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"Faith Alone In Christ Alone"

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## We Believe:

# JESUS IS LORD

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*"For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living."*

*—Romans 14:8, 9*

## I. Introduction

"Jesus Is Lord" was the motto adopted by the World Council of Churches over forty years ago. And a very good motto it is. However, in light of the pronouncements that have flowed from that largely liberal aggregation one wonders what they might mean by "Lord."

Much more important to Bible Christians is what God's Word has to say about the meaning of *Lord* as it refers to Christ Jesus. There is much discussion, and even dispute, today as to what it means to confess that "Jesus[1] Is Lord." What does *Lord* mean?

## II. How Jesus Is Lord

A great deal can be determined about individuals and language groups by their vocabulary and by the frequency with which they use certain terms. For example, in the Athabaskan language ("Eskimo") there are a host of words for *snow* at various stages. A classical Greek lexicon will reveal the wealth of words that the Greeks had for *dog* and dog-related activities (chiefly hunting).

When we look at a concordance to the Greek NT we are struck with the prominence of the word *Lord* (*Kyrios*). Moulton and Geden devote seventeen columns of small print to this word, plus four references to *lordship* or *dominions* (*kyriotēs*), seven uses of the related verb (*kyrieuō*) and two verses for the related adjective *lordly* or pertaining *to the Lord* (*kyriakos*).

[1] Is it too much to assume that all our readers know that *Jesus* (Heb. *Yeshua*) is the human name of the carpenter of Nazareth, at whose supposed birth year history divides time between B.C. and A.D.?

*Despotēs*, whose English derivative (despot) has an undesirable connotation, is used frequently and helps complete the picture, overlapping with *Kyrios* in meaning.

The NT use of these words, chiefly *Kyrios*, sheds a flood of light on the question that we propose with God's help to answer in this article: What do we mean when we say "Jesus is Lord"?

The word history, or etymology, of *Kyrios* does not help us a great deal. Turner defines the secular meaning of the Greek word, "apart from religious contexts," as " 'master,' or a 'guardian' or 'trustee.' "[2]

As usual, we must turn to usage to ascertain the meanings of the writers (and the Divine Inspirer) of the NT books. In the twenty-seven scrolls that make up our NT Canon we find at least seven ways in which Jesus is Lord.

## 1. Jesus Is Lord in His Dignity

We live in a very irreverent and iconoclastic age. This disrespectful and snide cultural milieu has sadly affected even nice, conservative people who basically respect our Christian heritage. Light and flippant things are said about sacred persons and things that would have horrified our ancestors (and still do appall many of us).

At the most basic level of usage, *Kyrios* denoted respect for our Lord even when the speaker was not yet aware of who He really was.

The Samaritan woman in John, who probably had an anti-Jewish bias due to her ethnic situation, nevertheless addressed Him as *Kyrios* ("Sir," John 4:11, 15, 19—NKJV), a title of respect. The fact that *kyrios* can refer to both God and man sometimes makes it hard for translators to know which word to put in the English text.[3]

The man who was healed by Christ in John 9 asks: "Who is He, *Kyrie*, that I may believe in Him?" It is clear that this man did not yet know who Jesus was, so *Sir* might be a better translation here than *Lord*.

A theologically important usage of *Kyrios* is made by the repentant thief at Calvary. The dying thief requests, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:43). Such faith! There were no *apparent* signs of royalty on that occasion—except the regal way our Lord spoke and handled the situation even in His agony. Of course, even here the word could be translated "Sir," but this would rob the passage of a great deal. Even worse is the critical text reading: "*Jesus*,

[2] Nigel Turner, *Christian Words*, 257.

[3] Translators of Spanish do not have this problem. They can use *Señor* equally for *Jesucristo* or for just any man without having to choose.

remember me."[4] The human name *Jesus*, while dear to us by centuries of hymnology and Bible-reading, was a common name in the first century. The vast majority of manuscripts supports the reading *Lord*, that we believe stresses His divine majesty.

