

Commentary
on the Apostle Paul's
Epistle to the Philippians



GIROLAMO ZANCHI (1516–1590)

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on the Apostle Paul's
Epistle to the Philippians



Girolamo Zanchi

Translated and introduced
by Patrick J. O'Banion



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For Ed and Andrea Hultgren

A father and a mother in the faith of Christ
Philippians 2:16

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Preface

Although a number of books written by the Italian Reformed theologian Girolamo Zanchi (1516–1590) have been published in English translation over the last four-hundred years (or so), those efforts have largely—and not without reason—focused on his theological (rather than his exegetical) works. While nowadays Zanchi is remembered primarily as a systematizer of doctrine, he might well be surprised by that legacy. Of his three major teaching appointments, two were to chairs of Biblical Studies, first in the Old and then later in the New Testament. Only in the interim did he served as a professor of what was then known as “commonplace theology.”

The present volumes represent the first major effort to make Zanchi’s exegetical labors available in English. Although he produced important studies of Hosea, parts of Isaiah, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 1 John, none of these have ever been translated into English. It boggles the mind that his commentaries on both Hosea and Ephesians are more than twice as long as the (admittedly lengthy) Philippians commentary translated here. As a textual critic, exegete, and theologian, he helped to shape the Reformed understanding not only of what the Bible said but also what it meant and how it all fit together into a coherent whole.

In spite of this, only two brief and incomplete samples of Zanchi’s exegetical efforts exist in English. The first is a theological excursus on Ephesians 5:22–33, extracted from Zanchi’s commentary on that epistle, which was first published in English at the end of the sixteenth century (and more recently in a new modern translation) as *The Spiritual Marriage of Christ and His Church and Every One of the Faithful*.¹ The second is a partial translation of a doctrinal and pastoral reflection upon Philippians 2:30 addressing the question of whether a

¹ *The Spiritual Marriage between Christ and His Church and Every One of the Faithful*, trans. Patrick J. O’Banion (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage

minister was allowed to remove himself from his field of ministry on account of plague. This appeared in 2021 in the volume entitled *Faith in the Time of Plague*.²

The present translation of Zanchi's Philippians commentary was made on the basis of the first published edition of the text, which appeared from the press of Mattheus Harnisch of Neustadt in 1595, five years after the author's death, and was printed alongside of his commentaries on Colossians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Consultation was also made with later editions, especially with the one included in the 1617 Crespin edition of Zanchi's collected theological works (*Opera omnia theologica*), and with the 1906 Dutch translation by Gerrit Wielenga.³

In completing this translation I have, as always, aimed at readability. Over the years, however, as I have become more comfortable with Zanchi's style and more confident in my ability to express his point, I have worked harder to make his writing easier for modern readers. This has entailed breaking up long sentences (and paragraphs), clarifying pronominal referents, inserting headings, and using idiomatic language. My goal in every such instance is to clarify and elucidate.

Tracking down Zanchi's many extra-biblical references and citations proved challenging. In the body of the text, I have retained the reference information given by Zanchi, which is usually correct but corresponds to the early modern editions that he and his contemporaries used rather than to modern editions. Thus, in brackets within the text, I have supplemented (and sometimes corrected) his information. In an accompanying footnote, I have clarified references and provided a citation to a standard modern translation (when it exists) of the work or (when it doesn't) a reference to an early modern or standard modern original-language edition of the work. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Books, 2021). In fact, while this work is clearly rooted in Zanchi's study of Ephesians 5, it may have been intended as a stand-alone treatise that was only subsequently inserted into the Ephesians commentary by his heirs when they edited his lectures for posthumous publication.

² "The Work of Christ and the Christian's Duty," in *Faith in the Times of Plague: Selected Writings from the Reformation and Post-Reformation*, ed. Stephen M. Coleman and Todd M. Rester (Glenside, Pa.: Westminster Seminary Press, 2021), 231–46.

³ Girolamo Zanchi, *Commentaar op Paulus' Zendbrief aan de Philippensen*, trans. G. Wielenga (Kampen: Kok, 1906).

A similar word should be offered with regard to Zanchi's use of the Bible. When he miscites a verse, I have corrected him in brackets; when he gives only a chapter, I have supplied the verse in brackets.⁴ As this commentary demonstrates, he was concerned to establish the Greek text of the New Testament, however, he was more flexible when it came to Latin translations of that text. He had a personal preference for the Latin of the Vulgate, which he used both as a youth and as part of the Augustinian Canons Regular of the Lateran Congregation. But he also made use of other translations, such as the *Sacra Biblia* of Theodore Beza and Franciscus Junius.

Sometimes Zanchi simply worked out his own translations on the basis of the original languages. As he did so, he rephrased the biblical text to help emphasize the point that he was trying to draw out of the Greek. The result of this practice was that we often encounter multiple Latin versions of the same biblical text in Zanchi's writing. Consequently, I have not relied upon any standard English translation of the Bible, opting instead to follow Zanchi's lead. As a consequence, the same verse or phrase may be rendered into English in a variety of different ways. While this can be a bit disorienting, it has seemed the best way to communicate what I understand to be the author's intent.

Naturally, Zanchi interacts a great deal with Greek in this commentary, both the Greek of Paul's epistle and the Greek of various patristic authorities. Those who are familiar with the early modern system of ligatures used to print Greek text (which employed a complex scheme of symbols intended—all evidence to the contrary—to make reading easier) know that deciphering the various squiggles is an adventure. I will only say that I have done my best to reproduce the Greek text *as printed*, which does not always correspond with what one might expect.

As much as possible, I have endeavored to push the Greek that appears in Zanchi's text down into footnotes. This was done in order to produce a book that would be accessible not only to biblical scholars but also to pastors, elders, and other theologically engaged readers, even those who are not trained in original languages. I have retained Greek in the main text only when doing so proved necessary

⁴ I note that this work contains far fewer mis-citations, especially of biblical texts, than was the case in Zanchi's *De religione confessione fides* (1585). The reason for this is not clear as both *De religione* and the Philippians commentary were prepared during the same period.

to the point being made. In such cases, I have provided English glosses in brackets within the text.

Thanks are due, as always, to my family, especially my wife who joyfully makes it possible for me to pursue projects like this one. Both my son and daughter are now of an age to provide help above and beyond their previous moral support. They assisted in the typing of the original draft and word-smithed some of the language. My son served as a conversation partner as we untangled several of the trickier references and citations. My colleague Dr. Donnie Berry helped with a couple of particularly thorny Greek translations, and my friend Dr. Robert Petersen once again read and commented upon the entire draft manuscript as it was completed. I am grateful to each one of these people but even more to the God who has brought them into my life.

Finally, this book is dedicated to Ed and Andrea Hultgren, who were my first father and mother in the Christian faith. I think of them whenever I read Paul's admonition to the Philippians to hold fast to the Word of life so that he might be proud in the day of Christ. I pray that my own faith in Christ will encourage them to remain steadfast, knowing that they have neither run in vain nor labored in vain.

Patrick J. O'Banion

Abbreviations

ANF	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325.</i> Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 10 vols. Reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999.
art./arts.	article/articles
bk./bks.	book/books
CCR	Zanchi, Girolamo, <i>Confession of the Christian Religion.</i> Edited and translated by Patrick J. O'Banion. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2025.
can.	canon
ch./chs.	chapter/chapters
col./cols.	column/columns
dist./dists.	distinction/distinctions
ep./eps.	epistle/epistles
fol./fols.	folio/folios
FOTC	<i>The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation.</i> 145 vols. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947–.
hom./homs.	homily/homilies
lect.	lecture
NPNF1	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.</i> Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989–1994.
NPNF2	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.</i> Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14 vols. 2nd series. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

OOT	Girolamo Zanchi. <i>Omnia opera theologicorum</i> . 8 tomes in 3 vols. Geneva, 1619.
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> . Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886.
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> . Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864.
PRRD	Richard A. Muller. <i>Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–1725</i> . 2nd ed. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.
q.	question
v./vv.	verse/verses
Vulg.	Vulgate

Introduction

In his extraordinary albeit incomplete commentary on Ephesians, the great English Puritan divine Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680) noted that, while he accounted the Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) as the “best of the school-men,” Girolamo Zanchi was, in his opinion, “the best of Protestant writers.” Not to be outdone by Goodwin (nor, one supposes, to outdo him), around a century later, the American theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) wrote precisely the same words about the same two men in his *Miscellaneous Observations*.¹ Setting aside the question of whether or not Edwards owed Goodwin a footnote, it is remarkable to hear these two eminent and influential Christian thinkers—one from the seventeenth and the other from the eighteenth century—express such high admiration for an Italian refugee theologian who, nowadays, has largely faded into obscurity.

While Girolamo Zanchi may not be a household name—even in those happy households where John Calvin and Herman Bavinck are mentioned regularly around the breakfast table—his influence is still very much a reality among Reformed Protestants. This is due not only to his vast learning and productivity but also, and more to the point, to the fact that he appeared on the scene in the second half of the sixteenth century, a period of great formation and formulation for the Reformed churches.

Born in 1516 in the northern Italian town of Alzano, Zanchi received a first-rate education, thanks initially to his parents and, following their early deaths, from the Augustinian Canons Regular of the Lateran Congregation, the religious order that young Girolamo joined.² In 1541, having become a priest, canon, and public preacher,

¹ Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861), 2:37; Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of President Edwards* (New York: S. Converse, 1830), 8:507.

² We now know for certain that Zanchi never enrolled as a student at

Zanchi was assigned to the house of the Lateran Congregation in Lucca, where his abbot was Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562), an evangelical preacher who would soon become a prominent second-generation Reformed theologian. Zanchi, too, became committed to the Reformation, although he remained in Italy until the threat of arrest finally drove him to seek refuge in the Protestant north in 1551.

Professionally at least, the rest of Zanchi's life was dominated by service to the church as a professor and pastor. For a decade between 1553 and 1563, he taught Old Testament at the College of St. Thomas in Strasbourg. Between 1563 and 1567, he pastored a Reformed congregation in Chiavenna in the Grisons. In 1567, he accepted the chair of theology at the University of Heidelberg. His remit was to teach the subject from Scripture and the church fathers by means of common places. When changing political winds led to a purging of the theological faculty at Heidelberg in late 1576, Zanchi and many of his colleagues lost their positions.

Despite being offered a chair at the University of Leiden and, later, a pulpit for the Italian congregation of Antwerp, Zanchi accepted an offer to teach New Testament at a Reformed academy in nearby Neustadt-an-der-Hardt, which had been established as a refuge for the Reformed members of Heidelberg's theology faculty. In May 1578, Zanchi was accorded the honor of giving the inaugural address.³ Known as the Casimirianum, the academy "became the intellectual centre of Reformed doctrine in German speaking lands."⁴

the University of Padua (as many had long surmised), but that his advanced education occurred between 1537 and 1540 at the Lateran monastery of Santa Maria in Porto (Ravenna). See Giulio Orazio Bravi, "Nuovi Documenti per Girolamo Zanchi in Italia," *Riforma e Movimenti Religiosi* 15 (2024): 179–82.

³ Christopher J. Burchill, "Girolamo Zanchi: Portrait of a Reformed Theologian and His Work," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no. 2 (1984): 204. Burchill notes that this lecture was published at Neustadt the following year, apparently without Zanchi's full approval. See "Oratio de aperiendis in ecclesia scholis, deque opera sacrarum literarum studiis comprimis danda" in *OOT*, vol. 2, tome 6, fols. *3r–*2v. Henceforth, the *OOT* will be cited with volume and tome separated by a slash, followed by the page, folio, or column number: 2/6:*3r–*2v.

⁴ Sachiko Kukusawa, "Uses of Philosophy in Reformation Thought: Melancthon, Schegk, and Crellius," in *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400–1700*, ed. Russell L. Friedman and Lauge O. Nielsen, The New Synthese Historical Library 53 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2013), 153. The Neustadt academy was so-called in honor of Johann Casimir (1543–1592), the younger son of Elector Frederick III, a

At age 59 and in fulfillment of his new teaching obligations, Zanchi began a series of lectures on the Pauline epistles, starting with Ephesians and continuing over the next several years onto Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians.⁵ As had always been the case, Zanchi moved slowly and methodically in the classroom, but now the veteran teacher drew upon decades of academic and ecclesiastical experience. He combined New Testament textual criticism and exegesis with dogmatic, biblical, and practical theology as well as apologetics and polemics.

Zanchi's method for commenting upon the New Testament was expansive, involving a verse-by-verse and section-by-section analysis of the book under consideration. He first established the Greek text of a verse, weighing the opinions of various textual critics—Erasmus, Camerarius, Beza, and others as appropriate—and comparing their conclusions with the Syriac recension, the Old Latin (*Vetus Latina*) and Vulgate translations, as well as with the Greek textual tradition received through what Zanchi calls the “Scholia” (literally “notes”). These last he drew from a catena-style commentary edited by Donatus of Verona and published in 1532.⁶ The commentary itself seems to have been originally compiled from patristic materials by a tenth century bishop of Trika named Oecumenius, who was sometimes confused with the sixth century commentator of the same name.⁷

Having established the text, Zanchi proceeded to its interpretation, considering the meaning of the words within their immediate and larger context. This often led him down multiple winding paths in which he assessed the suitability and implications of various potential interpretive options. He certainly had his preferences: “I like this,” he said of the Scholia’s reading of Philippians 2:6. Generally, however, he preferred simple readings that were attested by tradition,

committed Reformed Protestant, and the school’s founder.

⁵ These works were originally published posthumously in two separate volumes: first, the Ephesians commentary (Heidelberg, 1594) and, then, the remaining Pauline commentaries and a series of lectures on 1 John that he had begun while teaching at Strasbourg (Heidelberg, 1595). Collectively, these New Testament commentaries comprise the entire sixth tome of Zanchi’s *OOT*.

⁶ Oecumenius, *Expositiones antiquae ac valde utiles brevitatem una cum perspicuitate habentes mirabilem, ex diversis sanctorum patrum commentariis ab Oecumenio & Aretha collectae in hosce novi testamenti tractatus* (Verona, 1532).

⁷ This commentary has not been translated into English but will be cited here as it appears in *PG*, 118:1255–1326.

unless the text of Scripture compelled him to reject them. Not infrequently, he was undogmatic about variant interpretations: “Ultimately,” he wrote of Philippians 1:7, “two interpretations are the most widely accepted; a third is novel, but not to be condemned.” Nevertheless, no matter what patristic authorities endorsed an interpretation, if it did not conform to the biblical text, it could not be received. “The reason that I brought this up,” he explained, having subjected Ambrose’s reading of Philippians 3:16 to thorough criticism, “is not so that I could scold Ambrose but to remind us that the fathers must be read judiciously.”⁸

Finally, Zanchi integrated the teaching of particular verses and sections of Scripture into the broader scope of Christian theology. As he moved from text and interpretation to doctrine, Zanchi seasoned his work by engaging not only related biblical texts across the canon but also the church’s long theological tradition, especially the patristic era.⁹ All told, in the commentary on Philippians, Zanchi interacts with more than eighty different extra-biblical authors and a much larger number of works written by them.

As this suggests, Zanchi possessed an organized mind and a remarkable breadth of learning, which enabled him to operate with equal skill as both an exegete and dogmatician. And once he hit his stride as an author in the 1560s and 1570s, he produced an astonishing amount of published theological literature that was not only intellectually rich but also pastorally minded. Moreover, he trained a generation of theologians who, neither slavishly nor uncritically but respectfully, carried on his legacy, especially among the German, Dutch, and English Reformed.

The consequence of all this was that Zanchi left his mark. And that mark endures in the way that Reformed Christians today read their Bibles, understand its parts, and make sense of the whole. To engage Zanchi’s writings is to raise the hood (as it were) and consider the inner workings of a theological system based upon and established under the authority of the Word of God. To be sure, Zanchi’s

⁸ In point of fact, the view that Zanchi challenged was not Ambrose’s but the pseudonymous commentator (now known as Ambrosiaster) whose writings became conflated with Ambrose’s.

⁹ See the comments on this topic in John L. Farthing, “Patristics, Exegesis, and the Eucharist in the Theology of Girolamo Zanchi,” in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Grand Rapids and Carlisle, Cumbria: Baker and Paternoster, 1999), 80–85 and 91–95.

Scripture-saturated dogmatic works—especially on theology proper and Christology—offer one way to assay this matter. But his exegetical writings provide a different and rather valuable perspective as to why Reformed churches believe and behave as they do and how they got that way.

Unfortunately, post-Reformation Reformed exegesis is not well explored, and Zanchi's own works in that area have been largely neglected by both scholars of Reformed orthodoxy and translators. This translation of his *Commentary on the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* is the first-known complete English translation of one of Zanchi's commentaries.¹⁰ That being the case, a few words about the Philippians commentary are in order.

The commentary began in the classroom. Zanchi lectured on Philippians to his students at Neustadt after completing a much lengthier exposition of the epistle to the Ephesians. Neither the precise dates of starting and completing the course on Philippians nor the schedule of his lecture topics is known. However, in his textual analysis of 1:14, he made this remark: "It is as if today we were to see the same thing happen in Rome, Paris, Constantinople, Venice, or other great cities of the world as now (in the year 1582) has happened by God's blessing in Antwerp." Clearly, then, by 1582, he had already made some headway in his lectures. Antwerp's religious fortunes allow us (somewhat less reliably) to hypothesize that Zanchi finished his lectures before July 1584, when Alexander Farnese laid siege to that city, eventually bringing it under Spanish (and Roman Catholic) dominion. If it had been later, would Zanchi not have revised his sanguine reflection in light of Antwerp's fall?

The fact that, in their published form, the reference to Antwerp's status remained as written in 1582 raises another issue, namely, what is the relationship between Zanchi's lecture notes and the printed commentary? How much revising did Zanchi do (presumably with the help of an amanuensis, since he was already losing his eyesight) after retiring from teaching in the mid-1580s? Likewise, all of Zanchi's biblical commentaries, including the one on Philippians, were published posthumously under the editorial care of his heirs and those whom they engaged to advance the work. What changes did

¹⁰ The Philippians commentary was also translated into Dutch at the beginning of the twentieth century, which is the only other full translation of an exegetical work by Zanchi into a modern language.

they make while preparing the author's notes for publication?¹¹ At present, these questions remain unanswered.

As for the published commentary on Philippians, the centerpiece is a rich and lengthy exposition of the Christology presented in 2:5–11, wherein Christ, who was in the form of God, took on the form of a servant. Here Zanchi slows to a snail's pace, often handling the text word by word, as he interprets this passage in accord with Scriptures, in conversation with the church's long exegetical tradition, and in view of the Reformed confession of Christ and His work. All told, these seven verses account for more than fifteen percent of the entire work.

The commentary also addresses a number of other theological and interpretive issues, some more critical and others less so. Among the less critical, we can include Zanchi's insistence that Syzygus (Phil. 4:3) was Paul's wife and that Epaphroditus was the pastor of the Philippian church. Among the more critical, we must include his exegesis of the economy of salvation, justification by faith alone, and the imputation of Christ's active and passive righteousness. And because the work was written by one who, in spite of his theological precision (or rather because of it), was "second to none in piety," the commentary includes many wise reflections upon pastors and their relationship with Christ's sheep, the role of affliction in the Christian life, love, humility, the fear of the Lord, Christian joy, and much more.

In short, the work represents a vital but often overlooked element in Reformed theology. While the Reformed are noted for their robust doctrinal formulations, the fact that those formulations have always been established upon careful biblical exposition is sometimes forgotten. Zanchi showcases the fact that Reformed theology did not emerge as a set of doctrinal or confessional claims in search of proof-texts but as an exegetical tradition rooted in and founded upon the Word of God, which Reformed teachers read not as though they were individual geniuses but along with and as part of the church militant.

¹¹ We know, for instance, that the 2 Thessalonians commentary was completed posthumously by Zanchi's son-in-law, Quirinus Reuter, using his notes. See the printer's notice in *OOT*, 2/6:449. It may be that the absence of similar notices indicates that minimal editorial changes were made on the other commentaries and that Zanchi had already revised his lecture notes into commentaries.

May the Servant King, the Lord Jesus Christ, be at work in His church in this age through the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself, applying the Word of God in Philippians to the members of His body so that, in Christ, they may press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God.

Commentary
on the Apostle Paul's
Epistle to the Philippians

By Girolamo Zanchi

In which the Apostle's Text
is Accurately Explained
and Many Theological Topics
are Thoroughly Addressed

John 5:39

*Search the Scriptures, for in them you see yourselves to have eternal life,
and it is they that testify of Me.*

The Prologue

Before moving onto the letter to the Philippians itself, which follows the one sent to the Ephesians (which we have explained as carefully as possible), the ascription¹ requires that we briefly explain the following three things:

First, we must address the Philippians, to whom the letter is directed, along with their city, Philippi. We need not speak of Paul, the epistle's author, as we have said enough of him in the prologue to our commentary on the epistle to the Ephesians.²

Next, in the second place, I shall say something about the circumstance that led the apostle to write this epistle.

Finally, I will summarize the letter's character and content as well as the purpose toward which the apostle directs the whole of it.

Once these things have been set forth, I will proceed to explain the first chapter, divided according to its parts, having first offered a summary of it.

The City of Philip of Macedon

Firstly, then, we must handle the city of Philippi and the Philippians. Ptolemy and other geographers reckon Macedonia the richest, most fertile, and most powerful of the illustrious and richest regions of Europe, which is the chief and noblest part of the inhabited world. In former times, it was the territory of Philip, father of Alexander the Great; now it is wholly in the power of the Turks. How great Philip's power was is apparent not only from Ptolemy but also from Pliny, who says that fifty peoples inhabited this region.³ By special divine revelation, Paul was called to shine the light of the gospel upon it (Acts 16).

¹ Ἐπιγραφή.

² Girolamo Zanchi, *In d. Pauli epistolam ad Ephesios commentarius* (Neustadt, 1594).

³ According to Pliny's *Natural History* (4.17.10), 150 peoples inhabited Macedonia.

Furthermore, Thessalonica is the capital of the whole of Macedonia, but, more than any other city, it is Philippi of which the apostle here speaks, since he says: *To all the saints that are in Philippi*. It is near Neapolis and is the first city one encounters when going from Thrace to Macedonia. It is a great maritime city, as we also see from Acts 16. One comes to Philippi from Neapolis, as again is seen in Acts 16.

Notwithstanding, a certain amount of doubt may arise as a result of the following: Ptolemy's tenth map of Europe assigns the first place among Macedonia's cities to Neapolis, and Pliny notes the same thing (bk. 4, ch. 10 [that is, *The Natural History*, 4.17.10]). But in Acts 16, Luke clearly writes: *We sailed from Troas straight to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis, and thence to Philippi, which is the first city of this part of Macedonia, a colony*. It cannot be supposed that Ptolemy and the other geographers have all erred in their description of this region; however, it is even more certain that Luke could not have written anything false. So then, how was Philippi the first city of Macedonia, and yet not the first?

I respond: this knot can be easily untangled if one pays careful attention to the location of these cities. The previously mentioned Neapolis is a seaside city, opposite Thrace. From there flows the river called the Struma, on the far side of which is located the city of Philippi. Now, according to Pliny, this river is the Macedonian border. That is, it is the border of that part of Macedonia that adjoins Thrace. It follows that the first mainland city of Macedonia on this side of the Struma is Philippi, and this is what Luke referred to in the Acts of the Apostles, which agrees with Pliny and other secular authors.

However, although the boundary line separating Macedonia from Thrace is in other respects designated as the Struma, Neapolis, which was situated beyond the river by the sea, still belonged to Macedonia and, in a sense, was the boundary-marker between Macedonia and Thrace. And this is what Ptolemy and Pliny, and others mean when they give Neapolis the first place among the cities of Macedonia. If you consider the true borderline separating Macedonia from Thrace (namely, the River Struma), then Philippi is the first city of Macedonia. However, it was not first in every sense. Instead, Neapolis itself was first if one were also to consider the part of Macedonia that lies beyond the Struma. For, in that case, seaside Neapolis is the first city of Macedonia.

Allow me to offer a clear parallel from Caesar's true and ancient description of all the Germanic cities beyond the Rhine, which divides Gaul from Germania. But if you also consider the large part of this country on this side of the Rhine that was occupied by the Germans, we may also say that Speyer, Worms, and Neustadt are Germanic cities.

According to the first perspective, Heidelberg (for the sake of an example) would be the first city of this part of Germania for those coming to Germania from Gaul, for it is the first city encountered on the far side of the Rhine. From the other perspective, however, Metz would be the first, in so far as it actually belongs to Germania. It is evident, then, that there is no contradiction between Luke and the non-Christian geographers.

Moreover, Luke adds, in agreement with those writers, that the city of Philippi was not only the first city of Macedonia but also a colony, namely, of the Romans. This is clear from the suit that some Philippians brought against Paul and Silas in Acts 16. Luke mentions this fact to the commendation of that city, for the Roman colonies enjoyed the privileges of the Roman people. Their citizens were called Roman citizens and had the right to petition the Roman magistrate and the right to vote, despite not being born in Rome. This is evident from several books by Cicero and other authors.

Tarsus, where Paul was born, was also a colony of the same sort, and he himself exercised this right in his own defense, according to Acts 16. Moreover, while there were two kinds of colonies—some merely Latin, others Roman as well—the Roman colonies had greater dignity and influence than the Latin colonies, for the Latin ones had only the Latin rights, while the Roman ones also had the rights of the Roman people. Thus, the city of Philippi was a Roman colony of the noblest sort.

Now, as to the name, some argue that this city was first called Dathon, a name that signifies cleverness, but they have no compelling or credible witness for this. Diodorus Siculus writes that the city was formerly called Krenidas⁴ by the Thasians, whom (as others write) founded the town. Subsequently, King Philip of Macedonia occupied, fortified, and enlarged it, and it was named Philippi after him. On this point, all reliable writers agree, such as Ptolemy, Stephanus, who quotes Artemidorus, and others. These are the words of

⁴ Κρηνίδας.

Diodorus [Siculus], speaking of Philippi: *Then he came to the city of Krenidas. After he expanded it with many buildings, he named it Philippi, after himself* [*Library of History*, bk. 16.8].⁵ Hence, in Greek, the inhabitants of that city were called Φιλιππείς or Φιλιππινοὶ. Paul calls them Φιλιππίσιοι.

But why was that city first called Krenidas?⁶ Some say that many springs of water flowed down the hill around which it was built, for κρήνη means *spring*. But another explanation is possible, namely, that it was so called less on account of the springs of water as for the springs of gold. For there were so many veins of gold or springs flowing with gold (that is, rich gold mines) thereabout that King Philip is said to have received more than twenty talents every year, a sum that amounts to six hundred thousand Gallic crowns. Thus, the city was initially called Krenidas⁷ on account of these veins (or springs) of gold, but later it was called Philippi, for it was a very rich city. Now she is called Grixopolis (Chrysopolis [the Gilded City], as it were), on account of the gold with which she abounds, I believe.

But this noble and rich city of Philippi, which was also very famous because the army of Brutus and Cassius was there defeated by Octavian and Antony, at long last received the highest of all available honors and glory, namely that, by God's express command according to Acts 16, the Apostle Paul came with Silas and Timothy to preach the gospel there first, and then to some other cities of Macedonia. Next, this city was converted to Christ by the ministry of Paul and his companions after Lydia (the seller of purple, as she is commonly called) was brought in as the first fruits. Moreover, for Christ's sake (and for having cast a demon out of a possessed woman) the apostle endured much suffering, imprisonment, and calamities in that city. Finally, Philippi received from the Lord not only to believe in the Lord Jesus but also to suffer for Him, having been given perseverance of faith, as the apostle writes in the first chapter of the epistle. This suffices regarding the city of Philippi itself and the Philippians.

⁵ μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα παρελθὼν ἐπὶ πόλιν Κρηνίδας: ταύτην μὲν ἐπαυξήσας οἰκητόρων πλήθει μετωνόμασε Φιλίππους, ἅφ' ἑαυτοῦ προσαγορεύσας. The translation is from *Library of History, Volume VII: Books 15.20–16.65*, trans. Charles L. Sherman, Loeb Classical Library 389 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), 261.

⁶ Κρηνίδας.

⁷ Κρηνίδας.

The Occasion of the Letter

As for the second point, namely, what prompted Paul to write this letter to the Philippians, this is established partly from chapter four and partly from chapter three; in fact, from the entire epistle.

In chapter four we read that when the apostle was thrown into prison at Rome for his frank confession of the name of Christ and when the Philippians heard of it, they sent him alms—and generous ones—by the hand of their minister, Epaphroditus, which Paul calls a sweet-smelling sacrifice. Moreover, in chapter three we read: *Beware the dogs; beware the evil doers; beware the mutilators*. From this passage we can easily infer, as we also saw in the letter to the Ephesians, that although many who were of the circumcision professed Christ, yet along with faith in Christ they also enjoined and urged circumcision and the works of the law as necessary for salvation, which was certainly nothing other than falling away from Christ.

In chapter one and elsewhere Paul commends the Philippians for their steadfastness and perseverance in the pure faith of Christ, and for having suffered much to maintain the purity of the apostolic doctrine. Thus, the gifts and money sent to him by the Philippians provided the apostle with the occasion for writing this letter. For it was right for him to thank them, just as he did. He was also prompted by the reports which he had received from Epaphroditus concerning the false teachers of Judaism. For it was right for him to warn the Philippians that they ought not be deceived and to recount to them the summary of the gospel, which he did diligently in this letter, especially in chapters two and three. And finally, they provided an opportunity for him to write about what he had heard from that same Epaphroditus concerning the Philippians' steadfastness. Therefore, he commends their steadfastness and teaches them that this is God's special gift, for which they ought also to thank God, just as he does.

The Purpose of the Letter

From the second point about the reason behind the letter being written, the third point can now easily be deduced: what sort of letter is this? What is its argument, summary, and scope? Unlike the letters to the Romans and Galatians (which argue for justification only by God's grace and by faith in Christ) or the letter to the Hebrews

(which is about Christ's priesthood and a few other things), this epistle contains no particular or principal argument. Rather, it is an intimate letter, as it were, that includes various thanksgivings, recounting of things done, congratulations, warnings, admonitions, recommendations, and other such things. Yet, numerous teachings of a religious nature are joined together with these matters.

Particularly in the second chapter, the whole doctrine of Christ's person and two natures, His duty, humiliation, and exaltation are summarized with admirable brevity and skill. Furthermore, in the third chapter the apostle plainly teaches wherein our true righteousness and salvation do and do not consist. And all these things and many others and different ones as well collectively tend toward one and the same goal, namely, confirming the Philippians in the true doctrine of Christ, in pure religion, and in zeal for a Christian life.

Everything moves toward this goal. By way of example, after the greeting, Paul thanks God that, although many others have fallen away, He has kept the Philippians steadfast in true religion. Now, why does he do this? In order, thereby, to stir them up to persevere more and more. He goes on to speak of his own situation, that he was actually thrown into prison at Rome for the defense of the gospel but that, contrary to all his adversaries' expectation, this resulted in the gospel's greater advancement. Why even mention this? So that, by his own example, Paul might stimulate the Philippians to persevere, that every trial might always yield better fruit for the truly faithful.

Paul adds that he does not doubt that, since God has begun a good work in them, He will also ultimately bring it to completion [Phil. 1:6]. This has the same significance as the previous point. It is with regard to that same goal that Paul then offers testimony to the Philippians, so that having set aside every ambition, they might be like-minded, harmonious, and united in purpose, that is, that they might be in agreement as regards pious doctrine. And to that same end, he exhorts them to do this by setting Christ before them as an example, explaining to them summarily who Christ is, what He has done for us, and what is the fruit of His obedience to the Father.

In short, the apostle has one and the same goal for everything that he writes, namely, to stir us up unto steadfastness and perseverance in the true religion of Christ, in love for one another, and in zeal for the Christian life. Now we have the epistle's purpose and summary. But each chapter's contents and summaries will be viewed in its proper place. Here we end our prologue for this epistle.

Philippians Chapter One

Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δοῦλοι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, πᾶσι τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν
χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις, σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις.
Χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ
χριστοῦ.

Summary of Chapter One

Following the ascription and salutation, the apostle bears witness of his thankfulness that God has brought the Philippians into the fellowship of the gospel, and that they had made progress from the first day of their conversion up to the moment at which he was writing. And he says that he is persuaded that God's good work, which He began in them, will ultimately be brought to completion. Moreover, Paul not only hopes that this will come to pass (as the love that he has toward them demands) but also constantly begs God that more and more they might advance in the knowledge of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness to God's praise and glory. And this is the first part.

Next, writing of his chains, about which the Philippians had inquired, he says they have resulted more in the advancement of the gospel than in its destruction or suppression. And he explains how this happened, adding that he recognizes that all of this, which is his cross, will result in his salvation, making known the reason for his hope. Indeed, he even adds that *he knows*—that is, *he hopes*—that, once he has been freed from his chains, he might come to them, to the Philippians, for the sake of their salvation. And this is the second part.

Finally, he exhorts them to live lives worthy of the gospel in the meantime and not to allow themselves to be frightened in any way by their adversaries. Rather, they are to endure all adversity stoutly and to continue steadfast in doctrine and faith, having also been captivated by the example of the apostleship of Paul, whose patience and steadfastness the Philippians themselves saw and about which (at Rome) they now hear. This is the third part.

Thus, there are three parts to this chapter, besides the greeting: the first includes verses 3–11. The second includes verses 12–26. The third continues from there to the end of the chapter.

It should be noted that, just as all three parts pertain to the goal of the entire epistle, so they also pertain to the following purpose, as noted previously. But what is this purpose? Here it is: *Since God has*

brought you all into gospel fellowship¹ by His grace, persevere and progress steadfastly and courageously in this gospel doctrine and in this fellowship² with Christ and His Church.

We will see this in each of the sections and parts, but first we ought briefly to explain the ascription³ and greeting.

¹ κοινωνίαν.

² κοινωνία.

³ ἐπιγραφὴ.

Philippians 1:1-11: Text

1. *Paul and Timothy....*

The ascription¹ tells us, first, who is the author of the letter and who approves of it and, second, to whom it is addressed. The author is Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, who first preached the gospel at Philippi.

Timothy, Paul's disciple, companion, and faithful helper in the gospel collaborates on the epistle, and it may be that a scribe (with Paul dictating) does so as well. The Philippians know and love both of them; they are servants and ministers of Christ. Therefore, Paul says: *Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ.*²

Granted, Paul was the author of the epistle, not Timothy. Granted, Paul was an apostle, not Timothy. Nevertheless, Paul attaches Timothy to himself when he signs the epistle, as he also does in 2 Corinthians, and in the epistles to the Colossians and the Thesalonians. He even refers to himself and Timothy by the same title, namely, *servant of Christ*, so as to make no distinction between himself and Timothy. And likewise, he wants the readers to recognize that this letter was sent to the Philippians by both himself and Timothy. This was evidence of an extraordinary humility and love toward the church, for he wished to commend Timothy's authority over the churches, especially over the Philippians. To what end? To their advantage, for he intended to send him to the Philippians, as is clear from chapter two. This was the reason for the greeting formula.

Why did Paul at other times call himself an apostle and say that he was not of a lower rank than the other apostles, as in the epistles to the Galatians and Corinthians? Doubtless, it was for the benefit of the churches. For he did not defend his authority for ambition's sake but to safeguard his teaching for our salvation. We may therefore learn from this that no matter what title we go by, we ought always to adjust and direct everything toward the church's salvation and, so, to God's glory.

¹ ἐπιγραφή.

² Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δούλοι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

In fact, all Christians share the title *servants of Jesus Christ*³ because, having been bought by Christ at the cost of His blood, we are also to serve Him and be altogether guided by His will. But here Paul uses the title in a special way to refer to those who serve in the ministry, just as elsewhere he often calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ. James likewise begins his epistle in the same way: *James a servant of Jesus Christ* [James 1:1]. But in his second letter, Peter combines the two titles, saying: *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ* [2 Peter 1:1].

Certainly, to be a servant means more than to be a minister. They are called *ministers* who minister and serve for a certain time in a certain position and for a certain wage—like the ministers of rulers. Properly speaking, however, those who were called *servants* were wholly and perpetually bound to someone bodily. Lords possessed the authority of life and death over their servants, and the latter returned all profits to their lords as belonging to them and not to themselves. Finally, servants were to do nothing except at the command and according to the will of their lords.

Ministers as Christ's Servants

Thus, this epithet particularly teaches ministers of the Word what their office is, the specific sense in which they are altogether bound to Christ so that, first, they might depend at all times upon His speech and, in their ministry, never pursue what is their own but rather what is Christ's, as the apostle declares of Timothy in chapter two. Next, they must fearlessly denounce everyone, even kings and princes, when Christ's honor and the church's salvation demand it. Finally, their life should be poured out for Christ, for they are His servants. And they should not merely call themselves Christ's servants with words but should know themselves really to be such in their hearts. Nevertheless, to the extent that they are greater servants of Christ than others, they are thus also worthy of greater honor than all other Christians. For it is a matter of great honor to be a servant of so great a Lord, namely, of Christ.

The second thing that this ascription⁴ indicates is to whom this letter is addressed, namely, *to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are in Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.*

³ δούλου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

⁴ ἐπιγραφή.

We have already said enough about the Philippians, and in our commentary on Ephesians we have also spoken frequently about the word *saints*.

Holy Ones

When Paul uses the words *holy ones* [or: *saints*] he means all those who have professed the name of Christ in baptism and have not openly rebelled against Him, despite sometimes falling into sin on account of the weakness of the flesh. For such is the reality.

Properly speaking, [the Hebrew word] *kadosh*⁵ means clean or pure, and the verb means to make pure or clean. In Exodus 19[:10] it says *vekadesch*: *He will be sanctified, and his garments*, that is, *he will be cleansed*.

1. God

In a simple sense, only God—by Himself and by His own nature—is *kadosh*. He is holy (Isaiah 6[:3]), and the Author of all holiness. *God is light, and in Him there is no darkness* (John 1 [that is, 1 John 1:5]). John thereby indicates God's perfection, holiness, and purity. From this it follows that whatever partakes of that divine nature and holiness is called holy and is holy, albeit not in and of itself but by way of another. And the more one partakes of that divine holiness, that most pure nature, the more one is said to be holy.

Thus, holiness is of two kinds. First, the kind that one possesses in and of oneself and by one's own nature, which pertains to God alone. The second kind is received from another and by means of communication. This is the creaturely kind of holiness, but it is of various sorts.

Christ

Accordingly, Christ, insofar as He is man, holds the highest rank in this second kind of holiness. For He is the holy One in an altogether perfect way and par excellence.⁶ And this is the case for two reasons.

⁵ Zanchi transliterates the word *קדוש* in a variety of different ways in this section. I have standardized them all as *kadosh* for the sake of consistency.

⁶ *κατ' ἐξοχήν*.

First, because of the hypostatic union with the divine nature, which is holy *per se*. Second, on account of the most perfect character of holiness that is really imparted to His human nature. This is what it means when it says: *He has given Him the Spirit without measure* (John 3[:34]). And elsewhere, the child Jesus is frequently called holy and righteous as well.

2. The Church

The second rank belongs to the church, which is Christ's mystical body, that is, the company of the elect and of those born again by the Holy Spirit. To this pertains: *I believe the holy church*.⁷ And thus, the individual believers—those grafted onto Christ by the Holy Spirit—are rightly and properly called *saints*, and that in two respects. First, with regard to Christ's holiness, which is imputed to them. In this respect we are as holy here on earth as are those in heaven, for Christ's holiness is imputed to each of His members equally. Thus, in Christ Jesus we are quite rightly called *saints*, as is the case in this chapter.

Second, we are holy by the inhering holiness flowing from the Head to the members. With regard to this Scripture says: *Be holy for I am also holy* [Lev. 11:44; 1 Pt. 1:16]. With regard to this holiness, those who are in heaven are holier than we are, and in this respect, they are more truly called *saints* *par excellence*⁸ than we are.

3. Outward Saints

In third rank are those who are holy neither by imputation nor inhering holiness, and yet are called *saints* and reckoned among the holy. Why so? Because, having been called out of the impure and utterly unclean world into the communion of saints, they have been sealed

⁷ The received text of the Apostles' Creed does not repeat the preposition "in" with reference to the church. See Wolfram Kinzig, ed., *Faith in Formulae: A Collection of Early Christian Creeds and Creed-Related Texts*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2:351–52. In his interpretation of Philippians 1:27–30, Zanchi asserts that, while Christians place their believing faith *in* the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they merely *believe* (or perhaps, *believe about*) the church.

⁸ κατ' ἐξοχήν.

and consecrated and because they profess holiness. Indeed, a certain image and sign of holiness has been stamped upon their flesh through baptism, in the same way that the sign of holiness and mortification—namely, circumcision—had been stamped upon the flesh of the Israelites, although in their hearts they were uncircumcised and unclean.

In this sense, when the apostle says *to all the saints*, he includes in the word *saints* all those who have been called to Christ out of the world, have confessed Christ and been sealed by baptism, and have not forsaken Christ and His church with flagrant apostacy. Thus, all Jewish people were also called a holy nation, a holy people, although not all of them were really and truly holy and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We may call this a sacramental holiness because all those who have been baptized in Christ are sacramentally holy, even as Paul tells the Corinthians that they are all *sanctified* (1 Cor. 6[11]).

4. Inanimate Objects

The fourth grade in the order of holiness belongs to all inanimate objects that are transferred from a profane status and use to a holy status, condition, and use, and are devoted to God. This happens by a divine and mystical blessing and consecration. For upon these things is stamped a certain image and mark, whereby they are declared no longer to be profane but holy. This is like when merchants mark their merchandise with their seal. Thus, temples are called holy, having been devoted to God. Thus, vessels and sacrifices and priestly garments are all called holy. Thus, the bread in the Supper is holy bread, and so too the wine, and the water in baptism is holy. For although in their substance and nature they are not (as the Romanists imagine) changed by the blessing with which they are sanctified, their condition, status, and use are changed. And thus, that mystical blessing of which the fathers often speak is, as it were, a kind of image or mark upon these things whereby they are recognized as holy, having been marked out for use as holy things. For example, the water of baptism signifies and displays the cleansing of sins by Christ's blood, and the bread signifies and displays Christ, the heavenly Bread.

To illustrate by way of comparison: before being stamped with images of things in the temple (like Aaron's rod and the jar of manna), the silver and gold from which the temple shekels were produced were common, impure silver and gold. But when they were

stamped with the mark and image of items from the temple, then they were also described as holy in a certain sense and as having been changed from common to sacred and holy things. Of course, this was not because they were altered in their substance but only in their status and use.

Now we understand the true meaning of this word *kadosh*, ἁγίου (*holy*), and how holiness is conveyed from God to created things and something of God's holiness imparted to them. And the apostle understood things in the same way when he said: *To all the saints that are at Philippi*. This is a summary as it were regarding the sort of holiness whereby men are called holy. Holiness is triplex: first there is sacramental holiness; second, there is truly divine and Christian holiness, inhering here and consummate in heaven; third, there is holiness that is imputed, since it is proper to Christ.

Not all who bear the mark of the first kind also possess the second or are adorned with the third. However, all who are adorned with the second are also truly holy according to the third, both before God and before men. Furthermore, all three are from Christ, because He is the one who administers the sacrament, as we see in Ephesians 5[:26–27], although He does this through His ministers. He is also the one who regenerates and sanctifies us inwardly by His Spirit. Finally, He is the one who imputes His holiness to us. Therefore, this follows:

*In Christ Jesus.*⁹ This phrase indicates the efficient cause of the holiness about which we are speaking, which is Christ Jesus.¹⁰ For they are called holy, first, because they have holiness from Christ Jesus to whom they have been consecrated and in whose name they have been baptized. Second, they are truly holy because they have holiness from Christ Jesus who has regenerated and sanctified them by His Spirit. But third, and all the more, they are holy because they have holiness from Christ, by whose imputed holiness alone they are truly holy before God. For it is the garments of the Firstborn Son, as it were, that cover our uncleanness. Paul, thus, rightly adds: *In Christ Jesus.*¹¹

⁹ Ἐν Χριστῷ ἡσοῦ.

¹⁰ According to Aristotle, an efficient cause (*causa efficiens*) is the agent that moves or changes a thing.

¹¹ Ἐν Χριστῷ ἡσοῦ.

However, this phrase contains a certain contrast between Mosaic (or legal) holiness and Christian holiness. Mosaic holiness was obtained by the law and pertained only to the Israelites. Christian holiness is obtained from Christ and pertains to Gentiles as well. Therefore, writing to the Gentiles, Paul says: *to the saints in Christ*,¹² and so on. The Scholia noted this: *For there were also Jews who called themselves saints*;¹³ Paul is not writing to them, *rather, he speaks to those in Christ Jesus*.¹⁴ The letter was therefore addressed to the whole Philippian Church, that is, *to all the saints who were at Philippi*.

Furthermore, Paul also uses this expression for the sake of his primary purpose: perseverance. It is as if he were saying: *You are holy in Christ Jesus, not in Moses, not by means of the law but in Christ and through Christ. So, don't allow yourselves for any reason to be led away from Christ and unto Moses by seducers and wicked hirelings, as though the law were necessary for your holiness and salvation. (For righteousness was not by means of the law, or else Christ died for nothing [Gal. 2:21]) But abide and persevere in Him in whom alone and through whom alone you are holy, that is, Jesus Christ.*

Paul says this in general about the church to which he writes, and then he adds: *with the overseers and the deacons*.¹⁵ From the church of the Philippians as a whole, which he designated by the title *saints*, he moves on to those through whom the church was governed: the overseers and deacons. The former administered the Word, sacraments, and discipline; the latter administered alms.

Moreover, Paul pointed out two things by these words. First, he indicated that he was addressing these admonitions and exhortations, teachings, and consolations no less to the overseers and deacons than to the entire church, for they too had need of them. Second, he indicated that, just as the overseers and deacons cannot be without the rest of the people, so neither can the people be without their overseers and deacons. Rather, all of them joined together constitute the church. Therefore, he says: *The saints with the overseers and deacons*.

¹² ἐν Χριστῷ.

¹³ ἦσαν γὰρ καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι λέγοντες ἑαυτοὺς ἁγίους.

¹⁴ ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, φησί. PG, 118:1260B.

¹⁵ σὺν ἐπίσκοποις καὶ διακόνους.

Overseers

We spoke of ministerial rank and types in the commentary on the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians.¹⁶ For now, only a short comment should be made regarding the words *overseers* and *deacons* so we can better understand the apostle's words. *Episcopus* [overseer] is actually a Greek word but has been made use of so regularly in Latin that it has almost become a Latin word. Even Cicero, writing in Latin, makes use of it (*Letters to Atticus*, bk. 7, ep. 10 [that is, ep. 11]).

The word ἐπίσκοπος [overseer] is derived from¹⁷ τὸν ἐπισκοπεῖν, which means *to examine*—not simply in order to observe but in order to provide and offer care to those of whom one has become an examiner. This is true as regards both secular and sacred matters.

Thus, a physician is an *episcopus* of his patients, as he visits and cares for them. Thus, Galen often refers to physicians as *overseers*. And he says that, when they visit patients, they ἐπισκοπεῖν [examine]. So also, both the Greeks and the Romans called their prefects *episcopi*, for they examined everything and had the responsibility of seeing to it that each one received what was his and that no one was in want. In the fifth book of the *Iliad*, Homer calls Hector the *episcopus* of Troy because he was the city's defender and protector. The Athenians who were sent out into various regions in order to inspect and report to the kings about everything that was happening, so that he could address all matters, were also called *episcopi*. We call them *visitatores*—inspectors. Cicero writes about himself in this way in his letter to Atticus (bk. 7, ep. 10 [that is, ep. 11]). He says: *Pompey wants me to be an episcopum over all Campania and the maritime regions*, which Cicero refers to as a supremely delightful activity. Likewise, the same thing is clearly taught in the section of the *Pandects*¹⁸ concerning public employment and honors (bk. 50, tit. 40 [§18.7]) where it is clearly taught that, properly speaking, they are called *episcopi* who watch over the sale of bread and other things that are indispensable for the daily sustenance of the members of the citizenry.

So, generally speaking, any observer who cares for others is typically referred to as an *episcopus*.

¹⁶ Zanchi, *In d. Pauli epistolam ad Ephesios commentarius*, 176–80 (OOT, 2/6:134–36).

¹⁷ ἀπό.

¹⁸ That is, the sixth-century digest of Roman Law compiled under Emperor Justinian and which became part of the *corpus iuris civilis*.

Later, however, this name was restricted to the realm of sacred and ecclesiastical affairs so that the only ones who were called overseers were those who cared for the church, both in doctrine and conduct, with respect to eternal salvation. In this sense Christ is the church's first true overseer: *But now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls* (1 Peter 2[:25]). Subsequently, all who undertake to establish the church and guide her toward eternal life have (or might rightly have) been called *overseers*.

For even Peter interprets the word of the psalmist in Acts 1[:20]—*and let another take his office as overseer*¹⁹—as referring to Judas who betrayed Christ, because he had been an apostle and preached the gospel, intimating that the apostles were overseers. And 1 Peter 5[:1], it says: *I, who am myself an elder, exhort the elders who are among you*, for *elder* and *overseer* were synonymous. But when specific churches were entrusted to apostles, although they retained their apostolic title, they were all usually called overseers. Thus, Paul calls Timothy and Titus *overseers* and, thus, he calls the leaders of the Ephesian church *overseers* in Acts 20[:28], saying: *Watch over the flock in which the Holy Spirit has put you to shepherd the church*.

It is also apparent from Acts 20 that, in the time of the apostles, the same people were called both overseers and elders. Luke prefaced that passage with these words about Paul: *He summoned the elders of the church of Ephesus*. Later, Paul calls these men *overseers*. The same thing shows up here, for he writes to multiple overseers who were at Philippi. So, there was not a single overseer who had charge of that whole church. Thus, all caretakers are overseers. Likewise, if overseers were distinct from elders, it would be surprising for him to have written to deacons but left out the elders. For that reason, overseers are the same people as elders. Again, in the letters to Timothy and Titus, overseer and elder are the same: *Make someone an elder if he is blameless, for an overseer ought to be blameless* (1 Tim. 5 [that is, 3:1]; Titus 1[:6]).

The title *overseer*, however, indicates an office, for the overseer's²⁰ role is to keep watch on the church's needs with focused attention and provide for those needs with diligent zeal, to shepherd the church with the Word and sacraments, also to attend to her life and behavior, and to correct them with Christian discipline. This is what

¹⁹ In Acts 1:20, τὴν ἐπισκοπήν is typically translated “office.”

²⁰ ἐπισκοπεῖν.

the title *overseer* means, for the preposition ἐπι indicates focused attention. But *elder* is a title referring to age and dignity, for such ones are more fit for ministry than those who are younger.

Notwithstanding what we have said about [distinguishing between the titles of] overseers and elders, Jerome also saw that, at the time of the apostles, overseers were synonymous with elders (Letter to Oceanus, vol. 2, [ep. 69.3]).²¹ He addresses the same point more expansively in his letter to Evagrius²² [ep. 146.1] and in his commentary on Titus, where he handles this evidence at even greater length and makes use of this passage in the letter to the Philippians (vol. 9, ch. 1).²³

Later, however, it became customary for one man, elected out of the company of elders, to lead all the others in ruling the church. Jerome says that this happened in order to remove the seeds of schisms and that this has proceeded from ecclesiastical custom rather than from dominical tradition. All this comes from Jerome himself, who nevertheless does not condemn this custom since it can be beneficial and is almost necessary for order in the church. Additionally, it is not forbidden by God's Word. Therefore, if the churches are free to choose one from among the company of elders to undertake the care of a church in a special way and if that one is like a consul in a political senate and is thus distinguished from the others, then he can

²¹ Jerome writes, "In both epistles commandment is given that only monogamists should be chosen for the clerical office whether as bishops [that is, overseers] or as presbyters. Indeed with the ancients these names were synonymous, one alluding to the office, the other to the age of the clergy." *NPNF2*, 6:143.

²² Jerome's letter to Evagrius (or Evangelus) asserts in opposition to those who argued that "there must then have been more bishops than one in a single church," that "a bishop and a presbyter are the same." He goes on to cite Titus 1:5–7, 1 Tim. 4:14, 1 Peter 5:1–2, and the salutations to John's second and third epistles. *NPNF2*, 6:288.

²³ Jerome writes, "If someone thinks that this is our opinion, but not that of the Scriptures—that bishop and priest are one, and that one is the title of age, the other of his duty—let him reread the apostle's words to the Philippians when he says, 'Paul and Timothy, slaves of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons, grace to you and peace,' and so on. Philippi is a single city in Macedonia, and at least in one city several were not able to be bishops, as they are now thought. But because at the time they called the same men bishops whom they also called priests, therefore he has spoken indifferently of bishops and priests." Jerome, *St. Jerome's Commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 289.

be called the overseer *par excellence*,²⁴ or superintendent or inspector or by some other name. There can be no doubt that the unity of the church ought not to be broken on account of a title like this or variances in labels. Instead, we must argue about the matter itself, such as about the power of the elders—what is permitted to them and what is not permitted.

But I am not arguing about such things right now. It suffices for me to have shown whom the apostle meant when he used the title *overseers*, namely, all the caretakers in the Philippian church. By this designation, I do not only mean those who were in the city but also those in the surrounding region. For it is by way of synecdoche that Paul says *to the Philippians*, including the environs as well. For the epistle pertained as much to the rural as to the urban saints along with the overseers and deacons. This suffices with regard to the title of overseers.

Many questions may be asked regarding overseers with regard to succession, authority, and election, but we address those elsewhere. And thus, I now come to the other term, namely, *deacons*.

Deacons

The title *deacon*, which is derived from the word *serving*, has a twofold meaning in Scripture. Sometimes it is taken generally for any type of service, whether in political or ecclesiastical matters. In Romans 13[:4], the magistrate is called a deacon: *For he is a διάκονος*. In Ephesian 5 [that is, 3:7], Paul calls himself *a deacon of the gospel*. And in fact, in Romans 15[:8], he calls Christ Himself *a deacon to the circumcised*.

From this perspective, the title deacon is, as it were, a genus that is afterward distinguished into various species of deacons since it is predicated of Christ, the apostles, magistrates, those who collect ecclesiastical alms, and those who distribute alms.

Thus, sometimes the title is taken specifically to refer to one charged with gathering and distributing the church's alms. Such were the seven to whom Acts 6[:1–6] refers. It is in that sense that Paul uses it here, and he often speaks thus elsewhere (Rom. 12[:7]; 1 Tim. 3[:8, 12] and 5[:9–12]).²⁵

²⁴ κατ' ἐξοχήν.

²⁵ Zanchi appears to be subsuming the formal office of deacon under this description and is setting it off against the broader use of the term, meaning “minister” or servant. That is, deacons as described in 1 Tim. 3 *are*

That the apostle is speaking here distinctly of this latter kind of deacons is indicated by the conjunction *and*,²⁶ when he says, *with the overseers and deacons*. Thus, he indicates two distinct offices.²⁷

The Scholia ask why the apostle expressly juxtaposed these deacons with the overseers seeing that he did not normally write letters to deacons but rather to churches and overseers? They respond: because the deacons had sent Epaphroditus to Paul *with funds*²⁸ and, consequently, Paul wanted to thank them.

But there are other more significant reasons. The first is that Paul connected the deacons to the overseers in order to demonstrate that he cherished their ministry in the church. Second, he wanted to teach that all the ecclesiastical ministries consist in the two offices of overseers and deacons. Overseers care for souls by the administration of the Word and sacraments along with discipline of behavior. Deacons care for the bodies of the impoverished faithful.²⁹ The one handles spiritual things; the other handles temporal matters,³⁰ as the apostle tells the Corinthians. For diaconal ministry is also necessary in the church, for the bodies of the saints are the temple of the Holy Spirit.³¹ Therefore, they should not be neglected or condemned but supported and treated with honor.

The apostolic churches depend upon these two offices of ecclesiastical ministry, overseers (also called *elders*), who handle spiritual

those “charged with gathering and distributing the church’s alms.”

With regard to the citation of 1 Tim. 5, the word *διάκονος* is not present in this chapter (although it does appear in 4:6). Zanchi is likely referring to the older widows who were committed to hospitality, serving the saints, caring for the afflicted, and performing good works. Elsewhere, he argues specifically that these older widows were deaconesses in that they were among the men and women who served “refugees, the poor, and the afflicted.” *De primi hominis lapsu, de peccato et de lege Dei*, ch. 19, locus 4 (OOT, 2/4:767).

²⁶ καί.

²⁷ Here and subsequently in this section: *ordines*.

²⁸ σὺν τοῖς ἀναλώμασι. PG, 118:1259B.

²⁹ *fideles*. Zanchi uses this word to refer to those who have faith in Christ and are, thereby, united to Him. This is consistently translated as “faithful.”

³⁰ βιωτικά.

³¹ In his *De primi homini lapsu*, Zanchi follows Calvin (*Institutes*, 4.3.9) in more precisely distinguishing the diaconate into those who care for the poor and those who care for the ill. See OOT, 2/4:767.

matters, and deacons, who handle the non-spiritual and temporal matters.³²

Christ established these two offices and these two kinds of ecclesiastical ministry. He had eleven apostles, who preached the gospel, as well as Judas who, in addition to preaching the gospel also handled the money. When he was lost and died, the apostles initially performed both duties. But when the one impeded the other, they established deacons, who had a ministry distinct from that of the apostles, as is seen in Acts 6:[1–6]. This was the simplicity of the former apostolic church.

As the number of the faithful increased, however, it happened that the overseers could not bear the burden of the administration of the Word and sacraments on their own in addition to also keeping watch over the behavior of all and exercising ecclesiastical discipline. Hence, they added to themselves a new variety of elders who were focused on the administration of ecclesiastical discipline. Although these elders did not preach the Word, they were nevertheless judges of morals, and by this service they took the lead in ruling the church, alongside of the overseers who labored in the Word. Tertullian goes on at length about these matters in his *Apology*.³³ I understand the passage in 1 Timothy 5:[17] to pertain to this distinct order of overseers: *Elders who lead well are worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word*. Here the apostle shows that there are two orders of elders. Thus far, all these were apostolic matters.³⁴

Indeed, the fact that so many other ecclesiastical orders were added later may, in one sense, be tolerated on account of the necessity of the circumstances. But in another sense, they cannot be approved of in any way as they tended toward such tyranny in the church and toward superstition. Thus, efforts have rightly been made in our churches to return to apostolic simplicity.

³² βιωτικά.

³³ This may be a reference to ch. 39 of the *Apology*, but to say that Tertullian “goes on at length about these matters” in that passage is an exaggeration. Tertullian and Minucius Felix, *Tertullian, Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix, Octavius*, trans. Rudolphus Arbesmann, Fathers of the Church 10 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), 98–102.

³⁴ That is to say, all of these developments happened in the context of the apostolic church and at the direction of the apostles.

This suffices concerning those to whom the letter was written. But the expression should be understandable to everyone: they are speaking (or rather writing) a greeting.

A typical and truly evangelical salutation from the apostle follows.

2. Χάρις ὑμῖν, *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This salutation does not require a lengthy explanation. It is well known to all that the word *grace* means the free favor of God, the Fount of all blessings both physical and spiritual. Grace is, I repeat, the immense and free love of God about which John 3[:16] says: *God so loved the world*. That love or delight is, therefore, called *grace*—because it is altogether gracious. From this it also follows, then, that every blessing that proceeds from Him to us—and what blessing doesn't?—is entirely gracious, and it is given not according to merit but according to grace. This suffices concerning the first word, χάρις.

The word *peace* entails all the good things that remain, those that pertain both to this life and, consummately, to the life to come. Chief among these are peace of conscience, regeneration, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit, and a happy outcome in everything. Indeed, for the pious, who are in that grace of God about which Paul first spoke, all things turn out well. For *all things work together unto good for those who love God*, as the apostle says (Rom. 8[:28]). And likewise, when Hebrews greeted one another with the standard greeting of *shenim vhenim* (meaning *peace to you all*) they meant the same thing: *May everything turn out well for you*.

Thus, when the apostle wishes us *grace and peace*, he wishes us every good thing as well as the Fount and Cause of all good things—but first in their source and then in their effect. He to whom God's grace comes will not lack peace. But apart from God's grace, peace is not peace. The Lord says: *There is no peace for the wicked* (Isa. 57[:21]).

But where does this grace and peace come from? Not from Moses, not from the law, not from us ourselves, but first from God the Father. As He is the source of all deity, so He is the source of all grace and peace. Then, it comes from Jesus Christ as the Mediator in whom and through whom is all grace and peace. Hence, in John 1[:17]: *The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*. And in Titus 2[:11, 13]: *The grace of God our Savior has appeared, namely in Christ*. And at the nativity, the angels sang: *Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth* [Luke 2:14].