relations, and require more than being in covenant; as although a wife cannot but have interest in her husband, as she is a wife; yet can she not plead the dowry covenanted, except she continue a faithful wife; for if she fail in the essentials of the covenant, she may be divorced. Or an adopted son cannot plead actual possession of the inheritance, though he be a son, till the term come that is appointed by the father, or he perform something called for in the right of adoption, which is insinuated also [in] Gal. 4:1-2, etc.

Now to apply this, we may some way see in what sense works may be called the condition of the covenant of grace, and in what sense faith only.

1. If we take the condition largely and materially for what is called for from one in covenant; so works may be called the condition of the covenant, even as a wife, or son, their performing of conjugal and filial duties to their husband or parent, may be called conditions of marriage and adoption. Yet if we consider the condition of the covenant of grace strictly and formally, as that which does actually interest one in, or entitle him unto Christ's righteousness, and makes him a son, that is faith properly taken, as it does unite with Christ (John 1:12), because it is impossible to conceive one to believe in Christ, but he must be conceived to have title to him, as a wife has to her husband, or a son has to his father. And so he cannot be conceived to be a believer, but he must be justified, because to have interest in Christ and his righteousness, cannot be separated from justification.

2. We say if we look to such privileges of the covenant of grace as presuppose something beside

being in covenant to antecede; as for example, entering into life, admission unto glory, and the like; in that respect, works, and holiness may be called the condition of salvation, because that is not actually attained without these; even as a wife's dutifulness may be called the condition of her obtaining her dowry, yet neither is this properly a condition of marriage, nor the other of covenanting with God. But if we look to the privileges which follow the covenant immediately and do agree to a covenanter as such, as to be justified, adopted, etc. in that respect, not works, but faith is to be called the condition of the covenant, and of justification; because by faith they are instated into that covenant, and so in these privileges that agree to a covenant as such.

Hence 3. We may see that when we speak of the covenant of grace and its condition, it is not to be compared with every covenant amongst men indifferently, as suppose, to that agreement that is betwixt a master and a servant, and a husbandman and his laborer for his hire, which presupposes working (and so the performing thereof must go before, ere the servant or laborer can plead anything upon their agreement), but it is like a marriage covenant or free adoption, which does indeed infer duties to follow in the respects foresaid, and does imply an engagement to perform them, but does not presuppose the actual performance thereof, before any right can be pleaded by such relations, but only consenting and engaging to the same. Hence in scripture, the covenant of works is compared to that covenant which is betwixt masters and servants, and the husband-man and his hired laborers, etc. and the reward is called *debt*, or hire, not because of any merit or condignity in the works (which cannot be pleaded, even in Adam's case), but because the performance of the duties of holiness, and obedience, was necessarily presupposed to the having right to the great privileges contained in that covenant. For though Adam was in covenant with God at first, yet could he not claim life by virtue thereof, till he had continued in the obedience of the commands, and actually performed the same, as servants must do before they can plead for their hire. Again, the covenant of grace is compared to free adoption or a man's entitling of a stranger to his inheritance upon condition of his receiving that, and to marriage betwixt man and wife (which is frequent in scripture); not because the covenant of grace



requires not holiness and works, but because it does not require them actually to precede a person's title to all privileges covenanted, and does freely entitle him to the same, upon his entry therein, as a wife is entitled to what is the husband's, upon her marriage with him, although afterward she be to perform the duties of that relation, rather as duties called for by it, than as conditions of it. Hence we may call the covenant of works a servile covenant, and the covenant of grace a filial or conjugal covenant; and therefore, although holy duties be required in both, yet there is difference, and the one is of works, and the other of grace. Neither is it the difference that the works in the one were meritorious, and in the other not; for there is proper merit in neither, nor is the difference to be placed in this, that the one requires works perfectly holy, as the condition thereof, and the other evangelic works not perfectly holy. Because so, there were not the same law for ordering of holy duties to us which they had, nor that same absolute pattern of holiness for our copy, viz. God's holiness, calling us to be holy as he is holy; nor were defects, in reference to our perfect holiness, sinful under the covenant of grace, if perfection were not required therein: all which are false, besides that so it were still of works. But the difference lies in this: that our working is not to be the ground of our right to the inheritance, nor actually to precede our right as in the covenant of works it was necessary, but believing and consenting only.

This difference betwixt the covenant of works and of grace, may be conceived thus: suppose a debtor being sued for his own debt, should either plead no debt, or that he had paid it, or would pay it; this is the covenant of works. Again, that of grace, is, as a debtor acknowledging debt, but being unable to pay, pleading only the cautioner's payment, and expects to be absolved upon that account; and not as if by a cautioner's intervening, he had all the debt forgiven him to so much, or had a new bargain given him for a penny yearly, or a pepper-corn in the place of a thousand talents; and, in a word, so much down, or that for gold, ore of gold should be accepted. For so:

(1) Some would have their penny more weighty than others, and thereby be more justified than others, or at least have a better ground to be justified upon.

(2) It would be still the same kind of condition, and so the same covenant in kind (*majus et minus non variant specimen*); for, paying of one bushel for an hundred chalders, still says it is victual-rent, although it be of grace, that it is so little. And indeed so, the first covenant might be called of grace, because the good promised was so far beyond the rent required: and so it was but as a man that did at first require a talent, for that which was worth much more, and should afterward alter and require only a shekel.

(3) It cannot be so; for the sinner's charge is not that he wants [*lacks*] his penny or pepper-corn, but that he has broken the law; his righteousness therefore must be such as meets that charge (as Rom. 8:34), and so it must be such a righteousness as must stand before justice, and be equivalent, at least, to his own fulfilling the law, or his having satisfied the penalty thereof.

(4) When the apostle opposes the righteousness of the law and gospel, he opposes not as it were a thousand talents to a penny, or one sort of works to another, but the righteousness of Christ, or, to be found in him, to all kind of works whatsoever (Phil. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3, etc), and to have the righteousness of faith, and the righteousness of Christ, and the righteousness by faith, are ever one and the same, and are still opposed to works.

From this also it appears that covenanting does in order of nature precede justification; because, by covenanting and being in covenant, we come to have a right thereto, as to a promise of the covenant, as the accepting of an offered pardon, does go before our having actual right to the following privileges, or a woman's consent before her actual claim to the husband's goods, though the one is not supposed to be without the other; even as the breach of covenant precedes our being liable to condemnation by the law. Hence also we may someway gather that there may be some formal different consideration of the condition of justification, from the condition of the covenant; for justification being a legal judicial act, it must presuppose such a condition as may be a ground in justice to absolve a sinner; and therefore in this, Christ's satisfaction, as presented and pleaded, must be the only ground; for it is with respect to that only, by which a sinner can be justified; and this is, *to be found in Christ* (Phil. 3:9). Covenanting again, being a mutual deed, wherein the Lord condescends to make a free



offer, and to admit in covenant on condition of receiving, the condition here must be that which entitles to that thing offered and enters the person within the bond of the covenant, which must be faith. Hence these two acts of faith, whereby it is defined, may be thus conceived:

(1) It *receives* Christ, and so it enters into and closes with the covenant, and gets instantly a title to what is contained therein.

(2) It *rests* on him; which must be judicially understood, as one rests on a relevant defense, and therefore pleads it, as it is said Rom. 2, that the Jews rested on the law, which was to expect justification by it, and so to rest on the righteousness thereof; in which sense we now rest by faith on Christ's righteousness. This supposes one to be in him, and in the covenant, and it looks, as such, to justification; and in respect of its manner of acting immediately on Christ our righteousness, it may well be called the *instrumental cause* of our justification.

Thus, suppose a sinner to be lying under God's curse, and suppose the Mediator to have satisfied, and a proclamation to be made, that whatsoever sinner, liable to the curse for sin, will accept of Christ's righteousness; and rest thereon, he shall be justified. (1) A sinner is induced to receive that offer, which is done by consenting and submitting to that way of obtaining righteousness; this is the closing with the covenant, and thus faith is the condition thereof. Then (2). Suppose him to look to the charge that stands against him for his former sins in God's threatened curse, and to satisfy this he gives in Christ's satisfaction; which being offered to him for this end that he, upon the receiving thereof, may be justified; he, by faith resting on God's faithful word, through Christ, repels all these charges, by presenting that as his defense, and by the letter of the law of faith, which says, *He that believeth shall not come into condemnation, but hath passed from death to life*. He is absolved: and this is justification, even as he was formerly condemned by the law of works. Here the only meritorious cause of the absolution, and the righteousness upon which the sentence passes, is the cautioner's payment; yet so as it is judicially pleaded. In which respect, we say that faith is instrumental. And though this pleading of it be necessary, and the law absolves not but when the ground is instructed; yet this pleading or instructing is not in the person's righteousness

properly, or the ground of his absolution. But that which is pleaded and instructed, viz. the cautioner's payment which being according to law instructed, is the ground of absolving the debtor from the charge. This is plain, even in the dealing of human courts. And the tenor of the way of justification, being held forth in the Word, with respect to a judicial procedure in human courts, as is said, it can no other way be more satisfyingly cleared.

To insist a little more then: There is a two-fold peculiarity attributed to faith, beside what is given to works and any other grace. (1) That it is the condition of the covenant, properly. (2) That it has an instrumental causality peculiar to it, in our justification.

(1) By the first, is meant that believing in Christ, and the receiving of him; is that which instates one into the covenant, and gives him right to what is promised, and does in our having right to God's promises, supply that room, which conditions do in men's mutual bargains: wherein when one promises somewhat on such a condition, the performances of that condition does turn the conditional promise into an absolute right to him that has performed it. And so a condition is that upon which the title to the great promise, viz. God's being our God, does depend. And *faith* gets this name in respect of the place God has put it into his covenant, and so it flows from his extrinsic ordination.

(2) By the second, viz. that it is called an instrumental cause, the intrinsic manner of its acting is respected. For, though it be from the Spirit with other graces, and they be not separated; yet has it a peculiar aptitude to look to Christ, *receive him, apprehend and eat him, take hold of and rest on him*, etc. which no other grace has. For it is in the new creature and inner-man some way proportionably as it is in the outer-man; for though there be many members of one body, yet all act not in the same manner; the hand acts one way, and the ear another, etc. So it is in the inner-man, there are many graces (which are members thereof) yet have they their peculiar way of acting, whereof these mentioned are attributed to faith; for which often it is called the eye, the hand, and the door of the renewed soul, because by it, Christ is apprehended and received thereunto.



We conceive this instrumentality is justly attributed to faith, because seeing there must be an application of the righteousness of Christ, and seeing faith concurs or is made use of as a mids [means] for receiving of him, which is the way by which his righteousness is applied, why may it not be called instrumental in our justification, as it is instrumental in receiving of, and resting on his righteousness, by which, and for which we are justified? And thus faith is not our receiving, but the means by which we receive, as the eye is not our seeing, nor the hand our gripping of anything, but the organs or means whereby we see and grip. Neither does this give anything to faith, that derogates from Christ; for it leaves the praise and virtue to him. But [it] does infer only an exercising of faith, for attaining of that benefit, viz. *justification*; justification itself being an *apotelesma*, to say so, or effect, both of Christ's purchase, God's grace, and our believing, and flows from them all respectively, and presupposes the same. The dispute about active and passive instruments is needless here, seeing the meaning is clear, that for attaining of justification by Christ's righteousness, faith does peculiarly concur in the apprehending thereof, and resting thereon, otherwise than other graces can be said to do. And this cannot be denied, if we consider:

(1) That to be justified by Christ, and by faith, or by the righteousness of Christ, and the righteousness of faith, are still one in scripture, even then when that concurrence which is allowed to faith is denied to all other things; which says that faith concurs peculiarly, and that so as Christ is rested on by it when it justifies; or that it justifies by obtaining justification through him.

(2) If this be truth, that the righteousness of Christ is the thing immediately presented before God's justice upon which we are absolved, as is said, and also if it cannot be denied that faith has a peculiar aptitude to act on Christ's righteousness, and present the same; then it must be granted, first, that faith must have a peculiar way of concurring to the attaining of justification; and secondly, that this may well be called an instrumental casualty in reference to that end. Otherwise there is no use nor exercise of this its particular aptitude, which is still acknowledged. And if it please better to say, that faith justifies or concurs in justification, in respect of its peculiar aptitude to act on Christ, and to receive him, than to say it concurs instrumentally, we shall not

contend, providing it be the same, upon the matter, with the ordinary doctrine concerning this instrumentality of faith, which we may illustrate and confirm by these considerations and similitudes.

(1) It is granted that the Word is the external instrument of justification; and that must be because it offers the same upon condition of believing; or holds forth a righteousness by which we may be justified; so faith must be the internal instrument, because it receives the same that is offered by the Word; and receiving is no less necessary to justification, than offering; and seeing that receiving and offering relate so to each other, and both to the end, there is reason to attribute the same kind of casualty to the one, that is given to the other respectively.

(2) We are said to be justified by faith in Christ, as the people were healed by looking to the brazen serpent, which was to typify this (John 3:14). Now they, by the virtue of the serpent (considering it typically, and with respect to the appointment), did receive health; yet so as that health was attained by looking thereto; in which respect, their eye, or look, might be called instrumental in their health, although it was not looking simply, but to that object with respect to the Lord's appointment. Even so it is here; it is Christ's virtue whereby we are justified, yet so as by faith it is apprehended, and according to God's appointment looked unto. And thus (as Matt. 7), the eye is called the light of the body, because it is the organ by and through which light is brought or let in to it; so faith may be called our righteousness, as it is the means by which Christ's righteousness without us is apprehended, brought in as it were, and admitted of, to be ours.