Jesus is also Lord in His *titles* of dignity. My late father, devout Scandinavian that he was, insisted on referring to Christ as the *Lord* Jesus. As a boy I didn't understand the importance of this. Except for the Book of Hebrews (which does use "Jesus" without the *Lord* or *Christ* title, perhaps harking back to the human Jewish roots in the Gospels), the NT from Acts to Revelation generally does give titles of honor to our Lord Jesus Christ. Each has a special emphasis—Lord Jesus, Lord Christ, Christ Jesus, etc.

Today there is too much brash familiarity in addressing our Lord as "Jesus" all the time. We are well aware that many devout hymns are addressed to Christ by His human name of Jesus, and that godly Christians are fond of this His human name. But we show greater honor and respect when we address Him and refer to Him by one of His titles of dignity. One of the chief of these titles is *Lord* Jesus.

## 2. Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

In the Gospels, when Christ heals on the Sabbath or allows His disciples to eat grain from a field on the Sabbath, He proclaims that He, "the Son of Man, is Lord even [or also, *kai*] of the Sabbath" (Matt 12:8). This means that He is not controlled by the Sabbath, but the Sabbath is under His control. This certainly suggests His deity. As God the Son He shared in giving the original Sabbath law to Israel in the first place.

As Man, Jesus submitted to the Sabbath law to fulfill all righteousness. He did not, however, submit to the traditions that had encrusted the law with pettifogging legalisms that actually contradicted the original good that God intended by the fourth commandment. Because Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, we can rejoice with Paul that no Christian can be called to book for keeping or not keeping the Sabbath (Col 2:16, 17).

The principle of rest every seventh day, however, is a blessing to man's mental and physical health and is well worth maintaining.

[4] Bruce Metzger does not discuss this variant in his *A Textual Commentary on the Greek Testament*. The reading *Iēsou* is supported by the usual Egyptian mss. that most modern NTs follow (in Luke, $p^{75}$ ℵBC). The vast majority of mss., including A, read *Kyrie*. Needless to say, many critics will say the stronger reading is a later change toward a stricter orthodoxy. We believe there is ample material in the NT to warrant the *highest* Christology at the *earliest* date.

3. Jesus Is Lord of His Day

Not only is Jesus Lord of the Sabbath, the OT day of rest, but what is more significant for NT believers, He is Master of His own day, the "Lord's Day" (Rev 1:10). Some, using only the English text have said that this is really just another way of wording "the Day of the Lord." Actually the construction is quite different in the Greek.[5] "The Day of the Lord" represents the OT Day of YHWH, a day of divine retribution. Granted, this is a main theme in Revelation as a whole. However, in chapter 1 of Revelation the stress is on the Person of the Lord Jesus and John's prostrate adoration of the very One on whose chest he had reclined his head so many years before. Again, as with the "Lord's Supper" (1 Cor 11:20), the word is *kyriakē*, lordly, dominical.[6] The first day of the week in paganism was devoted to the sun (hence "Sunday") and, with Nero and several others, to the supposedly divine emperor. In Christianity it is devoted to the Son, the risen, conquering Son. It commemorates His resurrection, His *dominion* (or lordship) over death, Hades, and the grave.

Christians can demonstrate their submission to Christ's Lordship by observing the Lord's Day. But how should it be observed? Certainly all agree we should worship together and hear His Word. Acts 20:7-12 presents the Lord's Supper and preaching as standard elements in NT observance.

Is there continuity with the *rest* of the OT Sabbath? Some have gone so far as to make the Lord's Day a legal burden rather than a gracious joy. I have heard of Christians in Scotland in the past who would not pull the draw string on their shades lest they break the "Sabbath." This is not unlike observant Israelis who have timers on their house lights so they won't have to flip a light switch on the Sabbath. Christendom's opposite extreme, treating the Lord's Day as strictly a weekend pleasure slot on their calendar, is even worse.

Active Christian workers, especially preachers and missionaries, often find Sunday to be the *least* restful of days! By and large, however, most believers can—to their health and benefit—maintain the principle of one day in seven for rest—also for worship and service as opportunities present themselves. As to what each individual should or should

[5] "The Day of the Lord" is *hē hēmera tou Kyriou*. "The Lord's (lit., lordly) Day" is *hē kyriakē hēmera*.

