

Soame Jenyns & Benjamin Jenks: Influences on the Conversion & Theology of Archibald Alexander

By Rodney A. Johnson

In his mid-nineteenth century biography of his father, James W. Alexander recounts Archibald Alexander's (1772–1851) early life concern with evidences for the truthfulness of Christianity and his discovery of a “coarse pamphlet” laying in a trunk full of books:

It happened, providentially, that into a trunk of classical and scientific books, sent to me from home at my request, some lady had thrown a coarse pamphlet, which I had often seen tossing about at home.... But looking on the title page, I observed the word ‘Evidences,’ and it struck me immediately that it was possibly something in favour of Christianity.... I saw that I was not mistaken, for the whole title was ‘Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion by Soame Jenyns, Esq.’ I was rejoiced; and ... I sat down and began to read. *At every step conviction flashed across my mind, with such bright and overwhelming evidence, that when I ceased to read, the room had the appearance of being illuminated.* I never had such a feeling from the simple discovery of truth. And it is my opinion, that no argument of the external or historical kind would have produced such a conviction.¹

J. W. Alexander thereafter describes his father's encounter with a second influential book:

About this time, a little book, ‘Jenks on Justification by Faith,’ fell into his hands. This treatise he read with an effect not unlike what had proceeded from the perusal of Jenyns. Before this he had been in darkness and perplexity as to the way of acceptance with God, or, as he expressed it, he was leaning on the Old Covenant. *Now every thing appeared as clear as if written with a sunbeam.*²

As is clear from these passages, whatever Jenyns and

Jenks wrote powerfully affected the teenage Archibald Alexander as he grappled with the certainty of Christian faith in 1788–1789.³ In both cases, Alexander's leitmotif is *illumination* or *light*: Jenks' book provides sunbeam clarity; Jenyns' work fairly illumines the room where Alexander read.

While some secondary literature acknowledges Alexander's encounters with Jenyns and Jenks, this same literature nowhere critically examines the theology

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1. James W. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D.* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854), pp. 42–43 (italics supplied).

2. J.W. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, pp. 45–46 (italics supplied). I have located no extant book by this title. It is likely that another Jenks book is in view here, *Submission to the Righteousness of God. Or the Necessity of Trusting to a Better Righteousness Than Our Own* (London: Printed for W. Rogers, 1700). Other scholars concur in this assessment. See David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: Faith & Learning 1812–1868* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), p. 46; Gary Steward, *Princeton Seminary (1812–1929)* (Philipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2014), p. 52.

3. By his own admission, Alexander apparently came to faith in Christ reading a John Flavel sermon on Revelation 3:20, recounting that “[t]o John Flavel I certainly owe more than to any uninspired author.” J.W. Alexander, pp. 44–45, 47. Flavel preached eleven (11) sermons on this text. John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel*, vol. 4 (1820, repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2018), pp. 17–268. Alexander also read theological works by Joseph Alleine, William Bates, Richard Baxter, Thomas Boston, Phillip Doddridge, Jonathan Edwards, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, Walter Marshall, John Owen, Francis Turretin, and George Whitefield. See James M. Garretson, “Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary,” in *The Confessional Presbyterian*, vol. 8 (2012): 10; Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: Faith & Learning*, p. 46; J.W. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, p. 76 (listing Owen, Baxter, Alleine, the Erskines, Willison, Doddridge, Whitefield, Jenyns, and Dickinson).

these works contained.⁴ Thus, this research paper critically examines the respective theologies of Soame Jenyns (1704–1787) and Benjamin Jenks (*bap.* 1648 – *d.* 1724). Thereafter, this paper examines their respective influence(s) on the theology of Archibald Alexander, Princeton Seminary’s first professor.⁵ Specifically, from critically interacting with Alexander’s own works, this paper’s focus is whether Jenyns and Jenks influence Alexander’s theological views concerning the subjectivity of Christian experience (internal) vis-à-vis the objectivity of Biblical truth and doctrine (external). If this paper’s subject is a small lacuna, it is nonetheless no small matter. As Princeton Seminary’s first professor, Archibald Alexander exerts immense influence on almost four decades of students (including Charles Hodge) and on the American Presbyterian denomination. Later recognized as “the abiding image of the institution he created [Princeton Seminary],” Alexander

begins to formulate what becomes known as “the Princeton Theology” with his colleague, Samuel Miller.⁶

If it is fair to reduce the corpus of Archibald Alexander’s theology to a central idea, it is the necessity of rightly understanding the biblical relationship between the objective truth of the Scriptures and the outworking of those truths in the life of the Christian believer. In simpler terms, Alexander spends a lifetime preaching, teaching, and writing about the biblical relationship between the externals of Christian faith (e.g., the Scriptures, justification by faith) and the internals of Christian life and experience (i.e., a believer’s piety).⁷ This paper’s thesis is that although the books by Jenyns and Jenks play important roles in Alexander’s conversion experience, he does not adopt Jenyns’s theology about Scripture’s inspiration and inerrancy or the significance of its moral precepts. This paper further argues that Alexander’s theology of

4. See, e.g., Charles Hodge, *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, vol. XXVII, no. 1 (Jan. 1855): 133–159 (review of J.W. Alexander’s *Life of Archibald Alexander*) (Alexander read Jenyns “with great delight”); Andrew W. Hoffercker, Jr., “The Relation Between the Objective and Subjective Elements in Christian Religious Experience: A Study in the Systematic and Devotional Writings of Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield” (PhD diss., Brown University, 1970), pp. 20–21, 34 (repeating *Life of Archibald Alexander* account); Dennis Okholm, “Biblical Inspiration and Infallibility in the Writings of Archibald Alexander,” *Trinity Journal*, vol. 5 (1976): 79–89 and n.20 (Jenyns’s *Internal Evidences* “had a deep effect on Alexander from his early days on”); Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: Faith and Learning*, pp. 45–46 (recounting *Life of Archibald Alexander*’s Jenyns account); James M. Garretson, *Princeton and Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), pp. 8–9, 18 (repeating *Life of Archibald Alexander*’s account of Jenyns); James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), pp. 33–35 (repeating *Life of Archibald Alexander*’s Jenyns account); Steward, *Princeton Seminary*, p. 52 (Alexander “furthered along spiritually” by reading Jenyns’s *Internal Evidences* and Jenks’s *Submission to the Righteousness of God*); and Patrick J. Connolly, “Susanna Newcome and the Origins of Utilitarianism,” *Utilitas* 33 (2021): 384–398 (describing Jenyns as an “Anglican utilitarian” after the gradual eighteenth century departure from Cambridge Platonism).

One exception is Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (London: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 22 (describing Jenyns’s method of defending Christianity as “a radical departure from the ‘objective’ method of ‘external’ evidence used by early antideist writers to prove Christianity’s supernatural character from the biblical miracles and fulfilled prophecies.”).

5. Both Jenyns and Jenks authored other works. This paper’s examination is largely confined to their works referenced in J.W. Alexander’s biography of his father, i.e., *A View of the Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion* (1776), and *Submission to the Righteousness of God* (1755).

6. John A. Mackay, “Archibald Alexander, 1772–1851, Founding

Father,” *Sons of the Prophets: Leaders in Protestantism from Princeton Seminary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 22. No attempt is made here to reinvent the historical-biographical context for Archibald Alexander or Princeton Seminary. For such works, see, e.g., James Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (2012); James Garretson, *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012); James Garretson, *Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012); Gordon S. Mikowski and Richard R. Osmer, *With Piety and Learning: The History of Practical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2011); James M. Garretson, *A Scribe Well-Trained: Archibald Alexander and the Life of Piety* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); Paul Kjos Helseth, “Right Reason and the Princeton Mind” (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2010); D.G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007); David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994, 1996); William K. Selden, *Princeton Theological Seminary: A Narrative History 1812–1992* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); David F. Wells, *The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989); Mark A. Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology 1812–1921* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983); Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (London: Greenwood Press, 1983); W. Andrew Hoffercker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1981); and Hugh T. Kerr, ed., *Sons of the Prophets: Leaders in Protestantism from Princeton Seminary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

7. Representative of Alexander’s central theological idea is his statement that “[t]rue religion not only enlightens the understanding, but rectifies the affections of the heart. All genuine feelings of piety are the effects of divine truth.” Archibald Alexander, “An Introductory Essay: On the Nature of Vital Piety – Its Sameness in All Ages and Countries – And Its Various Aspects in Different Circumstances,” in *Advice to a Young Christian, On the Importance of Aiming At An Elevated Standard of Piety* (New York: American Tract Society, 1843), pp. 7–27. This essay is reproduced by James Garretson, *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*, 1.164–75.

