

# **THE THREEFOLD MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

**By**

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## **Preface**

### **Section I. Introduction: [BELOW] The Call for Its Threefold Ministry**

- 1. Historical Reality**
- 2. Ecclesiological Reality**
- 3. Theological Reality**
- 4. Practical Reality**
- 5. Eschatological Reality**

### **Section II. The Structure of the Church: [BELOW] The Launching Pad for its Threefold Ministry**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The Membership Layer**
- 3. The Leadership Layer**
- 4. The Gift Layer**
- 5. Conclusion**

### **Section III. The Revival of the Church: [ASAP] The Dynamics behind its Threefold Ministry**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The Evangelistic Ministry**
- 3. The Edificational Ministry**
- 4. The Diaconal Ministry**
- 5. Conclusion**

## Preface

Some time ago two men were discussing the nature of the sun and its function in the solar system. Scientifically one of them was clearly off base, while the other had his conceptual facts as straight as a gun barrel. But something did not seem to add up. The latter was pale as a sheet and looked like death warmed over, while the former was tanned and looked quite vigorous. The palpable difference? The expert shunned the great outdoors to be invigorated by the sun like the plague, while the ill-informed one could not get enough of it. No wonder he got the tan and all that this entailed. The message is simple. While the mind matters greatly, it is neither the only nor the final determinant for a powerful and effective life. Church history is awash with examples. There is little doubt that in the Day of Judgment everyone will stand before God with lots of eggs on his face and undoubtedly recognize his flaws (Ps. 40:12). But this does not nullify the fact that some were mightily used by God in spite of these flaws and will receive his accolade in the Judgment. Quite apparently the presence of power overcomes the flaws. At the same time where the power recedes, the flaws tend to turn into killers.

Luther's "railing" against James, and therewith, however unintentionally, against a full-orbed biblical doctrine of sanctification, is now widely recognized as a fundamental flaw. But it did not hinder the early rapid spread of Lutheranism. Eventually, however, the one-sided emphasis upon the legal element in salvation as the so-called heart of the Gospel (justification) at the "systematic" neglect, if not expense of the experiential (regeneration) and the practical (sanctification) clearly had a stultifying effect: today's Wittenberg is a (Lutheran) ghost town. Incidentally, it is hardly surprising that as a result of this twofold flaw a movement, such as Pietism, arose to fill this double vacuum, even if this, in turn, was only partly successful.

Early Calvinism provides a second sample. It failed to develop a full-orbed doctrine of regeneration. But it was clearly a powerhouse, and with its emphasis upon the twofold grace (*duplex gratia*) of justification *and* sanctification, which was a step up from Lutheranism, it enjoyed a rapid rise of the Reformed Faith in much of Europe, inclusive of France at the time. However, when the power receded and the notions of "baptismal regeneration" in the UK and "presumptive regeneration" in Continental Europe aggressively moved into the gap, the downgrade was quick in coming and sweeping in its deleterious results. After all, the superstructure of justification and sanctification is bound to crumble rapidly without the foundation of regeneration.<sup>1</sup> It is confounding how the Church has been able to miss this in the

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<sup>1</sup> Even if in his Commentaries, such as on Ezekiel 11:19, Calvin's exposition and emphasis upon regeneration is impeccable, in his *Institutes*, as is universally recognized, and his emphasis upon the *duplex gratia* of justification and sanctification (only) indicates, he virtually equates it with sanctification. This is reflected in the early Reformation Creeds, such as the *Heidelberg Catechism*, which makes only one occasional reference to regeneration in Lord's Day III (Question & Answer 8) without further defining it. To be sure, LD 16 (Q. & A., 45) states that by virtue of the sacrifice and death of Jesus "our old man is crucified, dead and buried with him that so the corrupt inclinations of the flesh may no longer reign in us, but that we may offer ourselves unto him a sacrifice of thanksgiving," with a reference to Rom. 6:6-11. But LD 23 (Q. & A., 60) is far from crystal clear in explaining this further. We are told that we are justified "only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart." While it is, indeed, only through genuine faith that man's sinful record can be replaced by the imputed righteousness of Christ, "the inclination to all evil" can only be undone by the heart transplant as promised in Ezek. 36:26. This is not transparent from the concluding clause. Incidentally, while the

light of the overwhelming evidence in both the OT and the NT that “the problem of the heart is

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righteousness of Christ is the undisputed basis for our justification, according to Scripture the holiness of Christ is necessary for our sanctification. LD 23, therefore, is unclear in its formulation in more than one way. Concluding with LD. 33 (Q. & A., 88-90), it informs us that “true conversion” consists “of two parts, the mortification of the old and the quickening of the new man.” However, they are both defined as a process. The first one is said to be a “sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins, and more and more to hate and flee from them.” The second one is “a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.” This twofold definition virtually equates “conversion” as the combination of the negative and positive side of progressive sanctification. Candidly, from a biblical perspective much of what we saw in the *Heidelberg Catechism* in the area of regeneration and conversion must be recognized as (quite?) misconceived, most of it as (thoroughly?) confused, and all of it as (very?) confusing. After all, regeneration is a once and for all implantation of a new heart, promised by God the Father (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26), produced by God the Son (Rom. 6:3-11), and personalized by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8). The evidence is conversion, consisting of the combination of repentance and faith, or a turning from self and sin to God for forgiveness and holiness through the heartfelt embrace of or closing with Christ. Further, with the destruction of the old heart or self on the cross of Christ and the production of the new heart or self in the resurrection of Christ, “the inclination to all evil” is once and for all destroyed and once and for all replaced by “the delight in the law of God” (Rom. 7:18)! Finally, without going into further details, when through union with Christ “the platform” of definitive regeneration (John 3:5), definitive justification (Rom. 5:1) as well as definitive sanctification (Heb. 10:10) is in place, “the superstructure” of daily (progressive) repentance and faith, daily (progressive) forgiveness of sins, and daily (progressive) holiness of life inevitably follows. This edifice of profound simplicity and simple profundity is regrettably missing in the *Heidelberg Catechism*, which may well have contributed to the widespread spiritual decline of a once thriving Christian culture. Of course, it goes without saying that as an early Reformation document it ought to be received with great gratitude. Frankly, it is remarkable how in the midst of a society that was drenched in a pervasive Roman Catholicism this document at all could have been produced as-is! But it may never be overlooked that “the *best* (!) of man is always *man* (!) at best,” and therefore must be examined and improved or revised whenever the Word of God demands this! Not so incidentally, the same early Reformation pattern regarding regeneration is reflected in the *Belgic Confession of Faith* which states that “true faith ... regenerates” (Article 24). This would be an “unthinkable” Arminian statement in a Reformed Creed, if it had not progressive sanctification in mind, but would have referred to the biblical doctrine of regeneration. In the so-called *Three Forms of Unity*, adopted by many Reformed Churches in Continental Europe, the *Canons of Dort* fills the doctrinal gap in the area of regeneration. But this Creed functions so little and so rarely in those Churches that it did not make any decisive difference in its “spiritual offspring.” This offspring is virtually unaware of the full-orbed biblical teaching in this area, especially after the notion of “presumptive regeneration,” whether in its theological formulation or its widespread practical impact, gained a virtually monopolistic foothold. It should never be forgotten that one of the forerunners, if not the father, of the Great Awakening according to Gilbert Tenent, Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, was maligned in the Dutch Reformed Church setting in the USA when he introduced the experiential necessity of rebirth in a (frequently if not habitual “presumptive salvation”) context that was dominated by the *Heidelberg Catechism*, as if it was an alien doctrine, and that George Whitefield was forced to preach outside the established Church in an Anglican (often, if not prevailing “baptismal salvation”) setting in the UK, and was looked upon with suspicion in a Presbyterian setting in the USA, when he emphatically and incessantly preached the same Biblical truth. It should be viewed as a near certainty that the “opposition” to both men and their penetrating preaching was prompted not as much by the generally prevailing unfamiliarity with the doctrine of regeneration as by the lack of regeneration itself due to its unfamiliarity through one or more centuries of neglect. Frankly, it must have been just as unsettling, if not threatening, an experience to be told in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century that a “heart transplant” was in order, for “blind rebels” to see and enter the Kingdom (John 3: 3, 5), as it was to Nicodemus in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century! But this does not make it any less imperative and cogent to preach it together with the biblical truths of justification and sanctification as God’s *triplex gratia*! After all, as an apparent consequence o/f the New Covenant Gospel (Ezek. 36:25-27) the necessity of rebirth is one of the three cornerstones of evangelistic preaching of Christ himself (John 3:3, 5), with the necessity of justification (John 4:16-18) and of sanctification (John 8:31-32, 43-44) as the two equally indispensable others. The notions of both *simplex gratia* (justification) and *duplex gratia* (justification and sanctification) fall seriously short of the full-orbed, biblical Gospel, and the exclusive emphasis upon either one of them therefore is simply “not going to do it,” that is, not often enough in the short run and never enough in the long run!

the heart of the problem.”<sup>2</sup> The Puritan movement sought to remedy this awful shortfall, but was only temporarily successful in the UK and spottily successful in continental Europe. Just as Wittenberg, Geneva is a (Calvinistic) ghost town, while mega-cities where at one time Christianity was thriving, such as London, Edinburgh, and Amsterdam, have quickly caught up or are not far behind.

Similarly, a fully committed Pentecostal wondered out loud why Pentecostalism has made such enormous strides in spite of the fallacious stress upon “speaking in tongues” as the sole evidence of the Baptism with the Spirit. Quite a refreshing admission! But his solution? The movement displayed such power that it wiped out the influence of a fundamental flaw!

Clearly, a conceptual determination of an issue or situation, whether proper or improper, rarely, if ever, has the final word! Even “perfect” theology is no “cure-all.” It is possible to be as straight as a gun barrel but be without power and therefore just as empty! All this means that at times and especially in the face of God’s empowering historical presence we can, if not must, be gratefully mild in our judgment in spite of palpable shortcomings or errors. At the same time we should always and by all means be utterly meticulous in raising our compassionate voice against even the slightest of shortcomings or errors, since sooner or later every chicken will come home to roost. This sets the complementary tone of my inquiry into the threefold ministry of the Church. It seeks to be mild in judgment about flaws in powerful men of God, but meticulous in analysis and assessment of all potential pitfalls! Both the failure to be thankful for all the accomplishments of the past and the error of turning a blind eye to the shortcomings of the past are and must be displeasing to our God and will do a disservice to the Church. All this comes into proper play as long we remember, both for ourselves and for others, that “the *best* (!) of man is *man* (!) at best!” This is mandatory for anyone who wishes to opt for “the best of both worlds,” that is, to be not only *semper suaviter in modo* (2 Tim. 2:25a), but also *semper fortiter in re* (2 Tim. 2:24b, 25b, 26).

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<sup>2</sup> Already a quick look at the word “heart” in a Concordance will make this soon, if not instantaneously, crystal clear.

# Introduction

This volume, which deals with the Threefold Ministry of the Church and contains a heart-felt, and hopefully heart-opening plea for it to function biblically and effectively to the glory of God the Father as, after all, *his* Building, to the glory of God the Son as, after all, *his* Body and to the glory of God the Holy Spirit as, after all, *his* Workshop, is predicated upon several realities. The first one is historical in nature, the second one ecclesiological, the third one theological, the fourth one practical, and the fifth one eschatological. All five of them have hopefully a rich payoff in the treatment of our topic.

## 1. *Historical Reality*

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

It does not take rocket science to recognize that the Christian Church, even if it thankfully continues to win individual “skirmishes,” and at times even “battles” in the making and training of disciples (Mt. 28:19-20), rather decisively lost the war in the Middle East as well as in Europe, and is fast losing the war in the USA. Presently Idolatrous Islam is ruling the roost in the Middle East, Atheistic Secularism in Europe and an increasingly Godless Humanism in the USA. In the Middle East the proclamation of the Gospel could well meet with violence and result in death. In Europe it routinely meets with a mocking disdain for “dinosaurs” that are fast dying out to boot. In the USA one can expect more or less politely to be sidestepped, cold-shouldered or marginalized, but in recent years more and more aggressively. Frankly, we should be greatly moved, alarmed and grieved about what happened to these at one time hotbeds of Christianity, recognizing that its adherents in these geographical locations now must either fear either for their lives, or for their legitimate place in society, or for their unimpeded functioning. It is passing strange that no one seems to be properly heart-broken about this course of events. Of course, every Christian should be, since in all of this the name of our God is grievously blasphemed (See Ezek. 36:20-23). But regrettably no one even appears to be alarmed enough to ask the question why this disastrous turn of events is repeated again and again, and even seems historically inevitable. To be sure, every few decades a more or less lengthy lament about “the present malaise” is published, which at times is long in analysis and assessment, but usually too short and too general, if not too oversimplified or too reductionist, in the proffered solutions.<sup>3</sup> At best

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<sup>3</sup> A series of diagnostic “laments” in five volumes comes from the hand of David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993); *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994); *Losing our Virtue* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998); *Above All Earthly Powers* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2005); and *The Courage to be Protestant* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008). In the first four volumes he documents the virtual disappearance of theological truth, the factual marginalization of the sovereign God, the rotting of the moral fabric of society, the frightening evaporation of holiness among professing Christians, and the practical disregard of the Kingship of Christ. In all this the Church shows to have fallen down on the job by