[6] The Didache (14:1) uses a somewhat redundant phrase "the Lord's Day of the Lord" (*kyriakē Kyriou*) for the day the Christians gathered to break bread. As "houses of the Lord," church buildings, when they came to replace the earlier house churches, were called *kyriaka* (sg., *kyriakon*). They are still called that in Scottish and English forms: *kirks* and *churches*.

not do on the Lord's Day, a personal submission to the Lord's will in one's own circumstances can decide the issue in the light of Scripture. We should neither offend others nor "judge Another's [the Lord's][7] servant" in this regard (Rom 14:4).

### 4. Jesus Is Lord in His Supper

One time the Apostle Paul used *kyriakos*, the adjectival form of *Kyrios*, to refer to the Supper of our Lord, literally the "Lordly Supper" (1 Cor 11:20).[8] The context in 1 Corinthians 11 is one of disrespect on the part of some carnal Corinthians for this feast of remembrance. It was *not* the Lord's Supper they were having, but rather a church supper to gratify their physical appetites!

As Host at His own Table, the Lord Jesus invites all the faithful (and some of the not-so-faithful) to come and dine with Him and His people. As the Lord of the Table, He leads the songs of the saints among His brethren: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You" (Heb 2:12, quoted from Ps 22:22).

One of the ways all believers can show their submission to Christ's Lordship is to accept His gracious invitation: "This do in remembrance of Me."

### 5. Jesus Is Lord and Master

Classic liberalism used to be fond of the title "the Master" for Jesus Christ. This should not obscure the fact from Bible Christians that this is a very good translation of at least one aspect of His Lordship, namely that He is Master, Lord, and Sovereign. Even the less than devotional (though highly useful word) "Boss" gives us some of the truth of this nuance of *Kyrios*.

In the Gospels our Lord tells several parables in which the key figure is a "boss" or lord, whether of a vineyard, an estate, or whatever.[9] It does not take great insight to figure out who is represented by this man in various guises. Obviously, it is the Lord Jesus Himself.

Because of the emotional connotations of the words *master* and *slave* in Western history from the not-too-distant past,[10] modern preaching

[7] This can be a general principle, but the context at least permits our capitalization and interpretation.

[8] Greek: *Kyriakon Deipnon*.

[9] E.g., Matt 24:45-51; Luke 12:37-48; 16:3-13.

[10] This is especially true in those countries, such as the USA, where slavery had racial connotations.

on this topic tends to substitute *employer* and *employee/servant* in handling such texts as Eph 6:5-9 and Col 4:1. The word for *servant* in the NT passages is literally *bondservant* or *slave*. Paul calls himself a *slave* (*doulos*, from the verb *deō*, *bind* or *tie*) of Jesus Christ. Probably the traditional KJV translation *servant* is best in English due to the racial undertones that tend to creep into our use of *slave*. In the OT the slaves or servants were frequently of the same ethnic origin as their masters. For the Messiah as the *Ebed-Yahweh*, or "Servant of the LORD," it would probably be misleading if the English word *slave* were used.

Be that as it may, we are *not* merely "employees" of our Lord! We can't change employers if we are truly regenerated. Sometimes we are told to "*make* Jesus Lord of our life." No doubt this plea is well meant. But He *is* Lord, whether we like it or not. The real question is: "What kind of servant (or slave) do *we* make ourselves?" If, like the OT slave who asked for his ear to be pierced with the awl to show his willing servitude, we submit and obey Him because we *love* Him, then we are on the way to becoming "good and faithful" servants (Matt 25:21). If we do not, we may prove to be lazy, unjust, or even wicked servants—but servants nonetheless.

While we could wish that all believers were disciples and good servants, the NT (especially 1 Corinthians), church history, and probably our own observations (perhaps even our own experiences!) all indicate that some Christians do not measure up as servants to anything approaching the ideal. Just to dismiss these people and to say they are not really saved, or worse (theologically speaking), that they "lost" their salvation, does not solve any problems, and certainly is not biblical.

Some believers gradually grow into a submissive servant mode through years of experience. Others seem to have a crisis event—at conversion, or more often later—when, in the words of one of our great English hymns, they "crown Him Lord of all."

### 6. Jesus Is Lord of Lords

There are two or three other NT expressions used of Christ that give very strong witness to His absolute sovereignty, perhaps in an even stronger way than *Kyrios*.