(3) Justification is still held forth in judicial expressions, as is said: now, as an accused party, their producing of a law for them, or a discharge, may be said to be instrumental in their own absolution, although it be only the virtue of the discharge given in that procures the same; so may faith be said instrumentally to justify us, as it presents for us Christ's satisfaction before the justice of God, and so it is here as in human courts. For although some advocates, it may be, plead better, and some worse; yet suppose that they all produce the same discharges, and the same laws in favors of their clients, they might all be called instrumental in their absolution, and the



ground of their absolvitours⁴ would be equal. Whereas, if their act of pleading, without respect to what is pleaded, were considered, it would not be so. Even so here, though some men's faith be more strong, and others more weak, yet all apprehending the same satisfaction of Christ, there is equal sharing in justification; which could not be, if faith did not concur instrumentally in the use-making of Christ's righteousness, even as of the only immediate evangelic righteousness, as it respects our justification; because, if faith be considered in itself, and not as with the object, apprehended by it, it is not equal even in those that are justified.

4. See it in miraculous faith: as it concurs for attaining of a particular benefit; so does saving faith for attaining of justification. For that there is an equal influence of both upon their respective effects, cannot be denied. Now, that miraculous faith might be said someway to concur instrumentally for health, is clear; for it is said that some had faith to be healed, to receive virtue from Christ, etc. which others had not, and accordingly the effects are attributed both to their faith and to Christ's power; therefore, it may be so here, viz. justification may flow from faith as the instrumental cause, and from Christ's righteousness as the meritorious.

5. In the ordinary similitude of marriage or solemn covenanting, it may be seen: for, actual consenting, or the hand that writes the name, may be said to be instrumental in the closing of the bargain, or in attaining the privileges that follow thereon, and the hand has another influence than the foot or eye, although these also be necessary, yet it is not consenting or subscribing simply, but such and such in reference to such objects and covenants: even as it is not the tongue's speaking truths, and the reaching forth of discharges simply, that are instrumental in men's courts for attaining absolution; but it is the speaking of such pertinent truths, or producing of such suitable discharges that comes under that name. And this is all we intend when we say that faith concurs instrumentally, even to hold out the immediate cause of our justification to be Christ apprehended by faith: so that faith and Christ are

both necessary, but differently, and so also that the efficacy of all the concurrence of faith may be from Christ the object, from which it is not to be separated when it is said to justify.

The other thing peculiarly attributed to faith, is that it is the condition of the covenant of grace, properly: which can be said of no other grace or work. This is to be understood as is above expressed, viz. that faith is that which on our side is called for, for constituting of us covenanters, and giving us right to the great comprehensive promise thereof, that God may be our God: and upon the performing of which, that which God has promised in it, may be expected, as is before said.

That faith is thus the condition peculiarly, and not works, nor any other grace (beside what is said afterward upon repentance) may thus appear:

(1) Because faith only has that peculiar aptitude of receiving God's offer, and returning of our engagement; and so, for making the bargain mutually to be closed: and faith cannot be conceived to be exercised, but the bargain must be conceived to be closed, and that person to be in covenant: therefore, the exercising thereof must be peculiarly the condition.

(2) If faith be that which peculiarly rides marches [Ed. See page 4] between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works and curse, and a believer eo ipso [for that very reason] be freed from the curse, because he is a believer, and rests on Christ, then faith must be peculiarly the condition of the covenant of grace; but the former cannot be denied, and is clear (John 3:18, 36).

(3) If works concur in the same casualty with faith, then it must either be works before one be in covenant, or works thereafter; but it can be neither. Not before one be in covenant, because such works cannot be accepted; nor secondly, after; because then they could not be the condition upon which we are admitted: for so, we would be accepted before the condition be performed. If it be said, that the same reasoning will seclude faith, because if faith be the condition, then it must either be faith before we be in covenant, or after, etc. *Answ.* It follows not; because it is faith neither before nor after our entry, but that which enters us, that is the condition. And it cannot be conceived before nor after, being an instantaneous act, as solemn

⁴ *Absolutor, absolvitour, absolvitur.* Scottish Law. A forensic term. "Absolvitur from the claim." When a person is freed by sentence of a judge from any debt or demand. *Jamieson.*



consenting in marriage, is not before nor after, as it constitutes marriage; but instantly. Here, still observe, that when we speak of a condition, we speak of that condition whereby one is admitted within the covenant, and not of anything that may be implied to be performed by one admitted already to covenant; because that must be the condition of the covenant properly that entitles one to the privileges covenanted. But what enters one into this covenant, does entitle him to the privileges covenanted; therefore it must properly be the condition; and faith being that, is therefore alone so to be esteemed. Which we may further urge thus: either being admitted to the covenant, one is freed from the curse, and instated in all the privileges of the covenant or not. It cannot be said not, because that were to make one a covenanter and not a covenanter, and one cannot be conceived to be in covenant with God, but God is in covenant with him actually, as a wife's marrying of a husband does actually state her in what is the husband's. Therefore *faith* being that whereby we are entered into covenant, as is granted, must be properly the only condition. Again, either by faith we are instated in the covenant of grace upon the very instant of believing, and so justified; or, one may be supposed to be a believer and not to be in the covenant of grace; or, to be in the covenant of grace, and not to be justified; both which are absurd: therefore faith must be the proper condition.

If it be said here that justification is a continued act, then we urge: (1) If instantly on believing one be justified and freed from the curse and instated into friendship with God, then it cannot be a continued act; but the former is true, as is said; and to say otherwise, would overturn the nature of the covenant. (2) If justification be a continued act, then our being received and admitted into covenant as to a right unto the saving blessings promised therein, must be a continued act also. For these two must stand and fall together, viz. to be admitted thus into covenant, and to be justified; for who are thus in covenant are justified, and who are justified are thus in covenant. But the last cannot be said, viz. that the act of our being admitted, or whereby we are entered into covenant, is a continued act.

Because: [1] So none living could be said to be in covenant with God, nor account themselves to be God's, or claim God to be theirs, which is absurd.

[2] So one that is a believer, might be said to be under the curse of the covenant of works, which is contrary unto that freedom pronounced into believers. For if they are not under grace, they are still under the covenant of works, and if under grace, then in the covenant of grace. To say here that God continues to justify, will not remove this; because justification must continue only as their admitting, or the act of their admission into covenant, may continue. But it cannot be said that they continue in being admitted into covenant; or that by a continued act the Lord is still admitting them; or that they are continuing to enter, as it infers non-admission, or non-entry, or an imperfect admission, but as it suppones [*supposes*] the person to be entered, and to continue so, it must therefore be so in justification.

[3] If a believer, *eo ipso* that he is a believer, has a shield against all challenges, and a righteousness that can abide the trial in justice, then justification cannot be a continual act, because if justification be not instantaneous and immediately perfect, it must either be upon one's not believing in Christ, or because of some defect of the righteousness that faith presents, and so faith were not a sufficient shield. For it must be, because the word does not pronounce him just upon the ground of that righteousness, which were also absurd; but the former is true: a believer cannot be conceived to be such, but he has a complete righteousness in Christ, and by being in him, has a sufficient answer to justice, upon the first instant of believing, as the whole series of the gospel demonstrates, *he that believeth shall not come into condemnation*, etc. Therefore must he be upon the first instant justified; for if it were but a perfecting, it could not be said that he had an actual perfect righteousness, but only that it were a perfecting.

Further, we may argue against works concurring with faith, thus: If works be a condition of the covenant, then it must either be works as begun, or as persevered into. But neither can be said. Not the first, because it is granted that persevering in holiness is no less necessary than entering thereinto. Not the second, because perseverance is a mercy contained in the covenant, and (if we may say so) promised to us upon condition of our believing and entering covenant: it cannot therefore be the condition of our entering the covenant. Again, many have not actual works,



and yet may be saved; therefore works cannot be the condition. If it be said, that such have resolutions of, and engagement unto works; that cannot solve this; because this opinion distinguishes works, and the necessity of them from faith properly and strictly taken. Yet to them that hold it, faith strictly and properly taken (even that which is justifying), does receive Christ as Lord, and so implies this engagement: and therefore, if that definition of justifying faith were true, and this ground also granted, that engaging is sufficient, then also were faith properly, that is, strictly taken, the condition of the covenant, according as they understand it; and so there were no necessity to add or mention works as distinct from it, or to press faith to be the condition as more largely and improperly taken. And so in some respect there were no difference: for this far none denies but that actual engaging to Christ and to holiness is necessary; because it is impossible to conceive one closing with the covenant, but he becomes *ipso facto* engaged who does close. Or thus: that which is the condition to one, must be to all at age (for of such we speak); but actual works cannot be the condition to all; because some may be saved without them. As suppose (which is not impossible) actual consenting to the covenant, and engaging to holiness, were the last act of a person before death; neither can they say that engaging to holiness were in this case sufficient, and that is here intended: because works are spoken of as the condition, as they are distinguished from faith, as it is taken by them to be the accepting of Christ as Lord as well as Savior, as has been said. See more of this on repentance.⁵

But beside all that is spoken, these two mainly stand in the way of our accounting works a condition of the covenant, or of justification, in the same kind of casualty with faith:

1. Because it obscures the difference of the two covenants, viz. the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace; for so works should be still the condition of the covenant of grace. Now, the apostle does directly oppose these. The righteousness of the law saith on this ways, *the man that doth these things*, etc. And the righteousness of faith is held forth as opposite to that, and so cannot be said to consist in doing of works (Rom. 10:5-6; Gal. 3:12).

If it be said that he excludes legal works, or law-righteousness, which are not alleged by this opinion; but does not exclude evangelic works, which may well stand with grace. *Ans.* (1) The apostle's opposition is not made to exclude one kind of works, and take in another; but simply to exclude all which may come under the expression *do this*. And hence faith itself, as it is our work, has ever been excluded in this respect.

(2) If we look to works, with respect unto the covenant of works, even so works have no proper merit, nor proportion unto the things promised of themselves, but as it is determined and condescended to in the covenant, and by virtue of God's promise made thereunto. Therefore it is called a covenant of works, not because of the merit of the works, but in respect of the formality of the condition thereof, viz. *doing*; that is, the righteousness which we ourselves do (Tit. 3:5). And in this respect, to work one day, and to work twenty years, or paying of a thousand talents, and one penny, does not difference the nature of the condition of the covenant (supposing the condition of both to be expressed in these terms) although the degree thereof be different.

(3) Faith is opposed to works as the condition of the covenant, or of justification, not as considered in itself, but as with respect to its object Christ; and so we are thus to conceive the opposition, works inherent in us, and performed by us, are called for in the covenant of works, as the righteousness thereof, and as the only ground upon which we can expect to be justified by it. Again, by the covenant of grace, Christ's righteousness without [*outside*] us, received by faith, is only admitted as a righteousness and ground of justification. That faith is so to be understood, in Rom. 10:5-6 and Gal. 3:10-12, etc. is evident. For the righteousness spoken of [in] Rom. 10:3-4 (which is the righteousness of faith, and is opposed to our righteousness) is Christ, *the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe*, who was stumbled at by the Jews, etc. So it is also in that other place, Gal. 3. as the scope manifests, viz. faith as making use of Christ; his becoming the curse for us. And it is observable that in both these chapters the difference of the conditions of the covenant of works and of grace is insisted on, to plead the necessity of a righteousness without us in opposition to our own; and so faith must be the condition of the covenant of grace, as it acts or rests on that.

⁵ See "Concerning Repentance." Ibid.



2. The second thing that mainly dissuades from that opinion, is that it proposes something in ourselves as the immediate ground of our justification before God, under that title of being our *evangelic righteousness*. For if works concur in that same casualty with faith, then our believing properly must be accounted our righteousness, and not Christ's by faith, taken hold on; because these two are inconsistent, viz. faith and works, in a proper sense, to be our evangelic righteousness, and Christ's also. For, suppose one to be charged at God's bar for sin, the one way Christ is represented, and the other way the man's believing and obedience. If it be said, that when we mention believing or faith, it cannot but respect Christ: *Answ.* (1) Then there is no difference; for we acknowledge faith correlatively taken to be our righteousness. (2) Then also works cannot concur in that manner, for they cannot so respect him; which is all that is intended.

If it be said, that Christ is our legal righteousness, that is, that by him we have satisfied the covenant of works, he having paid in our name; but faith and obedience are our evangelic righteousness; that is, as he has procured a new grant of life upon these easy terms in the covenant of grace, and so as by performing thereof, we may come to have right to what he has purchased, in satisfying the first covenant:

Answ. (1) This misrepresents God's way of covenanting, who has not appointed our paying of a small rent (as it were a penny) to be the ground of our right unto Christ's purchase; but seeing Christ became cautioner in our name, to pay the debt, he has appointed the debtor's claiming of, and submitting unto his payment, to be the terms upon which he shall be absolved as was at the entry to this discourse observed, and is clear from Philip. 3:9, where the *righteousness of faith* (which is our evangelic righteousness, and opposed to works) and to *be found in Christ*, are one; and the one is explained by the other.

(2) This way makes a covenant to be a *mids* or way for attaining of another righteousness for justification beside Christ's; and so makes two righteousnesses in justification, and one of them to be the *mids* [*means*] for attaining the other; whereas the gospel righteousness is but one in itself, by faith apprehended and made ours.

(3) Although this may seem not to exalt works by giving them any merit; yet it is impossible to account them even to be our evangelic righteousness, or a condition of the covenant of grace, but there will be still a readiness to heighten them above their own place, which derogates to the way of grace that is laid down by faith in Christ. For it is easy to exceed in reference to anything in ourselves considered in itself; whereas when faith only is respected, as it apprehends Christ, it cannot be so considered; for it not only merits nothing, but it excludes merit and all boasting. And therefore the Lord has thus wisely ordered that all may be kept from boasting, even of faith.

(4) We may answer, if by legal righteousness be understood that which may be satisfying to the law, so Christ indeed is our legal righteousness, yet so as by the gospel only we have access to him, and have a promise of being accepted through him, without the receiving of which by faith, he is not a legal righteousness to any; and so he is our only evangelic righteousness also. And thus our legal righteousness and evangelic are the same, for there is but one charge to a sinner, which only can be answered by fleeing to Christ. And so he is our legal righteousness as the law's charge is satisfied by him; and he is our evangelic righteousness, as that means of answering the law is to us proposed in the gospel, and for us (upon the condition foresaid) accepted by the same, without which Christ had never been our legal righteousness. And the dividing of these two righteousnesses, does *suppone* [*suppose*], that there may be a legal righteousness in Christ, to such as may actually never partake thereof (and we are afraid that some such thing may occasion this distinction), whereas God's way in the gospel is to provide a righteousness for such as were given to Christ, by which they may be actually justified (Isa. 53:11). And if Christ be not this gospel-righteousness, what can it be? For it is by him we are freed from the curse of the law, which is the end wherefore this gospel-righteousness is preached. And it is by putting on him, that even the gospel holds forth justification. But if we consider the law-righteousness strictly, as it requires personal holiness, or satisfaction from the very party, so Christ is not our legal righteousness; and in that sense it cannot be pleaded for. It must therefore follow that he is our gospel-righteousness, seeing no other way but by



the gospel we have access to him, and therefore, that distinction will not hold here. For Christ is either our legal righteousness – that is, the righteousness which the law holds forth and accepts of itself, or our evangelic righteousness – that is, the righteousness which the gospel holds forth, and which by it is accepted. But he is not the first. *Ergo*, he must be the second. And so faith, properly taken, cannot be our evangelic righteousness, seeing Christ, and faith properly taken, without relation to him, cannot both be so accounted. Again, if faith properly taken, and that largely, be our gospel-righteousness upon which we are justified, then it is either faith, including that respect to Christ, or not. But neither of these can be. For, if it respect and include Christ, then it is what we say: faith with its object, and not faith properly; and so not faith in that same casualty with works, which is asserted. If it respect not, nor include Christ, then is there a righteousness and ground of justification, wherein Christ is not comprehended, which will sound no way like a gospel-righteousness.

If it be said, that he has procured faith in that large sense to be accepted: *Ans.* (1) That makes a new covenant of works, as is said. (2) That is not to make Christ to be our immediate righteousness; but only to have procured that such works should be accepted, and the former covenant mitigated, but not in its nature changed. And so (3) It homologates popish doctrine, which we would hope is far from being intended by the maintainers of this opinion. (4) That overturns the imputation of Christ's righteousness as our immediate righteousness, which is enough to make it to be shunned. For if we lippen [*trust*] to such graces and duties as abstracted from Christ, and without resting on him, that is, not *to be found in him*, but in them (for these two are opposed, Philip. 3:9); and so they are a righteousness that will never quiet the conscience, and which the gospel will never own as an evangelic righteousness, rest on it who will.

If it be said, "Cannot faith then, properly taken, be in any respect counted a condition, or ground of right? For *answer*, in sum we say: (1) That faith, at most, is but the condition on which Christ becomes our righteousness, or is imputed to us for our justification; and so faith itself properly cannot be our righteousness. (2) We say that when faith is called the condition of the covenant, or our righteousness, it does not imply

that it is properly imputed; but it shows to whom, and upon what terms, Christ's righteousness is imputed, or how a sinner may have access to be justified by it. (3) We say that faith, when it is called the condition, is ever to be taken strictly; that is, as it receives Christ, and by that manner of acting is differenced from all other graces and works. And so (4) We say, that it cannot be conceived under this consideration, but as looking to Christ's righteousness as the object thereof, even as we cannot conceive a consent which constitutes a marriage, without respect unto the party consented unto, and his offer, or declaration of his will preceding, without which no consent could be constitutive of marriage, or be a ground of claim to any of the goods or privileges of such a person. Or, as we cannot conceive looking to the brazen serpent, as the condition upon or means by which health was gotten, but with respect to the object thereof, viz. the serpent. And the ground and warrant [*warrant: surety; security*] preceding, viz. God's appointment; without which, a look, considered simply in itself, is not so to be esteemed.

If it be yet urged here, that if faith properly taken, be the condition of the covenant of grace, and has in that succeeded in the room that works had in the covenant of works, then faith must be our evangelic righteousness, because works then were our legal righteousness, and that upon which our right to life did stand; but the former is a truth; he that said "do and live," says now, "believe and be saved." *Ergo*, etc.

Ans. (1) This will say nothing for faith largely taken as comprehending works; but at the most for faith strictly taken as contradistinguished from them: and so there will not be that same kind of casualty in both, but the contrary.

(2) In this condition, faith is never to be taken without implying the object Christ; or without respect to its proper aptitude for receiving of him, and so "believe and thou shalt be saved," implies still this: "receive Christ and rest on his righteousness, or submit to Christ's righteousness, and accept of him for that end, that he may be righteousness to thee, and thou shalt be saved." It is impossible to conceive it otherwise, at least rightly. Now, when upon believing, justification follows and the person is declared just, it cannot be said that the act of believing properly is imputed, and that upon that



account he is declared just. It is rather Christ's righteousness believed on, that is imputed to him, and upon that account he is declared just, which is the very terms of the covenant of redemption, whereby the sinner's sins are imputed to Christ; whereupon he, as cautioner [*surety*], is sentenced, and made sin, that his righteousness may be imputed to us, and so we, upon that account, made righteous, and that in him, and not in ourselves; as it is, 2 Cor. 5:21, which implies that even our evangelic righteousness, whereby we are absolved, is in him, and not in ourselves, as the sin for which he was sentenced was in us, and not in him.

(3) There is this difference between the two covenants, as was said: the one is a servile covenant, to say so, and must have what is engaged to in it, performed, before one have right to what is promised. And so works were in the covenant of works, the condition upon which life was to be expected; and without the actual performing of which, there could have been no pleading for it. But this, viz. the covenant of grace, is a conjugal covenant; therefore is not the condition thereof in all things to be squared by that. Besides, works were the very material righteousness upon which justification was sounded in the covenant of works; but to say of faith, as taken in itself, and without respect to Christ, that it were so the condition now, would be absurd, Christ being, by the whole strain of the gospel, held forth to be rested on before we can be justified. And yet even this would not confirm any way what is said of the joint concurrence of grace and works in that same kind of casualty with faith.

If it be further said: "May not faith, properly taken, be called the condition upon which Christ's righteousness becomes a sinner's, and is imputed to him?"

Ans. (1) This confirms what we say. For if faith be the condition upon which Christ becomes our righteousness, then it is Christ who is our righteousness, and not faith strictly and properly taken, much less largely, as comprehending all other graces. For if it were our righteousness, properly, there needed no imputation of Christ's after our believing, except it be said, as some Papists say, that it is imputed to make up our defects, and to make our holiness acceptable; and so it were our faith and works that should be

justified by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and not our persons: which is contrary to scripture.

(2) This is, upon the matter, the same with what we said, as is hinted; for, suppose a debtor to be pursued, he pleads absolution, because his cautioner has paid, and he produces the discharge given to him, wherein that is acknowledged. His pleading so, and producing of that discharge, may be some way called the ground that gives him right in law to have that payment of the cautioner's imputed to him; yet his absolution flows from the complex business, not of his pleading simply, but of the cautioner's paying, his pleading of that payment, and the law's accepting of that defense, and imputing of it to him; and so from all these together his absolution flows. Just so it is here. Our justification flows from Christ's satisfaction being accepted and rested on by us, and imputed to us by God.

(3) And therefore, thirdly, though faith properly be the condition upon which Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, I had rather call it the means by which it is apprehended; yet it follows not that therefore faith, properly taken, is our righteousness, and as such, is imputed to us, and accounted so, seeing still this presupposes the imputation of Christ's righteousness in order of nature to intervene between our believing and our justification; and therefore, that his righteousness imputed, must be properly our righteousness; seeing we, upon that account, and considered as such (viz. as having Christ's righteousness imputed to us) are justified, and upon that righteousness imputed, justification is immediately grounded.

(4) Yet, fourthly, all this says nothing for faith largely taken, as comprehending all gospel duties. For though faith strictly taken be necessary for having right to Christ's righteousness, of having it imputed to us, yet are not actual works so, by any means; but, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, we are first accepted, and then bring forth these good works; which shows that they do not go before that imputation of Christ's righteousness, or our justification, but that rather they follow thereupon. For if we cannot do good works till we be sanctified, and if none be sanctified but such as are justified, and these two cannot be separated; no, not for an instant of time



(for it cannot be said that a man is sanctified, but not yet justified, *aut contra*); then it will follow that a man is justified before he has actual works (it is of such we debate, and not of habitual seminal holiness); for he may be, and is sanctified before he can have them, much more ere he persevere in them, and so consequently, actual good works cannot concur to justification as faith does, or be the condition thereof. But the former is true and clear: therefore so is the latter also, which is the thing that was in question.

(5) Lastly, we say, if faith properly and largely taken according to their meaning, or yet strictly, be imputed to us for righteousness, then either Christ's righteousness is not imputed, but our faith only, or Christ's righteousness and our faith properly taken also. But neither can be said. Not the first, viz. that the righteousness of Christ is not imputed to us, but faith only; that I suppose is not intended. Neither can the latter be said, viz. that faith is imputed to us for righteousness, and Christ also. For then, Christ is either imputed for our total righteousness, and so faith [does not] come in, or, as a partial righteousness, and that is absurd. Again, either his righteousness is imputed to us before we believe (and so before our faith can be imputed), which is false; for that would make Christ's righteousness to be ours before we were in covenant internally. Or, it is imputed to us after we believe, and so after our own faith is imputed to us and accepted for righteousness; but that cannot be; for then we would be righteous before the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is absurd. Or, lastly, both must be imputed together, which also cannot be. For if both be imputed together, properly, then both in the same sense or kind of casualty, or in divers senses. The first cannot be said; for that would make both meritorious, which is disclaimed. If the last be said, then it must be so as the one is imputed to us for our legal righteousness, viz. Christ's satisfaction, and the other as out evangelic, viz. faith. But (1) That is the thing already spoken to, and divides Christ and our gospel-righteousness. Or (2) It turns to this, that Christ is the thing that satisfies justice, but faith is the ground or means by which we come to have title to that satisfaction; which is the thing that is granted, and we suppose is the thing that by some is intended: and is, in sum, that to which others give the name of the instrumental cause. And, if so, there needs not be contending

for words: for both are acknowledged, viz. that by Christ's righteousness, only as the meritorious cause, we are justified, and that there is no right to plead justification by that, except by faith, or upon condition of believing, by which actual right to Christ, and by him justification is certainly obtained.

Further, it cannot be said that they are imputed jointly. For then:

(1) Either that imputation must be an instantaneous act, at the first believing, or exercise of faith, and so justification must be an instantaneous act also; which they will not grant; because the faith that is imputed, according to them, is faith and the exercise of holiness persevered in; for which cause, justification to them is a continued act.

(2) It must be instantaneous, but not imputed, till faith and holiness be persevered into; and by this neither Christ's righteousness, nor faith is imputed to the person, nor can he be accounted in friendship with God, or to be in Christ, or righteous, till his life be closed; for he cannot be accounted so, till he be justified, and he is not justified till these be imputed to him for righteousness.

Or (3) That imputation must be a continued act, from the first closing with Christ till the end. But how can that be? For [1] It is hard to conceive the act of the imputation of our faith to be continued, but more hard to conceive the imputation of Christ's righteousness to be a continued act; for Christ's righteousness at the first is perfect, and it is to be imputed to the believers. If therefore one may be called a believer, it is to be imputed to him instantly. [2] Imputation being a judicial word and act, it supposes an instant sentencing of such a righteousness to belong to such a person, as it were, and to be accepted for him. For if he has not a perfect right, there is no legal imputation to say so; but if it be perfect, then it is an instantaneous act. [3] If it be continued, then it is continued as if at first it were not a perfect imputation or perfectly imputed; but that were to say that it is not imputation: if it be continued as perfect, then it is supposed to be instantaneous, and past; and what was said for justification, holds here. Indeed if the meaning be that the gospel continues to impute righteousness, even after faith, till the believer be in heaven, and to account such a sinner just by virtue thereof; that is truth. But



that speaks the changed state of a sinner, upon the account of an imputation and justification already: so, indeed, the word of the gospel continues still to pronounce believers justified upon that account, and that imputation in its virtue never ceases. But it cannot be said that the word continues to justify, as justifying denotes the changing of a person's state, from a state of enmity to a state of friendship: even as an absolved rebel, or debtor, once pronounced free by virtue of such a person's intercession, or cautioner's payment, continues to be declared free; that is, his absolution continues in force. But properly, the act of freedom, or absolving, does not continue, but is instantaneous upon the production of such rights.