Scripture, the doctrine of justification, and good works largely mirrors that of Jenks, though Alexander does not acknowledge him.⁸

This paper first considers Soame Jenyns, the English Parliamentarian.⁹ Beginning in 1729, Jenyns begins to publish collections of poetic verse, political pamphlets, and miscellaneous pieces; demonstrating an ability for penning “graceful prose,” he is recognized as a “wit and satirist.”¹⁰ In 1757, Jenyns publishes *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*.¹¹ Graceful or not, Samuel Johnson severely ridicules *A Free Inquiry* in three successive volumes of Yale’s *Literary Magazine*.¹² In 1776, Jenyns, publishes the apologetic work that becomes so influential for the young Alexander, *A View of the Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion*.¹³ Jenyns intends *Internal Evidences* for contemporary deists and freethinkers, emphasizing “the ethical qualities of Christianity” favored by “innovating apologists of the later eighteenth century” rather than “standard defensive arguments from prophecy and miracle.”¹⁴ Renowned for its “clarity and ease,” *Internal Evidences* is translated into French, Polish, and Greek.¹⁵ However, after reading

8. The primary and secondary literature on Alexander, including his archival collection at Princeton Seminary, is vast. For a compilation, see Wayne Sparkman, “The Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander: An Annotated Bibliography,” *The Confessional Presbyterian*, vol. 8 (2012): 120–152. For original, hard copy access, the Archibald Alexander Manuscript Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary, Wright Library, Special Collections, Princeton, New Jersey, contains thirty-three boxes (15.45 linear feet) of handwritten sermons, seminary lectures, letters, etc. For an online catalogue of the collection, see the Archibald Alexander Manuscript Collection, accessed July 29, 2024, <https://princetonseminaryarchives.libraryhost.com/repositories/2/resources/581>. The Presbyterian Church U.S.A.’s Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia holds a small archive of Alexander’s writings. See the Archibald Alexander Papers, accessed July 29, 2024, <https://history.pcusa.org/collections/research-tools/guides-archival-collections/rg-297>. The Log College Press makes available electronic versions of many of Alexander’s works. See The Log College Press, accessed July 29, 2024, <https://www.logcollegepress.com/authors-a#/new-page/>.

9. With brevity in view, this paper refrains from providing a full biographical treatment for Jenyns. For a standard treatment, see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), s.v., “Soame Jenyns,” by Ronald Rompkey, accessed June 18, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14766> (Sept. 23, 2004).

10. ODNB, s.v., “Soame Jenyns.”

11. Soame Jenyns, *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1757).

12. Samuel Johnson, *The Literary Magazine*, Numb. XIII (Apr. 15–May 15, 1757): 171–175; Numb. XIV (May 15–June 15, 1757): 251–253; Numb. XV (June 15–July 15, 1757): 301–306. See ODNB, s.v., “Soame Jenyns,” (Johnson’s ridicule “virtually put an end to optimistic theorizing”).

13. Soame Jenyns, *A View of the Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1776).

Internal Evidences, Jenyns’s contemporary, John Wesley, demurs and expresses perplexity and doubt:

Wed. 24.—I read Mr. Jenyns’s admired tract, on the ‘Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion.’ He is undoubtedly a fine writer; but whether he is a Christian, Deist, or Atheist, I cannot tell. If he is a Christian, he betrays his own cause by averring, that ‘all Scripture is not given by inspiration of God; but the writers of it were sometimes left to themselves, and consequently made some mistakes.’ Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth.¹⁶

With Jenyns’s popularity and Wesley’s perplexity in mind, we now critically examine Jenyns’s theology as expressed in *Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion*. Jenyns asserts that of the three arguments most writers have used to “prove the divine origin of the Christian religion” (Old Testament prophecies, New Testament miracles, and internal evidence), the last argument—internal evidence—simultaneously “seems to carry with it the greatest degree of conviction” yet has “never . . . been considered with that attention, which it deserves.”¹⁷ Proving the truth of the Christian religion

14. ODNB, s.v., “Soame Jenyns.”

15. Ibid.

16. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., vol. 4 (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1856), p. 459 (Aug. 24, 1776, diary entry). Additionally, Archibald Maclaine, an Irish minister to an English congregation in The Hague, published a series of letters to Jenyns criticising his *Internal Evidences*. An excerpt from his first letter leaves little doubt about Maclaine’s state of mind.

In general, your reasoning is neither close nor accurate. Your illustrations run wide of the principles they are designed to explain and enforce. One would be tempted sometimes to think, that you, yourself, lost sight of these principles in the midst of the desultory detail of arguments and observations, which you bring to support them. . . . Or, to use another figure that comes nearer to your particular case, you look like a zealous and spirited volunteer, who has embarked in a vessel, surrounded with enemies and assailed by tempestuous weather, and begins to defend and work the ship, without that experience in the art of Navigation, or the science of Defence, that is necessary to ensure success and victory.

Archibald Maclaine, *A Series of Letters Addressed to Soame Jenyns, Esq.; on Occasion of His View of the Internal Evidence of Christianity* (London: Printed for Charles Bathurst, 1777), pp. 7–9. Despite numerous strongly worded criticisms, Maclaine nonetheless congratulates Jenyns for his “entry into our Ark, which does not depend for the final issue of its course on our manoeuvres.” Ibid., p. 9 (italics in original).

17. Jenyns, *Internal Evidences*, pp. 1–2.

“should begin by shewing the internal marks of Divinity, which are stamped upon it” because “on this the credibility of the prophecies and miracles in a great measure depends.”¹⁸

Jenyns seeks to prove three (3) propositions: (i) that there is extant a book entitled the New Testament; (ii) that from the New Testament, “there may be extracted a system of religion intirely [*sic*] new ... unlike every thing, which had ever before entered into the mind of man”; and (iii) “that from this book may likewise be collected a system of ethicks, in which every moral precept founded on reason is carried to a higher degree of purity and perfection” than by any other philosophers.¹⁹ Based on these propositions, Jenyns ultimately concludes that “such a system of religion and morality ... must derive its origin from God.”²⁰

Jenyns’s first proposition—that the New Testament is extant—is minimally defended and narrowly conceived. He is decidedly *not* interested in proving the New Testament’s authorship, inspiration (none, some, or all), infallibility, or, for that matter, whether it contains mistakes and corruption:

Whether these books were wrote by the authors whose names are prefixed to them, whether they have been enlarged, diminished, or any way corrupted by the artifice or ignorance of translators, or transcribers; whether in the historical parts the writers were instructed by a perpetual, a partial, or by any inspiration at all; whether in the religious and moral parts, they received their

18. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10. Reflecting contemporaneous usage and spelling, both Jenyns and Jenks consistently use “intirely” and “every thing,” respectively, for the modern “entirely” and “everything.”

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16 (italics supplied).

22. *Ibid.*, p. 17 (italics supplied).

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18 (italics supplied). Perhaps more fundamentally, Jenyns is tacitly denying divine inspiration by asserting there is no uniformity in the New Testament’s theology.

24. For a definitive work on many of “the learned” and such “human systems,” see Robert A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

25. *Contra* Jenyns, one can argue that New Testament books themselves contain a “uniform or regular system of theology,” e.g., Romans and Galatians (justification by faith alone). That “learned men” later *extracted* such doctrine is made possible by the doctrine existing in the New Testament corpus itself.

26. Jenyns, p. 29. In later discussion, Jenyns ventures down the “lord, lunatic, liar” road subsequently traveled by John “Rabbi” Duncan, C.S. Lewis, and others. He argues that “we cannot possibly imagine, that he [Christ] could have been either an idiot or a madman...” He also traces the question of whether Christianity “was really an imposture founded on absurd, incredible, and obsolete fable” or whether it is

doctrines from a divine influence, or from the instructions and conversation of their matter; whether in their facts or sentiments there is always the most exact agreement, or whether in both they sometimes differ from each other; *whether they are in any case mistaken, or always infallible; or ever pretended to be so*, I shall not here dispute....²¹

Jenyns’s second proposition is that from the New Testament, “there may be *extracted* a system of religion intirely new ... unlike every thing, which had ever before entered into the mind of man.”²² Doctrinal *extraction* from the New Testament is noteworthy for Jenyns:

I say *extracted*, because all the doctrines of this religion having been delivered at various times, and on various occasions, and here only historically recorded, *no uniform or regular system of theology is here to be found*; and better perhaps it had been, *if less labour had been employed by the learned, to bend and twist these divine materials into the polished form of human systems, to which they will never submit, and for which they were never intended by their great author.*²³

Here, Jenyns is no friend of doctrine as a systematic endeavor or the seventeenth century divines (“the learned”) who write lengthy systematic theologies (or dogmatics) following the Reformation era’s confessional milieu.²⁴ Vis-à-vis his first proposition, Jenyns is also arguing against himself. If, as he concedes, he does not care whether (i) the New Testament books were written by the authors to which they were attributed; (ii) the books were corrupted by the ignorance or artifice of the translators or transcribers; or (iii) they were divinely inspired in part, the whole, or not at all; why would it matter whether “the learned” subsequently bent or twisted New Testament doctrines into “polished forms of human systems”?²⁵ Jenyns’s first proposition *abolishes* the necessity (or possibility) of the New Testament’s divine inspiration and infallibility; his second proposition *assumes* its divine inspiration (“these divine materials”). His first proposition *disclaims* the New Testament books’ authorial authenticity; his second proposition *delineates* the New Testament’s “divine materials” as those of a single author (“their great author”—presumably the Lord Jesus Christ).

Jenyns’s second proposition acknowledges that, unlike Greek and Roman histories, “Christ suffered and died as an atonement for the sins of mankind, is a doctrine so constantly and so strongly enforced through every part of the New Testament....”²⁶ Nonetheless, the

“intirely new” object of Christianity—like this “religion intirely new”—is not Christ’s substitutionary atonement, but to “prepare us by a state of probation for the kingdom of heaven”:

Christianity not only operates more effectually to this end, but has a nobler design in view, which is by a proper education here to render us fit members of a celestial society hereafter.... For the truth of this principle, *that the present life is a state of probation*, and education to prepare us for another, is confirmed by every thing which we see around us: It is the only key which can open to us the designs of Providence in the oeconomy of human affairs....²⁷

While it is difficult to precisely ascertain what Jenyns intends by his statement that the earthly “probationary state” renders Christians “fit members” of a subsequent “celestial society,” he appears to have erroneously extended the Edenic probationary state of Adam, humanity’s federal head, to all his posterity in all ages.²⁸ Jenyns does not apparently recognize that Christ, as the second Adam, triumphs over death and sin for His people, thereby securing forgiveness and eternal life in Him, thus rendering the Elec’s probation a nullity.

Jenyns’s third proposition is that the New Testament ethical system carries every moral precept founded on reason to a higher degree of purity and perfection than any previous philosophers.²⁹ These precepts include, e.g., “piety to God, benevolence to men, justice, charity, temperance, and sobriety....”³⁰ Christianity’s chief “new precepts ... preparing us for the kingdom of heaven” are “poorness of spirit, forgiveness of injuries, and charity to all men” along with “repentance, faith, self-abasement, and a detachment from the world....”³¹ Jenyns’s discussion of Christianity’s ethical demands, sprinkled with New Testament citations, is a lengthy and nuanced one.

For example, “[r]epentance,” Jenyns writes, “is another new moral duty strenuously insisted on by this religion [Christianity]... for this alone can purge us from those transgressions ... and purify us from that depravity in our nature, which renders us incapable of attaining this end.”³² By the same token, however, repentance cannot remove our incapacity; rather, the solution lies in what Scripture calls “being born again.”³³ By the end, Jenyns’s third propositional conclusion is that Christianity’s contrast between all other moral and religious institutions is “sufficiently evident” and its “superiority ... is as little to be disputed.”³⁴ Despite extolling the importance of Christ’s atonement, repentance, and faith, it remains unclear whether Jenyns views Christianity

merely as an unsurpassed ethical improvement vis-à-vis past ethical regimes, or whether he finds salvation in Christ alone.

Lastly, Jenyns commingles his three propositions in a meandering one-hundred-page conclusion.³⁵ For this study’s purposes, his conclusions about Scripture (initially expressed in his first proposition) are worth recounting here:

Others there are, who allow, that a revelation from God may be both necessary, and credible; but alledge, that the Scriptures, that is the books of the Old and New Testament, cannot be that Revelation; because in them are to be found errors and inconsistencies, fabulous stories, false facts, and false philosophy.... To this I reply, *that I readily acknowledge, that the Scriptures are not revelations from God, but the history of them: The revelation itself is derived from God; but the history of it is the production of men*, and therefore the truth of it is not

“what it pretends to be, a revelation communicated to mankind by the interposition of supernatural power?” Jenyns, pp. 35, 189–90. See John Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1873), p. 109 (describing the “inexorable trilemma” of Christ); and C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Fontana Books, 1966), pp. 52–53.

27. Jenyns, pp. 20, 24 (italics supplied).

28. A comprehensive discussion of Adam’s probationary state and its theological implications is beyond the scope of this paper. However, such a discussion would include, e.g., Scriptural exegesis and analysis of the Covenants of Works and Grace. It would also include analysis of such works as Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine*; *The Enchiridion, The Works of Aurelius Augustine*, vol. IX, ed. Marcus Dods, trans. S.D. Salmond (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1873) (with its four stages of the Christian life); Thomas Boston’s *Human Nature, In Its Fourfold State* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841) (especially the discussion of Adam’s probationary period). A multitude of seventeenth century theologians write about Covenant Theology’s contours, e.g., Johann Cocceius, *The Doctrine of the Covenant and the Testament of God*, trans. Casey Carmichael (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Trust, 2016); Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, 2 vols., trans. William Crookshank (London: Printed for R. Baynes, 1822, repr. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021); and Samuel Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened* (Edinburgh: Printed Andro Anderson, 1654). For recent treatments, see Stephen G. Meyers, *Covenant Theology in Scripture: God To Us* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021); and J.V. Fesko, *The Covenant of Works: The Origins, Development, and Reception of the Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

29. Jenyns, pp. 42–50 (comparing Christianity with the ideas of ancient Greece, Rome, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero).

30. Jenyns, p. 51.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Jenyns, pp. 76–77.

33. Jenyns, p. 77.

34. Jenyns, pp. 95.

35. Jenyns, pp. 97–191.

in the least affected by their fallibility, but depends on the *internal evidence* of its own supernatural excellence.

What has led many to overlook this distinction, is that common phrase, that the Scriptures are the word of God; and in one sense they certainly are; that is, they are the sacred repository of all the revelations, dispensations, promises, and precepts, which God has vouchsafed to communicated to mankind; but by this expression we are not to understand, that every part of this voluminous collection of historical, poetical, prophetic, theological, and moral writings, which we call the Bible, was dictated by the immediate influence of divine inspiration: The authors of these books pretend no such infallibility, and if they claim it not for themselves, who has authority to claim it for them?³⁶

36. Jenyns, pp. 122–23, 126–27 (italics supplied).

37. In Germany, a “liberal reform movement” known as “neology” mediates reason and revelation” and “emptied Christian revelation of any historical content that appeared nonsensical,” replacing it with “reasonable truths that accorded with natural religion.” A leading neologist, Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791), a “pioneer in critical historical scholarship . . . decoupled revelation from its articulation in Scripture.” In *Historische Einleitung in die Dogmatische Gottesgelehrsamkeit* (1759), Semler argues that “God’s word was not directly present in the text of the Bible.” Tuska Benes, *The Rebirth of Revelation: German Theology in an Age of Reason and History, 1750–1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), pp. 27–29. In a July 27, 1827, letter to Charles Hodge while Hodge was in Germany, Archibald Alexander writes, “I pray God to keep you from the poison of Neology! I wish you to come home enriched with Biblical learning, but abhorring German philosophy and theology.” Alexander A. Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), pp. 160–61.

38. See, e.g., Exodus 4:12, 15–16 (Moses and Aaron) (English Standard Version) (ESV); Numbers 23:5, 12 (Balaam); Deuteronomy 18:18; 2 Chronicles 36:22 (Jeremiah); Isaiah 51:16 (Isaiah); Jeremiah 1:9 (Jeremiah); Ezekiel 3:17, 27 (Ezekiel).

39. For example, during his wilderness temptations, Jesus quotes Old Testament passages to Satan (Matt. 4:1–11, quoting Deut. 8:3, Psa. 91:11–12, Isa. 7:12, and Deut. 6:13). At his crucifixion on the cross (Matt. 27:46), Jesus cries out with a loud voice, quoting Psalm 22:1.

40. 2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV).

41. 2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV). The word Peter uses here, *φερόμενοι*, comes from the Greek verb, *φέρω*. Here, the sense is being moved or caused to follow a certain course in direction or conduct by the Spirit of God. See Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), 3rd ed., revd. and ed. by Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 1051.

42. 2 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV) (Peter writing that the ignorant and unstable sometimes twist Paul’s letters “as they do the other Scriptures”).

43. *Internal Evidences* is not Jenyns’s last word on Christianity. In 1791, he published a series of lectures given to a “select company of friends” addressing, *inter alia*, the causes of infidelity, revelation’s necessity, Christ’s ascension, the credibility of revealed religion, the importance of revelation, and humility. *Lectures Delivered by Soame*

Jenyns stumbles badly over the doctrine of biblical inspiration and inerrancy of the original autographs. He also draws an artificial and troubling distinction between God’s revelation and what he calls the “history” of that revelation, i.e., the Scriptures, which is “the production of men.”³⁷ First, several Old Testament texts relate that God spoke through a prophet or, more specifically, the mouth of the prophet.³⁸ Second, Jesus himself repeatedly regards and quotes the Old Testament as Scripture.³⁹ Third, as Scripture, the New Testament self-attests that *all* Scripture is breathed out by God and is therefore profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.⁴⁰ The New Testament further attests that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation; rather, Scriptural prophecy is not produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Fourth, there is evidence that the first century apostles and church are already regarding Paul’s letters as Scripture.⁴²

In sum, whatever else he accomplishes in *Internal Evidences*, Jenyns consistently and thoroughly misreads and misstates Scripture’s own self-attestations and the Church’s doctrine of Scripture.⁴³ The Scriptures nowhere claim that its pages were dictated to human writers as Jenyns suggests. However, Scripture *does* attest that it is God-breathed and that it is a joint enterprise: men wrote as they were divinely carried along by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴ No Scriptural writer claimed that he was infallible; instead, the writers frequently acknowledge their sinfulness while simultaneously insisting on their obligation to authoritatively declare the word of the Lord.⁴⁵

Jenyns, Esq. (New York: Printed by Samuel Loudon, 1791) (dedicated to Edward Gibbon). These lectures may provide external evidence of an internal change in Jenyns. For example, in Lecture VI, Jenyns references his *Internal Evidences*, stating that the “well-attested miracles, by which God hath borne witness to the veracity of his servants, and to the truth of the doctrines delivered by them . . . are no inconsiderable evidences on the side of revelation.” The internal evidences, however, “bore down on my prejudices, and drove from my heart the infidelity, which for many years, I had unhappily cherished.” *Ibid.*, pp. 144–45. Tellingly perhaps, Jenyns’s last lecture (VII) is entitled “Humility,” using Matt. 5:3 as a proof text (“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”). *Ibid.*, p. 179.

44. A subsequent Princeton seminary professor, B.B. Warfield, refers to this divine-human enterprise in the writing of the Scriptures as “concurrent operations.” Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), p. 95. The Greek word, *θεοπνευστος*, in 2 Timothy 3:16, a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, is translated “expiration” or “inspired of God.” *BDAG*, pp. 449–50.

45. See, e.g., Exodus 6:12, 28–30 (Moses); Nehemiah 1:4–11 (Nehemiah); Job 42:1–6 (Job); Psalm 51, 143 (David); Isaiah 6:1–10 (Isaiah);

In contrast to Jenyns, Benjamin Jenks's theology plumbs the Scriptures and its doctrine of justification as the bedrock of Christian faith.⁴⁶ Jenks, a Church of England clergyman, published several books containing "moralizing messages," but his books of prayer are most popular.⁴⁷ One such book, *Prayers and Offices of Devotion* (1697), is published into the nineteenth century in more than thirty-five editions.⁴⁸ Jenks's *Submission to the Righteousness of God. Or the Necessity of Trusting to a Better Righteousness Than Our Own* is the focus here.⁴⁹ The full title of Jenks's *Righteousness of God* provides insight into his theological intentions: *Submission to the Righteousness of God. Or the Necessity of Trusting to a Better Righteousness Than Our Own. Opened and Defended, in a Plain, Practical Discourse Upon Romans X.3.*⁵⁰

Jenks's "To the Reader" introduction reveals that he is writing against numerous theological foes, i.e., those who assault and attack the "Faith of Christ" inside and outside the church; those who call Reason the "candle of the Lord"; and those of the "Remonstrant Party" within the Church of England.⁵¹ Perhaps more significantly, Jenks is also writing against his former theological self, a time when: (i) he "first set out for a Preacher"; (ii) he was "a Stickler for Pelagius"; (iii) what he "wanted in Skill, [he] made up in bitter Zeal"; and (iv) he was "empty of Truth, but full of Absurdity."⁵² Then, things began to change:

Thus I drove on for a while, in my new Province: Till it pleas'd the gracious God (who knew what need I had to be Humbled) in the midst of perfect Health, and all the Favour of men, and Prosperity of the World, to throw me down under great and sore Troubles of mind, and Doubtings of my State, and Dread of his Wrath...⁵³

Jenks's dark night of the soul continued "for a long while," but in that "School of sharp Discipline, did I learn of my Heavenly Teacher, the Doctrine of Faith."⁵⁴ On the other side, Jenks came out a changed man, opposing "Pelagian Sentiment" and Arminianism, and espousing a new—yet old—theology:

And till he [God] came with an Over-ruling impetus upon me; I know too well, that all mine own Power was only to Withstand the Work: And it would never have been done, if it had not been the Lord's own doing. Herein then my own Experience makes me heartily Subscribe to the Tenth Art. of Free Will [That the condition of man after the Fall of Adam is such, He cannot Turn and prepare himself, by his own natural Strength

and good Works, to Faith and Calling upon God: And that we have no Power to do Good works, pleasant and acceptable to God....]⁵⁵

Jeremiah 1:1–19 (Jeremiah); Daniel 9:1–15 (Daniel); 1 Timothy 1:12–17 (Paul, the "foremost" of sinners).

46. Jenks, *Submission to the Righteousness of God*, p. xxii ("Now do I Bless God for the Scriptures, and particularly S. Paul's Epistles: from which I can easily gather up a Satisfying Notion of Justifying Faith...."). It is not possible to completely analyze every theological question and proposition Jenks provides. This paper seeks to canvas his theology rather than baptize the reader in it.

47. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), s.v., "Benjamin Jenks," by Warren Johnston, accessed June 18, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14741> (Sept. 23, 2004). Jenks was the Rector of Harley in Shropshire (western Midlands of England) and Chaplain to the Right Honourable Earl of Bradford.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Jenks first published *Submission to the Righteousness of God* in 1700. Several subsequent editions are published, including one in 1755. Like other authors, Jenks's 1755 edition expands in length, presumably reflecting Jenks's more mature theological views on his subject. It is unknown which edition Archibald Alexander read in 1788–1789. Though a scholarly preference exists for first editions, this paper uses Jenks's 1755 edition on the premise that Jenks's subsequent edition reflects a more mature theological presentation of his subject.

50. Jenks, book cover (quoting Romans 10:3: "For they being Ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to Establish their own Righteousness, have not Submitted themselves to the Righteousness of God").

51. Jenks, pp. ii–v, xi–xiii. Seventeenth century England saw a revival of Platonist thought, primarily at Cambridge. The Cambridge Platonists frequently employ "candle of the Lord" language. Ernst Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, James P. Pettigrove, trans. (London: Nelson, 1953), p. 40 ("The Spirit of a Man is the Candle of the Lord" (taken from Proverbs 20:27)); One of the Platonists, Benjamin Whichcote, makes several "candle" references in his sermons. Benjamin Whichcote, *Select Sermons* (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1698), pp. 66, 94, 448. For Arminianism's rise and the "overthrow of Calvinism" in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, see Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

52. Jenks, p. xiv. He decried Calvinism at the time ("...under what extreme Odium was every thing that was heard Calvinistical....")

53. *Ibid.*, pp. xiv–xv. At the time of his divine encounter, Jenks's life circumstances are the antithesis of those of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). Thankfully, in His sovereignty and mercy, "the gracious God" meets sinners at the extremes of human experience and everywhere in between.

54. *Ibid.*, p. xv.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. xvi–xvii (brackets in original). Jenks is referencing Article 10 of the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles, "Of Free Will." He finds "no Small Relief" that he has with him "not only all the Reformed Churches abroad" but also the "best Bishops and greatest Worthies" in the Church of England. For an eighteenth-century latitudinarian commentary on the Thirty-Nine Articles, see Gilbert Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by R. Roberts, 1700).

For the changed Jenks, the righteousness necessary for justification according to the Scriptures is “the Righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, Apprehended and Applied by our Faith. Which, I think, I have better reason to call a *Better Righteousness than our Own*.”⁵⁶ This “Doctrine of Free Grace and Justification by Faith is “[t]hat soft Pillow under the weary Disconsolate Soul.”⁵⁷

What Jenks calls “a better righteousness” is no mere doctrinal quibble of interest only to contemporary divines and academics. He opens the formal portion of his tract by raising *the lone inquiry* haunting all fallen humanity through the ages: “The grand Enquiry that most of all concerns every Sinful Man, is How he shall come off, and obtain Peace and Acceptance, with the Holy Offended God.”⁵⁸ Jenks’s answer to that question occupies the remainder of *Submission to the Righteousness of God* and also occupies the next section of this paper.

If, Jenks continues, righteousness is needful for obtaining peace with God, the question becomes “what Righteousness will Serve the turn, and which Sort had we best Trust to; the several Pretenders to Righteousness cannot so easily hit it off.”⁵⁹ For this question, Jenks turns to St. Paul, “one of the best Teachers, from whom we may learn the certain truth....”⁶⁰ After examining Paul’s writings, Jenks strikes a conclusion:

God’s Righteousness here, is the Righteousness which God bestows upon us; and which Christ has wrought for us: And that Justification of a Sinner, which comes by the Faith of Jesus.... [A] Righteousness not obtained by our perfect fulfilling of the Law in our own persons: But by our Believing and relying on the Son of God, fulfilling all Righteousness for us: Which, through a

56. Jenks, p. xxx (italics supplied) (taken from the book’s title).

57. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3. In what will be a recurring theme, Jenks writes that “the Right Thinking will never bring a Man to Heaven, without Holy Living.” Jenks, p. 5.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11 (referencing Philippians 3:9 and Romans 3:21–22).

62. Jenks, pp. 19, 27, 54–55. As part of his response to “establishing their own righteousness,” Jenks harmonizes Paul and James concerning justification, concluding that James does not invalidate or interpret Paul. Jenks, pp. 45–55.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 56. Jenks further writes that “they that set up the Righteousness of Works, in Opposition to the Righteousness of Faith, ... with the Proud Conceit of their Own Righteousness; that they look upon it as full enough, and acquiesce in it.... And what need they any Foreign Righteousness, derived from the Savior.” Jenks, p. 88.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72 (referencing the book’s title).

65. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

67. Jenks, p. 138.

merciful Indulgence, now under the Gospel Covenant, is Imputed to us, as if it had been wrought by us.⁶¹

As he expounds at length, Jenks is particularly concerned about those who seek to justify themselves before God by “Establishing their own Righteousness” through “Legal Observances ... without the Righteousness of Jesus Christ,” putting themselves “under the old Covenant of Works”:

Such a high Rate do they put upon their Doings, they that Trust to them, more than they do to their Savior.... But the Works they look upon, as their real Saviors. Instead of throwing down all at his Feet; and Looking for Justification and Acceptance only upon his Account: He is the Last thought of, and Least of all Regarded, in all the Reckoning: And if possible, They will Shift, and do the business without him. This is the Pelagianism, born and bred in the Corrupt Nature of every Lapsed Sinner.”⁶²

Establishing one’s own righteousness, Jenks argues, is “most Silly, and Wicked, and Dangerous.”⁶³ Pride is the primary obstacle that “keeps men off from Submitting to the Righteousness of God.”⁶⁴ Pride, with its close companion Conceit, are a double and deadly sword:

[T]hey that set up the Righteousness of Works, in Opposition to the Righteousness of Faith, are so Puff’d and Swollen with the Proud Conceit of their Own Righteousness; that they look upon it as full enough, and acquiesce in it, without seeking any further. And what need they any Foreign Righteousness, derived from the Savior.⁶⁵

Why submit to God’s righteousness? Submitting to the righteousness of God, Jenks writes, is necessary “as ever you would enjoy Peace with God.”⁶⁶

If Jenks’s foremost concern is demonstrating Scripture’s opposition to a self-righteousness based on one’s works, his secondary concern is antinomianism. He argues repeatedly and persuasively that Christianity contains a duty to perform good works. However, he argues that good works are a duty because the Christian has been justified by Christ’s righteousness, not as an attempt to achieve a self- or works-based righteousness of one’s own. The faith alone in Christ alone is not alone; rather, “this Faith is accompanied with a Renewed Nature: And then from that, Holy actions will follow, even as Water from the Fountain.”⁶⁷ Jenks elaborates:

Only give Duty and Obedience their due place and Office, under thy Lord Redeemer: But ascribe not the Work and Glory of Christ to any the best of thy Works; Set them not in Competition with him; much less in Opposition to him: To make them the Price of Redemption, or Meritorious of thy Salvation. O never think to set up such a Righteousness of Works; as shall Satisfy the Justice of Heaven: Without being Beholden to the Satisfaction of Christ Jesus. But humbly bewailing thy own Unrighteousness, Plead the Righteousness of thy Saviour; as that wherein thou wouldst be Found; And by which thou resolvest ever to Abide.⁶⁸

In sum, Jenks's theology stands in stark contrast to that of Jenyns. While acknowledging that the Bible contains "internal evidences" of Christianity's divinity, Jenyns inexplicably does not care that (in his view) the Bible contains errors, became corrupted, and may not have been entirely the result of divine inspiration. Jenks, conversely, blesses God for the Scriptures (particularly Paul's epistles) because they contain "a Satisfying Notion of Justifying Faith."⁶⁹ The Scriptures contain and reveal "a Better Righteousness than our Own" via its "Doctrine of Free Grace and Justification by Faith, which is "[t]hat soft Pillow under the weary Disconsolate Soul."⁷⁰ Jenyns believes that Christianity's "intirely new" object is to prepare us for heaven by an earthly probation, thereby badly misconstruing Adamic probation and the Covenant of Works. Jenks, conversely, writes that biblical righteousness is not a self-righteousness founded on one's works; rather, it is a "Foreign Righteousness" derived from Christ our savior.

Whereas Jenyns presents virtues in a moralistic vein (every New Testament moral precept is carried to a higher degree of purity than earlier philosophers), Jenks presents the Christian's works as a *post facto* accompaniment to saving faith—as the fruit of saving faith—like water from a fountain. Thus, submitting to the righteousness of God, the Christian's hope is not ashamed; rather, by believing, the Christian finds quiet for his mind and the saving of his soul.⁷¹ As described *infra*, a young Archibald Alexander wrestled with faith and doubt in his late teenage years until Christ and the light of his gospel prevailed. With the quieting of the mind and the saving of souls as theological and experiential context, this paper now examines whether and how Jenyns and Jenks influence Archibald Alexander's theology, if at all.

Central to Archibald Alexander's theology is the necessity of rightly understanding the inspiration of the Scriptures. Further, he emphasizes the relationship between the Scriptures' objective truth and the outworking

of those truths in the life of the Christian believer.⁷² For Alexander, the Scriptures are "intended to be a guide to man in matters of religion; a rule of faith and practice."⁷³ His unyielding emphasis on the biblical relationship between doctrine and piety is an outgrowth of the General Assembly's 1811 "Princeton Plan."⁷⁴

In the first instance, one is immediately struck by the "dark night of the soul" similarity between Jenks and Alexander early in their Christian experience. Without straying into psychoanalysis, it is possible that Alexander read Jenks as a "kindred soul" who, like he, long wrestled with spiritual doubt and darkness before coming to faith in Christ. Jenks is initially a "stickler for Pelagius" and "empty of truth, but full of absurdity."⁷⁵ However, "it pleas'd the gracious God ... to throw me down under great and sore Troubles of mind, and Doubtings of my State, and Dread of his Wrath."⁷⁶ Jenks's spiritual wrestling did not quickly subside; rather, it continued "for a long while" until he came through as a changed man submitting to the righteousness of God; a man without power to do "Good works, pleasant and acceptable to God."⁷⁷ As a young man, Alexander found himself "in darkness and perplexity as to the way of acceptance with God"; he was "leaning on the Old Covenant."⁷⁸ After reading Jenks, Alexander fairly shouts that "Now every thing appeared as clear as if written with a sunbeam."⁷⁹

68. *Ibid.*, p. 186. Scripture's post-justification ethical demands form most of the second half of Jenks's book, describing the Scriptural justification-works relationship as a root-fruit; a holy life as the consequence of holy faith. Jenks, pp. 104–192, 151–52.

69. *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. xxx, 149.

71. Jenks, p. 192.

72. Alexander's own *Evidences of the Christian Religion*, 6th ed. (New York: Jonathan Levitt, 1832), one of his "most widely read books," provides "classic expression to the linkage between lived experience and the truths of revelation." See Mikowski and Osmer, *With Piety and Learning*, p. 17.

73. Archibald Alexander, *An Inaugural Discourse, Delivered in the Church at Princeton, New Jersey, in the Presence of the Directors of the Theological Seminary* (New York: Whiting and Watson, 1812), p. 73 (italics in original). Alexander here echoes *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (London: Printed for Robert Bostock, 1649), Ch. 1.II.

74. *Plan of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Located in Princeton, New Jersey*, 2nd ed. (Elizabethtown: Printed by Isaac A. Kollock, 1816), pp. 4–5 ("It is to unite, in those who shall sustain the ministerial office, religion and literature; that piety of the heart which is the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God, with solid learning....").

75. Jenks, p. xiv.

76. Jenks, pp. xiv–xv.

77. Jenks, pp. xvi–xvii.

78. J.W. Alexander, pp. 45–46.

79. *Ibid.* Jenksian-induced sunbeam notwithstanding, the young

In contrast to Jenyns's aversion to extracting and systemizing theology and doctrine from the Scriptures, Alexander sees this development in a positive light:

Look upon the Bible as the only source of infallible instruction on earth. All theology which is worth anything is in the Bible. All systems of theology are nothing more than the truths of the Bible arranged in a certain order. All treatises, commentaries, and sermons are intended to elucidate or enforce [the] same truth of Sacred Scripture.⁸⁰

Alexander describes the relationship between religious knowledge and experience in various ways. One of these is the seal/wax metaphor.⁸¹ Alexander argues that there exist two kinds of religious knowledge, intimately connected, but distinguishable: knowledge of truth as revealed in the Scriptures and the impression the truth makes on the human mind. The first he compares to the inscription or image on a seal; the second compares to

Alexander continued to ruminate on his spiritual condition. His personal diary entry for Monday, April 17, 1792, reads as follows: "Twenty years of my life are past, and gone never to be recalled, but what have I done for God, alas! alas! My precious moments are few, but when I reflect upon my life, what is there but an continued stain-blot." Archibald Alexander Manuscript Collection, Box 1:1 (Apr. 17, 1792).

80. Archibald Alexander Manuscript Collection, Box 7:7 (Introductory Lecture, June 20, 1822).

81. A second metaphor Alexander employs is somewhat similar, that of types used in printing and the impression the type makes on the paper: "The relation of sound doctrine to pious feeling and moral character, may be compared to that between the types used in printing, and the impression on the paper. If there be any disorder or defect, it will appear on the corresponding page." Archibald Alexander, preface, *Memoirs of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton* (Princeton: Baker & Conolly, 1833), p. v (the "Princeton" edition of Halyburton's *Memoirs*). Elsewhere, Alexander devotes two entire chapters to Halyburton's religious and death bed experience. Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1854), pp. 120–133, 250–259.

Joseph Addison Alexander (who follows in his father's footsteps as a Princeton seminary professor), is powerfully affected by Halyburton's writings. J.A. Alexander devotes an undated seminary lecture to Halyburton and his diary also bears witness to Halyburton's impact on his spirituality. See Joseph Addison Alexander Manuscript Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Special Collections, Box 6:2 ("Halyburken's [sic] Great Concern"). See also *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, vol. XLII (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., Jan. 1870), p. 115 (reproducing diary entry about Halyburton); Henry Carrington Alexander, *The Life of Joseph Addison Alexander* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1875), pp. 257–58 (diary entry describing life similarities with Halyburton and concluding that "[s]elf-righteousness and antinomianism are my Scylla and Charybdis").

the impression made by the seal on the wax; and nothing tends more to confirm and elucidate the truths contained in the Word, than an inward experience of their efficacy on the heart.⁸² But internal experience must be judged (externally) by the Scriptures:

In judging of religious experience, it is all important to keep steadily in view the divine system of truth, contained in the Holy Scriptures; otherwise, our experience, as is too often the case, will degenerate into enthusiasm. Many ardent professors, seem to readily to take it for granted, that all religious feelings must be good. They therefore take no care to discriminate between the genuine and the spurious, the pure gold and the tinsel. Their only concern is about the ardour of their feelings; not considering, that if they are spurious, the more intense they are, the further will they lead them astray.⁸³

Here, Alexander's theology of Scripture and Christian experience is a stark departure from Jenyns. Jenyns's Bible, while it announces moral precepts higher and purer than otherwise described, is nonetheless potentially devoid of divine inspiration and subject to corruption. Alexander, on the other hand, maintains that "a knowledge of divine truth is essential to genuine piety; error never can, under any circumstances, produce the effects of truth."⁸⁴

In *A Brief Compend of Bible Truth*, Alexander devotes a chapter to explaining the Biblical doctrine of justification.⁸⁵ Though he frequently speaks and writes of this doctrine, Alexander's summary here serves as an effective distillation vis-à-vis that of Jenks.⁸⁶ For Alexander,

82. Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, p. 5.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8. In contrast to Jenyns's low view of the Bible, Alexander held a high view of the Scriptures as the divinely inspired Word of God, the rule of faith and practice. He writes multiple volumes on the formation of the Biblical canon and its inspiration, authority, and canonical authority. Archibald Alexander, *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration, and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1836); and *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained, or The Bible Complete Without the Apocrypha and Unwritten Traditions* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1851).

84. Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, p. 8.

85. Archibald Alexander, *A Brief Compend of Biblical Truth* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1846), pp. 120–126.

86. See also Archibald Alexander, *A Treatise on Justification by Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Tract and Sunday School Society, 1837). Alexander's *Brief Compend* can be properly seen as a more succinct explanation of the justification doctrine occurring in his subsequent *Treatise on Justification*. The *Compend* seeks brevity; *A Treatise* seeks depth.

“[c]orrect ideas on the subject of a sinner’s justification are exceedingly important.”⁸⁷ Why? Because justification is “a cardinal point in the Christian system,” and a mistaken understanding of justification “will be apt to extend its pernicious influence to every other important doctrine.”⁸⁸ Moreover, if “we put a wrong sense on the word, it will be sure to favour the dangerous doctrine of human merit.”⁸⁹ According to the Scriptures, Alexander writes, justification does not mean “any change wrought within us, but a change of our relation or standing under the law.”⁹⁰ It is a mistake to say that man’s imperfect or sincere obedience “may be the ground of justification.”⁹¹ Rather, “[m]an’s sincere obedience, though imperfect, may be an evidence that he is in a justified state, but can never be the ground of the sentence of the Judge.”⁹² All of this, Alexander states, returns us to an ultimate question and the Bible’s answer:

The question then returns, ‘How can any man be just with God, since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God?’ To which we answer, that a man under the gospel is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law; that is, he is justified by the perfect righteousness of Christ, received by faith. This righteousness is imputed to the believing sinner; that is, God treats him as if he himself had wrought it out.⁹³

By Alexander’s reckoning, justification is not accomplished by an inherent righteousness, but an external one; a doctrine not predicated on man’s imperfect albeit sincere obedience; but a doctrine whereby the believing sinner is justified by Christ’s perfect righteousness, imputed to him. Though Alexander does not explicitly cite Jenks here, his summary is replete with Jenksian overtones. For Jenks, the righteousness necessary for the sinner’s justification is nothing else than “the Righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, Apprehended and Applied by our Faith,” a righteousness Jenks calls “a Better Righteousness than our Own.”⁹⁴ Alexander’s “ultimate” question from Romans 3:23 is substantially similar to Jenks’s own “grand enquiry” from the proper beginning of his book: “The Grand Enquiry that most of all concerns every Sinful Man, is How he shall come off, and obtain Peace and Acceptance, with the Holy Offended God.”⁹⁵

Like Jenks before him, Alexander finds it necessary to resolve James’s and Paul’s respective teachings on justification. For Alexander, this resolution is necessitated for the following reason:

There is nothing more difficult than to bring men off from dependence, in some form, on their own

righteousness. Therefore, the advocates of human merit, and justification by works, have seized with avidity upon the words of the apostle James, who declares that, ‘a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.’⁹⁶

Alexander harmonizes Paul and James by concluding they give the terms “works” and “justification” different usages:

[I]n doctrine he and Paul did not disagree, though they employ the terms mentioned in a somewhat different sense.... He [James] shows that such a faith [a speculative assent to the truth], being dead, could not justify. His doctrine is, that a living, operative faith, is necessary; and, that our faith must be shown by our works; and this is the same thing which Paul taught.⁹⁷

Jenks, for his part, writes extensively and persuasively against those seeking to justify themselves before God by “Establishing their own Righteousness ... without the Righteousness of Jesus Christ.”⁹⁸ Some men look upon works “as their real Saviors” and rather than “throwing down all at his Feet; and Looking for Justification and Acceptance only upon his Account,” Christ is “the Last Thought” and men seek to “do the business without him.”⁹⁹ It is possible to see Jenks’s influence on Alexander when Jenks concludes that Paul’s and James’s respective uses of the word “justification” are not the same:

So (I say) he [James] treats a different kind of *Justification*, from that which St. Paul establishes: Not of the Justification of our *Persons* in the sight of God, and before his Judgment-seat; But of the Justification of our *Faith* in

87. Alexander, *A Brief Compend*, p. 120.

88. *Ibid.*

89. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

92. *Ibid.*

93. Alexander, *A Brief Compend*, p. 122 (referencing Romans 3:23). Alexander begins his *Treatise on Justification* with a substantially similar restatement of this question: “How shall a man be just with God?” is surely the most important question which can possibly be conceived.” Alexander, *Treatise on Justification*, p. 3.

94. Jenks, p. xxx (italicized phrase taken from book’s title).

95. Jenks, p. 1.

96. Alexander, *A Brief Compend*, pp. 124–125.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 125. In an undated sermon on 1 Timothy 6:6, “Godliness with Contentment is Great Gain,” Alexander writes that “the way to happiness is the path of holiness.” The Archibald Alexander Manuscript Collection, Box 20:2.

98. Jenks, pp. 19, 27, 55.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 55 (This, Jenks announces, is Pelagianism).

the sight of the World; and at the Bar of our own *Consciences*: Where, (it's true), *Works* must come in, to make good our *Pretensions* to the holy Savior of the World. For though Faith *Justifies* us; yet *Works* declare us to have that *Faith*: And tho' Faith is the Seal of our *Justification*; yet *Works* are the Seal of our *Faith*: And Faith does the *business*, but *Works* *prove* it to be done.¹⁰⁰

Jenks concludes thusly: “[T]his faith [in Christ] is accompanied with a Renewed Nature: And then from that, Holy actions will follow, even as Water from the Fountain.”¹⁰¹

Premises considered, this comparison of Benjamin Jenks and Archibald Alexander shows sustained similarities in their respective theologies of justification, imputed righteousness, and good works operating as an accompaniment of saving faith in Christ alone. Alexander does not expressly reference Jenks in the various theological works examined here. Nonetheless,

100. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–47 (italics in original).

101. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

102. Jenyns, *Internal Evidences*, p. 5 (rather than proof by prophecies or miracles).

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9, 17, 50.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 24.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

106. *Ibid.* (italics supplied). In *Letters to Soame Jenyns*, Archibald Maclaine takes up Jenyns's argument and the overarching issues of internal and external evidences of Christianity's divinity. On Maclaine's view, the external evidences, i.e., miraculous (“miracles alone are the *direct* proof of a Commission *immediately* Divine”) carry the day for proof of Christianity's divinity:

The result of the matter then is, that, as the purity of the metal does not establish its *true* and *permanent* value, nor assure its *currency*, before it be stamped externally by the mark of the Sovereign, so the intrinsic excellence of the Doctrines and Precepts of a Religion, though they may procure it certain marks of respect and attachment, and make it pass for a useful rule of conduct, will not prove its Celestial origin, nor give it the authority of a Divine Revelation.

Maclaine, *Letters*, pp. 32–33 (italics in original).

107. In fairness to Jenyns, he confesses by book's end that these arguments “convinced him of the divine origin of this religion.” He admits that, at one time, he “believed little” in Christianity's truthfulness and divinity. However, “having some leisure and more curiosity,” he found on “candid inquiry” that Christianity was not “an imposture founded on an absurd, incredible and obsolete fable.” Rather, Christianity “is what it pretends to be, a revelation communicated to mankind by the interposition of supernatural power.” Jenyns, *Internal Evidences*, pp. 190–91.

108. Alexander, *Evidences of the Christian Religion*, p. 173. See Thomas Chalmers, *Works of Thomas Chalmers*, vol. 3, *On the Miraculous and Internal Evidences of the Christian Revelation and the Authority of its Records* (New York: Robert Carter, 1840).

109. Alexander, *Evidences*, pp. 176–77 (italics supplied).

it is fair to conclude that Jenks's theology profoundly and permanently influences Archibald Alexander, from the moment he first read Jenks when a teenager and throughout his long and distinguished career at Princeton Seminary. This paper now pivots to assess whether Soame Jenyns's theology permeated Archibald Alexander's theology during that same distinguished career.

As previously stated, Jenyns argues that to “prove the truth of the Christian Religion, we should begin by shewing the internal marks of Divinity, which are stamped upon it.”¹⁰² He argues that a system of religion “intirely new” can be extracted from the Bible and that it contains a system of ethics “carried to a higher degree of purity and perfection” than anything previous.¹⁰³ Though he acknowledges the New Testament constantly enforces the doctrine of Christ's atonement for the sins of mankind, Jenyns argues that the Scripture's purpose is to “prepare us by a state of probation for the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁰⁴ However, Jenyns disavows that the Scriptures are God's revelation; rather, they are “the history of them.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the Bible's truth “is not in the least affected by their fallibility but depends on the *internal evidence* of its own supernatural excellence.”¹⁰⁶ His book title notwithstanding, Jenyns does not effectively explain what “internal evidence” means, but concludes that Old and New Testaments' historical “unlikeness” is “internal evidence” of Christianity's divinity.¹⁰⁷

In his *Evidences of the Christian Religion*, Archibald Alexander likewise addresses evidences of the Scriptures' divinity. In chapter ten, entitled “The Bible Contains Internal Evidence That is Origin is Divine,” Alexander considers both Thomas Chalmers (who saw internal evidences as unsatisfactory) and Jenyns (who “exhibits the internal, in a light so strong, that his argument assumes the appearance of demonstration”).¹⁰⁸ Alexander's “internal evidences” argument begins this way:

And as there is a faith which is saving, and to which a purifying efficacy is ascribed; if we inquire, on what species of evidence this depends, it must be answered, *on internal evidence*; not, indeed, as perceived by the unaided intellect of man, but as it is exhibited to the mind, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. We cannot consent, therefore, to give up this species of evidence, as ‘superfluous and uncalled for,’ but must consider it, . . . *The internal evidence of the truth of the Scriptures*, cannot be fully brought into view, in any other way, than by a careful study of the Bible. It cannot easily be put into the form of logical argument, for it consists in moral fitness and beauty.¹⁰⁹



Soame Jenyns (1704–1787), English writer, Member of Parliament.
William Dickinson, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, mezzotint, 1776.

In general terms, Alexander makes three (3) “internal evidences” arguments for the Scriptures’ divinity: (i) the Scriptures speak of God’s attributes “in a way which accords with what right reason would lead us to expect, in a divine revelation”; (ii) the Bible’s account of man’s origins and character “accords, very exactly, with reason and experience”; and (iii) Scripture’s explicit instructions on what man needs most: the doctrine of a future state of retribution; assurance that sin may be pardoned and the method to accomplish this; and the means for restoring man’s depraved nature to “a state of rectitude.”¹¹⁰ Thus far, Alexander’s “internal evidences” bear little resemblance to those of Jenyns, especially his notion of our “probationary state.”

However, when Alexander considers “the moral precepts of the Gospel,” faint Jenynsian echoes are heard, especially as he describes the “excellence of the moral system of the New Testament.”¹¹¹ Alexander makes multiple arguments about the Gospel’s moral precepts and the Scriptures’ divinity: (i) its simple, but comprehensive character (reduced to two “grand principles”—love of God and love of man; (ii) New Testament moral precepts, though expressed in comprehensive language, are applied to “the actual relations and various conditions of men”; (iii) moral duties otherwise overlooked or misunderstood by other teachers are “prominently

exhibited, and solemnly inculcated,” e.g., humility, meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness; (iv) the New Testament moral system traces all virtue to the heart and sets no value on performance of religious duties when motives are impure; and (v) the New Testament’s moral virtues are exemplified in the lives of the apostles, primitive Christians, and in the life of Jesus Christ.¹¹²

To the untrained ear, this sounds like whispers from Jenyns’s *Internal Evidences*.¹¹³ His list of moral precepts (containing some overlap with Alexander) includes piety to God, benevolence to men, justice, charity, temperance, and sobriety.¹¹⁴ But in a stark departure from Jenyns (Scripture is fallible, uninspired, and possibly corrupted), Alexander *grounds* these moral virtues in the inspiration, truthfulness, and trustworthiness of Scripture. His forceful and joyful conclusion bears repeating:

No man or set of men had sufficient talents and knowledge, to forge such a book as the Bible. It evidently transcends all human effort. It has upon its face the impress of divinity. It shines with a light, which from its clearness and its splendor, shows itself to be celestial. It possesses the energy and penetrating influence which bespeak the omnipotence and omniscience of its Author. It has the effect of enlightening, elevating, purifying, directing, and comforting all those who cordially receive it. Surely, then, it is THE WORD OF GOD, and we will hold it fast, as the best blessing which God has vouchsafed to man.¹¹⁵

Mercifully, Alexander’s theology of biblical inspiration and internal evidences of the Scriptures’ divinity does *not* follow Jenyns down a ruinous theological path. Unlike John Wesley, who, after reading Jenyns, could not determine whether he was a Christian, Deist, or Atheist, there is no cavil of doubt after reading Archibald Alexander. He is a Calvinist Christian defending the infallibility of the Scriptures, the doctrine of justification through Christ alone, and the biblical necessity of good works evidencing new spiritual new birth in Christ.

110. Ibid., pp. 177–195.

111. Ibid., p. 196. For a discussion of same, see W. Andrew Hoffecker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians*, pp. 15–20.

112. Alexander, *Evidences*, pp. 196–212. Alexander’s argumentative development can be lengthy on each point, making concise summary difficult.

113. Jenyns, pp. 97–98 (from the New Testament “may likewise be collected a system of ethics, in which every moral precept founded on reason is carried to a higher degree of purity and perfection” than any of the wisest philosophers).

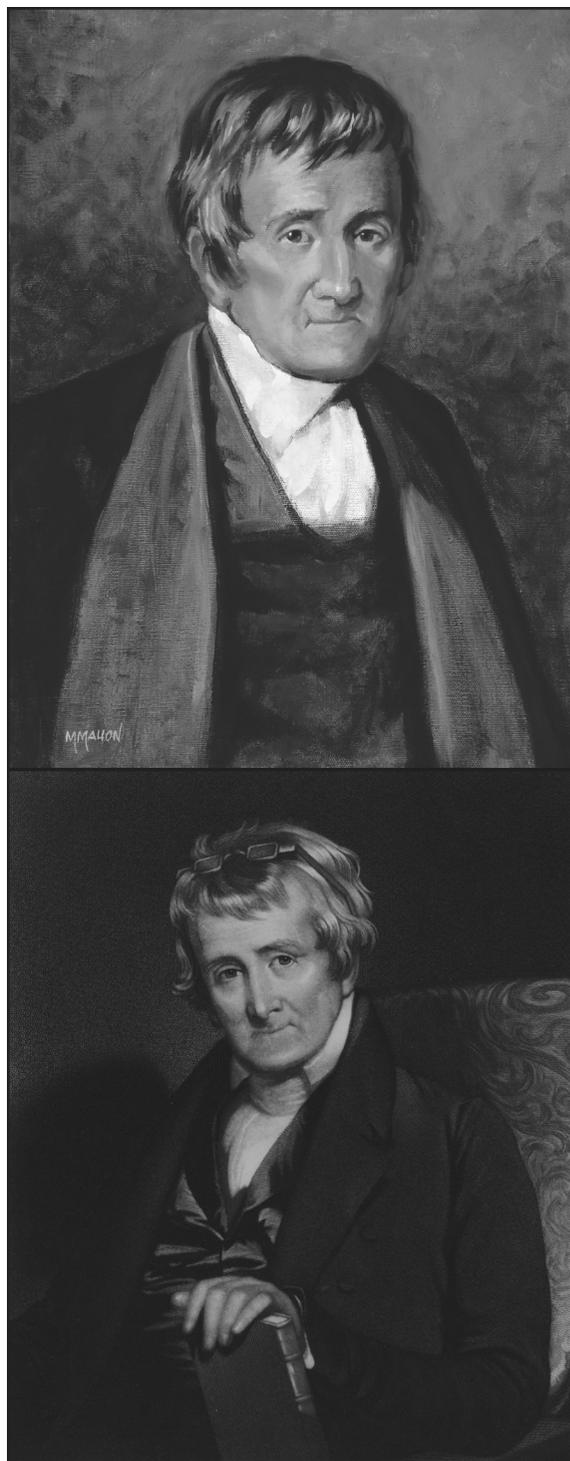
114. Jenyns excludes valour, active courage, patriotism, and friendship. Jenyns, pp. 51–63.

115. Alexander, *Evidences*, p. 214 (upper case in original).

In conclusion, this study addresses a small lacuna in the scholarly literature examining the influence of the theology of two men, Soame Jenyns and Benjamin Jenks, upon the conversion and theology of Princeton Seminary's first professor, Archibald Alexander. Though Alexander held Jenyns's *Internal Evidences* in high esteem from his teenage years, he did not adopt or follow Jenyns's theology of Scripture or his theory about the purpose(s) of Biblical moral precepts.¹¹⁶ Though he does not expressly acknowledge Jenks's *Submission to the Righteousness of God*, Alexander's theology of the doctrine of justification and the role and timing of the believer's good works are very similar in concern, theological content, and terminology. American Presbyterians should be grateful for both these truths. Archibald Alexander taught almost four decades of Princeton Seminary students who, in turn, took up Christian ministry in church pulpits, seminaries, and as foreign missionaries carried with them the "Princeton Theology" they imbibed.¹¹⁷ Archibald Alexander's theology survives, too, in the many extant books, sermons, pamphlets, and seminary lectures we are blessed to critically and devotionally read. All of this, it is respectfully submitted, is no small matter. ■

116. In two undated lecture manuscripts, Alexander continues to reference Jenyns and his *Internal Evidences*. In one lecture, Alexander lists Jenyns among three (3) columns of writers "against the Deists." Archibald Alexander Manuscript Collection, Box 13:35, "Deism" ("Jenyns" appears in the lefthand column, second from the bottom). In the other lecture, "Jenyns Internal Evidences" is number 34 on the list. Archibald Alexander Manuscript Collection, Box 13:37, "Deistical Objections". Lefferts Loetscher remarks that "one can only conjecture what the 'Old Princeton Theology' of the nineteenth century would have been if Archibald Alexander and his theological heirs had accepted [Jenyns's] broad view of Scripture from the author whom Alexander regarded so highly." Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment*, p. 22. Based on the last one hundred years, one could argue that Jenyns's, not Alexander's, view of the Scriptures prevails at Princeton Seminary.

117. The biographical particulars of Princeton Seminary graduates, beginning in 1815, can be found in the *Biographical Catalogue of the Princeton Theological Seminary, 1815-1932* (Princeton: The Trustees of The Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, 1933). An update bearing the same title is published in 1955. See *Biographical Catalogue of the Princeton Theological Seminary, 1815-1932* (Princeton: The Trustees of The Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, 1955).



Archibald Alexander (1772-1851). Top: By Mike Mahon (cover art for *The Confessional Presbyterian* 8 (2012)). Bottom: John Sartain after J. Neagle. Mezzotint and stipple on white wove paper. Pafa.org.