One of these is the word *despotēs*. From an English-speaking viewpoint this word is somewhat marred by the negative connotation of our derivative *despot*. Used ten times in the NT, this word is employed, like *kyrios*, for ordinary masters in Titus 2:9, for God in Zacharias'

Benedictus in Luke 2:29, and for God (or Christ) in the Jerusalem saints' prayers in Acts 4:24. It is used in 2 Pet 2:1 for the apostates "denying the *despotēn* that bought them."

In Jude, a book that stresses what happens when professing religionists refuse to bow to Christ's mastery, it is used together with *Kyrios* in the phrase "Our only Sovereign Lord God (*Despotēn Theon*) and Lord (*Kyrios*) Jesus Christ" (v. 4, author's translation).

Another title of Christ as Sovereign, this time a phrase, is "Lord of lords" (*Kyrios tōn kyriōn*, Rev 11:15). This expression has been made world-famous by the majestic musical setting of the words by George Frederick Handel in his "Messiah." This sort of expression is a Hebrew way of stating the superlative. The OT book Song of Songs means "The Most Exquisite Song." The expression here signifies "The Most Absolute Sovereign." Gentile kings in OT days were not too bashful to call themselves "king of kings." As the late OT Professor Merrill F. Unger would put it, "Modesty forbade them to say more."

A similar phrase uses a participle in the genitive instead of "lords." *Kyrios tōn kyrieuontōn* literally means "Lord of those lording" or "having dominion" (1 Tim 6:15).

## 7. Jesus Is LORD God

In his beautiful book on Christian vocabulary, Turner shows how the title *Kyrios* developed much deeper meaning than even "Master" in describing Jesus:

> In Biblical Greek, however, *kurios* is a divine title, the LXX rendering of JHWH (God's holy Name) and of *adonai*, (my Lord). We may expect to find the earliest Christian use of *kurios* in the Acts of the Apostles, reflecting the life and worship of the first believers. But in the earlier part of the book it is often difficult to determine the reference of *kurios*, whether it is to Jesus or to the Father. For instance, when the first believers prayed, 'Thou, *Lord*, which knowest the hearts', were they addressing Jesus (Act 1:24)? The title seems to apply equally well to both Jesus and the Father. . . . A title, once the prerogative of God the Father, is rapidly coming to be applied to Jesus, His Son. 'The fact is that we can almost see the Church's faith growing before our eyes.' We are quickly approaching a point where *Kurios* is a technical word with only one meaning, the 'Lord' Jesus.[11]

Helping us to see this development of meaning, Moulton and Geden print the Hebrew text in their Greek concordance wherever a NT

[11] Turner, *Christian Words*, 257-58.

reading represents a direct quotation from the OT, even if it equals a quotation by way of the LXX. Similarly, the New King James Version capitalizes LORD in those NT passages where it stands for YHWH in the OT reference cited. Of course, this should not be taken to mean that *Kyrios* cannot refer to the Lord Jesus as God where it is *not* a direct quote. (See Rom 10:9 as a likely example of the latter.)

*Kyrios* represents the Hebrew tetragrammaton, the four letters of the name of God (YHWH), considered by the Jews to be too sacred to pronounce, hence the substitution of another word, *Adonai* ("my Lord") in public Scripture readings. This occurs thousands of times in this way in the LXX. As would be expected, most of these references are to God in a general way. Of those quoted in the NT only a handful can be taken to refer to *God the Son* specifically.

Matthew 3:3, "Prepare the way of the LORD" (*Kyrios*, YHWH), certainly refers to Christ's road being prepared by John the Baptist. Surely the word Jehovah or Yahweh must mean the Lord Jesus in this context.

In the temptation account (Matt 4:10) the second usage of *Kyrios* represents a direct OT quotation again. Satan is rebuked by our Lord's unwillingness to tempt His Heavenly Father by throwing Himself down from the high point of the temple. But at least a secondary meaning makes Jesus LORD God, for is there not also a direct rebuke to Satan for tempting *Jesus*? After all, unlike most of his devotees, Satan did not doubt the deity of Christ.

It is common in old hymns to apply *Jehovah*, the personal name of God in its English form, chiefly to the Father. Actually the name must refer to all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, even if OT usage (necessarily) emphasizes the First Person—the One the Son has taught us to call "Father." Yes, Jesus is LORD in the highest sense; Jesus is God the Son; Jesus is Jehovah.[12]

## III. Conclusion

It is all very edifying to read an article on the Lordship of Christ in its several areas. He *is* LORD in all these respects, whether we totally recognize it or not.

Readers who are not yet saved must receive this Divine Savior into their own individual lives by simple faith to be born again and justified (John 1:12).

[12] KJV, NKJV, RSV, NASB, and NIV all use LORD in all capitals to render *Yahweh* or *Jehovah* in the OT. NKJV also does so in NT quotations translated from the Hebrew OT where that term was used.

If we have already accepted Him, our practical sanctification and future *rewards* will be largely determined by how *soon* and how *deeply* we submit to this Divine *Master.* However, these two aspects of Christ's Lordship *should not be confused.* If man has to be totally submitted (or even willing to be totally submissive) to Christ as "Absolute Boss," as a *requisite* for salvation, one wonders if there will be any at all to enter the kingdom.

In our understandable eagerness to keep works of any kind out of the presentation of the *Gospel,* we must be careful not to give the impression that we are *against* Christ's Lordship. Far from it! We would be thrilled if all of us who are Christians were suddenly to become, like Paul, "bondservants of Jesus Christ." While we do not believe in Lordship *Salvation,* we do believe in *Lordship,* and in "Lordship *Discipleship,*" if we may coin a new term.

Our attitude should be that described in Bishop Moule's lovely hymn:

My glorious Victor, Prince Divine,
Clasp these surrender'd hands in Thine;
At length my will is all Thine own,
Glad vassal of a Saviour's throne.

My Master, lead me to Thy door;
Pierce this now willing ear once more:
Thy bonds are freedom; let me stay
With Thee, to toil, endure, obey.

Yes, ear and hand, and thought and will,
Use all in Thy dear slav'ry still!
Self's weary liberties I cast
Beneath Thy feet; there keep them fast.

Tread them still down; and then, I know,
These hands shall with Thy gifts o'erflow;
And piercèd ears shall hear the tone
Which tells me Thou and I are one.

# REPENTANCE AND SALVATION

## Part 2:

## The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

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### I. Introduction

In Ezek 18:21-22 the Lord God of Israel spoke the following words:

> If a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live.

Is that the Gospel? Did the OT teach that one had to turn from his sins to obtain salvation?

The Hebrew *words* which deal with salvation are general and not specific. That is, one must look to the *context* to determine what type of salvation is in view. This is also true of the English terms for salvation. For example, the exclamation "I've been saved!" could mean a number of things depending on the context in which it was spoken or written. A person rescued from an icy river would mean, "I have been delivered from a watery grave." Lee Iacocca, the Chief Executive Officer of the Chrysler Corporation, upon receiving a $1.5 billion loan guarantee from the U.S. government would mean, "Chrysler has been saved from bankruptcy." A death row inmate granted a Presidential pardon would mean, "My life has been spared." Only in a context where one's eternal destiny was in view would the meaning be "I have been saved from eternal condemnation." This may seem to be an obvious point which has little to do with the subject at hand. Actually, it has everything to do with our subject and it is far from obvious to many who write and preach about the OT doctrine of salvation.

There are fifteen different Hebrew words for salvation used in the OT. The vast majority of OT references to salvation refer to various types of *temporal* deliverances: from one's enemies, from physical

death, and from various troubles.[1]

For example, five of the most common and most important OT words for salvation are *yāsha'*, *pādâ*, *gā'al*, *mālat*, and *nātzal*. Of the 812 uses of these terms in the OT, only 58 (7.1%) refer to eternal salvation.[2] Those refer to the future salvation of the nation of Israel by the Lord—a NT theme as well (Rom 11:26). In some cases the Messiah is indicated as the Savior (Mic 5:2, 6; Zech 9:9-10). It is interesting to note that these verses deal with the fact of the coming kingdom, not the condition for entrance into it.

In addition, there are a number of other OT passages which refer to eternal salvation, yet without using the terms of salvation: Gen 3:15; 15:6; Ps 22:27; Isa 6:10; 10:21; 19:22; 52:13–53:12; Jer 24:7; 31:31-34; and Hab 2:4.