To shut up this, we may illustrate the way of justification, which is more clearly expressed in the gospel under these expressions, *Believe, and thou shalt be saved*, by comparing it with the more obscure and typical expressions used under the law: for, it is certain, the substance is the same; and what is our legal righteousness, was theirs; and what was their evangelic righteousness, is ours also. Now, the terms or expressions of the Old Testament run thus (Lev. 1:3-4, etc): *When a man sinneth, he shall bring his offering, etc. and shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him, to make an atonement for him*, etc. In which words, there is an express condescending upon the Lord's side, to propose something as a righteousness for a sinner, which was to be accepted for him; yet, I suppose, no Christian will say that it was the external sacrifice itself that was to be accepted for such, nor that it was the act of the faith of the offerer alone, that was so accepted. For then there needed no sacrifice. But it behooved to be the thing typified by that sacrifice, viz. the sacrifice of Christ, looked to, apprehended and pleaded by the faith of the offerer, that was so accepted. Yet, the external sacrifices in the Old, are as expressly said to be accepted for a sinner's justification, or as an atonement for him, as faith is said to be accounted for righteousness in the New: and, as it cannot be said, that by virtue of Christ's satisfaction, or the covenant with him, it was procured that such performances and sacrifices should be accepted of themselves, as the person's immediate evangelic righteousness, though their ceremonial law was their gospel; so it cannot be

said that there is any such bargain concerning faith in the New Testament: but that Christ apprehended by faith, is the righteousness both under the Old and New Testament: which is the thing we intend. ❀

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Concerning the Nature of Christ's death, or if it be properly a Satisfaction.

This text is edited from an excurses appended at Lecture III on Revelation chapter three in "A Complete Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation," by James Durham.

By James Durham

Beside what observations have been already hinted at and held forth from this chapter, there are two more; which being clear of themselves from the words, and contributing much to the clearing of two concerning truths, in these days not a little controverted; we may insist a little more in speaking to them as the place gives ground; the one is concerning the nature, the other is concerning the extent of the merit of Christ's death. The first observation is, *that Christ's death and sufferings are properly a price and satisfaction for sin, and were purposely offered unto the justice of God as such.* So that when the majesty of God, to say so, was wronged by the sin of man, and when (at least, by the necessity flowing from the established law and curse) there behoved to be a satisfaction to justice, before any sinner could be freed from the sentence, then our Lord Jesus did offer himself to suffer in the room of the elect for the satisfying of justice; which accordingly was afterward performed by him, and upon that account, accepted by God. The scope of this doctrine is to show, *first*, that not only Christ's death and sufferings were for the confirmation of the doctrine he preached; nor yet, in the *second* place, only to give thereby a pattern of obedience to us; for, these two may be, and are in the death and sufferings of many martyrs; and to attribute no more to the death of Christ, is blasphemous. Nor, in the *third* place, only to procure to himself this prerogative of forgiving sinners their sins freely; for Christ, being God, had power with the Father to forgive sins before his becoming man: and even this pretended end implies Christ's death to be a price for making of a purchase, seeing it supposes that he, by honoring God, and doing what was pleasant to him, did procure this privilege to forgive others freely; which certainly implies that

these sufferings of his had a meritorious and satisfying virtue before God. But these ends of the Socinians,¹ being such as destroy the Godhead and personality of our Lord Jesus, as the second person of the trinity; and being purposely molded for the supporting of that blasphemy, we need not stand much upon the disproving of them; but we say, beyond these, our Lord Jesus his death was purposely intended by him, and actually accepted by Jehovah, as a proper price and satisfaction.

To clear this a little — When we speak of satisfaction, these things shortly are intended:

1. That as a man had made himself liable to the curse for provoking of God, and (to speak after the manner of men, as most of all this must be understood) thereby had wronged the majesty of God, by daring to disobey him, and to slight his authority; so there is in Christ's taking on of that debt, and humbling of himself to suffer for the same, a proportionableness and an equivalency for the vindicating of the glory, of the holiness, justice, and sovereignty of God; and to make these shine more, than if the sinner had been actually put at² for satisfying in their own persons: for that the Father's *fellow, equal and only begotten Son* should humble himself, and become man, and in that nature suffer; and that the majesty of God should make his sword awake against him, and smite him, etc. does much more abundantly declare and set forth the justice of God that will prosecute his threatenings, and his sovereignty and authority, in that he is obeyed and submitted unto, by such an excellent person, as his only begotten Son, than if either men had not sinned,

¹ Sixteenth century sect founded by Laelius and Faustus Socinus, which denied the divinity of Christ.

² Put at — to push, to exert power against (*Jamieson*).



or he, who is but a wretched creature, should have been cast into hell. For by this, justice had never been satisfied, nor had the authority of God been manifested by such a glorious instance as the obedience of the man Christ Jesus. So that we are to conceive of satisfaction in this matter, as that word useth to be [*commonly is*] understood amongst men, that is, when an injured or wronged person is appeased and satisfied in reference to the party that has done him injury, by the intervening recompense and satisfaction of some other, purposely, by such an equivalent compensation, intending the same.

2. When we speak of satisfaction in this case, it respects God's purpose and intention in designing the death and sufferings of the Mediator for this very end in the covenant of redemption: so that when there was no imaginable satisfaction to be expected from creatures, whereby there might be a vindication of God's justice, that so way might be made to pardon elect sinners; for this very end, a body was designed and prepared for the Mediator, as it is, Isa. 53:6, *The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all*; and in his counsel and decree did appoint him who knew no sin, to become sin for others, and thereby as a cautioner [*surety*] to be liable to their debt.

3. This also is intended, that the Mediator, in his accepting of the offer, and in laying down of his life, did purposely intend thus to satisfy: for when sacrifices and burnt-offerings, etc. could not please God, nor satisfy him in this respect, then did the Son willingly undertake *with delight to God's will*, as it is, Psa. 40:6-7, etc. And it is on this ground that Christ is called Cautioner (Heb. 7:22), because he undertook the satisfying for our debt; and upon this ground was there access in justice to exact it of him, though he himself knew no sin. For which, see Isa. 53:7; 10 [and] 2 Cor. 5:21.

4. In the fourth place this is included, that by the Lord Jehovah, the offended party, this death and willing suffering of our blessed Lord Jesus, was actually accepted as satisfactory and well-pleasing to him, in the room and stead of these who had offended, so that thereby he, in the order agreed upon, does lay by quarrels at the offending party, as men do discharge the principal creditor the debt, when the cautioner has satisfied in his name. Hence the Lord pronounces often that in his beloved Son he is well pleased, and that he

has found a ransom (Job 33:24). And from this it is, that his death is called a propitiation, as being acceptable to God, when other sacrifices could not be.

That in these respects Christ's death is truly a satisfaction for sin, may from this text thus be made out:

1. If by Christ's death we be redeemed, if the effect flowing from his death be a redemption, then is his death (under which all his sufferings are comprehended) a proper price and satisfaction for sin. But the former is true, therefore, etc. There is a double strength in this argument to make out the connection, first, in the word redemption: which, (as we show in the exposition) beside other things, do imply:

(1) That sinners, by sin, are sold and mortgaged, and the law and curse have obtained a right over them.

(2) That, at least, in respect of that established law and curse (*that day thou eatest, thou shalt die*) there was no dissolving of that right, but by some intervening satisfaction: otherwise the Lord, who pronounced it, might be thought not to be just and true in his threatenings.

(3) This implies, that when men and creatures could give no price, our Lord Jesus did actually undertake, and accordingly did pay; therefore it is a freedom that was bought, and he is a redeemer, because he did buy it, and satisfy for it; and this expression, being borrowed from the manner of men, will infer no less, as is said.

The second part of the strength of the argument is in this: That this redemption is attributed to his death and blood — *thou hast redeemed us by thy blood* — and these put together, make it exceeding strong; for the very price of the redemption is thereby clearly held forth. So, if it be asked, Why is Christ called a Redeemer? *Answer*. Because he redeemed us. If again it be said: wherewith did he redeem us, or, with what price? It is answered: with his blood. And indeed there can be no other reason why so frequently our redemption is attributed to his death, but because his death comes in a peculiar respect thereunto; so that when we (as once Isaac was to his father) were lying obnoxious to the stroke of God's justice, he offered himself in our room (as there was a Ram provided in the place of Isaac) that thereby we might escape (as it is, 2 Cor. 5:21). He redeemed



us from the curse, being himself *made a curse for us*; which must be understood to be in our stead (Gal. 3:13-14).

2. (Which is almost one with the last branch of the former) It is clear by this, that all the good that comes to the redeemed is still reckoned as the effect and purchase of Christ's suffering; which must respect the merit and efficacy of his blood, as by the same way of satisfaction procuring the same. And in this respect it may be said singularly of the Mediator, the second person of the Godhead, that he has procured this redemption, otherwise than can be said of the first and third person of the blessed Trinity. Therefore also we are said to be *loved by him, and washed by his own blood* (Rev. 1:5). But of this argument was spoken in the former.

3. This is brought as the song of all the redeemed, and as that which will agree to all of them, when the congregation of the first-born shall be brought together: now what other influence can the blood of Christ have upon these who were redeemed by him, from the foundation of the world, and before his death, when the example thereof could have no effect, or upon young ones, upon whom his sufferings can have no moral influence by opening or confirming to them doctrinally the way to heaven? And yet both these may well be capable of the efficacy thereof, as it is considered as a satisfaction. Now, considering that all the redeemed are equally, and in the same respects, obliged to Christ's death for their life, and for that cause do jointly concur in the same song of praise; we must either say, that none such as have been formerly instanced, are saved, or we must say, that they are all saved without any respect to his sufferings, both which, are false and absurd. Or lastly, we must acquiesce in this, that by Christ's sufferings, as by a satisfaction, this was procured to them, and therefore consequently, that his death is to be considered as such, seeing no otherwise it can have influence on their redemption. And there being but one redemption, and one way by which it is procured, viz. Christ's death; and one song, comprehending the acknowledgment of all the redeemed; and seeing, to some, it must be satisfaction; therefore it must be esteemed to be so, in reference to all others also, who are, or shall be partakers thereof.

4. This fruit of his death, viz. redemption, is peculiar to some of all kindreds and nations and is not common to all. It must therefore be considered as flowing from his death, as a satisfaction meritoriously procuring the same. Otherwise the effects which may follow, upon his confirming his doctrine by his death, giving an example to others, etc. are common indifferently to all that are hearers of the gospel; for in these respects he is so, and does so to all. This therefore being peculiar to some (as the next doctrine will further clear), must be understood as qualified by the covenant of redemption to be for the satisfying in the room of such and such, and not of others; which consideration does plainly bring it to the notion of a satisfaction.

5. There is a special emphasis and significancy in this, that *thou* hast redeemed us by *thy* blood, etc. Which does respect the excellency of the person who did lay down his blood for making of this purchase. It is *thou*, who art the first and last, who was dead and is alive, and liveth forever, who art the Son of God; yea, who art God (Acts 20:28; as was more fully cleared [in] Rev. 1:4-5); for *thou* and *thy* relate to the person described by such titles, in the former part of this prophesy. This gives ground for this argument: if the purchase made by the blood of Jesus Christ be such as could be made by none but by the blood of him who was, and is God, then his death and sufferings, for that end, must be a satisfaction, and by their merit and efficacy procure the redemption purchased. But the former is true. Therefore, etc.

The reasons of the consequence are because, (1) All the other ends of suffering may be in the sufferings of a mere man. (2) There were not need of such an excellent price, if the merit and worth thereof did not concur, by way of satisfaction, for obtaining of this redemption. (3) This respect to the excellency of the person, shows where from mainly their redemption flows, viz. that the person dying was of such worth, and that therefore his death and sufferings are accounted of great price before God. (4) And lastly, there is here a clear opposition: *thou* hast redeemed us by *thy* blood. That is: Thou, who art God, hast condescended to lay down thy life, and shed thy blood for us who were of little worth. Which imports that his sufferings were estimated in the stead of what should have been otherwise exacted from them.



These arguments will be the more clear, if we consider that opposition which is made by the apostle (Rom. 5), between our blessed Lord Jesus, the second Adam, and the first Adam, of whom men have their sinful being. For in that comparison, and opposition, Christ is not only made the author of life to these that are by faith his seed, as the first Adam was the author of death to these that descended from him; but also, and especially in this, that as by disobedience and transgression of Adam, death was brought upon his posterity, as being procured by the guilt and demerit, to speak so, of that offence; so by the obedience, righteousness, and sufferings of the other, life and freedom from the dominion of sin is purchased, and that by way of merit and satisfaction equivalent to the former offence. For as by Adam's fall the holiness and justice of God were wronged, so by the obedience of the second Adam, they were wonderfully made to shine. And this being the apostle's scope, to compare these two Adam's together, both in respect of the opposite effects that flow from them to their seed, and in respect of the opposite means by which these are procured, this which is asserted must necessarily follow.

It is also observable, and does exceedingly confirm the truth laid down, and discover the horridness of the opposite blasphemy, that the denying of Christ's death to be a satisfaction and the denying of his blessed Godhead, are knit together, that the asserting of the one does infer the other. Therefore these wretched Socinians, who deny the eternal Godhead, and the personality of the second person of the Godhead, must also deny the merit and excellency of his obedience in his death, without which it could not be a satisfaction. But, on the contrary, the redeemed, who have the right thoughts of Christ's Godhead, have also this impression of his death, that it is a satisfaction laid down in their name; upon both which grounds, they praise in this song, viz. that so excellent a person should redeem them by so excellent a price as the blood of God. And this does demonstrate their engagement to him, that when (upon supposition of the threatened curse, at least) there was no other that could undertake their debt, or satisfy for them, but he who was God, that even then he who was the Son of God did undertake the same. We are persuaded that all whoever shall share in this song, shall acknowledge both these truths,

and heartily bless the Son of God for making satisfaction by his blood. And considering that the abettors of this blasphemy do by this deny the Godhead of our blessed Lord's person, and altogether make void the efficacy of his sacrifice and priestly office, so that neither his person nor his offices are acknowledged by them, which yet are the two great and solid foundations of Christianity; therefore they are not worthy to be disputed with, nor accounted Christians. But rather [are] to be joined with, and reckoned among heathens, or the followers of Mahomet, and the receivers of his Alcoran [*Koran*]. For which cause, Christians would guard against this most horrid error, as being most blasphemous against the Mediator, and most destructive to their own salvation; for by these grounds they can neither have a Redeemer nor a redemption. It is reported of Socinus³ (the great patron of this blasphemy, by a learned man, viz. Cameron,⁴ who writes that he had it from one of his disciples), that he privately denied the world to be made of nothing, lest thereby he should be necessitated to acknowledge the infiniteness of God's power; which afterward was more publicly avowed and contended for by some of his followers. What horrible things are these, that men's corruptions will not conceive and foster? And what height or depth will not the devil drive men to, where he gets liberty? These things have ever been abhorred as most detestable, even as to the very mentioning of them; yet this horrid blasphemy wants not its patrons in this spring-time of error; and therefore men ought to walk the more circumspectly in reference to the same. ❀

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³ Faustus Socinus (Sozzini) (1539-1604).

⁴ John Cameron (c.1579-1625). Scottish synergistic theologian.



Letters from Myanmar.

The following are some letters emailed from Pastor Bacon while he and Mrs. Bacon were on their January mission trip to Myanmar.

By Richard Bacon

[The Mission team for the January 2003 trip consisted of Elder Carl Betsch and Dr. and Mrs. Bacon. They arrived in Myanmar on January 1st, but on different flights. Beginning on January 2nd, Elder Betsch taught a series of classes on the subjects of Reformed Family and Church Life. The series consisted in Reformed family devotions, church-elder visitation, and the work of the deacon's court. For most of the time that Elder Betsch was teaching, Dr. Bacon went to Kalay to take care of some items in the northern part of the country.]



returned from my “whirlwind” trip to Kalemyo yesterday. The trip took up Saturday, Sunday, and Monday [January 4-6]. I returned to Yangon on Tuesday AM. I took lots of pictures, but internet connections being what they are in Myanmar, I'm not able to attach them. The digital camera is great for finding out immediately if a picture has turned out or whether I need to take it over again. So I brought back pictures from Kalemyo and am sending some of them back to the US with Elder Betsch when he returns, Lord willing, this afternoon. Next trip I will remember to bring some CDRs for sending back pix.

Saturday morning began Friday afternoon, Dallas time. We had to report in at the airport at 4:30 AM, so I was up at 3:00 to finish the last minute packing details. We arrived in Kalemyo at 8:45 AM, after brief stops in Bagan and Mandalay. I was greeted at the airport by about 30 or 35 people. Not only was Moses Dawnga (headmaster of the orphanage) there, so were many representatives of the Kale presbytery of the MRPC and a few representatives also of the URC. The URC (United Reformed Church) is the “home” denomination of my friend and translator Siang Hup. His assistance proved to be invaluable to me during this trip.

As I checked into the hotel, Pasiang (Siang Hup's nickname) took care of clearing my itinerary with immigration (the MM counterpart to the INS) and the military authorities. We registered Pasiang with MI as my “official tour guide.” That means that he was responsible for my movements while I was in Kalemyo and the surrounding area. While I

was checking into the hotel, it seemed that everyone wanted me to make commitments to their particular schedule. I explained several times that I would not make any commitments without my translator present, but without my translator my protestations fell to the ground. Finally Hope finished with the work he was doing at the airport and came and helped me set out my schedule. Basically it called for me to spend Saturday with Dawnga, Sunday with the URC (more on that), and Monday with the MRPC folks. It didn't work out exactly like that, but that gives a good framework.

After checking into the hotel, we went with Dawnga to the compound he is hoping to purchase with the funds collected by Mission to Myanmar and First Presbyterian Church. It is really a gorgeous compound compared to where the orphans are living at present. There are two modest buildings on the property right at the front of the compound. Both buildings need some cosmetic work, but seem structurally sound, as far as I could tell (of course that is not much). The main building is a brick structure with a living area, food preparation area, kitchen area, and some miscellaneous rooms that will probably be used for Dawnga and his family. The wood structure is perfect for classes downstairs and hostelry upstairs. Behind the two buildings, the compound extends with trees and shrubberies equivalent to a small park. At the very back of the property is a fish pond. I expressed some concern about mosquitoes (Kale is a terribly malaria ridden area). The plan, however, is to stock the pond with carp hatchlings, and allow the fish to eat the mosquito larvae. The children will then eat the fish.

Additionally, there is a “stockade” for livestock. The orphanage in its present location raises a pig and about 100 “head” of chickens. There will be room at the new compound to raise several pigs and several hundred chickens. Also, there is a lot of room for playground and the children will have lots of exercise. Also, the land is quite fertile and the children will be able to raise vegetables and fruit on the compound as well.

Here is a bonus: between the time we began raising funds for the compound and the time we



finished, half of the compound next door became available. The nice thing is that the portion that became available contains a carpentry shop. So, not only will they be able to do their own building projects (there is room for many buildings), the boys will be learning a valuable trade in the shop. The original amount we thought we would need was \$11,000. As some of you know, the Lord blessed us with over \$14,000. With the half compound next door, the total actually came to \$14,500. So, even before we saw the addition, the Lord had already provided for it.¹

I must begin preparing now for my first meetings, but will write more later of my meetings on Saturday with Dawnga, how I baptized 20 orphans, spoke to the faculty of the orphanage about Christian education with the general secretary of ministry of education as my translator, and the following days: A Sabbath in Kalemyo, and Monday in the villages of Kale township.

Thursday, January 9, 2003

On Saturday afternoon we visited the orphanage itself and then returned to the hotel to freshen up for the Saturday evening feast. Saturday, January 4th was Independence Day in Myanmar, so there were many festivities in honor of Myanmar being liberated first from the Japanese in WW2, and then from the British Empire in 1948. Thanks to the generosity of American friends, the New Life Orphanage of Tahan was no exception.

We killed a pig and a few chickens, and purchased vegetables from the Bazaar. The older girls made plenty of rice, and Dawnga's wife or daughter fixed an Indian dish (Dawnga is a Chin, but originally he is from India) called "chutney" ... I'm not sure of the spelling. Siang Hup spent the evening with his family, who now live in that part of Myanmar, so Dawnga obtained another translator for the worship service. We prayed for Myanmar and I preached on the subject of Christian education and the importance of teaching a child how to subdue every area of life to the glory of God. The sermon was primarily for the faculty of the orphanage, but as it turned out, Dawnga had secured the services of a VIP as my translator. I never quite figured out what his title was (something like general secretary), but he was some bigwig in the ministry of education in the local provinces. He was quite interested in what I had to say. He is a Christian (at least nominally), and made a point of telling me that he thinks we need to begin catechizing children with the Westminster Shorter Catechism books as early as possible. When I mentioned him to some people

here in Yangon the following week, they were quite impressed that I had met him and regarded him as a very important person. So, it may be that the Lord has some great use in mind for that meeting.

Then, as part of the worship service, I baptized 20 orphans (names on request). Each of them received a "western name" at baptism. It is really a Christian name, and is the name by which they have been known since coming to the orphanage. That was a very exciting and fulfilling part of the trip for me. Dawnga had someone taking pictures of each of the orphans as he was baptized by "Uncle Bacon," so perhaps when he comes to Yangon later in the week, he will bring some photos for me to bring back to the US with me. He has not promised to do so, but it is the kind of thoughtfulness that Dawnga generally shows. The remainder of Saturday evening, I spent discussing with Lai Thuama (the ministry of education translator) how the Chin people could implement some of the principles he heard about in my sermon. Dawnga took my picture with him and we exchanged email addresses and promised to stay in touch with one another. As it turns out, I've also been scheduled to speak for three hours next Monday (13 January) to the leadership of the Christian Youth Fellowship of Myanmar on the subject of Christian Education. I found out about this the other evening when a man came by the hotel to see Elder Betsch and mentioned that he would be at the fellowship meeting to hear me speak. I confirmed the meeting yesterday with Mang Khan Suan, who came by the blind school to have lunch with me, but then didn't stay for lunch. So we hope to have supper together this evening.

On Sabbath morning I preached at the URC church in "New Town" Tahan. I preached on "The Church in the Wilderness" from 1 Corinthians 10:1-15. I preached from the same notes that night in the MRPC church in Tahan, but people who heard both sermons didn't realize it. I think sometimes my sermons "gain something" in the translation. I explained how the "Exodus generation" had a glorious beginning, a miraculous provision, and then a trying failure. Then I made some applications to the Myanmar churches as a "weighty warning." The sermon(s) seemed well received in both churches. The URC gave me a chaung nak as a present and the MRPC church gave me a shawl for Debby.

During the afternoon, I visited a second orphanage; one that has been planted by a Japanese NGO. It has a very nice campus. The Japanese army treated the Burmese and Chin people very badly during World War 2, but they have been quite generous toward the Myanmar peoples in recent years. The next day I crossed a new bridge also built by a Japanese NGO and saw a school building constructed at Japanese expense. John Liam Sian, who also manages a

¹ [Ed. In the Lord's providence this deal fell through, but a piece of farm land nearby became available and was purchased instead.]



ministry called “Bibles in China” or “Bibles for China”, manages the “Love in Action” orphanage. Richard Wurmbbrand sponsored him in the Chinese Bible project. John wanted to take me and Pasiang to lunch at a restaurant, but we explained that our view of the Sabbath causes us to give our manservant and maidservant the day off as a day of rest for themselves as well as for us. He had never heard that before, so we discussed the Sabbath for a while. He was interested in seeing young Chin given job opportunities so they would not be idle. I explained that before God would give them jobs, He may be waiting for them to learn how to work and rest in accordance with his cycle of six days of work and a day of rest. Later that afternoon a table full of food turned up in the dining room of the campus and I asked no questions for conscience sake, but I wondered if his purpose was to keep me occupied. As it turned out, I discovered later that is precisely what he was doing.

In my next email I will write about my journey into the villages of Cicai and Sadaw to revisit the people and churches I saw in August 2001.

Friday, January 10, 2003,

Many of our friends from the MRPC came to the airport to meet me when I arrived at Kalembo on Saturday last. Among them were Rev. Abraham Maung Len Thang of the Tahan MRPC, Lal Ruai of the Sadaw MRPC, and Hrang the missionary at Cicai village. U Ezra Tin Aung of the Kalembo MRPC was also there with his wife, who are Micah and Esther’s parents-in-law and parents respectively. They were somewhat upset about the fact that I would not be spending Lord’s Day afternoon with them, but I did not know that at the time.

On Monday morning, after I preached at the Tahan MRPC on Sunday evening from the same text (1 Cor. 10:1-15) I used in the morning at the URC, Len Thang’s youngest son, together with Pasiang, picked me up at the Taung Zalat hotel. We drove in a jeep south of Tahan, through Sadaw, to Cicai village. Cicai village is the church building I opened for the MRPC back in August 2001. Some of you have seen the video in which most of the people who could get into the building were sitting on the floor. Since that time the people of the MRPC and many of the villagers who are not members of the church have gone out into the rain forest and gathered wood to build benches (pews). They have done a very good job. The pews are not simply rough-hewn places to sit, but have very nice backs and “arms” at both ends of each one. They have still not stained or varnished (or painted) the pews, but they have some very serviceable pews for now. Also, with their newfound experience as pew-builders, some

of the men of the village may now have a marketable skill they did not have before.

There was a very nice “sign” welcoming me to their village, which called me their grandfather (a term I am pretty sure they intended as one of respect). I spoke to the church from Hebrews 12:1-3, encouraging them to continue in the course that has been laid out for them, whether that course be one of persevering in difficulty and affliction, or whether it be one of continued success and prosperity. The church presented Mrs Bacon (who was not present) and me with some Chin style shawls, and the missionary’s wife had “knitted” mufflers for my translator and me. I thanked them for the gifts and then we went outside to pose for pictures. We took a lot of pictures sitting on one of the pews the people had made, and then “lunch” was ready.

They made me a feast consisting of pork innards, many kinds of vegetables, rice, and fruit. It was all very good. But by the time we finished eating, it was time for us to go on to Sadaw village. So we spoke our several good byes and I got back in the Jeep. It took much less time to visit the villages this time because I was able to get there by Jeep rather than having to walk the last few Km. The footbridge that was previously the only link between these villages and Tahan has been replaced by a road bridge built by a Japanese NGO. Although the going was very rough in places, we were able to make the entire trip by Jeep. For those who may be thinking “4x4 SUV” when I write Jeep, this was a WW2 vintage Willys Jeep. It was quite serviceable, however, and got us to the villages and back in fine fashion.

We arrived in Sadaw village shortly after leaving Cicai – it is much closer by automobile than by foot. When I was in the villages in 2001, I spent a rest stop in Sadaw at the home of Lal Ruai’s father. Lal Ruai is the missionary in Sadaw village, and the MRPC preaching station meets in his father’s house. Some of you have seen Lal Ruai in the video I brought back. He is the gentleman who was keeping me from falling off the footbridge on the way back from the villages. The church there has managed to build about three-fourths of their church building. It is quite large – larger than they need at present. They are simply building each part as they get the funds. They have the walls and roof on already. They need to finish out the ends under the roof, install windows, and finish the floor. They have received much help from the villagers who are not members of the MRPC because Lal Ruai has become something of a local legend.

Lal Ruai was in the military and learned to drink and fight. After he got out of the military, he came back to Sadaw village but did not really get past the drinking and fighting. But at some point, the Lord touched his heart through the preaching of



the Word and Lal Ruai was converted. His life immediately changed and he became one of the main leaders in the village to whom people could look for help and guidance. So when it became known that Lal Ruai wanted to build a church building for the MRPC, all the villagers began “pitching in” to help where and how they could. I should add that although Lal Ruai is building a church house for the Lord in Sadaw village, he has no house of his own. He does not have a family of his own, so he stays some of the time in his father’s house and some of the time in his brother’s. He has a very simple life as far as this world’s goods are concerned. The Lord has prospered him, however, with an entire village of “sons and daughters.”

After looking at their church building in progress and spending some time in Lal Ruai’s brother’s house visiting with the church’s elders, I got back in the Jeep and was taken to Kalemyo and Tahan. After being afforded the time to freshen up at the hotel, we went to the Tahan MRPC church building where I spent about three hours in informal conversation with some of the members of the Kale Presbytery. As I understand, some of the things we discussed were subsequently discussed among themselves at a called meeting of the Presbytery and with pretty much the same outcome. It is difficult to say at this point what was done at the subsequent meeting. It has been reported to me through a very poor telephone connection in which both ends were obviously not understanding one another clearly.

Nevertheless, I did explain to the men some of the vision that I have personally for the MRPC and for Myanmar generally. Pasiang translated my concerns in such a way that I think they understood pretty clearly what I thought needed to be done. The MRPC has never really adopted a genuinely reformed church order. This has stunted its growth considerably and has led to numerous misunderstandings between them and us. I made some concrete suggestions as to how they might go about adopting a church order and then truly following it. All the men were of a good mind to adopt a reformed church order. They fully understood that what they have been doing for the past two years is not working and is, in many ways, harmful to the ecclesiastical structure of the MRPC. They face some unique difficulties, it is true, but if reformed church order is based upon Scripture – as we believe it is – then it should be as beneficial in Myanmar as it is in Texas.

The time was quite productive, if tiring, and so we finished the meeting and went to Abraham Len Thang’s house for a feast. This was a feast that the ARPC held in honor of the MRPC, the Kale Presbytery, and the Myanmar Independence Day of January 4th. We had a meal of several vegetables, pork, chicken, fish, and fruit. It is considered a great thing in Myanmar, and

especially among the Chin, to eat together in this way. Such meals are rare in their culture and signify a sort of friendship that goes beyond mere acquaintanceship. After the evening meal, we went to the church building where I preached again on Hebrews 12:1-3. Again I encouraged them to continue in the course that God had laid out for them. I explained that the martyrs (witnesses) of Hebrews 11 and of many generations of the church that have gone before them are calling to them from history to run their race with patience and steadfastness, just as those Hebrew Christians to whom Paul wrote. They seemed to be encouraged by my presence and by the message.

We left well after dark and returned to the hotel. The next morning many of those from the Tahan area came to the airport to see me away. The men from the villages returned to their villages on Monday night and could not walk or bicycle all the way back to Kalemyo in time for the airplane’s liftoff. Still, a large number of men were present and Rev. Len Thang saw us all the way into the airport lobby (until he was asked to leave by security). Pasiang forgot that he would need to file an itinerary not only with MI, but also with immigration (or vice versa). So he spent part of the time copying our itinerary. Once our bags and persons were searched we went into the “passenger-only” waiting area and spent some time with a man who may well prove to be quite useful to our plans for the future. But that possibility is so far in the future, it may be best not to discuss just yet (only whet your appetite to know more upon my return).

In my next letter I will try to tell you something about the classes we held at the blind school this week. We have been discussing “hermeneutics,” and will continue to do so next week as well. I thought the blind school was operated by a Christian charity in Insein Township. It turns out that it is a government owned school. The administrator of the school is an apparently good friend with S-1. As I promised, “more later.”

Monday, January 13, 2003

Carl Betsch left last Wednesday, and it has been a busy five days since that time. Carl was with us when I began teaching fifteen hours of hermeneutics. I finished on Friday evening, after covering the basic approach: we must determine 1) what a passage says; 2) what the passage means in light of its overall context, including the whole of redemptive history; and 3) we must explain what the people of God should do – or how they should live – as a result of it. This is the “bridge” between good hermeneutics on the one hand and effectual homiletics on the other. We also discussed such principles as discourse analysis and examined some of the “tools” that are



available to us as exegetes. We looked especially at introduction, analogy of Scripture, analogy of faith, and context clues. Then we spent the last day (five hours) doing an exercise in hermeneutics using Romans chapters nine to eleven as our passage. We got some interesting results and the general consensus seemed to be that Doctor Bacon “makes us think about things.”

I had meetings each night with various local pastors, teachers, and translators. Most of them have projects that they would like to see funded by someone in the US. Most of them I have to say, “no, but thank you for showing me your vision.”

Saturday morning, Moses Dawnga came by the hotel at 8:00 and brought us some apples and let us know that the funds for the new compound had arrived. He was not especially happy with the exchange rate, explaining that last time the exchange rate was higher. I told him that we have no control over that aspect of things, but that it is determined by the market for Kyats and dollars. I do think that the MM government is pretty close to things and puts dollars into the market at a rate that keeps parity pretty close to 1,000:1. But that may be nothing more than a perception on my part.

After Dawnga left, Moses Ngun Hlei Thang and Siang Hope came by. We had a long (about three hour) discussion regarding EFL learning centers and what it would take to support students in Moses’ Yangon school, especially if they came from a different denomination such as MRPC. Moses and the ERCS have been talking for several years about beginning a school in Yangon and then last year they decided to place the compound in Titus San Ceu Luai’s name. I hope to follow up on that later.

Saturday afternoon I went to the Blazon to pick up supplies for both Sabbath, and some extras that we always planned to pick up after we arrived and were only just now “getting around to it.” Benjamin (Ngun Nei Thio) came by the hotel Saturday afternoon and we were able to chat for some time. He is doing well, but has left the reformed faith and returned to his previously held dispensationalism. I think this means he never really adopted the reformed faith at all. I’m not sure if any of our other men have met Benjamin, but I think Elder David Seekamp met him on our first trip in November and December of 2000.

Yesterday, I preached in the morning at the URC church in North Dagon. That is the church that Moses Ngun Hlei Thang pastors. We arrived just as Siang Hope was finishing up the Sunday School (Biblical Institutes) class. I preached from Hebrews 12:1-4 on running the race with patience. I think it was well received. They had a fairly reformed worship service in which all the elements except the sacraments were present. We would have disagreed with the songs and

accompaniment, but they were in line with most American Reformed or Presbyterian church services. In the afternoon, I went to preach for Naing Thang. He is pastor of a small church that consists primarily of Karen, though he is himself a Kaang Chin. Their service consisted primarily of singing. When I arose to preach, I preached a much shorter version of the sermon I had preached in the AM. Many MM are used to preaching lasting not over one half hour. Thus, when I preach for that long and the translator uses a similar amount of time, they find an hour-long sermon more than they are actually used to. So I shortened the afternoon sermon by half. It seemed very well received, but I’m not really sure what I said – I am not all that confident that my translator understood most of it. But he must have preached a good sermon, whatever it was about, because the people said afterward how much they were encouraged by it.

Yesterday evening, Mrs Bacon and I stayed in the hotel and had a light snack of peanut butter & jelly, coffee, and some potato chips. We turned in fairly early, but continued to receive phone calls after we had gone to the room. The most important one was from Thang Bwee, who I asked Titus to contact for me. It seems that Thang Bwee attempted to send me an email letter back in September which I never received. But he plans to come to my hotel sometime this afternoon and at that time I will give him some books I brought for him and some tracts that came to him from the Mt Zion Bible church in Pensacola, FL. I look forward to seeing him again. He said he will not bring his wife because she has not been doing very well in her health.

Today I will spend the morning teaching the leadership council of the Christian Youth Fellowship of Myanmar on “Youth and Christian Education.” I will likely touch briefly on their overwhelming uses of “pictures,” while I’m here. I don’t know if that is the first thing I will say. More likely I will discuss the importance of Psa. 127-128, and Deuteronomy 6:1-15. This is not altogether different from what Elder Betsch was teaching when he was still here. When all is said and done, I hope to cover the importance of a full-orbed Christian education that goes to all of life and not simply to “Sunday School.” My ride has only just now arrived, so I will close this and write more later.

Monday, January 20, 2003

It has been a week since I last wrote an update for you. In that time, I’ve taught Greek class each day and met with one person or another each evening. Also, I had a slight case of tiredness last week, but was able to spend a little more time between the sheets and that cleared up. The time has been quite precious and I’ve spent most of it



either renewing or solidifying old friendships more so than making new ones.

Last Monday I spoke at a meeting of the Christian Youth Fellowship of Myanmar in the morning. Mang Khan Suan arranged that particular engagement. He is a Tiddim and a Baptist. The youth conference was sponsored by the CYFM and brought people from various backgrounds. There were about 100 in attendance by my estimation, but I was later told 115. They appeared to be about high school age. I spoke on the subject of youth and Christian Education. It seemed to be well received, though I'm not sure how many actually understood all the ramifications.

Tuesday through Friday were spent in Greek classes. We've been working with some pretty young students this time, though not so young as my students in Rowlett. Rev. Sen Hmung attends class each day, as do a few other older men (and Daw Kip Vel, who is Rev. Moses Ngun Hlei Thang's wife). Most of the students, however, are first or second year Bible college age (late teens to early twenties). Most of them are doing pretty well, but others need to be prodded along. All of them do what they are told, but education in Myanmar is such that they have a bit of trouble showing much initiative.

On Tuesday morning I met briefly with Lal Ruai before class began. I'm supposed to meet with him again this evening around 4:00. He is the pastor of the MRPC church in Sadaw village, near Kalemio. I have several pictures of him to show when I return. Tuesday evening Hrang Zawn, the missionary from Cicai village came by to see me and we spoke through an interpreter for about half an hour. On Sunday I went by Moses Ngun Hlei Thang's house to see him and where Siang Hope has been living. We are trying to find a different place for Siang Hope. He has been living in a small room with Moses' sons because he has been anticipating coming to the US. Now that it appears this will not be happening anytime soon, everyone is eager for Siang Hope to find his own place.

Wednesday was the hardest of the week. By that time I had been working for two weeks without a day off (I preached twice both Lord's Days), and my bones were beginning to feel some of the pressure. I had some meetings scheduled for that evening, but ended up canceling them and going to bed early. I also "doubled up" on some of my vitamins and took some additional electrolytes via "salt" tablets. That seemed to help – probably the rest did more good than anything else. Also, I slowed the rest of the week down a little, meeting with people only after class rather than both before and after class.

On Thursday and Friday class slowed down a little, as we began doing more "board work." Some

of the students are clearly catching on and are having little trouble with the exercises. Others are still struggling. The ones who are struggling most, however, are simply not finishing their memory work. So, on Thursday I told them all to get new notebooks, and told them I would reimburse them for their notebooks up to 150 Ks. each. I then showed them how to use their notebooks to work on vocabulary and inflected endings. This seemed to have a good effect overall – at least they all went out and bought some notebooks. Class work improved on Friday.

Saturday morning I taught for two hours at the Reformed Bible Institute for Rev. Thang Bwee. He was very interested in my hermeneutics notes, so I taught for a few hours on the subject of covenant theology vs. dispensationalism. This is an especially timely topic in Myanmar because many or most of the dispensationalists here claim that reformed theology is a "new cult." Seems they know about as much church history as the dispensationalists in the US! Anyway, we spoke about the "three legs" of dispensationalism and examined each one – and of course found each of them wanting for biblical support. I had tea and bread with Rev. Thang Bwee after class and then gave him some "rice money" for his students. Both he and the students seemed genuinely thankful. They are sponsored by Rev. Changwon Shu of Korea.

Saturday afternoon I went shopping at City Mart after making sure I had a few notes prepared in case I was asked to preach on Lord's Day. I picked up a few items for us to have for breakfast, but we still had some peanut butter and crackers from previous weeks for lunch. As soon as I returned from my trip to City Mart, Michael Zahau was waiting for me so I could have supper with him, Robert Thawm Luai, Moses Ngun Hlei Thang, and Ai Za Len. They wanted to explain their idea for a Reformed literature and relief society. Actually the idea is not so bad, as it would be a first step toward getting some of the reformed denominations working together in a meaningful way. They also included Siang Hope as a member of the executive board, along with each of their respective denominations. They also had Elder Betsch and me listed as potential advisors. This is the result, actually, of a meeting that Carl Betsch and I had with some of these same men before Carl left the country. The idea is to have the reformed folks working together as much as they can with a unified voice. It doesn't seem like much, but it is a first step. I picked up the tab for supper. Five of us ate soup, rice, beef & mushrooms, crab claws, and kih lite for \$14. Elder Betsch may remember the Million Coins restaurant. That is where we went.

On Lord's Day I preached at the URC for Rev. Moses from Acts 16:9. Rev. Moses did the translating for me, but I'm not sure exactly why.



Siang Hope has been doing the translating up to now and has been doing a good job. He actually speaks English better than Rev. Moses. I think Rev. Moses has trouble understanding American (or at least the Tx version) English. The British English spoken here by the few who do speak English is quite a bit different from the American English we all know and love. Hope, however, learned most of his English in India from an American teacher named Judy Chako (or something like that). He does much better with American English.

I brought out two doctrines from the text. The first is that God sends his gospel to one country and not another according to his sovereign mercy (this in conjunction with vv. 6 and 7 of Acts 16). Corollary to this is the fact that God is as free to withdraw the gospel as he is to withhold it. The second doctrine is that no people are more in need of help than those who are without the gospel. One can be without freedom, as Joseph was; without peace, as David was; bereft of children, as Job was; and still be blessed of God. But without the gospel there is no other blessing from God – because without the gospel there is neither Christ in this life nor heaven in the next. The uses were twofold as well – we must face up to every difficulty for the sake of the gospel. If we love darkness, God will remove our candlestick. If Jacob had not wrestled with God until he received the blessing, then there would have been no Israel. The supplanter could not have become the prince with God. The second use was the necessity of taking the gospel to all the people groups of Myanmar.

I spent Lord's Day afternoon with Siang Hope, explaining some of the vision that Myanmar must have if it is ever to rid itself of poverty. One of the difficulties that has arisen due to the way in which poverty has been approached in this country for 200 years is that they see begging as the only alternative to starving. Even the most reformed people in Myanmar have little or no concept of Christian calling, of service to their fellow man, or hope that God's work done in God's way could bring any level of relief to their poverty. Hope began to see a little bit, but it is not a lesson quickly learned – even by evangelical Americans who are only too glad to provide a handout. The handout gives a quick fix and makes everybody "feel" better. The Burman has a fuller tummy, and the American has an afterglow that makes him think he's actually helped the situation. And of course, tomorrow is another day (to quote Scarlett O'hara).

I spent the Lord's Day dressed in a legado and longgyi (Burmese style shirt and sarong). Last night Dr Tat went to a friend's wedding dressed in

an American suit. So we got some shots of us together – he in his business suit and me in my longgyi. They don't refer to trousers as such, they use the Indian word for trousers – longpans! It was a nice joke that we had a picture of a "Burma man in a suit and an American in a longgyi." About 6:00 PM Tawna came by to take me to his house to show me his "ministry." Basically he treks from jungle village to village preaching the gospel. His gospel is a bit to the Arminian side of center, but he does preach Jesus Christ after a manner. But the thing that was strangest was that he didn't hit me up for any funds to sponsor his ministry. In fact, when I asked him who his sponsor was, he explained that he doesn't need an American sponsor. It turns out that he teaches tithing and then teaches local pastors how to live on or below the necessary level that the local people can support them. He mainly wanted me just to see what they are doing and for me to pray for a blessing on his house. It seems that the custom of Buddhist monks blessing a house for rice does give rise to the idea that a house can be blessed by a paya (holy man) coming to your house and praying for it. Tawna's wife served me a Coca Cola, and when she brought it to me, their youngest son began crying. I thought she was giving me his softdrink and it made me feel very bad. Tawna explained that his son simply wanted to pray for our refreshments, and so he invited the boy in to pray. He stood for a minute or two with his head bowed and eyes closed and then Tawna said, "amen," and his son went away quite happy. Seems there are two words that are the same in every language in the world – "amen," and "hallelujah." ...

Cordially,

Richard Bacon 

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Hebrews: Who is the Author?

By W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.



he book of *Hebrews* is clearly one of the most important books in the entire Bible. John Owen, for example, considered it second in importance only to *Romans*.¹ Moses Stuart thought it to be the equal of *Romans*.² John Calvin wrote that “there is ... no book in the Holy Scriptures which speaks so clearly of the priesthood of Christ, so highly exalts the virtue and dignity of that only true sacrifice which He offered by His death, so abundantly treats of the use of ceremonies as well as of their abrogation, and, in a word, so fully explains that Christ is the end of the law.”³

The *Book of Hebrews* contains some thirty citations from the Old Testament, while at the same time pointing out that with the coming of Christ and the New Testament era, we have a “better covenant” which is “established on better promises” (*Hebrews* 8:6). The overarching theme of the book is the supremacy of Christ over all that came before Him. He is superior to all of the former means of revelation (1:1-3), to the angels (1:4-2:18), to Moses and Joshua (3:1-4:13), to the Aaronic priesthood (4:14-10:18), and to the entirety of the Old Covenant (10:19-12:29). *Hebrews* focuses on Christ as prophet, priest, and king; but the major emphasis is on His high priesthood. He is “the author and perfecter of the faith” (12:2), who all of the Old Testament types prefigured. There is a real sense, then, in which we may say that this book is a compendium of all Biblical teachings, both Old and New Testaments, regarding redemptive history.

At the same time, *Hebrews* is a book with a degree of mystery about it. There are questions regarding the author, the addresses, the date it was written, and the occasion of the writing. Even the title “to [the] Hebrews” (*pros ebraious*) is

questionable. Though this title can be traced back to the second century, it was likely not a part of the original letter.⁴

Certainly one of the most debated questions about this book, and the principle one this article intends to study, is the authorship. Who wrote the anonymous *Book of Hebrews*? When this question is asked, Origen’s (c. 185-254) well known statement is frequently given as an answer: “in truth God [alone] knows.”⁵ Numerous theories regarding the authorship have been advanced:⁶ the apostle Paul; Silas, the companion of Paul (*Acts* 15:40); Aquila and Priscilla,⁷ fellow tent makers with Paul and his trusted friends (*Acts* 18:2); Luke, the faithful friend and traveling companion of Paul (*Colossians* 4:14; *2 Timothy* 4:11); Barnabas, Paul’s friend and fellow minister (*Acts* 13:2); Apollos, a gifted teacher and friend of Paul (*Acts* 18:23-28); etc. Of the non-Pauline suggestions, Barnabas and Apollos are the most frequently proposed.

One of the reasons that the persons other than Paul are suggested is that each possible author mentioned was somehow associated with this great apostle. The author of this book was undoubtedly a scholar of great measure. And Paul was certainly just that: he was a rabbinical scholar, who studied under the renowned Gamaliel (*Acts* 22:3), and who later worked with and/or trained each of those listed above. Even those commentators who do not hold to the

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), xxiii; B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), xxvii.

⁵ Cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.

⁶ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 685-698; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 19-30; Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 6-8.

⁷ The participle usage of *diegeomai* found in *Hebrews* 11:32 has a masculine ending, which rules out a woman being the author.

¹ John Owen, “Translator’s Preface,” in John Calvin, *Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), XXII:v.

² Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: William Tegg and Company, 1850), v.

³ Calvin, *Commentaries*, XXII:xxvi.



Pauline authorship of *Hebrews* concur that this letter incorporates a goodly amount of Paul's thought. This simply cannot be reasonably doubted.⁸

With so many different opinions and so much controversy over this matter, the question remains: Are we able to know the author of *Hebrews*? After a lengthy study of this subject, New Testament scholar Donald Guthrie concluded: "In the light of the preceding discussions, an open verdict is clearly the safest course and in this the opinion of Origen ['in truth God alone knows'] can hardly be improved upon."⁹

The first thing that needs to be acknowledged is that the question of the authorship of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is a difficult one to answer. But we must not leave the matter there. The letter being anonymous, we cannot know with infallible, inerrant certainty who the author is. That does not mean, however, that we cannot reach a well-informed opinion with a goodly degree of certainty. After all, John's epistles are also anonymous; yet there is little or no question regarding the authorship of those writings. *First John*, *2 John*, and *3 John* have always been recognized as coming from the pen of the apostle John. What is not as well known is that the classical view of the church through the centuries has also been, though not with as great a degree of certainty, that the author of *Hebrews* was the apostle Paul. As we examine the evidence (both external and internal), we will see that John Owen was correct in his assessment: "The evidence both external and internal is so satisfactory, that an impression is left on the mind, that Paul was the author of this epistle, nearly equal to what his very name prefixed to it would have produced."¹⁰

First is the external evidence. As Robert Reymond points out, as often as Origen's referred to opinion is cited (that God alone knows who the author is), what is not so commonly recognized is that immediately preceding this statement, Origen said that his belief was that the letter was written by Paul.¹¹ Origen's words are as follows:

But as for myself, if I were to state my own opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle [Paul], but that the diction and phraseology are those of someone who wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore, if any church holds that this epistle is by Paul, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have the ancients handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows.¹²

It cannot be reasonably doubted that the Eastern church held to Pauline authorship from its earliest days. According to Eusebius (c. 263-340), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) taught that "Paul wrote the Hebrews in the Hebrew language and that Luke carefully translated it into Greek." He also stated that this was the belief of the "blessed elder Pantaenus" (died c. 200).¹³ In the Western church, Tertullian (c. 155-220) is the first clear testimony regarding the authorship of this epistle, and, although his words are somewhat difficult to cipher, as Laird Harris avers, "it would seem possible to hold that Tertullian did actually accept *Hebrews* and accepted it because it derived from the apostles, specifically Paul."¹⁴ Then there is the historian Eusebius, who spoke of the "fourteen epistles" of the apostle Paul.¹⁵ It is also the case that Jerome (c. 347-420) in Jerusalem considered *Hebrews* to be of Pauline origin, as did Augustine (354-430) in North Africa.¹⁶ It is also worthy of note that in several of the early Greek manuscripts this epistle is located, not after *Philemon* as in our Bibles, but grouped among the other Pauline epistles, thereby revealing that those who

⁸ Moses Stuart noted the reply of the critics of his day who denied Pauline authorship: "The writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*," they say, "was an intimate friend, or a studious imitator, of Paul; a man of talents, who, with unqualified admiration of the apostle's sentiments, mode of reasoning, and even choice of words, closely imitated him in all these particulars. Hence the similarity between the writings of Paul and the *Epistle to the Hebrews* (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 146).

⁹ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 698.

¹⁰ Owen, in the "Translator's Preface," Calvin, *Commentaries*, XXII:ix.

¹¹ Robert L. Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 274.

¹² Cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25.

¹³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.

¹⁴ R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 266.

¹⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.3.

¹⁶ Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 276.



arranged the manuscripts considered *Hebrews* to be of Pauline origin.¹⁷ Also, the fact of the matter is that *Hebrews* was received into the canon of Scripture by the early church due (principally) to the belief that it was an inspired epistle of the apostle Paul. As confirmed by Geisler and Nix:

The anonymity of *Hebrews* kept open the question of the apostolic authority of the epistle. In time, the Western church came to accept *Hebrews* as Pauline and, therefore, that issue was resolved. Once the West was convinced of the apostolicity of the book, there remained no obstacle to its full and final acceptance into the canon.¹⁸

W. H. Goold listed a number of other scholars of antiquity that held to Pauline authorship: Hilary, Ambrose, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Justin Martyr, and Athanasius. Then too, Pauline authorship was the adopted view of the synod of Antioch (A.D. 264), the council of Nicea (A.D. 315), the council of Laodicea (A.D. 360), the council of Hippo (A.D. 393), the third council of Carthage (A.D. 397), and the sixth council of Carthage (A.D. 419).¹⁹

Throughout the years of church history, numerous other scholars have also concluded that Paul wrote *Hebrews*. Thomas Aquinas taught that Paul was the author of this book.²⁰ The Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared that there are fourteen Pauline epistles.²¹ In the *Belgic Confession* (1561), *Hebrews* is listed among the Pauline writings. The same is true of the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1562). The first publication of the *King James Version* of the Bible (1611),

entitled this letter “The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews.” John Owen, who wrote a masterful seven volume commentary on *Hebrews*, commented that “St. Paul it is by whom we affirm this epistle to be written.”²² Matthew Henry commented that *Hebrews* “is generally assigned to the apostle Paul; and some later copies and translations have put Paul’s name in the title. In the primitive times it was generally ascribed to him, and the style and scope of it very well agree with his spirit, who was a person of a clear head and a warm heart, whose main end and endeavor it was to exalt Christ.”²³ Matthew Poole said that he agreed with “the general consent of the church through successive ages of it, entitling it [*Hebrews*] to him [Paul].”²⁴ Louis Gaussen considered Paul to be the author of *Hebrews*,²⁵ as did Jonathan Edwards.²⁶ John Brown of Edinburgh wrote: “That tradition ascribes the epistle to the apostle Paul as its author After considering with some care the evidence on both sides of this question, I am disposed to think that, though by no means absolutely certain, it is in a high degree probable, that this epistle was written by the apostle Paul.”²⁷ And Moses Stuart, after an exhaustive study of the subject, concluded: “On the whole, I must acquiesce in the opinion of Origen, which I repeat to the general voice of antiquity; it is not without reason the ancients have handed it down to us, that this epistle is Paul’s. Nor shall I differ materially with those who, like Eusebius, can say...[that] fourteen epistles are clearly and certainly Paul’s.”²⁸ The Reformed Baptist theologian John Gill said that this book is “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews.”²⁹ A. W. Pink wrote that he was “fully assured” that

¹⁷ Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, translated by Thomas L. Kingsbury (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, [1871], 1978), I:16; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxx-xxxii; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 686. F. F. Bruce noted that in the Chester Beatty collection of manuscripts, which is the “oldest known surviving copy of the Pauline letters” (dated at the end of the second century), *Hebrews* is included among the Pauline writings (*Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 466).

¹⁸ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 118.

¹⁹ Listed in John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, edited by William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), I:93; see also Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, I:12-16.

²⁰ Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 22.

²¹ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies of the New Testament* (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), IV:362.

²² John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, I:67.

²³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), VI:888.

²⁴ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), III:808.

²⁵ Louis Gaussen, *God-Breathed: The Divine Inspiration of the Bible* (The Trinity Foundation, 2001), 29, 93, 111.

²⁶ Cited in John H. Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Powhatan, Virginia: Berea Publications; Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 1991), I:248.

²⁷ John Brown, *Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 7-8.

²⁸ Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 234.

²⁹ John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Paris, Arkansas: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989), IX:372.



the author of *Hebrews* “was the apostle Paul.”³⁰ Robert Reymond, in agreement with all of these commentators, concluded: “I conclude that there is nothing in the content of the letter that Paul could not have written and that the Pauline authorship of *Hebrews* best explains, humanly speaking, the letter’s place in the canon.”³¹

Moses Stuart was correct in his assertion that the external evidence is “preponderant in favor of the opinion that Paul was the author of our epistle [*Hebrews*].”³² It is when we come to the internal evidence, however, that we find the strongest opposition to this opinion. Calvin, for example, wrote: “I, indeed, can adduce no reason to show that Paul was its author; for they who say that he designedly suppressed his name because it was hateful to the Jews, bring nothing to the purpose But the manner of teaching, and the style, sufficiently show that Paul was not the author; and the writer himself confesses in the second chapter that he was one of the disciples of the apostles, which is wholly different from the way in which Paul spoke of himself.”³³ William Hendriksen, Simon Kistemaker, and B. F. Westcott also list a number of reasons why Paul (allegedly) could not have authored this book.³⁴ An examination of the internal evidence, however, will show that this is simply not the case. To cite Dr. Reymond: “Internal evidence also supports the legitimacy of holding that Paul could have been the author.”³⁵

Let us examine some of the internal evidence.³⁶ One of the most serious challenges that those who hold to Pauline authorship have to answer is why Paul would not have signed this epistle, as he did the other thirteen. First, Clement of Alexandria gave an answer to this question years

ago when he wrote that “the blessed elder Pantaenus” taught that “since the Lord [Jesus], being the Apostle to the Hebrews [*Hebrews* 3:1], was sent to the Hebrews, Paul, through modesty, since he had been sent to the Gentiles, does not inscribe himself as an apostle to the Hebrews, both to give due deference to the Lord and because he wrote to the Hebrews also out of his abundance, being a preacher and apostle to the Gentiles.”³⁷ John Owen added to this by saying that Paul, being the apostle to the Gentiles (*Acts* 9:15; *Galatians* 2:7), and knowing of Jewish discrimination against him, wanted to avoid any Jewish prejudice against the letter which likely would have come if they knew who wrote it. Rather, Paul founds all of his arguments on the Old Testament Scriptures, with which his audience would have been familiar.³⁸ These are legitimate reasons for Paul not to have affixed his name to the epistle.

Along this same line of thought, in 2 *Thessalonians* 3:17-18, Paul writes: “The salutation [*aspasmos*] of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Note is made that Paul does not say in these verses that he signs every epistle that he writes. What he says is that he always gives this “salutation” [*aspasmos*]: “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” This salutation (or something similar to it) is found at the end of every one of Paul’s signed thirteen epistles. It is also at the end of *Hebrews* (13:25): “Grace be with you all. Amen.” Paul did write his salutation at the end of this epistle, just as he said he would do in all of his writings.

Second, there is the alleged problem of *Hebrews* 2:3, which reads “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.” According to William Hendriksen, “about the last thing Paul would ever say is found in *Hebrews* 2:3. He emphasized the fact that he had received his gospel directly from Christ.”³⁹ But the author of this verse does not say that he received his gospel from the other apostles. What he says is that it “was confirmed [*ebebaiothe*] to us by those

³⁰ A. W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1954], 1993), 18.

³¹ Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 279.

³² Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 112.

³³ Calvin, *Commentaries*, XXII:xxvii.

³⁴ William Hendriksen, *Survey of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 416; Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 7; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, lxxvii-lxxviii.

³⁵ Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 276.

³⁶ Much of this information is drawn from Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 276-279; Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1:65-92; and Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, IX:372-373.

³⁷ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.

³⁸ Owen in “Translator’s Preface,” Calvin, *Commentaries*, XXII:x.

³⁹ Hendriksen, *Survey of the Bible*, 416.



who heard Him.” And as Reymond explains, this implies “that he was already in possession of the message at the time of its confirmation to him.” And this “confirmation” could have taken place in Paul’s first visit to Jerusalem when he met with Peter and James (*Galatians* 1:18-19); or it could have occurred on the visit he describes in *Galatians* 2:1-10. Certainly, Reymond goes on to say, “the action of the apostles, as described by Paul in *Galatians* 2:9 (‘... recognizing the grace that had been given unto me, James and Cephas and John ... gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship’) has the appearance of being a ‘confirming’ activity.”⁴⁰ What the other apostles, whose credentials were not in question, did on this occasion was confirm or endorse Paul’s credentials as an apostle. And this endorsement was necessary for Paul to properly function as an apostle. Herein, wrote William Hendriksen, the endorsement “served as the confirmation of a solemn covenant.”⁴¹

As John Owen suggested, another possibility is that the apostle could just be “placing himself among those unto whom he wrote, though not personally concerned in every particular spoken – a thing so usual with him [Paul] that there is scarce any of his epistles wherein sundry instances of it are not to be found. See *1 Corinthians* 10:8-9; *1 Thessalonians* 4:17.”⁴² John Brown was of the same opinion:

What the Lord spoke concerning this great salvation, “was confirmed,” says the inspired writer, “to us by them who heard Him.” Some interpreters conceive that in the use of the pronoun of the first person here, they have evidence that Paul was not the author of the epistle, as he obtained his knowledge of the Christian salvation, as he states in *Galatians*, not from men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. I do not think there is much in this. He is speaking of himself in common with those to whom he was writing, few or none of whom probably had heard the gospel from the lips of the Lord Himself; and though Paul did not obtain his knowledge of the gospel from the

other apostles, he might justly say, it was confirmed to him by those who heard the Savior.⁴³

These things being so, *Hebrews* 2:3 in no way denies that Paul could have written this epistle.

Third, there is the supposed difficulty, to cite Calvin, “with the manner of teaching, and the style” used in *Hebrews*, which differs to some degree with that of Paul in his other epistles. That there is some difference in these is beyond cavil. But this in no way means that Paul could not have written the letter. John’s style of writing, for example, in *Revelation* is significantly different from his other writings: the *Gospel of John*, *1 John*, *2 John*, and *3 John*. But this does not mean that John did not write *Revelation*. Then too, *1 Peter* differs in a large degree from *2 Peter*; yet, Peter wrote them both.⁴⁴ In fact, there are some New Testament scholars who aver that Paul could not have written the Pastoral Epistles because the style found in these letters is unlike the apostle’s other writings. But this in no way denies Pauline authorship.⁴⁵ But if Clement of Alexandria is correct in his belief that Paul wrote the letter in Hebrew, and Luke translated it into Greek, this would explain the difference in style and vocabulary. And what is more likely, the same would be true if Paul himself wrote this letter in Greek (as with his other letters) and used an amanuensis (confirm *Romans* 16:22).⁴⁶

A different audience would also account for the difference “with the manner of teaching, and the style.” Moreover, John Owen and Moses Stuart have pointed out dozens of similarities between the “manner of teaching” in Paul’s other letters

⁴³ Brown, *Hebrews*, 80.

⁴⁴ Michael Green wrote: “Is it conceivable that these two epistles, *1 Peter* and *2 Peter*, should come from the same hand? The language is different (strikingly so in the original), and the thought is also different.” Green, in agreement with Jerome, went on to show that one of the reasons for the difference is easily explainable by the fact that Peter used different secretaries when writing these two letters; see Michael Green, *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1968], 1984), 16.

⁴⁵ William Hendriksen, in the “Introduction” to his *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), lists a number of such scholars who reject the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals.

⁴⁶ R. D. Shaw pointed out that it is probable that Paul wrote most, if not all, of his letters by dictating them to an amanuensis (*The Pauline Epistles* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909], 8-9).

⁴⁰ Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 278.

⁴¹ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 85. See also R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 19.

⁴² Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, III:280.



and in *Hebrews*. They have also showed that much of the language used in *Hebrews* is similar to that which is found in other Pauline epistles.⁴⁷ The present author is in agreement with Robert Reymond when he writes: “As for its style and grammar ... and its doctrinal content, I grant that these matters are different in some ways from Paul’s other letters to specific churches and individuals, but its recipients, its very subject matter, and its purpose would have made much to do with determining the style and vocabulary of the letter. There is nothing in the content of the letter that Paul could not have written.”⁴⁸

The internal evidence of *2 Peter* 3:15 (“and account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation – as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you”), also supports the Pauline authorship of *Hebrews*. In his introductory “argument” to the *Book of Hebrews*, Matthew Poole wrote: “This is most certain, that the apostle Paul wrote such an epistle [the one Peter refers to]; that it was well known to the dispersed churches of Christ then; that it was abused by corrupt minds, as it is at this day, since the Spirit gives us undeniable testimony of it in *2 Peter* 3:15-16 That this epistle [*Hebrews*] should be it [the one Peter refers to], seems not difficult to determine.”⁴⁹ A. W. Pink was of the same opinion: “That this epistle [*Hebrews*] was written by Paul is clear from *2 Peter* 3:15. Peter was writing to saved Jews as the opening verses of his first epistle intimates. The first verse of chapter 3 in his second epistle informs us that this letter was addressed to the same people as his former one had been. Then in verse 15 he declares that his beloved brother Paul “also according to the wisdom given unto Him has written unto you.” If the *Epistle to the Hebrews* be not that writing, where is it?”⁵⁰

The external and internal evidence has been collected. What then should be the verdict? The present writer is in agreement with the

conclusion reached by John Owen over three centuries ago: “The evidence both external and internal is so satisfactory, that an impression is left on the mind, that Paul was the author of this epistle, nearly equal to what his very name prefixed to it would have produced.”⁵¹

If Paul is the author, where was he when he wrote *Hebrews*? The most likely place of origin is Rome. In the closing statements he writes “those from Italy greet you” (13:24). The most plausible way of interpreting this remark is that the Christians in Italy, i.e., Rome, send their greetings to the addressees. This strongly implies that Paul was in Rome at the time of the writing, perhaps at the end of his first imprisonment there (*Acts* 28:30). This is also inferred by *Hebrews* 13:18-19, by his request for the addressees to pray for him that “I may be restored to you the sooner.”⁵² The fact that in 13:23 the author speaks with confidence that “I shall see you,” in no way denies that he was in prison at the time of the writing. Paul wrote *Philemon* and *Philippians* from his prison cell, and in both letters he expressed a confidence that God would deliver him from prison and send him on his way to them (see *Philemon* 22 and *Philippians* 1:25; 2:23-24).⁵³ *Hebrews* may well have been written near the very end of this same prison time. This would give us a date for the epistle around A.D. 62 or 63. Of course, with John Owen we should also say that the letter could have been written shortly after Paul’s release from this first Roman imprisonment.⁵⁴

Who were the addressees? As the title “To the Hebrews” suggests, they are Jewish Christians, who in all likelihood were living in Jerusalem and the environs of Judea. Having studied the matter at length, Moses Stuart wrote: “In ancient times, so far as I have been able to discover, there was but one opinion on this subject; and this has been adopted and defended by a majority of distinguished critics [commentators], in modern and recent times. This opinion is, that the epistle was addressed to the Hebrew church of

⁴⁷ Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1:78-91; Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 121-145. See also Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 722-723.

⁴⁸ Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990), 295.

⁴⁹ Poole, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, III:808.

⁵⁰ Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 18.

⁵¹ Owen, “Translator’s Preface,” Calvin, *Commentaries*, XXII:ix.


⁵² See Brown, *Hebrews*, 727; Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, 280; Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, III:878-879; and Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 115-121.

⁵³ Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 115-121.

⁵⁴ Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1:96-101.



Palestine.”⁵⁵ These were Jews who had made a profession of faith in Christ, but were now in danger of wavering in their faith, and falling away (3:12-4:16). They are exhorted to “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end” (3:6), and to “press on to maturity” (6:1). These Hebrews were undergoing persecution for their faith (12:1-4), and were in need of exhortation (13:22).

The conclusion of the matter is this: It seems clear from both the external and the internal evidence that the apostle Paul is the most likely candidate to be the author of the *Book of Hebrews*. With little question this has been the classical view of the church, even though this is not the case in our day. Moses Stuart correctly asserted that “there is a peculiarity of representation so distinctly marked here, so exclusively Pauline in manner, that if Paul himself did not write the epistle to the *Hebrews*, it must have been some one, who had drunk in so deeply of his instructions, as to become the very image of the fountain whence he drew.”⁵⁶ We do not, however, need to end up here. A reasonable examination of all of the issues should bring us to the conclusion reached by the nineteenth century scholar John Brown: “After considering with some care the evidence on both sides of this question, I am disposed to think that, though by no means absolutely certain, it is in a high degree probable, that this epistle was written by the apostle Paul.”⁵⁷ The present author is of the opinion that the *Epistle to the Hebrews* was penned by the apostle Paul to the Hebrew church of Palestine, during (or immediately subsequent to his release from) his first imprisonment in Rome in A.D. 62 or 63. 

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⁵⁵ Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 32; see also Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xli.

⁵⁶ Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 128.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Hebrews*, 8.

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