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adopting worldly methodologies, whether modern or postmodern, by catering to all too human likes and dislikes, and by relinquishing its mandate to para-ecclesiastical organizations in an unprecedented way. No doubt the extensive analysis and assessment of a wide variety of cultural and counter-biblical ills, from Paganism, Enlightenment, Postmodernism, that has not just “collapsed the distinctions between right and wrong, good and bad, decent and indecent, but made them irrelevant” (*God in the Wasteland*, 48) and an idolatrous concentration of the human Self in every imaginable way, to a watered down and soft evangelicalism, the emergent church, the seeker-friendly church, the psychologizing church, the marketeering church, the consumer-oriented church, etc., etc., greatly contribute to our understanding of the times. But Wells himself appears to concede to his critics that his books have (mostly) been “about this kind of diagnosis,” while offering “little prescription,” being “too negative” in tone and substance, and with “not enough positive” and concrete remedial details. All this is at least partly due to his belated recognition and admitted “miscalculation,” “how remote a robust, biblical faith of a Protestant kind has actually become to many people today. I thought they would know what they had departed from and needed to return to.” This is offered as an “excuse” of sorts, but with the continuing acknowledgement that “knowing how postmodern culture impacts biblical faith, how it can unravel that faith or rearrange its priorities or how it masks certain things and magnifies others, or seduces biblical faith or perverts it, is not the same thing as saying what we should do about it” (*The Courage*, 217). To be sure, he points out the necessity for the Church to return to the bold proclamation of “objective truth,” and the majestic “transcendence” and “holiness” of God, with all that this entails for the Gospel (*No Place*, 278, 281-282; 291-292; 299-301, respectively), to reintroduce the centrality of God across the board in both the affairs of the world and the ministry of the Church (*God in the Wasteland*, 120ff), to recover the holiness of God, and against that backdrop make the concept and “crushing weight” of sin reappear, to address it for what it is in all its guilty ugliness before God and man, to recover the “Good News” of the Reformation and never to lose heart in courageously, boldly, and confidently proclaiming it (2 Cor. 3:4, 12; 4:1, 16; 5:6, 8) to wretched sinners and wretched saints alike (*Losing our Virtue*, 35-41, 129-140, 179-191, 204-209), to debunk the idolatrous “Black Hole” of the ironically empty and ultimately meaningless rebellious Self with its hollow promises and rebellious worldviews, and in its place to emphasize justification by faith, based on Christ’s penal substitution, as the heart of the utterly meaningful Gospel (*Above all Earthly Pow’rs*, 29, 153-162, 198-202, 218-232), and, last but not least, to find its moorings again in the ecclesiastical Reformation triad with its insistence upon preaching the inerrant, authoritative and sufficient Word of God truthfully and properly, upon keeping or returning the administration of the Sacraments to its rightful place and with its proper function, and of dispensing Church discipline in the appropriate manner and with the proper diligence (*The Courage*, 226-242). In short, Wells’ five volumes are quite detailed and helpful in repeatedly addressing and plumbing the depth of a great number of degrading, dangerous and deadly, especially modern (Enlightenment) and postmodern, “ills.” The proposed “remedies” are truthful throughout, and at times heartwarming, such as expressed in the following quotations from *God in the Wasteland*, “The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common” (30); “It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless” (88); “When the consumer is sovereign, the product (in this case God himself) must be subservient” (101); “Without the holiness of God sin has no meaning and grace has no point, for it is God’s holiness that gives to the one its definition and to the other its greatness” (144). “Until we recognize afresh the centrality of God’s holiness, until it once again enters into the innermost fibers of evangelical faith, our virtue will lack seriousness, our belief will lack poignancy, our practice will lack joyful pungency, our worship will lack joyful seriousness, our preaching will lack the mordancy of grace, and the church will be just one more special interest pleading for a hearing in a world of competing enterprises” (145). But both the explicit and implicit “remedies” still are (admittedly) presented in such general terms and lack so many necessary specifics that they seemingly “must” fail to make any appreciable difference in an utterly alarming situation. At times they even fall short of full-orbed biblical truth. After all, as we shall see below in detail, the Gospel covers more, much more, than “only” the doctrine of justification, however glorious it is, and the Church must display more, much more, than “merely” the three marks of the Reformation to be fully biblical, however truthful they are. All this is leads to the conclusion that in order “to make (even) a dent” in today’s thoroughly pluralistic culture we must go well beyond any unspecified generalities and any reductionistic oversimplifications. Men, such as Martin Luther and Thomas Manton blaze a trail and set the tone for all of us here. Luther’s Preface to his Catechism for Young Children apparently contains the lament that the knowledge of God’s Word is virtually absent among the common folks. But he did not stop there. He addressed this by publishing his Catechism and monitoring its careful implementation. The lament was short, and the proposed cure deep in substance and extensive in detail. In the heyday of Puritanism Thomas Manton, *An Exposition of the Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., n. d.), 8, expressed his deep distress about

it is applauded by a relative few and that for a time only. Soon it is “paralyzed and paralyzing business as usual” again, until the next wake-up call in a situation, which has deteriorated even further, simply sees this scenario repeat itself. More often than not, however, laments, often too few and too far between, are ignored whether with a reference to the glorious once and for all decisive victory secured by Christ in his crucifixion and resurrection, to individual skirmishes or battles that at times against extreme odds are clearly won, or to the sovereign providence of God that “after all” controls everything that comes to pass. The regrettable fact is that in each of these instances we encounter a presumptuous, self-exonerating, and self-destructive falsehood behind a

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the depressing state of the spirituality of his day, “We are all apt to divorce comfort from duty, and to content ourselves with a ‘barren and unfruitful knowledge’ of Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 1:8, as if all that he required of the world were a few naked, cold and inactive apprehensions of his merit, and all things were so done *for us* that nothing remained to be done *by us*. This is the wretched conceit of many in the present age, and therefore either they abuse the sweetness of grace to looseness, or the power of it to laziness.” Ironically, such was written in a time period that evokes our envy. This should make us wonder how he would assess our condition! At any rate, his response was his detailed and influential Commentary on the Epistle of James that is still a remedial landmark contribution today! He is fully aware that both “the devil (hell) and the angelic host (heaven) are in the details.” So, once again the lament was short and to the point and the solution as thorough as one could expect. Incidentally, not all “laments” are created equal. E. g., Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) bemoans the anti-intellectual mind-set of a stifled and stifling evangelicalism that comes to expression, a. o., in its adherence to a narrow-minded Dispensationalism and its penchant (sic!) for “six-day creationism,” and so supposedly shuts itself off from the cultural pursuits of the day. He recommends that it should broaden its vision, which, of course, may well end up with the embrace of evolutionism, and possibly abortion and homosexuality. Carl Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011), properly opposes the focus as well as content of this “lament” on solid biblical grounds and in the process asks the incisive question what, after all, constitutes “the evangelical mind.” He concludes that it is undefined, undefinable (13-26), and troublesome due to its lack of a solid and well-defined “doctrinal core,” of an uncompromising commitment to “biblical inerrancy,” and a waffling attitude about a staunch and “consistently biblical hermeneutics,” and all this conjoint to a virtual bid for a legitimate, but ironically mostly elusive place at the pluralistic “cultural round table” of the day. Such bid will never be forthcoming without the demand once and for all to capitulate on issues, such as homosexuality, and to relinquish the biblical stance on a historical Adam, and all that this entails in terms of the Fall of man and his Redemption in Christ (Rom. 5:12-21). Frankly, the former is already tolerated, if not defended, and the latter is already under attack. in the broadly so-called evangelical world (27-38)! All this spells the unavoidable “marginalization” of “traditional” Christianity, but also the (faint) hope that the “marginalized” of whatever stripe will band together under the banner of “an agreed-upon evangel” (39-41). Thankfully Trueman, unlike Wells (?), does not simply call upon us to maintain or return to the traditional (Reformation) *status quo*. It is precisely the contention of the present volume that this leaves far too much to be desired, and is totally insufficient to stem the unmistakable onslaught that is unleashed again the “Cause of God and Truth.” How can one expect for something that somehow failed in the past to succeed in the present or the future? One should have one’s head in the sand not to recognize that Christianity in the West, inclusive of the USA, lives of borrowed time and therefore better be alarmed enough to study the enemy lines and to be resolved to take, resume, or augment the full (battle) action that Scripture requires as the *conditio sine qua non* for “victory,” whatever the cost or the price. All this, again with Trueman, does not require us simply to take a long and hard look at the “mind” (Noll), but rather, and again unlike Wells (?), at the “evangel” itself. The definition of the Gospel (according to the Scriptures of the OT and NT) and the way it conquers (through the Church) are, indeed, the burning issues. It may well come as a surprise to the reader (of the balance) of this volume that the Church rarely, if ever, has agreed on the content of the Gospel or had a full-orbed view of what it was supposed to be and how it was supposed to operate effectively. In fact, throughout its history it has operated at best with a curtailed Gospel and has usually failed properly to construe the nature and function of the Instrument ordained by God to spread it. This regrettably applies to some extent to the Reformation as well. I intend to argue all this in detail, and hereby invite you, the reader, to be “the proverbial Berean” in assessing it and subsequently to take appropriate action in line with your findings (Acts 17:10ff). At any rate, it must be more than disconcerting to be told at the start of the Third Millennium that there apparently is still no well-defined “evangel” on which we may agree, or disagree for that matter! If true, it is to our guilty shame before our God, and goes a long way to explain the “lamentable” condition of the Church throughout its history.



glorious truth, provided that the diagnosis of Jesus in these kinds of circumstances means anything. After all, it should not go unnoticed that he attributes spiritual downgrades squarely to the lamentable “State of the Church,” and in that context does not put his own universal victory (Rev. 1:5) or occasional ecclesiastical victories (Rev. 3:8) or God’s providential victories (Rev. 19:6-8) in the equation to smooth out or pacify situations. Neither should we! He insists on repentance. So should we! Regrettably, if Revelation 2-3 is any indication, it may take no more than a few decades for once thriving Churches to incur the fierce judgment of God (1 Pet. 4:17) by becoming “loveless” (Rev. 2:4-5), “lifeless” (Rev. 3:1), “listless” (Rev. 3:16), or anything similar, and as a result fundamentally forfeit the right to exist.

Candidly, I lost you, the reader, before I even make a start, if you like most folks would wave all this off as excessive, irrelevant, or annoying. But be assured that in doing such you ignore men like Daniel and Nehemiah in the OT (or women such as Anna in the NT), who *in similar circumstances* breathtakingly recognized and confessed their “*mea culpa, mea magna, mea maxima culpa*” before God in unceasing prayer (Dan. 9:1ff; Neh. 1:1ff; see also Lk. 2:37). If this is not a persuasive argument, hopefully God’s own words will be conclusive. He declares to be angry even with the prayers of his own people in a situation in which once thriving circumstances had disastrously and culpably deteriorated (Ps. 80:4ff). Apparently only the hunger for and the presence of Revival can remedy this (Ps. 80:18)!<sup>4</sup> The similarity with today’s situation in the Middle East, Europe and the USA is palpable. In each continent the once “blossoming vine” that covered lots and lots of “real estate” was ravaged and is no more (Ps. 80:5-13). It is at best a wishful memory in the speeches or writings of a few, who moreover hardly ever see the heavy hand of God in its virtual extermination (Ps. 80:4-6), and even less frequently utter or call for a “tortured cry” for its “restoration” (Ps. 80:3, 7, 19). We may well wonder how those who “did not soil their garments” in a “lifeless” Church (Rev. 2:4) assessed their situation and how they responded to the heart-rending “barrenness” around them. We know how such folks responded at more recent occasions. It drove them to God in pulsating Revival Prayer and to men in pulsating Revival Preaching.<sup>5</sup> At the same time we also know how “others”

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<sup>4</sup> So much for folks who are critical of Revival times to the point of rejecting them as too excessively emotional, too individualistic, etc., etc., and therefore identify them as a threat to the proper development of the Church! Candidly, they tend to throw out the baby with a near exclusive focus upon admittedly some questionable bath water, which of course accompanies every movement, inclusive of the mightiest movements, of God. They usually seek to offset the flaws with solutions that do have a solid biblical base, but with such a narrow, if not truncated, scope that they do not remedy situations that gave rise to the desperately needed Revival times in the first place. The bottom line is that they, unintentionally I am sure (?), end up cutting their nose to spite their face, often either oblivious of the fact that the malaise continues or somehow managing to explain (what should be an unmistakable) downgrade away! This is easily verified and documented as soon as it is recognized that Revival times, ever since Acts 1-12, are characterized by twelve mighty marks: the experiential and tangible presence of mighty life (an inexhaustible and pulsating well of living water from Jesus through the Holy Spirit), evidencing itself in mighty prayer, mighty preaching, mighty conversions (always from 10 to 20 million conversions in a century), mighty assemblies, mighty holiness, mighty generosity, mighty grass roots evangelism, mighty impact upon society, under mighty leaders, in mighty combat conjoint to a mighty pursuit of the Grand Command of “making and training of disciples” (Mt. 28:19-20). These twelve Revival features, taken as I stated from Acts 1-12, constitute the benchmark, the standard, the pattern, by which every epoch in Church history will be measured. After all, they are promised and mandated as the heart and core of the New Covenant. In the light of this it seems puny (and self-defeating) to fault and condemn Revival times for its undeniable (and regrettable) but peripheral excesses in the midst of a stagnant and basically impotent Church life that (even more regrettably) is usually not recognized as such.

<sup>5</sup> See Eifion Evans, *When He Comes* (London: Evangelical Press, 1967). This is a remarkable volume that displays the “beauty and loveliness” of Revival times (28). First, it pictures, the backdrop of revivals, times of prevailing apathy and indifference, coupled with spiritual bankruptcy and stagnation, even in the midst of orthodoxy, times of

responded (Read: failed to respond) in the face of gross idolatry and immorality (Rev. 2:14-15, 20). It proved the well-known saying to be true that “good people” only need to do “nothing” for disaster to strike, and to strike hard. In the Revelation context Jesus himself has to come personally to the rescue in order to sanitize his Church (Rev. 2:16, 22-23). It seems that history repeats itself again and again *ad nauseam*, and that the personal intervention of our Lord always is and always will remain necessary. The Revelation 2-3 “mosaic” was in evidence already in the OT in the days of Judge Deborah. Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun and Issachar put their very lives on the line in the war against Hazor. Reuben took its merry time, deep in thought to consider its course of action until it was too late. Gilead, Dan and Asher simply decided to stay home. But to top it all off the inhabitants of Meroz were “thoroughly cursed, because they did not come to the help of the Lord” (Judg. 5:12-23). In Nehemiah’s days a similar scenario was in evidence. He appointed his good brother Hanani as co-mayor of Jerusalem during his decade long absence, because he “was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many” (Neh. 7:2). But upon his return the failure to pay the tithes, the refusal to keep the Sabbath, and the practice to marry unbelievers, all of which he had remedied (Neh. 10:28-39), was once again as rampant as ever (Neh. 13:1-30). The warning that pronounces a curse upon anyone who “does the work of God negligently,” or “with slackness” (Jer. 48:10) is a perennial one, equally applicable to the OT and the NT Church. After all, also in New Covenant times with its Revival salvation, folks can return to folly in a hurry (Ps. 85:8). James’ summons is a case in point, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourself therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (Jam. 4:6-10). This “heavy” summons is addressed to the total NT Christian Church and everybody in it throughout its history. In fact, and rather incredibly, it is addressed *already* to the

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lukewarmness and aridity, coupled with the neglect of the means of grace and a compromise with the world, symptomatic of almost an apostate Church (26), times that lacked unreserved consecration, and were marked by unwillingness on the part of the churches to labor directly for the salvation of souls (30), often governed by sleepy watchmen as well as cold and suspicious officials with regards to even the idea of revival (70). Second, it also pictures the characteristics of revival times. The greatest innovation took place in the spirit of the preacher (111). God’s spokesmen shed their drowsiness (52), and became men of vision, conviction, power and pathos (43, 47, 49), and of earnest, diligent, fervent prayer (37, 40). *They saw no one but God* (90). As a result the preaching style changed. Instead of a theoretical, oratorical, prosaic, formal, and lifeless presentation of the truth that lacked urgency and sincerity, the preaching became personal, free, earnest, close, direct, moving men to repentance and faith. Furthermore, it was no longer apologetic, but a living, dogmatic, authoritative, and successful proclamation of the truth, coupled with powerful appeals to all age groups to hate sin, to love holiness and to shun specific ills, such as drunkenness and profanity (67, 81, 111, 113, 115, 118, 119, 120; Jer. 14:9). In short, their love for God and the neighbor was more pervasive, their godliness more prominent, their perseverance more permanent, their prayers were more pressing, their preaching more powerful, their singing more potent, and their zeal for conversions more passionate (95). In the process they avoided both extremes, either leaning too heavily upon man or otherwise leaving the work wholly to God (31). Finally, it challenged all objections to revivals as false and unfounded. They were not just exercises of empty excitement with former sinful habits soon to reoccur. Upon examination most conversions proved to be permanent, and adorned by healthy and vigorous growth (91, 110). The following testimony sums it all up, “I was in College at the time studying great matters, but never having realized them in my experience as living truth. I knew Butler’s arguments for a future state, and Paley’s *Evidences of Christianity*. I felt their force of the arguments. But there came two plain men from Cardiganshire to Bala, and preached Jesus Christ simply and unaffectedly, without much culture or eloquence. But they had more ... no one needed Butler’s arguments or Paley’s *Evidences*. The change that I experienced was ample evidence to me of the divinity of Christianity. Before I was a mass of damnation, and in the service I became a new creature (106).

early, the earliest, the infant Christian Church, barely a decade or two old. This means that everybody throughout Church history better perpetually take careful notice of James' summons. All this should be a spur for us in the midst of two crumbled "continental" societies, and one crumbling one, Asia, Europe and North America, to pay close, humble, and contrite attention (Is. 57:15a) to what Scripture has to say about the threefold ministry of the Church. To repeat the injunction that Scripture itself repeats, we better for our life's sake "incessantly, humbly, and contritely tremble at God's Word" (Is. 66:2, 5) with its ever present message that apparently "the judgment of God" invariably hovers over the "Household of God (!)," over "us (!)" and so ever stands at our doorsteps (1 Pet. 4:17). Jesus (Rev. 2-3), James (Jam. 4) and Peter (1 Pet. 4) all draw one line and stand shoulder to shoulder in this. If Moses would be around, he would fully, quickly and emphatically concur. One seemingly simple "impulsive" act on his part constituted such a violation of the holiness of God that it drew a quick, heavy, and irreversible judgment (Num. 20:10-13; Dt. 3:23-27). The executed Uzzah would concur even more emphatically (2 Sam. 6:5-7; 2 Chron. 13:5-10). David at first took his side. But he repented in a hurry and made no bones about this when the truth of God's Word dawned on him (2 Sam. 6:8-15; 2 Chron. 13:11-13; 15:1-15). Our God is and remains a "consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). The bottom line? Listening to Jesus, while sitting at the feet, "as the only thing needful" (Lk. 10:38-42) and subsequently to act upon his Word decidedly and decisively in radical and utter obedience is the only way to "revive our spirits and our hearts" individually (Is. 57:15b) and our Churches corporately (Hab, 3:2), which thankfully results in "joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8; see also Is. 66:10-12; John 15:11).

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

## 2. Ecclesiological Reality

The second reality is ecclesiological. This closely follows the first one in importance. To put it bluntly, the only reason why God tolerates the present world and allows it to continue is to bring the Church, the Bride of Christ, into existence. The world does *not* have an independent purpose, whether “utopian” or otherwise. This may sound counter-intuitive. But it is nevertheless biblical and true.

Of course, unbelief denies it to be true, and incessantly seeks to make the world “a good,” “a better,” or “the best possible place” in millions of ways, whether individually or corporately, in millions of areas, such as healthcare, education, the economy, government, prisons, defense, cell phones, travel, vehicles, airplanes, hotels, food stuffs, beverages, etc., etc., etc., for millions of people, youth, the aged, women, men, the middle class, minorities, etc., etc., etc., more or less loudly trumpets every possible success story, and endeavors to overcome every failure. All this in a world in which disasters, crime, warfare, violence, discord, break-ups, etc., etc., etc., are rampant! But “hope seems to spring eternal,” even if it thus far has proven to be an empty and unrealistic “Sisyphus” type of hope.

Regrettably, even some evangelical scholars part company here and deny that it is biblical to argue that the world has *no* independent purpose *whatsoever* for whatever strictly theological or broadly philosophical reason. This reasoning must get our careful attention. But for now it is sufficient to show that Scripture is crystal clear in this regard. Before the Flood God was so aggravated, to put it mildly, with the wickedness of the human race in general that he decided to wipe them all out! Only one man survived, together with his family. A few millennia later history repeated itself. Before the Exile God was so aggravated, to put it mildly once again, if not more so, with the wickedness of the nation of Israel in particular that he decided to throw them all out! Only a meager remnant survived. But in both instances--one family, a meager remnant--God availed himself merely of stop-gap measures that could not and cannot solve the problem that this utterly wicked and incurably bankrupt world poses. Revelation picks up on that when John is told that no one is capable of bailing out the human race out, neither mankind in general nor Israel in particular, “no one in heaven, no one on earth, and no one under the earth.” It is hardly surprising that John weeps uncontrollably ... until he is brought face to face with Jesus as the Lion-Lamb whose cross and resurrection both purposed and guaranteed the emergence of the Church from all nations and languages (Rev. 5:1-10). Without this eye-opening objective that evokes the unending praise of the whole universe (Rev. 5:11-14) God would have terminated the present world in all its rebellious, guilty and polluted bankruptcy long ago. Apart from the fact that ultimately everything is designed to reflect the glory of God, the world’s sole (intermediate) function is clearly to serve as God’s “spawning ground” to produce potential members of the Church, no more, no less. The Christian family will pick up on this, and recognize that its sole (intermediate) function is to produce children for the local Church and in that context help train them in godliness day and night, inside and outside (Deut. 6:4-9). The local Church, in turn, will pick up on this as well and recognize that its sole (intermediate) function is to produce members of the Bride of Christ, the Holy City. In obedience to Christ’s Grand Command it is devoted to the hot pursuit of both “making and training disciples” with all that this entails (Mt. 28:19-20). It does so by means of a threefold ministry, an Evangelistic Ministry under the Leadership of Evangelists (Eph. 4:10c), an Edification Ministry under the Leadership of Pastor-Teachers (Eph. 4:10d), and a Service Ministry under the Leadership of Deacons (Phil. 1:1). Frankly, it is passing strange that the Church all too frequently has focused its attention on the achievements, the

enjoyments, the pleasures, if not enticements of the world, failing to view and approach it in the footsteps of Jesus first and foremost as its God-ordained “fishing ground” (Mt. 4:19). In this context it is equally strange that it all too often tends to emphasize its Edification Ministry at the neglect or expense of its Evangelistic and Diaconal Ministry, let alone to launch a “hot pursuit” to see the latter two blossom out and flourish as powerfully as Scripture mandates. It has more than once questioned the continuation of the Office of Evangelist (Eph. 4:10), and therefore failed to grow a vital and indispensable Evangelistic Leadership. Of course, when the Church is powerful it grows quantitatively as well as qualitatively, at times even by leaps and bounds. But when the power recedes, the vacuum of an Evangelistic Leadership comes back to haunt it. It also has more than once minimized the Function of Deacons “merely” as “ministers of mercy,” and therefore failed to employ them to the point of providing the *total* wide and robust range of *all* the “logistics” necessary to facilitate the biblically mandated Evangelistic and Edification Ministries, whether directly or indirectly (Acts 6:1-6). As we shall observe below, according to Scripture a “ministry of mercy” does not even begin to cover all the bases of the authentic and full-orbed Diaconal directive. Frankly, the Church all too often resembles one of those famous trains like the Orient Express. A Church with a strong Edification Ministry resembles the part of the train that consists of first class seating coaches, first class sleeping coaches, and first class restaurant coaches. They are extremely comfortable and the passengers are very well cared for. Of course, these “coaches” are necessary for a proper train journey. But without a powerful engine, that is, the Evangelistic ministry, which admittedly shows only a few intermittent signs of genuine life on today’s ecclesial scene, the train is not or hardly moving and without thorough and constant maintenance, the Serving Ministry, the infrastructure of whatever sort is soon in whole or in part neglected. It turns bizarre, of course, when the passengers in love with their comfort zones do not even seem to notice that they are not or hardly moving, and do not recognize the need to weep over their virtual stand-still on deteriorating and degraded tracks. If anyone doubts the latter, a simple reminder may remedy this. Revival times that “routinely” produced between ten and twenty millions of converts in a Century or so are in most locations simply a thing of the past. Furthermore, what used to be the nearly exclusive “logistical” ministry of the Church in the midst of a stagnating world, such as the systematic care for the poor, for orphans, etc., and the establishment and maintenance of educational institutions, medical facilities, etc., has now virtually been taken over by the State.<sup>6</sup> All in all, is it any wonder that the ecclesiastical downgrade seems inevitable?

Candidly, once again I lost you, the reader, before I even start, if you like so many folks question some or all of this from the very outset or dismiss it out of hand. But remember in the area of Evangelism not only the NT phenomenon of the “spontaneous” expansion of a Spirit-filled Church (Acts 2:47; 8:4; 11:19-21) in which even Pastor-Teachers programmatically participated in doing “the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5) but also, as mentioned, the Revival times throughout Church history, which with the addition of huge numbers of “worshippers” to the Church royally met the Acts 2 benchmark and gloriously reflected its pattern (Acts 2:37)! Such times in the Middle East, in Europe, in the US, and more recently in Korea, Malawi and Uganda, which resulted in overflowing churches everywhere, with massive building programs and impressive societal impact to match, demonstrate this without a shadow of a doubt.

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<sup>6</sup> For the vast influence, the pervasive impact, and the immense imprint of the Christian Faith upon all areas of societal life, such as sexual morality, the dignity of women, hospitals, health care, education, labor, economics, liberty, justice, slavery, art, architecture, music, literature, etc., see Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

Remember also the NT vista upon the Church as an “innumerable multitude, clothed in white robes (Rev. 7:9-10) that can hardly materialize without a concerted effort of the whole Church without exception perennially to pursue that eschatological reality as its present objective.

Remember as well that in the Diaconal area a widespread and consistent eagerness prevailed to provide a vast array of societal and social services as part of the implementation of the Kingship of Jesus over all of life. Once again, before long the biblical function of the world, and the way it continues to operate, in spite of the fact that it does not have its own independent purpose, stands in need of close attention,<sup>7</sup> but for now our interest should be piqued how the threefold ministry of the Church did, can and must contribute to this awesome quantitative and qualitative “end product.”

### 3. *Theological Reality*

The third reality is theological and slightly more sophisticated. It pertains to the complementarity of (all) biblical truth. The sin against it may well be the greatest, most widespread, and most debilitating one perpetrated in the Church in every phase and aspect of its existence. It is deadly. It is the failure or refusal to honor both sides of God’s complementary truth, by ignoring, downplaying, or destroying one side by means of the other. The Trinity was the target of this sin in the early Church. Is God One or Three? The biblical answer, of course, is “both,” even if One in Essence and Three in Persons, and therefore not in the same way. However, Sabellius took a firm hold of the one and proceeded to eliminate the three. Arius, on the other hand, reversed the procedure. He embraced the three and got rid of the one. The sovereignty-responsibility has been a similar issue throughout the history of the Church. Which one of the two poles is taught in Scripture? The biblical answer again is “both.” But enamored by human responsibility Arminianism was and is unable to “swallow” full Divine Sovereignty, bound to end up in “Openness of God Theism,” if and when held with rigorous consistency. On the other hand, irreversibly committed to Divine Sovereignty Hyper-Calvinism tends to downplay human responsibility. Finally, how about the seemingly conflicting emotionalities of love and hate in God? Does he love or hate the sinner? For the third time, the biblical answer is “both.”<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, most Christians opine that God may hate sin, but cannot but love the sinner.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, others, be it the minority, simply cannot envision how God who foreordains everybody’s eternal destiny could ever display any love whatsoever toward the reprobate. The result of the pervasive sin against the complementarity of truth is an inevitable warfare in all societal structures, whether (a) redemptive (supernatural) in nature, specifically the Church, (b) creational (natural), such as marriage, the family, the state, or (c) voluntary, such as businesses, organizations, clubs, etc. All these infightings, battles, and wars have done untold damage to the Church throughout its existence. The culprit? It is the conscious or unconscious allegiance to the ultimacy or primacy of the human mind, rooted in the idolatry of the self. The mind has single occupancy only, such as a Motel 6. In general, when there is agreement, there is “peace.” But woe, if and when there is disagreement. Potential or actual warfare is the order of the day,

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<sup>7</sup> See for a starter, **Appendix I** and its bird’s eye assessment of the (intermediate) purpose and (sole) function of the present world.

<sup>8</sup> See for this, David Platt, “The Glory of God, the Lostness of Man, and the Gospel of Christ,” in John Piper & David Mathis, eds., *Finish the Mission* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2012), 59-61, and from the same author, *Follow Me* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2013), 42-43. See also Ps. 5:5-6; 7:12; 11:5; Prov. 15:29; John 43:36!

whether in practice or theory. More concretely, the mind cannot simultaneously encompass clearly stipulated biblical truth, such as, the one-ness and three-ness of God, Divine sovereignty and human responsibility, God's love and God's hatred of sinners, and all other complementary truths. The potential list is literally endless. The solution, of course, is the embrace of the primacy of the heart. It has double occupancy, like a Marriott.<sup>9</sup> This is the case for believers and unbelievers alike. Through God's common grace unbelievers who have a heart's relationship of love can certainly live in apparent peace and harmony with each other in the midst of disagreements. But even a heart that is merely subdued and sweetened by common grace has the "self" on the throne. As such it cannot and will not embrace complementary *biblical* truth. For this embrace to occur a *fully functioning* regenerate heart, which, as we shall see below, replaces the unregenerate heart or self, is indispensable. The emphasis upon *fully functioning* is no luxury. It is hardly a secret that folks who would give their lives in defense of the doctrine of the Trinity turn around and fight the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty tooth and nail. What they "swallow" on the one hand, they "spit out" on the other. The root cause for this difference is crystal clear. In the second instance the fully functioning regenerate heart is, often unconsciously and unintentionally, dismissed and replaced by the primacy of the finite mind. The upshot? The humanly incomprehensible is just as "heartily" embraced in one instance (The Trinity) as it is "mindfully" (Read: "mindlessly") opposed in a second one (Divine Sovereignty). The summons ever to guard the regenerate heart as a matter of life and death could not be more apropos!

Candidly, and now for the third time, I have lost you, the reader, if you fail to recognize the relevance of all this and decide to reject or even ignore it. But remember, the heart is and remains man's mission control center (Prov. 4:23)! That is why it has to be guarded to the hilt. Remember also that the mind may not be conformed to the world which loves to assign it ultimacy as a stronghold raised against the knowledge of God, and therefore must be torn down as such by weapons of warfare that are divinely empowered (2 Cor. 10:4-5a). In fact, the mind does not come into its biblical own until it is renewed daily (Rom. 12:2) by making its total content fully captive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:5b)! The mind is and remains a tool of the heart, whether regenerate or unregenerate. When the heart embraces both poles of any complementary truth, it has a rich pay-off for the mind. It immediately does and will have cognitive rest! This applies to the Trinity, to the sovereignty-responsibility issue, to both God's love and hatred of sinners, and to all other complementary biblical truths. Incidentally, the primacy or ultimacy of the will or the emotions carries the same liability. Agreement means peace, but disagreement warfare. But when the heart has the primacy, it can and will put up with foolishness of the mind, the will or the emotions in loved ones. We all better deeply love and greatly respect Luther in spite of his "'foolish' railings" against James, which according to one commentator put a centuries' long pall on the Epistle that did not really started to lift until the 1980's and onward, when a spate of commentaries and monographs on James began to be published that focused on its message and merits for its own sake! We all better love Calvin as well in spite of his failure systematically and vigorously to put the threefold Gospel on the ecclesiastical map, or for that matter godly Pentecostals in spite of their aberration to proclaim "speaking in tongues" as the (sole) evidence of the experiential presence of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>9</sup> In case the concept of the complementarity of truth, and what it entails in terms of its nature and its "residence," is not fully clear, Isaiah 26:12 should lift any remaining fog with its statement that "*God* has performed for us all *our* works (italics added)." Both the complementarity and the simultaneity of God's performance and our works, in which God's 100% and man's 100% equals 100%, cannot but reside in the regenerate heart with its double occupancy!

#### ***4. Practical Reality***

The fourth reality is both profoundly simple and simply profound, and therefore easily to be grasped, but not as easily to be implemented. While it is not sufficiently intelligible simply to define theology as “application”--which should raise some eyebrows--, it is irrefutable that all truth does have practical implications and should have practical applications. Difference in theology does and must mean a difference in practice. Divergent views about any truth must always be defended or promoted on two counts. For one, it must be firmly believed to be based on Scripture. And for another, it must just as firmly be believed to be more conducive to holiness. But here we run into a curious fact. Often emotions run high in discussions pertaining to Christian Doctrine or Christian Life. But at the end of the day it just as often appears to be a “tempest in a teapot,” or “a storm in a glass of water,” whatever the doctrine or the practice, because all too often everybody goes home to drink the same root beer, frankly with or without the root. In other words, the stand one takes makes no practical difference whatsoever in terms of a godly life. By way of illustration, the meaning of the Lord Supper was a “hot potato” in the days of the Reformation. It precipitated an utterly regrettable split between Lutheran and Calvinist churches. But what practical difference did it make for Lutherans and Calvinists to partake of the Lord’s Supper on any given Sunday? Similarly in the areas of the Trinity, Sovereignty and Responsibility, as well as Evangelism, Apologetics, or Counseling! If hotly debated truths or methodologies do not have practical consequences and their proponents do not (have any intention to) act upon them, what good is it to enter into the debate at all? The same applies to “The Threefold Ministry of the Church.” The Biblical teaching on this topic is explosive. So is and should be its practical implication for and application in the life of the Church!

Candidly, I have lost you, the reader, now for the fourth time, if you beg to differ. But remember James’ indictment that folks who listen to God’s Word and know God’s Word still deceive themselves if they do not act upon it. Presumably nobody wishes to be like a man or woman who carefully studies his or her face, but turns around and, oh my, totally forgets, in fact, decides to forget, what he or she looks like (Jam. 1:24). It is incredibly foolish in the workaday world. It is even more foolish in God’s world! While acting without thinking is bound to be chaotic, thinking without acting is and remains sterile. The presence of the practical implications of one’s doctrinal or methodological stance is especially telling in the next reality, which spills over in the focus of this volume, The Threefold Ministry of the Church.

#### ***5. Eschatological Reality***

The fifth and final reality is eschatological and may meet with some questions without touching the substance of this section. At any rate it should be understood that all eschatological positions, whether Amillennial, Postmillennial, Historical or Dispensational Premillennial, are fully committed to victory, both definitive victory on the cross and in the resurrection of Christ and ultimate victory in heaven. But they differ when it comes down to our earthly scene. Historic and Dispensational Premillennialism are pessimistic and “defeatist” about the present era. The statement that “It is useless to polish the brass on a sinking ship” pretty much sums it up! They stake their hope of victory upon a literal and physical Millennium following the Return of Christ. Postmillennialism is optimistic and trumpets “victory” even in the present era prior to his Second Coming. Somehow the whole world is getting a Christian signature, inclusive of the nation of



Israel. The usually prevailing type of Amillennialism appears to send mixed signals. It prefers to call itself neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but rather realistic. It often hopes, even seeks, and is always thankful for victory, but it is ready to live with providential “defeat.” After all, the “wheat” and the “tares” are perennial companions in an ever present and continuing stand-off (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43). The real victory, then, is reserved for the afterlife.

The present volume holds to an eschatology that seeks to avoid the questionable aspects that seem to be attached to each view as defined thus far, and may be designated for lack of possibly a preferable terminology as “Proto-millennialism,” in which “proto” stands for the dictionary meaning of “radical.” In short, “radical” millennialism latches on to the promise of God that holds out the prospect of victory but in the process demands total combat for its fulfillment. As such it constantly “throbs” with life as it embraces a perennial D-Day with all that this entails in terms of “blood, sweat and tears,” in order to arrive at an ever beckoning, ever obtainable and ever joyful V-Day, which, incidentally, also is and should be characteristic of a biblically consistent and full-orbed Amillennialism. So it cannot but hold to a (Postmillennial) *vision* of victory already on the present earthly scene. The promises of God are too glorious to ignore (See a. o. Ps. 2:8; Hab. 2:14; Mt. 28:19-20, and the many similar passages in the OT as well as the NT). But this comes with a biblical caveat. It simultaneously insists that in God’s governmental dealings his promises are invariably realized through a tireless and untiring human instrumentality: 100% God through 100% man. In short, the biblical motto is, “Victory through Battle.” In fact, victory *only* through hard battle, consistent battle, perennial battle!<sup>10</sup> The bottom line: Presence of (Proto-millennial) Battle? Victory! Absence of Battle? (Premillennial) Defeat! It is hard to miss that both the OT and the NT testify to this throughout. In short, if the victory is won, we have only God to thank. But if we experience defeat, whether total or partial, we only have ourselves greatly, shamefully, and sorrowfully to blame, and cannot simply ascribe it in a rather detached, nonchalant, or even “devoted” manner to “Sovereignty” or “Providence!”<sup>11</sup>

In other words, the promises of God transcend the unconditional-conditional polarity. “Unconditionality” tends to emphasize the sovereignty of God while often taking its eyes off, and therefore at the neglect or expense of, the full and unreserved responsibility of man, allowing

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<sup>10</sup> I am fond of telling my esteemed Postmillennial friends that the only way they can see their hope (vision of victory) come to fruition is by acting like a Proto-millennialist (or consistent, biblically full-orbed Amillennialist) (victory through battle)! Jonathan Edwards, in his beautiful booklet, *Call to United Extra-ordinary Prayer* (Christian Heritage, 2003), holds out the expectation of such prayer in the (postmillennial) eschatological end times. If he had been a biblically full-orbed “Amillennialist” or Proto-millennialist he would have argued (1) that this kind of prevailing prayer is not just promised for those end times, but divinely mandated for every “present,” every “now,” in the history of the Church, although he admittedly appears to do this by implication, and (2) that as a result such prayer could no longer be called “extra-ordinary,” but would have to be designated as “normal” and the benchmark or standard by which the Church will be perennially judged “for better or for worse” (Is. 62:6-7)! His failure solemnly to insist on this may have been the reason why his otherwise superb booklet suffered a century long obscurity, and although recently brought back in the spotlight, does not have the much needed impact in or upon a society that has lost the war or is about to lose it without much mourning about this. Candidly, why would it have this impact, as long as Revival Prayer is presented as “extra-ordinary” and as long as it is held or implied that somehow “the ordinary” will do “fine?”

<sup>11</sup> Compare for God’s governmental concatenation of Divine grace and human responsibility, Thomas Manton, *op. cit.*, 8-9, “It is true God has opened an excellent treasure in the church to defray the debts of humble sinners, and to bear the expenses of the saints to heaven. But there is nothing allowed to wanton prodigals, who spend freely and sin lavishly upon the mere account of the riches of grace ... There is a difference between causality and order. Mercy is never obtained but in the use of means. Wisdom’s dole is dispensed at wisdom’s gate (Prov. 8:34) ... (even if) the use of means does not oblige God to give mercy ... (James) wrote ... to prevent or check their misprisions (errors) who cried up naked apprehensions for faith, and a barren profession for true religion.”

the latter too often to act like an interested observer only. “Conditionality” tends to emphasize the responsibility of man, often suggesting or implying that he is the cause to an effect, keeping its eye off, and therefore at the neglect or expense of, the full and unreserved sovereignty of God. Scripture is replete with data that indicate or spell out the transcendence of these two poles.

In the OT Joshua has been granted all the real estate from the river Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea upon which “he places the sole of his foot” (Josh. 1:3-4). The grant, in the perfect tense (!), is nothing but amazing in its scope. But to grant is not the same as to possess. It requires an unrelenting commitment to mortal combat to receive it. Ironically, the Israelites did not even rise to that occasion in their attempts to occupy the land of Canaan. They were culpably left with large swaths of the native population as permanent thorns in their side. Incidentally, not until David was there a semblance of the kind of victory envisioned in the days of Joshua! David clearly had every reason to thank God without whom he would have embarked upon an impossible task. The Goliath story is a case in point! But at the same time he paid the heavy price of incessant danger in at times a very tenuous warfare that seemed to spell doom. Solomon inherited David’s achievements, but squandered them away when he turned his back to the 100% God, not to mention the rapid downgrade during the subsequent Northern and Southern Kingdoms, which must make us weep (Jer. 8:18-9:1; Rom. 9:2; Phil. 3:18).

The NT counterpart of the transcendence of this polarity is given by Peter. We have been granted (perfect tense here as well) all that is needful for “life and godliness.” This is even more astonishingly all-encompassing. But, once again, to grant is not to receive. It must be obtained by knowing him who called us to his own glory (2 Pet. 1:3-4). No intimate repentant, believing, grateful, joyful communion with Christ, through his Word, the Fellowship of his people, the Lord’s Supper, and Prayer (Acts 2:42)? No fullness of life or holiness! Period!

In both cases, OT as well as NT, the transcending nature of the promise comes to the fore. The “grant” is in the form of a promissory note that demands a full human commitment to acquire its content. A check written and signed by a trustworthy individual is “money in the bank.” But it must be cashed, if it is “to be put in circulation.” Until that time it is “unclaimed capital.” There are innumerable data in Scripture that underscore this governmental pattern of “100% God through 100% man,” the latter as the God-mandated means to an end, and never as a cause to an effect. Abraham had to return to the marriage bed for Isaac to be born. Parents have to train their children for them not to deviate. Folks have to exhort each other daily for holiness to be a reality. Nehemiah does not come out of his clothes to see the promise of a rebuilt Jerusalem fulfilled. The merchant cannot buy the property with the treasure in it or the pearl of great price, until and unless he has sold everything in order to pay for it. No fear, no unbelief, no indifference, no negligence, no laziness, no passivity, no lingering, no wasting of time, no procrastination permitted. Not ever! All this stands condemned as rebellion against God (Dt. 1:26-33), and as a result leaves his “money in the bank” for future utilization. After all, both “the gifts (grants) and the calling (summons to cash in) of God” are and remain “irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29)! It is to be feared that in the Judgment all of us to our shame will be faced with “lots of unclaimed capital!” Candidly, “unconditionality” does not allow for “unclaimed capital” and thereby flies in the face of the complementary truth of Hebrews 4:1-2. God’s promises remain in force, even if there is no tangible benefit due to lack of faith! “Conditionality,” on the other hand, may well leave room for “‘dead’ capital,” and therefore suffers two ills. It misses that “unclaimed capital” is and remains “alive,” and it flies in the face of the complementary truth of Philippians 2:12-13. It is God who works both to will and to work! “Of God, and through God and unto God are all things” (Rom. 11:36)! Both “unconditionality” and “conditionality”

thinking fall victim to the primacy of the intellect that does not leave both poles, of sovereignty and responsibility, “alone,” for what they are in tandem, or “at peace,” in harmony with each other, but must jeopardize the one by virtue of and at the expense of the other. At any rate, all this explains why in the present context the biblical “Victory through Battle” motto is emphasized. It is woven in the warp and woof of Scripture (For an additional sample, see once again Is. 62:6-7). Each victory is and must be hard-fought. After all, unless a seed dies, it does not produce any fruit. But if it does die, the fruit is abundant (John 12:24). In short, no death, no fruit, a little death, (at best) a little fruit, a little more death, (hopefully) a little more fruit, unqualified death, lavish fruit! This decisively establishes and underscores the biblical truth of 100% God + 100% man = 100%. This comes to perfect expression in Isaiah, “*You* have done for us all *our* works (Is. 26:12; italics, added), one of those precious verses that are mostly unknown and hardly ever function as they should. Both Divine and human activities take place simultaneously, but the Divine activity has invariably the primacy over the human one. This is the kind of complementarity of truth that does not fit in the human mind with its single occupancy, but peacefully lodges in the regenerate heart with its double occupancy, and yields “cognitive rest” to boot.

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

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

Ministry, which deals with the Foundational Principles as well as in Section III under the heading of The Revival of the Church as the Dynamics behind its Threefold Ministry that deals with the Practical Implications and Applications of the Foundational Principles.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Section III that deals with the Practical Implications and Applications of the Foundational Principles is scheduled to focus specifically upon 1. The Nature, Function, Manner and Objectives of the Evangelistic Ministry of the Church, 2. The Nature, Function, Manner and Objectives of the Edificational Ministry of the Church, and 3. The Nature, Function, Manner and Objectives of the Serving Ministry of the Church, to be preceded by an Introduction and to be followed by a Conclusion.

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

### **Introduction**

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

Frankly, it has become increasingly popular, especially in Pentecostal circles, to promote an ongoing Five-fold Ministry, as if this were taught in Ephesians 4:10, an apostolic, a prophetic, an evangelistic, a pastoral, and a teaching ministry. However, a meticulous exegesis of this passage as well as other relevant passages of Scripture does not support this construct. First, the Greek wording of Ephesians 4:10 does not present a five-fold, but rather a four-fold ministry. God has given “some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastor-teachers.” The original terminology translated as “some” occurs only four times. This means that the hyphenation of pastor-teachers is mandated, which precludes and forbids the expansion of biblical truth into the popular but mistaken view of a so-called five-fold ministry.<sup>13</sup> Second, the office of Deacon, as presented in Philippians 1:1 and underscored in I Timothy 3:8-13, is never taken into account. This truncates biblical truth by definition. One simply cannot leave out an essential biblical component and hope for clear sailing. Third, while it is true that at the time of Paul’s writing of Ephesians there were still live apostles and live prophets, Ephesians 2:20 indicates that they made up the foundation of the Church. Ephesians 3: adds by way of explanation that they are “foundational” in as much they disclosed the mystery of Christ that was thus far an unknown entity. Clearly this foundation was laid in full, as reflected in the completed canon of the NT. This makes it equally clear that these offices ceased to exist. To deny this is to deny that the Christ-mystery is fully known as well as the sufficiency of Scripture that contains all its features. All this is corroborated by other data in the NT. An “Apostle” (with a capital “A”) had to be an eye-witness of Jesus, and had to be part of the Apostolate which had the Holy Spirit breathed upon it to produce the “apostolic” Word of God (John 20:22-23), while a “Prophet” (with a

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<sup>13</sup> Nowhere in the NT is the “pastor-teacher,” which is the substantive as well as functional equivalent of “elder” or “overseer” (bishop), ever designated simply as “pastor.”

capital “P”) was a special authorized mouth-piece of God that has an inerrant and universally binding message, inclusive of the OT (See 1 Pet. 1:,,,21) as well as the NT (See 2 Pet. 3:,,,16). No one today meets these conditions and therefore can claim this privilege and this function. Clearly, Apostles with a capital “A” and “Prophets” with a capital “P” had their day, fulfilled their calling, and ceased to be necessary any longer. Their Office simply had run its *full* course. This said, however, apostles with a small “a” are still in evidence in NT times. They are folks with a specific mission. Romans 16 opens up a window upon their function. In this chapter Paul requests the Roman congregation to greet a number of hard working people, women as well as men some of whom risked their necks for him and deserved the undying gratitude of him as well as of all the churches (Rom. 16:...6). It is rather remarkable that he does not send his greetings to them directly. This starts to make sense, however, if they were his unofficial or official “co-workers” who either as a spontaneous and voluntary or as an assigned and sent advance party, “advance” in comparison to him (Rom. 16:7c), were instrumental in jump-starting the Church in Rome. If they did not at least partly labor “in his name,” they definitely acted with his knowledge and encouragement. So with this as backdrop Paul “summons” the Romans to honor them as their “founding brothers and sisters,” while urging them in no uncertain terms as well to keep a wary eye on, in fact, to distance themselves from the others who were sowing discord and undermined both their and his teaching, which he undoubtedly summarized in his Letter. In this context Paul calls Andronicus and Junias outstanding “missionaries,” if not an outstanding “missionary” team, who as his “co-prisoners” in the service of King Jesus either preceded him in their labors or were commissioned by him to start what he eventually would solidify, if not complete (Rom. 16:7). All this leads to the conclusion that the NT distinguishes three types of apostles, the ones with a capital “A” (Gal. 1:17, 19; 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 2:20; 4:11), false apostles (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11), as well as apostles in the wider sense of the word (Rom.16:7; 1 Cor. 9:5; 12:28-29; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25), “folks-with-a-mission,” whom we today designate as “missionaries” or “missionary-associates.” They spread or helped spread the Gospel often in “virgin” territories and plant churches.<sup>14</sup> Prophets with a small “p” are in evidence in NT times as well. These, as we shall see further below, are folks who set forth the existing Word of God, similar to the schools of the prophets in the OT. But there is no evidence in the NT that they represented an “office.” This leaves us with three attested offices in the NT, the office of Evangelist (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11), of Pastor-Teacher (Acts 20:17; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1ff; 5:17) and of Deacon (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8ff).<sup>15</sup> They have the ultimate, be it delegated and ministerial, authority in the Church. Everyone, inclusive of the apostles with a small “a” and prophets with a small “p,” is answerable to them. Scripture is crystal clear in that regard (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-13; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Heb. 13:7, 17). Incidentally, if Evangelists are sent on

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<sup>14</sup> See also J. Van Bruggen, *Het Raadsel van Romeinen 16* (Groningen: Uitgeverij de Vuurbaak, 1970), 15-36, esp. 19-22, 27-32.

<sup>15</sup> A careful study of all the pertinent biblical data, such as Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11d; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Tit. 1:5, 7; Jam 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-2), does (and should!) lead to the conclusion that the office of pastor-teacher, elder, overseer (bishop) fully overlap each other, in fact, are one and the same! There may be a difference in function within the office (1 Tim. 5:17). But this does not warrant the regrettable decision on the part of many to split the office in two, thus tearing at the exquisite biblical tapestry and putting the future in jeopardy. After all, it tends to elevate the function of the one component and lower the expectation of the second, or ironically manages to do both. As a result Scripture passages such as Hebrews 13:7, 13:17, etc., are often truncated or can easily become unintelligible to one degree or another. In short, one cannot seriously impair the unified command structure of an army and expect to win the war!

a mission, they can double up as “missionaries,” Similarly, Pastor-Teachers must have the gift of “speaking the oracles of God” (Peter) or of “prophecy” (Paul) to qualify for the office.

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

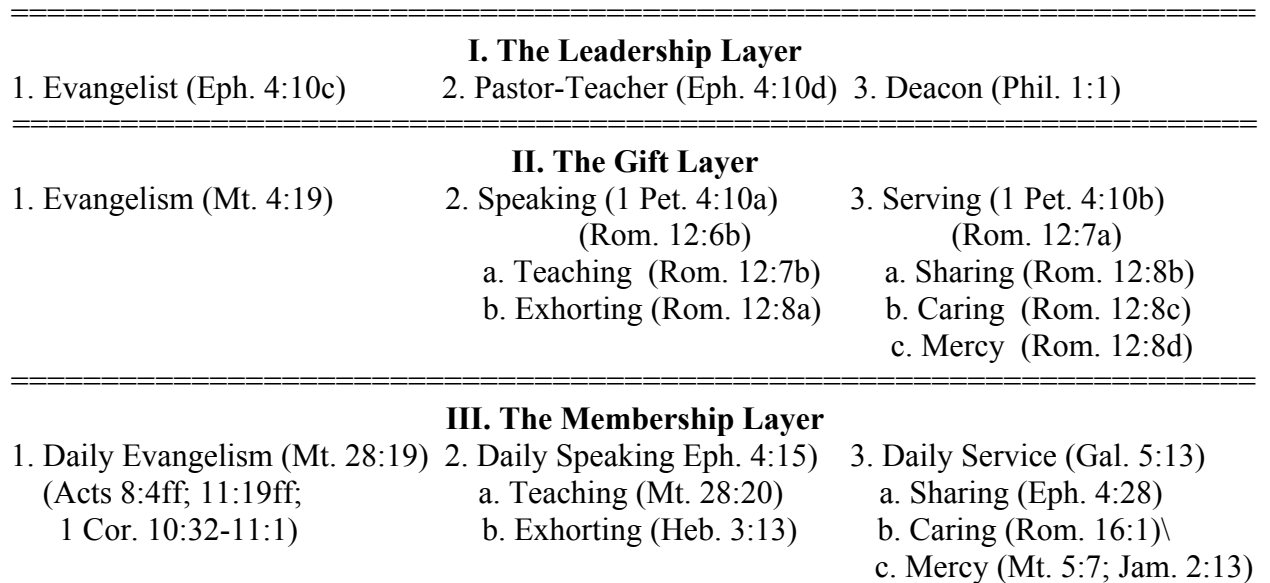
The structure of the Church, which presents the framework for its threefold ministry, can best be presented in the form of a grid, such as tic-tac-toe, consisting of three layers, each of which has three segments. The bottom layer focuses on the Membership of the Church and mandates, as we shall see below, daily Evangelism, daily Speaking and Daily Service. The top layer covers the threefold Leadership in the Church, and accommodates the three Offices of Evangelist, Pastor-Teacher and Deacon. The middle layer represents the threefold Giftedness in the Church and covers the gift of Evangelism (Mt. 4:19), as well as the gift of Speaking the Oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:10a) and the gift of Serving (1 Pet. 4:10b), according to Peter.<sup>16</sup> The apostle Paul follows in the footsteps of Peter when he differentiates between the gift of “prophecy” (with a small “p”), clearly corresponding with and identical to “speaking the oracles of God” (Rom. 12:6b)<sup>17</sup> and the gift of “service (identical Greek term in both Paul and Peter) (Rom. 12:7a). But he enlarges on Peter when he breaks the gift of “prophecy” down into two gifts, “teaching” and “exhorting” (Rom. 12:7b, 8a) and the gift of serving, into three gifts,

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<sup>16</sup> What comes into view here is the biblical distinction between the leadership gifts of Ephesians 4:10, the extraordinary gifts of 1 Corinthians 10-12, and the ordinary gifts mentioned in Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:10. This distinction is mandated by the fact that every believer has one of the gifts mentioned in the Romans and 1 Peter passages by definition. No such gift, no Christianity. This cannot be said about the gifts mentioned in the 1 Corinthians chapters. They are treated as “icing on the cake” and therefore are “optional.” Of course, it is commonly agreed that the leadership gifts in Ephesians are in a class of their own. It is customary in “gift” analysis and assessment seminars to lump them all together. The total number then comes to more than two dozen. This is a serious error. Such seminars put the biblical “gift” area in a fog, and usually have no tangible impact upon the attendees, and as a result do not translate in a more effective ministry on their part. They usually ascribe one or more gifts to themselves but end up with “business as usual.” To stick to “description” removes “prescription” from view.

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

“sharing,” “caring,” and “showing mercy” (Rom. 12:8b, c, d).<sup>18</sup> The emerging tapestry is exquisite on the face of it and displays the deep-structure of the Church that either must be in place or to be implemented post-haste as the necessary condition for it to function and act like an organized, efficient, effective and successful army,<sup>19</sup> not only prepared to prevail in small scale battles and to succeed in large(r) scale campaigns, but also poised to win the war. With its structure in place and fully operational, the Church resembles a modern up-to-date factory that does and must have all its essential components continually and indefinitely in place in order to run at full capacity. The following graph is designed to visualize all this.



<sup>18</sup> Note that in Paul the first two gifts, “prophecy” and “service” are abstract nouns, corresponding with the two categories of “speaking the oracles of God,” and “service” in Peter, while the remaining five are concrete nouns, “he who teaches, he who exhorts, he who shares, he who cares and he who shows mercy.” This makes me conclude that there is no discrepancy between Paul and Peter. Both indicate that there are two gift *areas*. Paul then adds that there are two *functionaries* in the first and three *functionaries* in the second gift area for a total of six gifts, one in the evangelism, two in the speaking and three in the serving area. This makes eminent practical sense. There is a need for only one OBGYN or midwife to bring someone in the world. Furthermore, it takes two, a pediatrician and a general practitioner, to keep folks healthy. But, finally, there are always three attendants in a doctor’s or dentist’s office to take care of the logistics so that the doctor can totally and exclusively concentrate on the task at hand for the benefit of the patient. The Church leadership, as we shall see, shows a similar pattern, with one type of evangelist, two types of pastor-teachers, overseers or elders, and three types of deacons, and must put this on practical display in order to be fully effective.

<sup>19</sup> Many Church folks decry the very idea of “success.” They hold that it necessarily carries the worldly overtones of “empire building.” In this they are mistaken. As all will and should agree, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all embarked on an intentionally successful mission (See e.g. Is. 53:10b). This makes it hardly surprising that God’s instrument to accomplish this mission are promised “success” in the implementation of his plan, even if there are strict conditions (Josh 1:7-8). But all fears should be laid to rest when the root condition of “biblical success” is recognized for what it is, namely predicated upon “dying” (John 12:24). This once and for all separates it from its worldly counterpart decidedly and decisively. We are called upon boldly and humbly to be in hot and successful pursuit of advancing the cause of God’s name, God’s Kingdom, and God’s will and to be joyful in the warm embrace of “dying” to that effect. Without the latter the former cannot be achieved. After all, the message of Jesus is quite simple in its profundity, “I died for you, you die for me. And this is a non-negotiable.” Candidly, I fear that folks who decry “success,” basically shield themselves against “paying the price,” whether consciously and intentionally or not. This ultimately stamps this decry as an act of “impiety,” however “pious” it may seem at the surface.



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Now on with the details, starting with the basic operational Membership Layer, reflecting the kingship and priesthood of all believers (Rev. 5:10), continuing with the overseeing and directional Leadership Layer, and concluding with the pivotal but much neglected Gift Layer! In fact, it seems that both in biblical theory and biblical practice all three Layers leave a lot to be desired and need to come in a much sharper and full-orbed focus and a much improved and full-orbed implementation. In short, “holes galore” to be fixed in the fabric of all three!

### **The Membership Layer**

I cover this layer first because from it the Leadership must be recruited and from it the Gifts do emerge. Starting, then, with the bottom layer of the Membership of the Church, upon “their repentance, the forgiveness of their sins, *and the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38) believers are both mandated and eager *daily* (1) to “evangelize” (2) “to speak the Word,” and (3) “to serve.” Let me unpack this systematically.

First, the Great Commission (Read: “Grand Command”) of making disciples of *all* the nations, which at present make for a total of 7 billion people, can hardly be started or completed *in toto*, unless and until all believers, as Scripture indicates and Revival times demonstrate, join in one capacity or another in spontaneous and daily evangelism (Acts 11:19ff).<sup>20</sup> Of course, it takes the empowering gift of the Holy Spirit of which the Apostles were very much aware. They would be “useless,” and therefore were told to wait, until he would be poured out on them on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). The same applies to “today.” Without the Holy Spirit it is a “no-go” across the board. Hence the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer upon their repentance (regeneration) and their forgiveness (justification)! Not to have the gift of the Spirit is not to belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9). This stands to eminent reason. Without the indwelling Spirit indwelling sin (Rom. 7:20), or the flesh (Rom. 7:18; 8:5; Gal. 5:16-17), will maul and obliterate everybody, and nullify any possibility of holiness whatsoever (John 15:5; Rom. 7:24), of which making disciples is an essential component. After all, the latter is a “command” (Mt. 28:19)! Of course, the sober “stickler” is that “without holiness no one can see the Lord” (Heb. 10:14), that, is, ever come into his presence and ever fellowship with him.

Frankly, there is a great, Grand Canyon like, gap between Malachi and Matthew. What God the Father promises as the substance of the New Covenant can never materialize apart from what God the Son produces through his cross and his resurrection. This is to say, the OT as the book of the Father is “nothing” and accomplishes “nothing” apart from the Gospels as the book of the Son. He personifies the New Covenant (Is. 42:6; 49:8) and in that capacity provides the substance of what the Father promises. But there is a second equally great, equally Grand Canyon like, gap between John and Acts.<sup>21</sup> What the Father promises and the Son produces will

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

<sup>21</sup> The idea of the awesome “gap” between John and Acts at this pivotal juncture in Scripture, “the (immense) transition the Holy Spirit effects from the Gospels to the Acts,” “the enormity of the progress between the last chapter of the Gospels and the first chapter of Acts,” was first brought to my attention by Adolphe Monod, *Farewell to his Friends and to his Church* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), 103, 113, republished with the title

never be personalized without the Holy Spirit. The OT as the book of the Father and the Gospels as the book of the Son are “nothing” and accomplish “nothing” without Acts, the Epistles and the rest of the NT as the book of the Holy Spirit (John 14: )! In a word, the Spirit transports the substance of the New Covenant (Is. 59:21). He instills power in the believer and his daily Gospel Evangelism and he instills conviction in those who are exposed to that Gospel. Without him everybody is and remains a “desert” (Is. 32:14-15), a “cemetery.” (Is. 37:1ff) and a “Dead Sea” (Ezek. 47:1ff). But when the Spirit is poured out and makes his grand and impressive entrance the effect is awesome. The “desert” turns into one vast “fertile field,” and not just a barren place with a “few acres of arable soil.” The “cemetery” turns into one great “maternity ward,” and not just a place with some “clinics,” few and far between. And the Dead Sea turns into one large “fresh water lake,” and not just a locale with a “few spots of fresh water.” Neither grieved (Eph. 4:30), nor quenched (1 Thess. 5:19), nor outraged (Heb. 10:29), the Spirit in his unencumbered and overflowing presence will empower all believers, and make their spontaneous and daily evangelistic activity the order of the day! The history of powerful Revival times is there to demonstrate this, however few and far between they may have been, frankly, to the culpable shame of the Church corporately and of its members individually when the Divine promise as well as mandate to that effect leaves them “cold.” In the light of both promise and mandate, the least we can do is to pray humbly, fervently, incessantly and expectantly for these times to visit us, to remain with us, or to return to us, both corporately (Hab. 3:2) and individually (Ps. 119:25, 37, 50, 77, 88, 93, 116, 144, 154, 156). It has been well said that apparently the lack of corporate revival is no excuse for the lack of daily personal revival!

Second, in addition to the eager and daily pursuit of evangelism all believers are also mandated and eager to “speak the Word” daily. This consists of teaching (Mt. 28:20; Heb.5:12) and exhorting (Heb. 3:13). But both must have the *quality* of “heralding” or “proclaiming” the truth to be effective.<sup>22</sup> This is pivotal and applies to other ministerial disciplines as well, such as evangelism, counseling, and apologetics.<sup>23</sup> This is not a popular view. It is thought to be heavy-handed, insensitive, and sure to turn people off. We are often told that in all its ministries the Church should really and extensively resort to listening first, to building relationships, to smooth the way for eventually presenting facts for careful consideration. While all this is good and well, and at times may have its proper and limited place, this does not seem to jibe with Paul’s customary approach. In fact, as far as we know, he never did anything close to it, let alone bog down in it! In his evangelistic apologetics or apologetic evangelism he *proclaimed* the truth of Jesus in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), *proclaimed* the truth of God in Athens (Acts 17:23), and *proclaimed* the truth of Moses and the prophets to Herod Agrippa (Acts 26:12-23, esp. 22-23).<sup>24</sup>

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*Living in the Hope of Glory* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 41, 55. It made me aware of a similar awesome “gap” between Malachi and Matthew.

<sup>22</sup> John Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), .....REFERENCE.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 17:23.

<sup>24</sup> Recent proposals in apologetic methodology seek to replace “the use of rational or evidential arguments” with “the art of persuasion,” along the lines of Aristotle with his threefold emphasis upon the “‘inviting’ character of the speaker” (*ethos*), the “‘facilitating’ diagnosis of the frame of mind of the one spoken to” (*pathos*), and the “‘impelling’ content of the words spoken” (*logos*). In other words, the “theology of persuasion” is basically pitted against the questionable “notion of compelling proof” as the focus of an apologetics that can be verified from Scripture (Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 123ff, esp. 126-127, 139-160), ostensibly in the footsteps of Paul. After all, did he not emphatically state that “knowing the fear of God we *persuade* others” (2 Cor. 5:11), and were not some Jews, many Greeks, and a few of the leading women in Thessalonica *persuaded* to join Paul and Silas (Acts 17:4), and did not Herod Agrippa retort, “You almost *persuade* me to become a Christian” (Acts 26:28), and did not Paul seek to *persuade* the Jews in Rome about Jesus from the

All his “preliminaries” served that purpose. In Thessalonica he barely escaped a vicious mob (Acts 17:5-6), in Athens he was mockingly called a “babbling” (Acts 17:18, 32), and in Agrippa’s presence he was declared “insane” (Acts 26:24). This is the inevitable price of “heralding” or “proclaiming” the truth of God. Frankly, without this quality no ministry, whether evangelistic, apologetic, edificational or otherwise, will ever be able to reach the heart, man’s mission control center. It will stop and mire down at the intellect, the will, or the emotions. But the intellect can only store “dead” capital, the will only “make-belief” capital and the emotions only “fleeting” capital. No, only “proclamation” that “bears witness to the truth” (John 18:37b) is the God-given instrument that can “create ears to hear” (John 17:37c) by “cutting at the heart” (Acts 2:37; 7:54). As such, it will grip its owners and either electrify it unto conversion (Acts 2:41; Acts

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Law of Moses and the Prophets, in which he was at least partially successful? So this proposal *seems* biblical. But is it warranted as it is formulated and presented? To start with Agrippa’s response, it at the least fails to mention, if not overlooks, that it is in reply to Paul’s *proclamation* of truth. In short, Paul *proclaims* with a view to persuasion. This is equally obvious in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1ff), in Athens (Acts 17:22ff), and in Rome (Acts 28:23). The context of 2 Corinthians 5:11 more than suggests the same. But in its present formulation this proposal equally fails to recognize that for Agrippa “persuasion” did not stop at “the adoption of a particular point of view,” or the “identification with a particular position,” which is the objective of the Aristotelian “art of persuasion.” After all, he tells Paul that “he nearly persuades him *to become a Christian*.” Based on *proclamation* Paul is after *conversion*. This is also clear from his call to repentance (and faith) in Athens (Acts 17:30)! More precisely, he is after conversion by means of *Gospel* truth! Frankly, why do we need Aristotle and his threefold framework, when Scripture is ever so much more clear and cogent in its emphasis upon the biblical character of the speaker, the biblical diagnosis of the hearer, and the biblical content of the spoken word (2 Tim, 2:22-24; see also 1 Thess. 2:1-12)! Let us by all means acknowledge that by God’s “common grace” Aristotle’s clinical observations are on the money as far as they go, but fall woefully short of Paul’s *Gospel Apologetics*. To him “persuasion” results from the *proclamation* of *Gospel* truth that addresses the heart of man, even if it is *through* the mind, and uses it only as a wayside station toward the *conversion* of the hearer, even if it is via the *acknowledgment* of the truth (2 Tim. 2:24-25; see also 1 Thess. 1:4-10; 2:13-16)! Agrippa was fully aware of all this. So should a Biblical Apologist! A Christian apologist who holds that “our goal in a covenantal apologetic cannot be the conversion of those to whom we speak,” apparently because “this is a goal we cannot accomplish” (Oliphint, 159) smuggles in a grave error behind an undeniable truism, and therefore is certainly not a Pauline Apologist! Of course, “persuasion” is clearly a biblical concept. It implies, if not underscores, that “discursively compelling proof” is not in Paul’s purview, and that, as we saw, on solid biblical grounds. But even if it is recognized that it must be based on the presentation of authoritative biblical truth, two crucial elements are still missing in any “theology of persuasion,” if it resembles a beautiful Swiss watch that lacks an empowering battery (*proclamation*) and the observance of the proper time (*conversion*). This is not just a nit-picking criticism. John Owen seems fond of reminding folks that if a preacher does not aim at repentance, as a rule he will never get repentance and ends up with a barren ministry. Similarly, if an apologist does not aim at conversion, as a rule he will not get conversions, and at the end of the day remains practically barren. It does not come as a surprise that both Evidentialist and Presuppositional apologists routinely concede that their methodologies are not very fruitful, if at all. At any rate, I fully agree that “the use of rational and evidential arguments with a view to mental agreement” as the core of one’s apologetic method needs to be debunked. It mires down in “probabilities” and cannot deliver “discursively compelling proof.” Frankly, to be content with “probability thinking” is passing strange. God “proclaims” that everybody is fully conscious of his existence (Rom 1:21). With (the kind of) apologists as friends who end up with his probable existence only, God hardly needs any enemies! Furthermore, it is increasingly recognized that “compelling proof” is an elusive entity (See also Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 25). It simply is not in the jurisdiction of man. So there is a need of a huge paradigm shift. But to replace objective “rational and evidential argumentation” with “the art of persuasion” in the form it is often promoted today falls quite short of it. Candidly, it is sub-biblical. For one thing, it still targets the mind. No, in the power of the Spirit and in dependence upon the Spirit a Biblical Apologetics, whether it is the Apologetics of Peter, Stephen or Paul, targets the heart of man as his mission control center (Acts 2:37; 7:51-54; 28:25-27) by means of the “proclamation-presentation of Gospel truth” with a view to repentance and submission! Within this framework additional relevant truths, whether of Scripture or nature, serve as a “corroborating” (Rev. 2:25ff, 34f; 7:1ff) and the truths of experience, facts, or logic as a “supporting” cast (Acts 2:22-23, 36; 17:22-23, 28).

17:34) or have it rise up in physical retaliation, such as stoning (Acts 7:58), or in verbal abuse, such as mocking (Acts 17:32).

Of course, within the fellowship of the saints there is a place for study, for discussion, for interaction, to ascertain and understand the meaning of a text or the ins and outs of situations. But understanding in Scripture is threefold, of the mind (Dan. 9:2), of the heart (1 Ki. 3:9; Is. 6:10) and of life (Job 28:28). To be sure, without the understanding of the mind the truth resides in a fog. But without the electrifying understanding of the heart truth will be “still-born.” It will never blossom out into an understanding of life (Eph. 4:13). And that is where authoritative proclamation comes into the picture, “Thus says the Lord!” This, not so incidentally, explains the heavy stress of Proverbs on “instruction” (Prov. 1:8; 4:1, 13; etc., etc.), and the emphasis in Romans that the Word has “molding” power (Rom. 6:17). Similarly, with regards to unbelievers there is a place for reasoning, for conversing, for interaction (Acts 17:17-18a), but proclamation has the final word (Acts 17:18b-19, 23). God’s truth is never up for discussion, not in the OT and not in the NT, and therefore not in Church history either! God’s truth is authoritative. The heart must bow before it for it to make a practical difference. It must bow before it unreservedly to embrace it, fully to absorb it and radically to display it. “Let your heart be perfect with the Lord your God to walk in his statutes and to keep his commandments” (1 Ki. 8:61; see also 1 Chr. 22:19)!

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

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

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

Incidentally, teachers without exhorters tend to produce “anacondas.” Every Sunday attendees in the Church service receive their sermon “piglet.” Half asleep they digest it for a week to return the next Sunday for another “piglet.” Exhorters are not content with that scenario.

They are after folks to recognize that biblical “piglets” are not “sleeping pills,” but fuel to mount up as eagles (Is. 40:31). On the other hand, exhorters without teachers tend to be “a pain in the neck.” They need teachers to pave the way for their exhortations. In short, teachers “desperately” need exhorters and exhorters “desperately” need teachers. Both therefore must be humble enough to pursue a joint speaking ministry. But, as we shall see, most fail miserably in this regard and all too often end up as “meteors.” They come and they go without much lasting effect. For a time they may illumine the sky more or less brightly. But at the end of the day they have not produced a “marching-army culture” that is “self-sustaining,” “self-governing,” “self-propagating,” and self-replicating.” It should not come as a surprise that at their demise they leave a darkening or darkened sky behind!

Thirdly, all believers are mandated and eager to serve. Service comes in three areas, “sharing,” “caring” and “showing of mercy.” In “sharing” believers generously donate their time, their energy, their skills, their money, etc., to needy people and in needy situation. Caring takes it a step further. In fact, it goes deeper. They recognize pain, whether spiritual, physical, mental, emotional or volitional pain, and seek “carefully” to remedy it with their presence, with their empathy, with their words, with their actions, but especially with the Word of God. “Showing mercy” goes deeper yet. In Scripture mercy is invariably shown to folks who are “terminal.” In other words, it “mercy” handles matters of life and death. Without the Good Samaritan’s hands-on mercy the man who was beaten to a pulp would not have survived. Without God’s justifying mercy the publican would have been lost forever. Potentially as well as actually showing mercy is costly. The Good Samaritan risked his life, while the priest and the Levite, of course, were not that “foolish” (Lk. 10:31-32). Jesus took it a step further. He forfeited his life. Frankly, everyone stands in need of mercy to survive, if not in a physical sense (Good Samaritan), or no longer in a justifying sense (Tax Collector), definitely in the sanctifying sense. Without Jesus no one can do anything that is pleasing to God (John 15:5). That is why the author of Hebrews tells us that we need mercy perennially (Heb. 4:16).

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

### **The Leadership Layer**

The threefold Leadership of the Church that occupies the top layer of the structure of the Church has two tasks to perform in order to turn the Church from a “standing army” into a “Marching Army.”

The first task of the Leadership is simply to fulfill the function that is peculiar to their Office. Evangelists must evangelize. Pastors-teachers, also designated in Scripture as overseers (bishops) or elders, must pastor-teach, and Deacons must serve, with the details to be presented below. But there is a vital second task that is too often, if not universally neglected. It may even be ignored or opposed. If believers must evangelize daily, speak the Word daily, and serve daily, they must be competently trained in all three areas. Training covers five phases. Trainees must (1) be taught, (2) be modeled, (3) be observed, (4) be refined and (5) be certified. When I ask my lady students, whether they want to marry a man who is unable (or unwilling) to evangelize, teach or serve their children, the answer is invariably and emphatically, “no!” That is why everybody who “joins” a Church must be asked at that very moment where he wants to start in the training process, in evangelism, in speaking or in serving. The proper reply, which I, frankly to my initial surprise, heard once out of the mouth of a young man, should emphatically always be, “In All Three.” This clearly evidences the presence of the gift of the Holy Spirit and marks a believer as a genuine “disciple of Christ.” To be a disciple is simply to be a student who wants to pay the full price of reading, studying, absorbing, *and* displaying the content of the Word in a life of “the obedience of the faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). The training will start with the study of a (short) Manual each, on Evangelism, Speaking, and Serving. This will be the basis of his instruction in a Classroom or similar setting by a competent pastor-teacher, which takes approx. 20% of the training time. The remaining 80%, of modeling, observing, refining and certifying, must be spent in the field. One cannot learn to swim in the desert. One must get into the pool. While “Pastor-Teachers” should be in charge of the Classroom in all three areas, the Evangelist takes over when “students” are prepared and ready to enter the field in Evangelism. His task, then, is to model, to observe, to refine and to certify them in and for that mandated ministry. The Pastor-Teacher has the identical task in the area of Speaking the Word, and the Deacon in the area of serving. Because the Speaking gift has two components, the training in speaking should really be done by the Pastor-Teacher and the Pastor-Exhorter, and because the Serving gift has three components the training in serving be undertaken by the Deacon-“Sharer,” the Deacon-“Carer,” and the Deacon-“Shower of Mercy.” But additional details about this below! At any rate, this is the Biblical Model that is laid out in principle in 2 Timothy 2:2 and was practiced throughout by the Apostle Paul. Incidentally, in addition to all other required courses, Theological Seminaries should have at least three clinical courses in each of these three areas of up to three weeks (during “January” or “May” terms?) along the lines just mentioned to train all its students and to certify that they are “competent” in all three areas. If they must be such as believers, how much more as potential leaders! Of course, a clinical course in Apologetics is also warmly recommended, but could be combined with the one in Evangelism. The two are and should be “kissing cousins.” Practically, biblical evangelism frequently, if not invariably, ends up as an apologetic evangelism as well. Properly, a biblical apologetics always is and should be an evangelistic apologetics. Thankfully in a Counseling Study track clinical courses are routinely offered. At any rate, the Church should insist on such courses that cover the three mandated areas of ministry and seriously consider withholding all support from Seminaries or similar Schools until they do not just teach their students in the class room, but also train them in the field and do not just outsource them. In fact, they should take their cue from Medical Schools. These insist, for instance, that an OB/GYN student cannot and will not be certified until he or she has delivered at least 200 or more babies *always in the presence of their teachers*, in order not to jeopardize the physical and temporal safety of patients. This takes three years of “merciless” apprenticeship 24/7. How much more determined should not Seminaries be to emulate this in

their concern not to jeopardize “spiritual and eternal safety?” The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Presbyterian Log College may well serve as a model. When it was operational, the Church grew exponentially. When a more “traditional” Seminary replaced it, the growth of the Church declined markedly. The bottom line? However excellent the 20% class room time may be, the 80% in the field will make or break a competent and effective ministry! Incidentally, if the leadership of the church does not sufficiently train and certify its young men in all three areas, young ladies who biblically insist on that in their future husbands, may never get married. This would be black mark on the leadership and stingingly expose their deficient, if not delinquent, negligence! But this naturally brings up a question. How to ensure that the “leader-trainers” are properly equipped to prepare their students properly for their life’s ministry within the home as well as beyond it in the church and in the world? Here the pivotal middle layer of the threefold giftedness enters the picture.

### **The Gift Layer**

The structural tapestry of the Church is exquisite. The threefold mandate of the Membership and the threefold function of the Leadership dovetail with the threefold Giftedness! Each believer is entrusted with an ordinary “spiritual gift,” either in Evangelism (Mt. 4:19), in speaking the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:10a) or in serving (1 Pet. 4:10b). But it must be developed. One cannot expect a person immediately and competently to swim during his first outing to the pool. It takes practice and practice and practice. Similarly, the gift will by and large not suddenly “pop” up nor, what is more common, slowly “emerge” (I have seen both), unless and until the trainees in the certification process *immerse* themselves in “Schools” of Evangelism, Speaking, and Serving, and *not* stop or slow down until they reach their objective, the identification of their gift. From my personal experience this may take up to three weeks of intensive non-stop field work under competent and vigilant supervision. If I may avail myself of the following illustration, effective training resembles the harvesting and preparing pine trees for their future use. The first week they are cut to size say as two by four by eight. To build a deck with the thus cut boards would guarantee that sooner or later they would “rot.” So the second week the boards are to be “treated,” so that they will not rot, but be sure to last. Everyone is aware of the quality of “treated pine.” The third week, however, they are nicely polished, with the rough edges smoothed out, and so receive the finishing touch. At last, they are ready to function “indefinitely” according to the plan of the “builder.” Of course, “three weeks” may not be sufficient in each instance, depending upon the intensity of the “Training Schools” and the make-up of the trainee. At times it needs to be longer. But the end is always extremely gratifying. When the gift emerges, comes out in the open, and is joyfully experienced, the recipients, both male and female, become positively “unstoppable.”

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

Army” trained until it is “unstoppable” as a “Marching Army” with nobody AWOL. If the Satanic energy, in evidence everywhere, from a passive indifference to the things of God to a virulent, hostile, and increasingly aggressive atheism, would only be matched by a militant Church, it would face a different landscape, from letters to the editor to the entertainment industry to political corruption and in all the gaps in between these. Instead the Church all too often, if not usually, hunkers down in a virtually permanent R&R with a relative few taking care of the weekly pastor-teacher “maintenance,” with hardly anyone having an eye for a vigorous evangelistic outreach, and with only a small number, at times “hired hands,” to cover the logistics. This is not just a shame. It is criminal negligence. The Church needs “unstoppable” people. In fact, it needs for *all* of its people to be or to become “unstoppable,” or at least to be eager enough to take decisive steps to reach that level. But, once again, for this to be embraced and pursued the gift of the Holy Spirit subsequent to the experience of heartfelt repentance and the refreshing forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19-20) is indispensable. Without it nobody even wants to begin to make a move toward obedience in each of the three areas (See also Phil. 2:12-13), let alone seeking to be trained for it in a thorough and effective manner.

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

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

(2) It is pivotal for the proper recruitment of Leadership of the Church. It is properly argued that effective leaders may only be appointed to the Office that corresponds with their



giftedness.<sup>25</sup> Too many leaders have failed because they were “mismanaged.” One does not put a carpenter or plumber in an electrician’s “office,” nor an electrician or a carpenter in a plumber’s “office,” nor a plumber or an electrician in a carpenter’s “office.” Of course, everyone is able to screw in an electric bulb, to plunge a toilet and to put a nail in the wall to hang a picture. But when the going is grim, lightning “fries” the electric system, sewage backs up into the house, or the roof caves in due to heavy snow, it is time to call in the expert. Not to do so is to court disaster when situations reach the breaking point. In other words, someone with a clear-cut evangelistic gift should not be put in a pastor-teacher or a diaconal office, neither folks with a pastor-teacher gift in a diaconal or evangelist office, nor a person with a serving gift in an evangelist or pastor-teacher office. Candidly, I have seen pastor-teachers fail miserably in a Missionary-Evangelist capacity. No compelling urge to do street evangelism, to go “door-to-door,” to do market evangelism, etc., etc., and seemingly lots of idle time on their hands. They give the appearance of spinning their wheels, or even of being lazy. However, the root problem is that they are simply mismanaged and misplaced. The very moment that they “come home,” take charge of a local congregation in their gift area of teaching or exhorting, they begin to blossom again!<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, unless the candidates for leadership have identified and displayed their giftedness, the Church will not and cannot end up with “unstoppable” leaders, each in their own niche. As a result it will hobble at best without making much headway. This can only add to the inevitable disaster.

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

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<sup>25</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1996)

<sup>26</sup> Jordan Cameron started his football career in Brigham Young University before he transferred to the University of Southern California. In neither place did he admittedly amount to much. But drafted by the Cleveland Browns the coaching staff dug a little deeper and recognized his niche. They positioned him in the playing field as “tight end.” From that moment on he lit up the scoreboard with touchdown after touchdown! The Church would do well to follow a similar procedure with every Christian. Let it “patiently” determine everyone’s giftedness and position him or her in the proper niche for the greatest return of God’s investment!

the question whether they truly belong to Christ. After all, every Christian has received a gift to be used to advance the Kingdom, and not to stay buried or be buried (Mt. 25:24-30).

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

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

First, then, the details!

1. In the opening exhortation Paul starts out by cautioning believers not imperialistically to occupy the place and usurp the function that properly belong to others, but to be sober-minded and stick to one’s own gift-niche. When calamitous situations occur, electricians, plumbers and carpenters do not proudly push experts in their field out of the way to take over in areas where they are incompetent, not qualified, or not certified. They recognize full well that they are “selectively brilliant” only, and gladly make way for other “niche players,” when and where this is called for. But Paul does not stop here. He continues to assure both the Church in general and the believers in particular that, thanks be to God, there is no need to be imperialistic. In a properly functioning Church there is completely integrated cooperation among the individual members just as in the human body there is no envious, grinding, reductionist, and self-destructive competition, say, among the eye, the ear and the tongue. They harmoniously and effortlessly do their unimpeded job. Neither the ear nor the tongue faces or seeks to face the road while driving. The eye does and has the full latitude to do so. Similarly, in a pitch dark place the eye is not asked to come to the rescue. It is the ear that is straining for a sign of life. If the place is totally deserted the tongue does not do much good either and the mouth remains closed. Finally, when one is requested to deliver a speech, the tongue enters the fray. Neither the eye,

nor the ear do, can, or desire to replace it. In short, this “facial” triad is smoothly, efficiently and wholeheartedly governed by eager, thankful, and cheerful cooperation as well as unreserved, effective and wholesome contribution. What is in crystal clear evidence, is both a fully joint and integrated effort and a fully committed and unobstructed deferral to each other.

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

Not so incidentally, the remainder of Romans 12 explains what it takes to obey the command and to embrace the encouragement. Love “compels” and “propels” to the former, while combat “demands” and “drives” to the latter. By the way, why would anyone be surprised that every part of Scripture is always an organic and perfect fit? After all, the Holy Spirit is its originating Author! At any rate, obedience to the command is predicated upon the experiential presence of mutual love that is “devoted,” “diligent,” and “prefers” to honor others in their God-given niche “amicably, humbly, unpretentiously and peaceably” (Rom. 12:9-10, 16, 18). Love is (1) a deep desire to be united with an object, (2) a sheer delight when this union is accomplished, and (3) a sacrificial drive that pays any price to arrive at that union and to retain it. When this love is experienced, the pursuit of this obedience is a “natural” (Read: super-natural!). Further, the embrace of the encouragement is bound to be present and needful in times of inevitable combat. It helps and enables folks to be ever joyful in hope, ever persevering in tribulation, ever devoted to prayer, never to pay back evil for evil, always respect what is right, never take revenge, refusal to overcome evil by evil, but rather with good (Rom. 12:12, 14, 17, 19, 21). The benefits of true friendship in which one can share everything without holding anything back, is incalculable. Candidly, it is “foolish” to think or pretend that a “lone ranger” can snatch victory from the jaws of a looming or lurking defeat, let alone “act, as if” this is possible! If we do not seek to “hang together,” we will “hang separately” is fully biblical datum! Of course, we all know that a lone monk succeeded to bring the wildly popular gladiator games in ancient Rome to an abrupt end. This often prompts folk to pontificate that “as single individual can change the world all by himself.” But it is universally ignored that the monk did so by dying! And even after his death it took a joint effort to terminate them officially. Wilberforce was by-passed as Prime-Minister of the UK due to his nearly single-minded focus upon the “slavery” issue. In all this he “died” of sorts. But the abolition was a joint effort after a battle that lasted a life time. “Lone rangers” usually turn into official or unofficial “cult leaders” who enrich themselves in cash, reputation, or otherwise, whether consciously or not. When they vanish, their empires always collapse (Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, etc.). This stands to reason. They function as the pillar of a one pillar suspension bridge that holds up the bridge and directs all traffic. To be a follower of a man at any time and in any situation is both foolish and calamitous. After all, humans are only able to pass on their bad traits. The “good” comes exclusively from God and never from any other source. The fact that Paul repeatedly weighs in on this whole issue, and more than once hammers away at this same anvil (See 1 Cor. 12:1ff) discloses that the threat of a reductionist, a much- or all-controlling, a partly or mostly stultifying, and a frequently or usually oppressive lone-ranger syndrome is far greater than anyone may imagine. I do not know of any Church that does not at least have the seed of a questionable leadership of that sort in it. Neither apparently does the apostle Paul, which must be more than a sufficient reason for self-examination.

Ecclesiastes already raises a warning flag, if not rings alarm bells, in this context when it points out that while “one may be ‘good,’” “two are ‘better’ than one” when it comes down to labor effectively and so to get a return on one’s investment, and that (only) a “threefold cord, clearly the ‘best’ scenario, is not quickly torn apart” (Eccl. 4:9-12). “Two are better than one!” Everyone needs the “better” of a partner to prevent the inevitable stumbling from turning into a disastrous failure, to produce the much-needed warmth in the midst of inevitable freezing temperatures, and to stave off sure defeat in inevitable times of vicious attacks, whether subtle or not so subtle. In fact, it may well take the “best” of *two* partners to seal the victory. Lone rangers in sharing the Gospel in evangelism, speaking the truth unto edification, or serving in the broad logistical area, however good or even excellent they may be in their function and content, become automatically the enemy of the “better,” once they believe, whether deep down or openly, that they have “arrived.” Similarly, however, any two-some in evangelism, pastoring or serving, just as automatically become the enemy of the “best,” when they think they have everything under “perfect” control. After all, it is only “a threefold cord,” in this context a cord with the three strands of evangelizing, pastoring and serving that “cannot quickly be torn,” provided, of course, that these three “dictates” of Scripture mean anything. All this stands to reason. All Christians are admittedly “brilliant” in their experienced gift and their assigned function. But at the same time, they are only “selectively” brilliant! In isolation they may light up their environment more or less dimly. But jointly they form a powerful beam of light that illumines the waterfront. At times antagonistic folks or hostile conditions may force isolation upon them. But proudly to opt for isolation, whether consciously and intentionally or not, stands roundly condemned in Scripture for its dire implication and its equally dire outcome! “He who isolates himself seeks his own (self-serving and self-promoting) desire. He quarrels against all sound wisdom” (and thereby proves himself to be a narrow-minded fool with all that this entails) (Prov. 18:1-2).

Ultimately only a tripod can remain standing on a solid threefold footing. Frankly, I have seen (great) evangelistic leaders (regrettably) put the total ministry of the Church under the virtually one umbrella of “making disciples.” Eventually the once vigorous Sunday Evening Service died for lack of a *bona fide* Pastor-Teacher that would feed the flock at that time-slot. The end product is at best a shallow Church. I have seen (great) Pastor-Teachers (regrettably) put the total Ministry of the Church under the virtually one umbrella of “training disciples.” Eventually the once vigorous Weekly Outreach into the community greatly diminished for lack of a *bona fide* Evangelist in charge who would blaze the trail and set the tone. The end product is at best a stifled Church. I have seen (once great) denominations put their ministry under the virtually one umbrella of “humanitarian” assistance, whether at home or abroad. Eventually the “making as well as training of disciples” took the back seat, and slowly but surely disappeared for lack of *bona fide* Evangelists and Pastor-Teachers. The end product is at best a “social gospel” Church. In each instance there was the inevitable loss of wounded and hurting members.

In short, “selective brilliance” requires close cooperation in a joint ministry, whether in the Membership area, with its three mandates, in the Gift area with its three niches, or in the Leadership area with its three offices. More specifically, in the Leadership area, each office must be allowed to develop its own vision to energize it, to formulate its own blueprint to communicate its vision, to map out its own strategy to field it, and to embark upon a hot pursuit to implement it. Each office can only “sparkle” itself and “spark” others in its own niche. Hence Paul’s warning to all believers, “right out of the starting gate” (Rom. 12:3-4), not to occupy the place or usurp the function that God has allotted to others and his complementary encouragement

that there is no need for that, once they have come to terms with themselves, and flourish in their own niche and in their own rights.

At any rate, when all this is settled in principle, each office reports its findings to the combined threefold Leadership for its prayers, examination, assessment and adoption, until it results in a harmonious threefold vision, threefold blueprint, threefold strategy and threefold pursuit to which each of the three offices is a unique contributory that the other two could never duplicate. This should come with the understanding that in the field the Evangelist takes the agreed upon lead and sets the agreed upon tone, with the Pastor-Teacher and Deacon both in the auxiliary position, that in the pulpit the Pastor-Teacher is in charge with the Evangelist and the Deacon in the Nr. 2 position, and that in the logistical area, the Deacon takes over as agreed upon with the Pastor-Teacher and the Evangelist to follow suit. This, of course, requires the heartfelt embrace of the Pauline injunction for each Leader “not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think” (Rom. 12:3) and the humble recognition that his contribution to the vision of the Church, with all that this biblically entails in theory and practice, can never cover more than one third (33,33%) of its needs. In this scenario the three Offices combine their selective brilliances, and form a powerful beam of light that puts the threefold “sparkle” in the whole church and illumines it until it “sparks” every believer. Once the threefold “culture” of daily evangelism, daily speaking and daily serving is in place in the fabric of the Church and the Membership is constantly mobilized to that end by the threefold Leadership with the assistance of the three types of Gifted Folks, it is difficult to see how the Church cannot continually transition itself under an evolving and revolving Leadership. After all, it successfully functions under the motto, “One for All, and All for One.” Only this does and can solve the perennial “one and many problem.” It avoids like the plague the regimenting tyranny and oppression of the One and the fuming revolt of the Many that is woven in the warp and woof of the apostate world with “its lust of the flesh, its lust of the eyes and its pride of life” (1 John 2:16). But it only can be a universal inviting “haven of rest,” if it is a universal “model of love.”<sup>27</sup>

The hot and strenuous pursuit is clearly pivotal for the Threefold Ministry to flourish, whether in the Leadership, the Gift, or the Membership areas. Frankly, Ecclesiastical History teaches us and personal history taught me that the “suffering,” which invariably accompanies any biblical type of hot pursuit, will by and large not elicit much attention, let alone sympathy, from the (Church) public at large, that is to say, not until it proves to be successful. God’s servants therefore must be willing, if not eager to suffer in silence, at least until there is a reason for folks to sit up and take notice. At that time success is bound to attract followers to one degree or another. This produces a Leadership team, whether under the auspices of the Evangelist, the Pastor-Teacher or the Deacon. But the end-station is not reached until this Leadership team is both transformative and transactional in nature, and so turns into a Team of actual or potential Leaders. It is (1) properly transformative when it molds the followers by putting them in the starting blocks, and (2) properly transactional when it energizes the followers by setting them in motion, to develop their own vision, formulate their own blueprint, map out their own strategy, embark upon their own hot pursuit with the prayerful confidence of success that should spawn new followers and new leaders.

2. In the concluding exhortation Paul goes into great detail about the content and functioning of the individual gifts within the fabric of the local church. In doing so he does not deal with the

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<sup>27</sup> For an examination and a suggested solution of “The One and Many Problem,” that plagues the world in all its manifestations, phases and aspects, see Heny Krabbendam, *Sovereignty and Responsibility* (Bonn: Verlag fur Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2002).

evangelistic giftedness that marks the external outreach ministry of the Church. The contours and function of this giftedness (analogically) reflect the parallel giftedness in the speaking and serving area. But in detailing the latter Paul goes well beyond Peter (1 Pet. 4:10-11). As we saw, Peter identifies two types of gifts, “Speaking the (existing) oracles of God” and “Service.” Paul designates them as “Prophecy” and “Service,” both abstract nouns that indicate *areas* of ministry. But he further unfolds the Speaking area as well as the Service area. The first one is occupied by folks who teach and exhort; the second one by folks who share, care,<sup>28</sup> and show mercy. In all these five instances we encounter *people*, designated in *concrete* terms by masculine participles. The “prophetic” and “service” areas must be developed “proportionally,” that is “to the hilt.” The folks who teach and exhort must follow suit. On the other hand, those who share must be “generous,” those who care “diligent,” and those who show mercy “cheerful” (Rom. 12:6-8). The bottom line is unmistakable. While in humility no one claims anything to which he is not entitled, whatever the cost, in obedience everyone gives it his “all,” whatever the price. In short, a fully functioning Church resembles a six cylinder engine that fires on all pistons simultaneously and in total unison. The “selective brilliance” of the various parts serves the whole, and the “one beam of light” snugly accommodates all the parts.

## 5. Conclusion

The conclusion calls for concrete consequences that should be explosive for a powerful impact of the threefold Ministry of the Church. But they may not materialize until the five realities mentioned in Section I come into their own and touch not only a temporary responsive chord, but are embedded in our hearts. If they are, we will grasp and echo several things.

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

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<sup>28</sup> Many translators go for “he who leads.” This is a very possible translation. But Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, tr., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), Vol. VI, 700-701, points out that the notion of “caring” or “protecting” is an equally prominent aspect of the Greek original, and in this instance prefers the translation, “he who cares.” So do I! It fits the context much better.

2. We will grasp and echo the central significance of the Church. You will not put any eggs in the basket of the world. Literally nothing can hatch there. Scripture tells us that we must distance ourselves from it for our lives sake, both as it is organized against God and as it is organized apart from God. The first one usually stands to reason. But the latter is a different story. Before long the world infiltrates, often in the area of “common grace,” subsequently brings us to our knees and finally takes us down. However, if the Church is our life in the full biblical sense of the word, we will start out on our knees and rise to every occasion.

3. We will grasp and echo the complementarity of truth and never “unbundle” what God has bundled together, such as the three Ministries of the Evangelist, the Pastor-Teacher and the Deacon. For each “to isolate itself from the others is to pursue its own desires, and rages against all sound judgment” (Prov. 18:1). This is tough language. But everyone who listens to it will experience it as wholesome medicine! To ignore it implicitly or dismiss it explicitly can easily in the short run, and will eventually in the long run, lead to unwholesome competition, possibly fed by “envy and selfish ambition that leads to disorder and every evil practice” (Jam. 3:16), which in turn is rooted in the lust to satisfy one’s own pleasure (Jam. 4:1). Neither will we bundle what God has unbundled. You will never seek to dominate the Church’s threefold ministry, either as the Evangelist, or the Pastor-Teacher or the Deacon, and put the other ministries under your umbrella. Rather you will defer to each in the area of his God-given niche and competence.

4. We will grasp and echo the wisdom of James. Hearing the Word with the utmost attention, without any back-talk, let alone outbursts of anger against its content, is glorious and necessary. But it is not sufficient. Mental euphoria about a well-understood and formulated doctrine, such as the Holy Spirit, suffers of self-delusion, if it is not accompanied by, in fact, suffused with a commensurate experiential reality that makes itself felt and an activating reality that makes itself known. The first reality has a “glow” that is there for all to sit up. The second one has an “impact” for everyone to take note.

5. Finally, we will grasp and echo the commitment to an existence of “victory through battle” in all its various aspects and phases. The promises of God are not there as an “invitation” to take to our “Lazy Boy” or “Lazy-Girl” for that matter. Rather, they are recognized as a lifeline for drowning people who take hold of the motto “Ora et Labora,” and put that on vivid display. It prompts them to incessant prayer for these promises to be fulfilled as a matter of survival, and

Now on to the concrete and explosive consequences

TO BE WORKED OUT under the following headings:

1. Implications for the organization of the Church in terms of Evangelism, Training, and Serving. The P/T is not the sole visionary of the Church. Triadic Leadership. General Church Board, consisting of three branches: ALL three (E/P-T/D) Represented. Branch Boards may meet separately to hammer out their vision and the method of its implementation to meet together for a joint decision, with each Branch deferring to each other in its niche area.
2. Implications of a Threefold Gospel and a Threefold Edification. Luther: ONE Prong/ Calvin: TWO Prongs/ Scripture: THREE Prongs. Let the good never be the enemy of the better or the best.
3. Implication for Church Membership. All members must be certified in all three areas.
4. Implication for the Gift area: An electrician, plumber and carpenter can do the simple things in all three areas, such as putting in new bulbs, plunging a toilet and hammering

nail in the wall. But when the electric system fails, the sewage backs up or the roof caves one calls for the expert, the folks who are gifted in that area. The electrician is called to fix the electric system, the plumber the sewage system, and the carpenter to fix the collapsed roof. The same in the spiritual area of life. The evangelistically gifted take the lead in evangelism, the speaking gifted in the speaking area, the serving gifted in the serving area. Scripture is clear. One may not push "the expert" out of his area, but must defer to him. This is similar to the body. The eye is needed for seeing, the ear for hearing and the tongue for speaking. No one ever has seen the ear say to the eye when driving: move over: it is now my turn to face the road. This is imperialism (Paul in 1 Cor.). All folks are only selectively brilliant. So humble. Do not try to take over. At the same time, let everybody say to everybody else, "I need you," in order to put all selective brilliances together to form a beam of light that brightly illumines the waterfront. Otherwise we are doomed to at best a "curtailed," and at times even a twisted fruitfulness that destroys the-future-with-and-under-God-and-his-smile!



# **Section III. The Revival of the Church: [ASAP] The Dynamics behind its Threefold Ministry**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The Evangelistic Ministry**
- 3. The Edificational Ministry**
- 4. The Diaconal Ministry**
- 5. Conclusion**

## **Some Random Thoughts**

### **1. Introduction**

Biblical Revival, as described in Acts 1-12 is characterized by twelve mighty marks, etc!

### **2. The Evangelistic Ministry**

Define the Gospel, etc.

### **3. The Edificational Ministry**

### **4. The Diaconal Ministry**

The Nature of the Diaconal Ministry is threefold. (1) It “shares,” in terms of time, skills, funds, etc., etc. (2) It “cares” in terms of covering the deeper and deepest needs. And (3) it “shows mercy” in rescuing folks who are terminal, such as the man rescued by the Good Samaritan.

In general it provides the “logistics” in the broadest sense of the word with a view to facilitating both the Evangelistic and Speaking Ministries of the Church. In other words, it must do everything in all conditions and circumstances that serves those two purposes.

If the “captains” or “lieutenants” in either ministry are too busy “to brush their teeth,” the diaconal ministry must provide that service. As a symbol of their ministry every deacon at the ordination and installation in their office may be handed a “tooth brush” as an abiding “Symbol.”

It takes place on three levels, the membership level, the gift level and the leadership level.

### **5. Conclusion**

## APPENDIX I

The question why the world “works” as it does, if it has no independent purpose is a real one. Scripture is quite clear that with the Noahic Covenant God simply stipulates that this world must continue as planned, structured, organized and mandated. The notion that the Noahic Covenant is “brand-new,” because the summons to take dominion is not repeated is a fallacy. The reason why only the multiplication aspect is repeated is simple. It is quite possible that a billion people were wiped out. With the earth at least 5000 years in existence, a population of one billion would be far from extraordinary. Procreation goes fast. Well, Noah is merely told to start all over again with the assurance that he does not need to fear another abrupt end. He only has to look at the rainbow to be reminded and assured of that. There simply is no need to repeat the total cultural mandate. The notion that “whatever is not abrogated continues” does not only apply to the relationship of the OT and the NT, it also applies to the developing story in the OT and the NT. Frankly, what other option did Noah and his family than to continue along the same lines as before? Naturally they remembered all the accomplishments up to the Flood, which were considerable, and would as a matter-of-course go about their reconstruction and their further development! Once more, it is pure and unfounded speculation that God puts a new plan in operation. Nevertheless, the budding new mankind faces a new reality. They must continue the cultural mandate, all right. But they face the two horns of a very depressing dilemma. They are “doomed (read: damned) if they don’t!” Anyone who does not wish to work will not be allowed to eat. This is a divine rule of thumb implied in the cultural mandate and underscored by Paul (2 Thess. )! But with equal certainty they are also “doomed (read: damned) if they do!” This world is “vanity” from top to bottom. It is “empty” of meaning and of everything related to it. Scripture is utterly clear on this (Eccles. ). Furthermore, it is such as a judgment of God who did subject it to emptiness (Rom. 8: ). He put the stamped of “futility” upon it and burdened mankind with a Sisyphus labor. “You messed up. But I will not allow you to change the way this world was and is supposed to run. It is business as original and usual. However, because you messed up big time you are now condemned to “build bridges to nowhere.” These are cultural bridges of all kinds, covering all facets, aspects and phases of our globe as both the rich and minuscule section of the universe on which mankind is stationed! Bridges galore, political bridges, economic bridges, educational bridges, art bridges, business bridges, medical bridges, transportation bridges, scientific bridges, entrepreneurial bridges, theoretical bridges, practical bridges, etc., etc. They are increasingly awesome in each culture. But each culture also comes and goes. Think of the four cultures and the empires that gave rise to them in the book of Daniel, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. But also empires and their cultures prior to them, the Chinese and the Egyptian, or those that are more recent, the French (Napoleon), the British, the German (Hitler), the Russian (Soviet Union), etc.! They all had their heyday. But they are either gone or declining. But this precipitates a further question. Why all these accomplishments? Why all these multiple, often marvelous, at times ingenious and always enjoyable bridges into nowhere? The answer, of course, is the “common graces” of God. But they must be understood biblically not to become “deadly pitfalls.” First, their enjoyment does not remove futility. “Enjoy your wife,” Ecclesiastes intones, “all the days of your meaningless life” (Eccl. 9:9). This puts everything in perspective. Don’t ever idolize anything this world has to offer, as if it is ultimate and “eternal.” It will be your undoing (1 Cor. 7: ). It has been well said that mankind resembles the passengers on the Titanic. Great ... Cruel iceberg cuts into the vitals of the ship and all the merriment abruptly ends in sudden disaster in the dark, icy and disastrous ocean without a lifeboat in sight.

(See John Piper, "Joy" Titanic). Second, God's goodness and kindness on display in his "common graces" serve God's sole purpose for this world and its continuation as the perennial "spawning ground" for members of the Body of Christ. The reason? They are designed to lead to repentance, so that people would fear God as the source of all meaning and to keep his commandments as the grid of all meaning. Without God and his Law futility has the first, the middle and the last word. It is the height of irony, however, that what God has established and designed as a benevolent spur to repent and believe and so to escape his wrath, mankind appeals to it so that it can ignore this wrath or wave it off. After all, it seems so counter-intuitive that a world with so much richness to enjoy, richness of all sorts, would suddenly face the stark and dark reality of eternal horror. Third, all this allows us to pinpoint the nature of "common grace." According to Scripture, everything only comes from "above" or from "below." What comes from "above" is grace, such as the grace of regeneration, justification, sanctification, etc., etc. It is pure (Jam.) and it is life (Col. 3). What comes from "below" is invariably sin, such as the sin of rebellion, guilt, pollution, etc., etc. It is hard like a rock, brutal like a beats, and malevolent like the devil (Jam 3). Or vice versa, all "grace" does, can and will only come from "above." At the same time all sin does, can, and will only come from "below." In fact, everything only comes from "above" or from "below." There is no grey area or middle ground. However, the essential peculiarity of "common grace," however, is that comes both from "above" and from "below."

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