Consideration will now be given to the OT terms which deal with repentance. The reader should remember that our aim is not merely to discover the OT teaching on the role of repentance in *eternal* salvation. Rather, our goal is to discover the OT teaching on the role of repentance in all types of salvation.

## II. No Old Testament Technical Term for Repentance

Scholars are in agreement that there is no OT word which in all or even in most of its uses refers to repentance.[3] However, two words are commonly cited as sometimes having that meaning. Those words are *shûb* and *nāḥam*.

[1] For further discussion of OT salvation and its temporal emphasis, see James K. Zink, "Salvation in the Old Testament: A Central Theme," *Encounter 25* (1964): 405-414; Allen P. Ross, "The Biblical Method of Salvation: A Case for Discontinuity," 161-78, 352-56 in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), edited by John S. Feinberg; Colin Brown, s.v. "Redemption," NIDNTT, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978) 3: 201-209.

[2] These figures are derived from the author's personal study. The 58 references to eternal salvation include 2 Sam 23:5, Ps 14:7; 49:15; 53:6; 130:7, 8; Isa 1:27; 12:2 (twice), 3; 19:20; 25:9 (twice); 33:22; 35:4, 9, 10; 45:17, 22; 49:6, 8, 24, 25 (twice); 51:6, 8, 11; 52:7, 9, 10; 56:1; 62:1, 11, 12; Jer 23:6; 30:7, 10, 11; 31:7; 33:16; 46:27; Ezek 34:12, 22, 27; 36: 29; 37:23; Dan 12:1; Hos 13:14; Mic 5:6; Zeph 3:17; 19; Zech 8:7, 13; 10:6, 8; 9:9, 16; 12:7.

[3] See Aloys Dirksen, *The New Testament Concept of Metanoia*, 148; William Holladay, *The Root SŪBH in the Old Testament*, 156-57; C. G. Montefiore, "Rabbinic Conceptions of Repentance," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 16 (1904): 212-13; George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols., 1: 507; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. *"metanoeō, metanoia,"* by E. Würthwein, 4 (1967): 980.

## III. Shûb

This term is the twelfth most common word in the OT.[4] It has a basic sense of "to turn," "to turn back," "to go back," or "to return."[5] In the vast majority of its uses it refers to literal changes of direction. For example, Moses, after being in the tabernacle, "*would return* to the camp" (Exod 33:11). Of its 1,056 OT uses only 203 occur in religious contexts.[6] In all but one passage those religious uses refer to Israel or God turning toward or away from one another.[7]

### A. The Turning of the Lord

There are four categories of God's turning or returning in the OT. All four grow out of the blessings/curses provisions of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28) whereby the Lord promised that He would bless obedience and curse disobedience.

The non-technical nature of *shûb* is shown in the fact that it was often used to refer to the turning of the Lord. Obviously, if it were a technical term which always referred to turning from one's sinful ways, it could never have been used of God.

#### 1. The Four Categories of the Lord's Turning.

*First, the Lord returned Israel's evil upon its head.* He withdrew His blessings and sent temporal judgments whenever the nation turned away from Him in disobedience.[8]

*Second, the Lord turned back (or, negatively, did not turn back) His anger from Israel.* He withdrew temporal judgments and sent blessings whenever the nation turned away from her sinful deeds and turned back to Him in obedience.[9]

[4] Holladay, *SŪBH*, 2.

[5] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "*shûb*," 996-97; Holladay, *SŪBH*, 51-115.

[6] Würthwein suggests ("*metanoia*," 984), but does not demonstrate, that there are only "about 118 theological uses." Holladay (*SŪBH*, 116) suggests that there are 144 "covenantal uses" of the verb and 19 of derived nouns and adjectives. However, through my own study I have found 203 religious uses. See Robert N. Wilkin, "Repentance as a Condition for Salvation in the New Testament" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985), 210-12 for a complete listing.

[7] Jonah 3:5-10 refers to non-Israelites (i.e., Ninevites). They turned to the Lord and, as a result, He then turned His burning anger away from them.

[8] See Deut 23:14; Josh 24:20; Judg 9:56, 57; 1 Sam 25:39; 26:23; 2 Sam 16:8; 1 Kgs 2:32; Neh 4:4; Ps 7:12; 54:5.

[9] See 2 Chr 12:12; 29:10; 30:8, 9; Ps 78:38; 106:23; Isa 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4; 12:1; Jer 4:8, 28; 18:20; 23:20; 30:24; Lam 2:8; Dan 9:16; Hos 14:4; Joel 2:14; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; Jonah 3:9 (non-Israelites).

*Third, the Lord returned Israel to its former place of blessing.* Whenever Israel turned back to the Lord from her sinful ways, He restored the nation's blessings.[10] In some texts the specific blessing that the Lord promised and provided was to return the nation to the promised land.

*Fourth, the Lord returned to the nation.*[11] In the three types of the Lord's turning just discussed, there was always a specific object of the turning indicated in the context (i.e., He returned evil; He turned back His anger; He returned blessings). However, in passages containing this fourth type of turning, no specific objects were mentioned. This bare expression referred generally to the Lord removing temporal judgments and sending temporal blessings.

2. Temporal, Not Eternal, Blessings and Curses. With the lone exception of Jer 32:40 (which refers to millennial and ultimately eternal blessings which the Lord has promised to bestow on Israel as part of the New Covenant), the Lord's turning toward or away from the nation with blessings or curses always referred to *temporal* experiences. The turning of the Lord in the OT did not concern eternal salvation or eternal judgment.

3. Israel Reaped What She Sowed. When the nation was obedient, the Lord sent blessings. When she was disobedient, He sent curses. The Lord's love for the nation moved Him to discipline and reward His chosen people so that they might learn to obey Him.

## B. The Turning of Israel

1. The Biblical Concept. As alluded to in the preceding section, the OT record shows that the nation of Israel repeatedly turned away from the Lord. In each instance the nation would experience temporal judgments (reaping the curses of the Mosaic Covenant) which prompted her to turn back to the Lord. There are three categories of Israel's turning, in a theological sense, found in the OT.

*First, Israel turned away from the Lord in disobedience.* Israel turned away from the Lord by turning to idolatry[12] and to other forms of willful, cold-hearted disobedience.[13]

[10] See Deut 30:3; 2 Sam 15:25; 1 Kgs 8:34; 2 Chr 6:25; Ps 14:7; 80:3, 7, 14, 19; Jer 32: 37; 33:7, 11; 42:12; Hos 6:11; Nah 2:2; Zeph 2:7.

[11] See 2 Sam 16:12; 2 Chr 30:6, 9; Jer 15:19; 18:8; 32:40; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7.

[12] See Judg 2:19; 8:33; 1 Kgs 9:6; Isa 57:17; Jer 11:10; Hos 11:7.

[13] See Num 14:43; Josh 22:16, 18, 23, 29; 1 Sam 15:11; Jer 34:16; Ezek 3:20; 18:24, 26.

The following passages are illustrative.

> "The Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because *you have turned away* from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you" (Num 14:43, italics mine).

> And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that *they reverted* and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel . . . When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz . . . So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died. And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. . . . And when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera . . . When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan . . . (Judg 2:19-20; 3:9, 11-12, 15; 4:1-2, italics mine).

The non-technical nature of *shûb* is thus further seen in that when it referred to Israel it often dealt with turning away from the Lord and to sinful ways.

*Second, the nation turned to the Lord in obedience.* Israel turned back to the Lord by turning away from idolatry[14] and from other forms of willful, cold-hearted disobedience.[15] Obedience was a condition for temporal deliverance from the curses of the Mosaic Covenant

[14] Great emphasis in the OT is placed on the nation turning away from (or failing to turn away from) idolatry and to the Lord. The prophetic summons to repentance often was a call to the nation to turn from her idolatry. See, for example, Deut 4:30; 1 Sam 7:3; 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Kgs 17:13; 23:25; 2 Chr 7:14, 19; 15:4; 30:6, 9; 36:13; Isa 31:6; Jer 3:1, 7, 10, 12, 14, 19, 22; 4:1; 8:4, 5; 18:8, 11; 25:5; 26:3; 35:15; 36:3, 7; 44:5; Ezek 14:6; and Hos 3:5; 5:4; 6:1; 11:5; 14:1, 2, 4. These citations refer to temporal judgments being sent or removed depending on whether the nation continued in her idolatry or turned away from it to the Lord.

Two passages, Isa 31:6-7 and Hos 3:5, indicate that in the latter days—a reference to the Millennial Kingdom—the nation will put away its idols and will turn to the Lord and fear Him. Thus while the OT reports that the people often turned away from the Lord to idolatry (even to the point that one of Israel's greatest kings, Solomon, died as an idolator [1 Kgs 11:1-13ff.]), it also prophesies a day when those things would no longer characterize the nation.

[15] See, for example, Deut 30:2, 10; 1 Kgs 8:33, 35, 47, 48; 2 Chr 6:24, 26, 37, 38; Neh 1:9; 9:26, 29, 35; Job 22:23; 36:10; Ps 7:12; 51:13; Jer 5:3; 15:7; 23:14; 34:16; Dan 9:13; Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11; Jonah 3:8, 10.

(cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). Turning away from one's sinful practices was never presented in the OT as a condition for escaping eternal wrath.[16]

One chapter in the OT seems to contradict the point just made. Ezekiel 18 links life with turning from one's sinful practices and death with failing to live righteously. The following verses are representative:

> "If [a man] has walked in My statutes and kept My judgments faithfully—he is just; he shall surely live!" says the Lord GOD (Ezek 18:9).
>
> "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezek 18:20).
>
> "But if a wicked man *turns* from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die" (Ezek 18:21).
>
> "When a righteous man *turns away* from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies" (Ezek 18:26).
>
> "I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore *turn* and live!" (Ezek 18:32).

Some interpret those verses to mean that eternal salvation was conditioned upon turning from one's sins.[17] Such an interpretation is, however, unwarranted.

There is no reference in Ezekiel 18 to the Lake of Fire, eternal death,

[16] One might think that the OT taught that an idolator would have to turn from his idolatry to obtain eternal salvation. However, no verses support this view. See footnote 14 above. If idolators could not get into God's kingdom then Solomon would be excluded (1 Kings 11)—a very unlikely possibility in light of the way he is spoken of in the Old and New Testaments (cf. 1 Chr 22:10; 28:5-7; Matt 6:29; 12:42; Acts 7:47). Of course, anyone who trusted in idols to grant him a blessed afterlife would have to give up such confidence in order to trust only in the God of Israel (cf. Acts 17:30). However, it seems that Israel did not turn to idols for that reason. Rather, Israelites worshiped idols to fit in with the surrounding nations and to obtain temporal blessings if possible.

[17] See, for example, G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), 201-202; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 242-49, esp. 244 (N.B.: Eichrodt suggests that both temporal and eternal salvation are in view); H. L. Ellison, *Ezekiel: the Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 74-75; John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale OT Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1969), 150-52. In addition, see John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1850), 247-49, and Patrick Fairbairn, *An Exposition of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), 198-202. While Calvin and Fairbairn suggest that Ezekiel 18 is dealing with eternal salvation, they suggest that the ability to turn from one's sins and do good is a gift from God which apart from His enablement is humanly impossible. They believe that Ezekiel 18 is thus showing men their absolute need of salvation and grace.

eternal life, entrance into God's kingdom, exclusion from the kingdom, justification, or anything remotely associated with eternal judgment. Nor is that chapter ever cited in the NT as dealing with any of those subjects. What is at issue in Ezekiel 18 is life and death—physical life and physical death. The Hebrew terms for life and death are commonly used in this way throughout the OT.[18]
Dyer comments:

> God was not saying that a saved Israelite would lose his [eternal] salvation if he fell into sin. Both the blessing and the judgment in view here are temporal, not eternal. The judgment was physical death (cf. vv 4, 20, 26), not eternal damnation.[19]

Similarly, in introducing his discussion of Ezekiel 18, Charles Feinberg notes, "The subject of justification by faith should not be pressed into this chapter; it is not under discussion."[20] Later, commenting on verse nine (which refers to life being conditioned upon obedience to the Law of Moses) he writes, "This statement, we must caution again, does not have eternal life in view, but life on earth. