GREAT SPOIL

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Thomas Manton's Spirituality of the Word

J. Stephen Yuille

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Great Spoil
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In memory of a dear mother, mother-in-law, and nana
Irene Laura Richardson (née McIntosh)
1931–2018

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Introduction

What is Puritanism? The term has been used to describe Thomas Cartwright, William Perkins, John Preston, John Goodwin, John Bunyan, John Milton, Oliver Cromwell, John Owen, Richard Baxter, John Cotton, Jonathan Edwards, and countless others, yet it is impossible to define *Puritanism* in a manner that encompasses all these men. Richard Greaves attributes the confusion surrounding the term to its "multiplicity of meanings" in the Elizabethan and Jacobean era.[1] At that time it was widely employed in a derogatory fashion to disparage one's opponents. Given its somewhat promiscuous usage, it is ill-advised to speak of Puritanism without first establishing what one means by the term. Heeding my own advice, I begin with a definition.

During the reign of Bloody Mary (r. 1553–1558), many Protestants suffered a grisly death at the stake. Many more escaped the queen's ferocity by fleeing to the Continent, and in 1554 most of these exiles settled in Frankfurt, where they quickly summoned John Knox from Geneva to serve as their pastor. Under Knox's oversight, they adopted a modified version of the Prayer Book, which had been produced during the reign of Edward VI (r. 1547–1553). It notably abolished any practice deemed contrary to the Reformed faith. The following year, in 1555, a new wave of English exiles arrived, led by Richard Cox, vice-chancellor of Oxford. Soon after their arrival, they made it known to their fellow

1. Richard Greaves, "The Puritan-Nonconformist Tradition in England, 1560–1700: Historiographical Reflections," *Albion* XVII (1985): 449.

countrymen that they desired "the face of an English church."[2] They favored the Prayer Book in its original form and desired to work within the established church as it was. From that moment, the congregation was divided between the supporters of Knox and Cox. Although united in their opposition to Mary and Roman Catholicism, these two factions did not share a common view on the nature or extent of the Reformation in England, nor did they agree as to the final authority in the ordering of public worship; Cox supporters appealed to the Prayer Book, whereas Knox supporters appealed to Scripture. Before long, the Cox faction gained control of the church, forcing Knox (and many of his followers) to depart for Geneva.

This sharp disagreement was a harbinger of things to come within the Church of England. When Mary died in 1558, Elizabeth I became the new monarch, and the Frankfurt division soon took center stage. Given England's precarious political condition, Elizabeth's ministers called for moderation. She heeded their advice, as she was well aware of the various factions within the established church. She implemented what is known as the Elizabethan Settlement, which rested on two acts of Parliament in 1559. The first, the Act of Supremacy, restored the preeminence of the Church of England to the monarch, while the second, the Act of Uniformity, enforced a new Prayer Book—a slight revision of Edward VI's edition. These acts were designed to find a via media (middle way) between the splintered groups. The form of church worship and government remained intact, and the clergy continued to dress in their traditional habits; however, the Elizabethan Settlement called for the abolishment of prayers to the saints and the removal of relics and images from churches. Most significantly, it engineered the dismissal of the fourteen surviving bishops from Mary's reign. Four years later, in 1563, the Church of England established the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion,[3] which clearly placed it within the framework of ancient councils and historic creeds. These articles also espoused the

2. As quoted by William M'Gavin, "Life of John Knox," in John Knox, *The History of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland* (Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton, & Co., 1831), xxxvii.

3. Parliament officially authorized these eight years later.

teaching of the Reformation on Scripture, free will, justification, and good works while also openly opposing Roman Catholic dogmas such as purgatory and transubstantiation, and practices such as invoking the saints and adoring the Eucharist.

Not everyone was thrilled with the Elizabethan Settlement. As expected, Roman Catholics lamented the reversal of Mary's policies, but Protestants were also deeply divided over the implemented changes, mirroring the old Frankfurt debate. Some were satisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement, whereas others longed for greater reform. Among the latter were many who wanted to remove all perceived remnants of Roman Catholicism. Some of them also desired to alter the church's government on the basis of Presbyterianism. These men encompassed a broad spectrum of opinion, yet all shared one common denominator—dissatisfaction with the extent of the English Reformation. As one historian notes, "The term 'Puritan' became current during the 1560s as a nickname for Protestants who, dissatisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement of the church…would have subscribed to the contention of the Admonition to Parliament of 1572 that 'we in England are so far off, from having a church rightly reformed, according to the prescript of God's Word, that as yet we are not come to the outward face of the same.'"[4]

While varied in their aim and intensity, the Puritans' struggle for ecclesiastical change continued through the reigns of the Stuart kings, until the Great Ejection of 1662 when Charles II (r. 1660–1685) introduced an Act of Uniformity, effectively forcing close to two thousand ministers out of the established church and into dissent.

During this one-hundred-year period (1558–1662), the term *Puritan* assumed an additional meaning to the one described above. At the end of the sixteenth century, William Perkins lamented, "Who are so much branded with vile terms of Puritans and Precisians, as those that most endeavour to get and keep the purity of heart in a

4. Neil Keeble, "Puritan Spirituality," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. G. S. Wakefield (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 323.

good conscience?"[5] Writing in 1611, Robert Bolton commented, "The world is come to that wretched pass, and height of profaneness, that even honesty and sanctification is many times odiously branded by the nick-name Puritanism."[6] In 1641, Thomas Wilson noted that "fervency in religion" is called "indiscretion, rashness, puritanism, or headiness."[7] It is evident that, in addition to its political and ecclesiastical usage, the term *Puritan* became a derogatory moniker for those who practiced a certain style of piety—what we might call "experimental Calvinism"—which transcended the deep divisions between those of differing political and ecclesiastical views: Independents and Presbyterians, Parliamentarians and Royalists, conformists and nonconformists, credobaptists and paedobaptists.[8] At its center stood the conviction that believers must experience an affective appropriation of God's sovereign grace, moving beyond intellectual assent to heartfelt dedication to Christ. These Puritans preached with great enthusiasm about God's sovereign grace from eternity, but they were particularly concerned about how this grace breaks through in time into the believer's experience. They wanted to explain how believers respond to God's sovereign acts—that is, how the covenant of grace impacts them and moves them from initial faith to full assurance.

Central to this experimental Calvinism was the Bible. The Puritans were convinced that the Spirit of God works in His people through His Word.[9] William Perkins, for example, affirmed that "the holy use of

5. William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition upon Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1631), 3:15.

6. Robert Bolton, *A Discourse about the State of True Happiness: Delivered in Certain Sermons in Oxford, and at Paul's Cross* (London, 1611), 132.

7. Thomas Wilson, *David's Zeal for Zion: A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, April 4, 1641* (London, 1641), 14.

8. For more on these definitions, see J. Stephen Yuille, *Puritan Spirituality: The Fear of God in the Affective Theology of George Swinnock* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 5–17.

9. This conviction was central to the Reformation, which involved a major shift of emphasis in the cultivation of Christian spirituality. Roman Catholicism had majored on symbols and images as the means of cultivating spirituality. The Reformers, however, turned to words—both spoken and written. They championed a thoroughly "biblical" spirituality.

the Word" is the means "whereby we draw near unto heaven itself."[10] According to Perkins, the Holy Spirit unites the heavenly and the creaturely in a *sacramental* union, producing spiritual effects (faith) through physical means (the reading, hearing, and preaching of God's Word). As the Father gave the Son objectively in history, He now gives the Son objectively through His Word. The issue is not divine presence, but divine action. For Perkins (and those who stand in the same tradition) the implication is that if we absent ourselves from the Word, we isolate ourselves from Christ and remove ourselves from His kingdom.[11] On this basis, the Puritans argued for the sole sufficiency of Scripture; that is to say, they affirmed that the nature of the Holy Spirit's work in the authors of Scripture was unique and that the Holy Spirit now *illumines* what He then *inspired*.

The Puritans defended their position against the Roman Catholics, who championed church tradition as revelation.[12] They were also forced to defend their position against the Anabaptists (and, later, the Quakers), who urged people to turn to the "inner light" to hear God's voice. For these "radicals," the indwelling Holy Spirit is more powerful than the words of Scripture. They maintained that the Bible is indeed precious but that the indwelling Holy Spirit is the supreme authority when it comes to direction for Christian living and thinking.[13] The Puritans viewed this "anabaptistical" position as dangerous because it made an unwarranted cleavage between the Spirit and the Word.[14]

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10. William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition upon the Whole Epistle of Jude* (London: Felix Kingston, 1606), 64.

11. Perkins, *Jude*, 122.

12. The Roman Catholic view crystallized between the years 1100 and 1400. Simply put, Scripture and Tradition are two distinct sources of divine revelation; therefore, both constitute the inspired Word of God. According to the Council of Trent (1546), "Saving truth and rules of conduct" are "contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which, received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down to us…. God is the author of both" (Session 4).

13. By way of example, see Isaac Penington, *Letters of Isaac Penington*, 2nd ed. (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1829), 202–3.

14. The Puritans stood in the tradition of the Reformers, who opposed the radicals on account of their exaltation of personal interpretation over corporate interpretation as

The Puritan position on the sufficiency of Scripture received creedal sanction in 1646 with the publication of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which states, "The whole counsel of God…is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit [i.e., the Radicals, Anabaptists, Quakers, etc.], or traditions of men [i.e., the Roman Catholics]."[15] According to the confession, the Bible is the only deposit of divine revelation and therefore is the meeting place between Christ and believers. Again, it is the instrument through which the Spirit of God works in the people of God.

In contrast to the Puritan commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture, mysticism is rooted in the conviction that we can attain an immediate knowledge of God and His will through personal experience as we listen for His voice in our hearts—a voice we discern in "gusts of emotion" and "inner urgings."[16] Regrettably, many today

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well as their expectation of new revelation. The radicals did not stress how God comes to us (i.e., through the Word and sacraments) but rather how we come to God. In sharp contrast, the Reformers affirmed that God gives the Word as the means by which He gives the Spirit. Richard Lovelace summarizes as follows: "In order to guard against the prophetic pretensions of enthusiasts and the Roman Catholic appeal to the guidance of the Spirit in her Magisterium, the Reformers and the Puritans strongly guarded their doctrine of the Holy Spirit by a stress on the objectivity of the written Word. In the Reformed tradition, revelation was confined to Scripture, although it was acknowledged that illumination by the Holy Spirit was necessary for the understanding and application of the Word." *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1979), 263.

15. WCF 1.6. See also the London Baptist Confession of 1689, 1.6. Interestingly, it includes a sentence to its description of Holy Scripture that is not found in the WCF: "The Holy Scripture is the all-sufficient, certain and infallible rule or standard of the knowledge, faith and obedience that constitute salvation" (1.1). Three qualifiers are added to the expression *rule or standard* to make the point that there is no authority apart from Scripture. Nothing is to be added—whether by oral tradition (Roman Catholics) or new revelation (Quakers). This addition was likely the result of the growing concern among Particular Baptists over the number of Quakers interacting with Baptist churches.

16. J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Guard Us, Guide Us: Divine Leading in Life's Decisions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 14. But how are we to understand our "inner urgings"? According to John Murray, we will experience feelings, impressions,

believe they are able to sense the Holy Spirit working directly (apart from the Bible) within them, producing impulses and intuitions as a means of communicating His will to them. In so doing, they have made their relationship with God contingent on nebulous feelings. Even more troubling is the fact that they have severed the Spirit of God from the Word of God, thereby divorcing Him from the only infallible and sufficient revelation that He has given us—namely, the Bible.

It seems that far too many Evangelicals have forsaken the Word-based piety that their Puritan forefathers worked so hard to define and defend. That being the case, my goal in this book is to redirect us back to a model of biblical piety (or, spirituality) through an examination of Thomas Manton's sermons on Psalm 119. After a brief acquaintance with Manton as a leading Puritan committed to the ministry of the Word (chapter 2), I investigate the concept of blessedness so foundational to his piety (chapters 3–9). In sum, he believes that God impresses His excellencies on us through His Word, thereby stirring our affections so that we make returns to Him—namely, faith, love, humility, and repentance. God's Word, therefore, is the instrument by which God speaks to us and we respond to Him (chapters 10–14). Given the fact that the Spirit of God works only through the Word of God, Manton is convinced that we should devote ourselves to it through the practice of spiritual duties (chapters 15–21).

This is how Manton understands the blessed man's pursuit in Psalm 119, and it is this emphasis that invariably shapes his biblical piety. At the foundation stands the conviction that as we love and obey God's Word, the blessed God communes with us by His Spirit, conveying sweet influences on our soul through His Word. Thus, we expect God

convictions, and so on as we respond to the Holy Spirit's work of illumination "through the Word of God." But this is not to be confused with the mystic's belief that the state of our consciousness (i.e., feelings) is the result of a "direct intimation" of the Holy Spirit's will to us. See John Murray, "The Guidance of the Holy Spirit," in Sinclair B. Ferguson, *From the Mouth of God: Trusting, Reading, and Applying the Bible* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2014), 185. By and large, modern evangelicalism has abandoned the Puritans' emphasis on the spirituality of the Word, choosing instead to follow the path of the Anabaptists and Quakers. This trend is so widespread that a subtle mysticism has become the presumptive position among most evangelicals.

to speak to us—not subjectively through inner urgings, but through His Word. The Bible is God's voice—that which "goeth forth out of [God's] mouth" (Isa. 55:11). It bridges the expanse between heaven and earth, Creator and creature. It is as powerful as the rain and snow that cometh down from heaven and "returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater" (Isa. 55:10). For this reason, we listen to the Bible as if we heard God speaking to us from heaven, rejoicing like those who find "great spoil" (Ps. 119:162).

Chapter 1

Thomas Manton

Thomas Manton was born at Lydeard St. Lawrence, Somerset, on March 31, 1620.[1] After completing grammar school, he enrolled at Wadham College, Oxford, and graduated four years later with a bachelor of arts. Since advanced degrees did not require his presence at Oxford, he would go on to complete the bachelor of divinity in 1654 and the doctor of divinity in 1660 while engaged in ministry.

Upon his ordination to the diaconate in 1639, Manton embarked on his first lectureship at the parish church of Culliton (Colyton),

1. The standard account of Manton's life is William Harris, "Some Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Reverend and Learned Thomas Manton, D. D.," in Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* (1870–1875; repr., Birmingham, Ala.: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), 1:vii–xxxiii. Harris's biographical sketch is based on two earlier accounts: William Bates, "A Funeral Sermon Preached upon the Death of the Reverend and Excellent Divine, Dr. Thomas Manton," in Manton, *Works*, 22:123–47; and Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (London, 1691), 2:446–48. Additional summaries of Manton's life are found in Edmund Calamy, *The Nonconformist's Memorial: Being an Account of the Ministers, Who Were Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration, Particularly by the Act of Uniformity, Which Took Place on Bartholomew-Day, Aug. 24, 1662* (London, 1775), 1:138–41; and Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 407–9. For a more thorough analysis of Manton in his historical context, see Derek Cooper, "The Ecumenical Exegete: Thomas Manton's Commentary on James in Relation to Its Protestant Predecessors, Contemporaries and Successors" (PhD thesis, Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2008); and Adam Richardson, "Thomas Manton and the Presbyterians in Interregnum and Restoration England" (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2014).

Devon. In order to avoid the growing political unrest in the region, he moved a short time later with his new bride, Mary Morgan, to London. In 1644, St. Mary's Church in Stoke Newington was sequestered, and the pastorate was offered to Manton. He held this position until becoming pastor of St. Paul's in Covent Garden a few years later.

These were eventful years for the nation, and Manton found himself in the midst of significant social and political upheaval. In 1641, Parliament passed the Grand Remonstrance, which eventually led to the Civil War between Parliamentarians and Royalists. After the former's victory in 1646, Charles I attempted to persuade Scotland to invade England under the promise that he would establish Presbyterianism. Disappointed by the Long Parliament's unwillingness to confront the king, Thomas Pride (a colonel in the new model army) "purged" it of close to two hundred members in 1648. The remaining members constituted the new Rump Parliament, which eventually tried and executed the king for treason. Manton played no role in this. While it is true that he served as one of the three clerks at the Westminster Assembly, penned the introduction to the assembly's documents, preached occasionally before Parliament, and prayed at various ceremonies related to Oliver Cromwell's Protectorship, Manton remained a committed royalist. He was one of fifty-seven divines who signed a protest against the Rump Parliament's plan to execute the king.

Despite his outspoken opposition to the regicide, Manton was a prominent figure during Oliver Cromwell's Protectorship. He quickly became a leading voice in political and theological matters, serving on numerous commissions. After Richard Cromwell's Protectorship failed in 1660, General Monck restored the Long Parliament by reinstating those members who had been excluded twelve years earlier. It immediately dissolved itself and convened the new Convention Parliament, composed mostly of Presbyterians favorable to the return of Charles II. Manton was very active in this endeavor. According to J. C. Ryle, "If there was one name which more than another was incessantly before the public for several years about the period of the Restoration, that

name was Manton's."[2] He was even one of the delegates who met with Charles II at Breda in order to negotiate the terms of his return.

Upon his restoration, the king convened the new Cavalier Parliament, thereby sweeping away any hopes for compromise between Presbyterians and Episcopalians. It passed the Act of Uniformity in 1662, requiring all who had not received Episcopal ordination to be reordained by bishops; moreover, it required ministers to declare their consent to the entire Book of Common Prayer and their rejection of the Solemn League and Covenant. As a result, approximately two thousand ministers (including Manton) left the Church of England. While actively seeking accommodation for Presbyterians within the national church, Manton continued to preach privately. Because of his violation of the Five Mile Act, he was imprisoned for six months in 1670;[3] however, the political indulgence two years later allowed him to preach openly at his home in Covent Garden. Soon after, he became a lecturer at Pinner's Hall, where he remained in this capacity until his death on October 18, 1677.

At Manton's funeral, William Bates preached on 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."[4] In the course of his sermon, he praised his close friend for "the holiness of his person," extolling in particular his constancy, loyalty, charity, and humility.[5] Bates also praised Manton for "the quality of his office," affirming that he possessed "a clear judgment, rich fancy, strong memory, and happy elocution."[6] These characteristics, coupled with his extraordinary knowledge of Scripture, made him an excellent minister of the gospel. According to Bates, the goal of Manton's preaching was to open eyes so that people might see "their wretched condition as sinners"; to cause them to flee "from the wrath to come"; to make them "humbly,

2. J. C. Ryle, "An Estimate of Manton," in Manton, *Works*, 2:vii.

3. This act prohibited ministers from coming within five miles of the parish church from which they had been ejected.

4. Bates, "Funeral Sermon," in Manton, *Works*, 22:123–47. J. C. Ryle provides an insightful assessment of Manton as a man, writer, theologian, and expositor. See his "Estimate of Manton," 2:iii–xiii.

5. Bates, "Funeral Sermon," 22:146.

6. Bates, "Funeral Sermon," 22:143.

thankfully and entirely" receive Christ as their all-sufficient Savior; and to edify them "in their most holy faith."[7] The style of Manton's preaching was commensurate with his goal. "His expression," writes Bates, "was natural and free, clear and eloquent, quick and powerful… this man of God was inflamed with a holy zeal, and from thence such ardent expressions broke forth as were capable to procure attention and consent in his hearers."[8] By all accounts, Bates's high estimation of Manton's preaching was fully warranted.[9] According to Edmund Calamy, Manton "left behind him the general reputation of as excellent a preacher as this city or nation hath produced."[10]

In a letter, dated August 1, 1684, included as a preface to Manton's published sermons on Matthew 25, three ministers (William Bates, John Collinges, and John Howe)[11] encourage the reader to seek out sermons that are "substantial, scriptural, and practical,"[12] adding, "all other discourses are abusively called preaching, and Athens were a more proper place for them than a preacher's pulpit."[13] Interestingly, in the course of their commendation of Manton for his "solid" discourses, they provide a brief overview of the history of preaching.

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7. Bates, "Funeral Sermon," 22:144. Manton was Reformed in his soteriology. See *Works*, 3:328–31; 5:475–84; 12:295–96, 314–15; 20:326, 361. However, he modeled his preaching on Christ, particularly His free offer of the gospel. See *Works*, 13:293. For a brief discussion of the relationship between his soteriology and preaching, see Donald J. MacLean, "Thomas Manton (1620–1677)," in *James Durham (1622–1658) and the Gospel Offer in Its Seventeenth-Century Context* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 197–214.

8. Bates, "Funeral Sermon," 22:144–45.

9. In the opinion of Archbishop James Ussher, Manton was one of the "best preachers in England." See Harris, "Some Memoirs," in Manton, *Works*, 1:xi.

10. Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's History of His Life and Times* (London, 1702), 210.

11. William Bates (1625–1699), John Collinges (1623–1690), and John Howe (1630–1705) were Manton's contemporaries. Like Manton, they were Presbyterian ministers, ejected for nonconformity in 1662. Each published popular works on divinity.

12. Thomas Manton, "To the Reader," *Several Sermons upon the Twenty-Fifth Chapter of Matthew*, in Manton, *Works*, 9:316.

13. Manton, "To the Reader," 9:316.

They begin by highlighting two famous preachers of the ancient church: Chrysostom and Augustine.[14] They applaud these two for their "judicious explications of Scripture"—for their "plenty of matter, clearness of judgment, [and] orderliness of method." Moving into the Middle Ages, the three ministers note a dramatic shift in preaching. They contend that it "turned into trifling about scholastic niceties," whereby preachers found their chief texts in John Duns Scotus (1266–1308) or Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) rather than in Scripture. The Reformation, however, marked another pivotal turning point in the history of preaching. The three ministers speak glowingly of Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, William Farel, Pierre Viret, and Theodore Beza because of their faithful handling of Scripture in the pulpit; yet they lament the subsequent generation of preachers, who (for the most part) failed to follow the example of the magisterial reformers. Finally, after reviewing the history of preaching, the three ministers arrive at their own day, affirming that God has "reserved it for a great blessing," for it is a more fertile season of preaching than "any since that of the apostles."

How do these three ministers account for this unprecedented period of homiletic blessing? They point to one man—William Perkins, declaring that he was the first to restore preaching to "its true sense" and to teach "the true manner of it."[15] Perkins's views on preaching are set down in *The Art of Prophesying*.[16] He affirmed that when a

14. Manton, "To the Reader," 9:316.

15. Manton, "To the Reader," 9:316–17. The three ministers add the following remark: "The generality of good preachers have made it their business to preach Christ and the exceeding riches of his grace, and to study matter rather than words, upon Mr. Perkins's old principle *verba sequenter res*." This "old principle" seems to be taken from Cato's famous dictum *rem tene, verba sequentur*, "Grasp the subject, the words will follow." Marcus Porcius Cato (234–149 BC) was a Roman statesman, often called "Cato the Elder" to distinguish him from "Cato the Younger" (his great-grandson).

16. William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying; or, A Treatise concerning the Sacred and Only True Manner and Method of Preaching*, vol. 2 in *The Works of William Perkins* (London, 1631). It was first published in 1592 in Latin, then translated into English in 1606. It consists of eleven chapters, covering the principles of hermeneutics, interpretation, application, and proclamation. For a thorough treatment of Perkins's treatise, see Joseph A. Pipa, "William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching" (PhD

preacher stands before his congregation, he does so "in the name and room of Christ," with the goal of calling people into a state of grace and preserving them therein.[17] Preaching, therefore, is the means by which we experience God's grace from conversion to glorification.[18] It is the means by which God reveals Himself to us and imparts His grace to us. It is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit effects our union with Christ. In sum, Perkins affirms that the "only ordinary means" by which to attain faith is the Word preached. It must be "heard, remembered, practiced, and continually hid in the heart."[19] It is this conviction that led him to formulate a method of preaching that would (in his opinion) best achieve its experiential end.

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diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985). Some scholars trace Perkins's plain style of preaching to Ramism. See, for example, Donald Keith McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins's Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987). Ramus (1515–1572), a convert from Roman Catholicism, proposed a method to simplify all academic subjects—a single logic for both dialectic and rhetoric. The task of the logician was to classify concepts in order to make them understandable and memorable. This was accomplished through method, or the orderly presentation of a subject. The *ars logica* quickly won the support of many Puritans, including Gabriel Harvey, a lecturer who used Ramus's method to reform the arts curriculum of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Harvey's presentation deeply impressed Perkins, who regularly employed Ramus's method by presenting his subject's partition, often by dichotomies, into progressively more heads or topics, applying each truth set forth. Pipa demonstrates that Perkins did not slavishly follow Ramus in that he was not locked into the use of dichotomy. "William Perkins," 161–68.

17. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:646. For a helpful discussion about urgency in Puritan preaching, see Maarten Kuivenhoven, "Condemning Coldness and Sleepy Dullness: The Concept of Urgency in the Preaching Models of Richard Baxter and William Perkins," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 4, no. 2 (July 2012): 180–200.

18. The term *experiential* (or *experimental*) comes from the Latin verb *experior* (to know by experience). Experiential preaching "addresses the vital matter of how a Christian experiences the truth of biblical, Christian doctrine in his life." Joel R. Beeke, "The Lasting Power of Reformed Experiential Preaching," in *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 425–43.

19. William Perkins, *A Treatise Tending unto a Declaration, Whether a Man Be in the Estate of Damnation, or in the Estate of Grace: and if He Be in the First, How He May in Time Come out of It: if in the Second, How He May Discern It, and Persevere in the Same to the End*, in *Works of William Perkins* (London, 1608), 1:363.

In *The Art of Prophesying*, Perkins lays out "the sacred and only method of preaching" in four succinct steps.[20] The first is "to read the text distinctly out of the canonical Scriptures." Next is "to give the sense and understanding" of the text, which is known as interpretation: "the opening of the words and sentences of the Scripture, so that one entire and natural sense may appear."[21] The third step in preaching is "to collect a few and profitable points of doctrine," which Perkins referred to as "the right cutting of the Word."[22] In simple terms, it involves deducing the main point of a passage, both theological and practical. The final step in preaching is "to apply the doctrines rightly collected to the life and manners of men in a simple and plain speech."[23] The effectiveness of Perkins's own preaching was due in large part to this last step. He had a penchant for dealing with "cases of conscience" through careful self-examination and faithful scriptural application.[24]

Perkins recognized, however, that his experiential end (the "sense") and methodical approach (the "manner") in preaching were insufficient in themselves to effect lasting change in others. "We preachers may cry until our lungs fly out, or be spent within us, and men are moved no

20. For a detailed analysis, see J. Stephen Yuille, "A Simple Method: William Perkins and the Shaping of the Protestant Pulpit," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 9, no. 1 (January 2017): 215–30.

21. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:653. Richard Muller observes that Perkins "evidences a preference for a close, literal/grammatical location of the meaning of the text coupled with, as was true of the work of his predecessors in the Reformed tradition, a strong sense of the direct theological address of the text to the church in the present." "William Perkins and the Protestant Exegetical Tradition: Interpretation, Style and Method," in *A Commentary on Hebrews 11 (1609 Edition)*, ed. John H. Augustine (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 87. Muller explains Perkins's use of "scope" and "method" in exegesis—he divides each verse, explains the meaning of its parts, and then draws out the text's argument in terms of the grammatical and logical relations of the parts.

22. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:662.

23. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:664.

24. Ian Breward, "William Perkins and the Origins of Puritan Casuistry," *The Evangelist Quarterly* 40 (1968): 16–22; George L. Mosse, *The Holy Pretence: A Study in Christianity and Reason of State from William Perkins to John Winthrop* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 48–67.

more than stones."[25] There was still a missing element—unction (the demonstration of God's power). Such power is evident when people judge that the Holy Spirit is speaking through the preacher's words and gestures. Perkins explains, "When as the minister of the Word doth in the time of preaching so behave himself, that all, even ignorant persons and unbelievers may judge, that it is not so much he that speaketh, as the Spirit of God in him and by him…. This makes the ministry to be lively and powerful."[26] But how is such unction achieved? While recognizing that anointed preaching ultimately resides in the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit, Perkins maintained that the Spirit is more likely to bless preaching marked by simplicity. Therefore, he encouraged a "plain" style because he was convinced that "a strange word hinders the understanding of those things that are spoken…. It draws the mind away from the purpose to some other matter."[27]

Manton adopted wholeheartedly Perkins's "simple" method of preaching because he believed it was the best way to convince the judgment and embrace the affections, thereby bringing the mind into vital contact with the meaning of Scripture. By all accounts, he was a skilled spiritual physician who excelled at expounding and applying God's truth to those under his pastoral care.[28]

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25. William Perkins, *A Faithful and Plain Exposition upon the Two First Verses of the Second Chapter of Zephaniah*, in *Works of William Perkins* (London, 1631), 3:424.

26. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:670.

27. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:670. As Pipa observes, the "ornate" style was chiefly concerned about "the abundant use of rhetorical devices such as repetition, heaping of examples, gradation or word-chains and schemata…innumerable quotations from the church fathers and various secular sources." "Development of Puritan Preaching," 38. For more on the styles of preaching, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1939); J. W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964); and Horton Davies, *The Worship of English Puritans* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997).

28. Manton remarks, "Were we only to provide for ourselves, we might read to you fair lectures of contemplative divinity, and with words as soft as oil entice you into a fool's paradise, never searching your wounds and sores. But our commission is to 'cry aloud, and spare not' (Isaiah 58:1)." *Exposition of James*, in Manton, *Works*, 4:436.

Over the course of his pastoral ministry, Manton preached numerous miscellaneous sermons in addition to extensive series on the Lord's Prayer, Christ's temptation, His transfiguration, Isaiah 53, 2 Thessalonians 2, Matthew 25, John 17, Romans 6 and 8, 2 Corinthians 5, Hebrews 11, Psalm 119, James, and Jude.[29] He placed such importance on preaching because he viewed it as a means of grace in which Christ was present.[30] To put it another way, he was convinced that preaching possesses "a ministerial efficacy by which the authority and sovereign efficacy of the Spirit is conveyed."[31] For this reason, he affirmed that we ought to listen to the Bible "as if we had heard [God] utter and pronounce it with his own mouth, or had received it immediately by

29. Manton's published works include close to one thousand sermons gathered into twenty-two volumes. Interestingly, they do not contain a single polemical or doctrinal treatise. All of his writings, therefore, are expositional. In the opinion of Hughes Oliphant Old, Manton's published works "probably give us the best sustained impression of Puritan preaching which is available." *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 4:301. For an analysis of Manton as a biblical interpreter, see Derek Cooper, *Thomas Manton: A Guided Tour of the Life and Thought of a Puritan Pastor* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2011), 79–142. Cooper's study focuses on Manton's sermons on the book of James.

30. Manton champions the Reformed position of *fides ex auditu*. The implication is that if we absent ourselves from preaching, we isolate ourselves from God's grace. For more on the Puritans' emphasis on the life-giving power of the Bible, see J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1990), 281–84.

31. Manton, *Exposition of James*, 4:132. He would agree wholeheartedly with John Calvin's assertion (based on Rom. 10:17) that "when it pleases the Lord to work," preaching "becomes the instrument of his power." *Commentaries on the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans*, in *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 19:401. Arnold Hunt points to two sources for the Reformed method of preaching. The first is Paul's portrayal of the inseparable link between preaching, hearing, and believing, as articulated in Romans 10:17. The second is Aristotle's theory of perception, according to which hearing contributes most to "the acquisition of knowledge." *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 22–23. For more on the relationship between the Reformed method of preaching and the Reformed doctrine of Scripture, see Mary Morrissey, "Scripture, Style, and Persuasion in Seventeenth-Century English Theories of Preaching," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53, no. 4 (October 2002).

oracle from him."[32] This conviction is apparent throughout Manton's sermons, but nowhere is it more prevalent than in his 190 sermons[33] on Psalm 119.[34]

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32. Manton, *Psalm 119*, 7:261.

33. These sermons are found in Manton, *Works*, vols. 6–9. According to Bates, Manton preached them "in his usual course of three times a week." "To the Reader," in Manton, *Works*, 6:2. In describing Manton's audience, Vincent Alsop writes, "They can here with safety read what with great danger they formerly heard." "To the Reader," in Manton, *Works*, 6:4. This remark seems to imply that Manton preached this series of sermons under some duress—perhaps in the late 1660s, after the passing of the Five Mile Act.

34. The Reformed tradition has long recognized Psalm 119 as an exemplar of biblical spirituality. Matthew Henry remarked, "Many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life. Many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every Christian." *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, ed. Leslie F. Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), 705. Jonathan Edwards stated that he knew of no part of Scripture "where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated, as in the 119th Psalm." *On Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (1834; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), 1:280. William Plumer recognized one of Psalm 119's "highest excellencies" to be "its varied instruction on the nature of true, experimental religion." *Psalms: A Critical and Expository Commentary with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks* (1867; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 1018. Similarly, Charles Bridges believed that Psalm 119 "contains the anatomy of experimental religion, the interior lineaments of the family of God. It is given for the use of believers in all ages, as an excellent touchstone of vital godliness." *Psalm 119: An Exposition* (1827; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), ix.

Chapter 2

Blessedness

Manton prefaces his sermon series on Psalm 119 by declaring that it is "a choice piece of Scripture."[1] Expectedly, he mentions that the psalm is an alphabetic acrostic poem[2] consisting of twenty-two stanzas, according to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, with each

1. Manton, *Psalm 119*, 6:5. Manton sees little coherence in Psalm 119, commenting, "Many of the sentences have no other connection than pearls upon the same string, though some are as links in the same chain, fastened one to another by an apt method and order." *Psalm 119*, 7:95. Again, "Most of the sentences of this psalm are independent, and do not easily fall under the rules of method; so that we need not take pains in clearing up the context." *Psalm 119*, 8:420. Similarly, Matthew Henry remarks, "There is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links." *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 705. Charles Bridges echoes this sentiment: "If [the verses] are not links on the same chain in continuous and unbroken dependence, they may at least be considered as pearls upon one string, of equal, though independent, value." *Psalm 119*, xi. But is this true? The psalm is a prayerful meditation, not an analytic presentation, but that is not to say it lacks coherence. In general, each stanza displays a thematic unity. The *Aleph* (1st) and *Beth* (2nd) stanzas serve as a prologue, in which the psalmist sets the foundation for the psalm by describing his relationship to "the law of the Lord." The *Gimel* (3rd) stanza marks the beginning of the prayer of lament, which continues throughout the psalm, although its emphasis varies. The *Kaph* (11th) stanza marks the pinnacle of the lament. The *Lamed* (12th) stanza notes a significant change in the psalmist's perspective and marks the psalm's zenith. The prayer of lament continues, but the psalmist's perspective (as expressed in the 12th stanza) shapes the remainder of the psalm. The *Taw* (22nd) stanza provides an appropriate conclusion: a promise of praise.

2. There are other alphabetic acrostics in the Old Testament. See Pss. 9/10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145; Prov. 31:10–31; and Lam. 1–4.

stanza containing eight verses beginning with the same letter.[3] He concludes his prefatory remarks by stating his intention to devote a sermon to each verse in order.

For Manton, the first verse sets the foundation for the entire psalm: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD" (Ps. 119:1). "The Psalmist beginneth with a description of the way to true blessedness," says Manton, "as Christ began his Sermon on the Mount, and as the whole Book of Psalms is elsewhere begun. Blessedness is that which we all aim at, only we are either ignorant or reckless of the way that leadeth to it; therefore the holy Psalmist would first set us right in the true notion of a blessed man."[4] According to Manton, blessedness (or happiness) is our most fundamental pursuit: "To ask whether men would be happy or not, is to ask whether they love themselves."[5] Our problem, however, is that—since the fall—we have sought happiness apart from God.[6] We have substituted "vain glory" for "eternal glory," "little brutish pleasure" for "fullness of joy," and "perishing vanities" for "true riches."[7] This has resulted in disorder, meaning we prefer the creature before God, the body before the soul, earth before heaven, and time before eternity.[8] Because of this, we mistake both the end of and means to blessedness.[9]

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3. Manton does not believe the psalmist's intention in adopting this literary form is to hide some "mystery" for the reader to discover, but simply to aid with "attention and memory." *Psalm 119*, 6:5.

4. Manton, *Psalm 119*, 6:5. Bridges echoes this sentiment: "This most interesting and instructive psalm, like the Psalter itself, opens with a beatitude for our comfort and encouragement, directing us immediately to that happiness, which all mankind in different ways are seeking and inquiring after." *Psalm 119*, 1.

5. Manton, *Psalm 119*, 6:6. Robert Harris agrees, "The end whereto all men are carried, and whereat they aim, is happiness." *The Way of True Happiness*, *Delivered in Twenty-Four Sermons upon the Beatitudes* (1653; repr., Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1998), 10. Similarly, Thomas Watson declares, "Blessedness is the desire of all men." *The Beatitudes: An Exposition of Matthew 5:1–12* (1660; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), 24.

6. Thomas Manton, *Sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:29*, in Manton, *Works*, 19:49.

7. Manton, *Sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:29*, 19:51.

8. Manton, *Sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:29*, 19:57–58.

9. Manton, *Psalm 119*, 6:6. According to Watson, "Millions of men mistake both the nature of blessedness and the way thither." *Beatitudes*, 25. Why? They equate

In the century before Manton, John Calvin argued that "all men naturally aspire after happiness, but instead of searching for it in the right path, they designedly prefer wandering up and down through endless by-paths, to their ruin and destruction."[10] He asserted that while everyone seeks "true peace of mind," most err in their pursuit.[11] By way of amplification, Calvin pointed to the Stoics, who believed that blessedness is found in indifference—the impassionate acceptance of circumstances. According to this view, we must learn to desire what is; when we do, we rise above the perturbations of life to experience "peace of mind." Calvin also pointed to the Epicureans, who believed that blessedness is found in indulgence—the incessant gratification of desires. For Epicurus, there are two kinds of pleasure stemming from two kinds of desire: the natural and the vain. We must learn to satisfy our natural desires while denying our vain desires.

These two (Stoicism and Epicureanism) epitomize man's effort to find "true peace of mind," but both proceed on the faulty premise that peace of mind is related to circumstances. For Manton, blessedness flows not from changing circumstances but from an unchanging God.[12] The reason why is obvious: the human soul and "outward things" are mismatched. He explains, "We desire an infinite eternal

blessedness with externals. Watson appeals to the example of Solomon to show the folly of believing that happiness is found in "terrestrial things." *Beatitudes*, 25–26. (1) Solomon had parentage; he was the son of David. (2) Solomon had wealth; he "made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones" (1 Kings 10:27). (3) Solomon had luxury; he was surrounded by extravagance—gold, silver, ivory, apes, peacocks, horses, spices, vineyards, music, food, etc. (4) Solomon had power; he "reigned over all the kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life" (1 Kings 4:21). (5) Solomon had pleasure; "he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines" (1 Kings 11:3). (6) Solomon had wisdom; "And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart" (1 Kings 10:24). In the face of it all, what does Solomon declare? "All was vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 2:1–11).

10. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 4:403.

11. John Calvin, *Sermons on the Beatitudes*, trans. Robert White (1562; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), 18.

12. Manton writes, "True happiness is only to be found in the favor of God, and in the way appointed by God; but man would be at his own dispose, and would invent and

good, still such as may quiet and satisfy us; therefore man being made capable of enjoying God, who is infinite, and finding himself not satisfied with a few or many things, always seeketh after new things. Here is his error, that he seeketh after that which is infinite, among those things which are finite, and so wandereth up and down groping for an eternal good."[13] For Manton, the soul is eternal; it cannot be satisfied by something that is not equal to its own duration—the temporal. In addition, the soul is spiritual; it cannot be satisfied by something that is not equal to its own nature—the material. Finally, the soul is exceptional; it cannot be satisfied by something that is not equal to its own quality—the trivial. The soul can find happiness only in that which is suited to it. This means that the soul can find happiness only in God.

This pursuit of blessedness in God is a central Puritan motif.[14] According to Thomas Watson, "Blessedness lies in the fruition of the chief good. It is not every good that makes man blessed, but it must be the supreme good, and that is God."[15] Robert Harris remarks, "God enjoyed is man's happiness."[16] William Gurnall declares, "Man's happiness stands in his likeness to God, and his fruition of God."[17] Thomas Shepard comments, "There is no man's heart but it must have some good to content it; which good is to be found only in the fountain

find out a happiness for himself, and be sufficient to himself for his own blessedness, without any dependence upon God." *Sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:29*, 19:54.

13. Manton, *Sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:29*, 19:56–57.

14. To a man, the Puritans believed that God designed us for a specific *end*—namely, to find pleasure in Him. They found the framework for their view in Aristotle, who asserted, "There is some end (*telos*) of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake." This end is "the chief good" (happiness), which is "always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 9, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1.2, 4, 7. For Aristotle, the conclusion was primarily ethical; that is, the happy person is the virtuous person—virtue being the mean between two extremes. The Puritans, however, while embracing Aristotle's teleological framework, rejected his view of the virtuous man. They made it abundantly clear that our chief good is God.

15. Watson, *Beatitudes*, 29.

16. Harris, *Way of True Happiness*, 18.

17. William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armor: A Treatise of the Saints' War against the Devil* (1662–1665; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995), 1:415.

of all good, and that is God."[18] For Richard Baxter, "Every soul that hath a title to this rest, doth place his chief happiness in God. This rest consisteth in the full and glorious enjoyment of God."[19] Finally, John Flavel affirms, "God is that supreme good, in the enjoyment of whom all true happiness lies."[20] This Puritan consensus is summed up in the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "What is the chief end of man?" to which it answers, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."[21]

Manton stands firmly in this tradition and makes it clear that God is "our chiefest good and our utmost end."[22] That being the case, we must learn how to enjoy Him. For Manton, the way lies in adherence to the following six propositions:

1. God is over all, and above all, blessed enough in himself, and needs nothing from us to add to his happiness and perfection.
2. Though God stand in no need of us, yet he is willing to communicate his blessedness, and to make us happy in the enjoyment of himself.
3. The word of God, especially the gospel part, does only teach us the way how we may be blessed in the enjoyment of God.
4. If we would profit by the word of God, we must go to God, and desire the light and strength of his grace.

18. Thomas Shepard, *The Sincere Convert: Discovering the Small Number of True Believers and the Great Difficulty of Saving Conversion*, in *The Sincere Convert and the Sound Believer* (1853; repr., Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999), 62.

19. Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter: Select Treatises* (1863; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 54.

20. John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel* (1820; repr., London: Banner of Truth, 1968), 5:210.

21. According to B. B. Warfield, "The ultimate source of the declaration is almost as easily identified as its proximate source. This must undoubtedly be found in John Calvin, who, in his 'Institutes' and in 'Catechisms' alike, placed this identical idea in the forefront of his instruction." *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, in *The Works of Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 6:380.

22. Manton, *Psalm 119*, 6:108.

5. The more we are brought to attend upon the word, and the more influence the word has upon us, the nearer the blessing.
6. It is not only an affront put upon God, but also a great wrong, to neglect the word of God, and the way he prescribes, and to seek blessedness in temporal things.[23]

In the following six chapters, we will unpack each of these propositions in greater detail and consider how they lay the foundation for Manton's spirituality of the Word.

23. Manton, *Psalm 119*, 6:111–13.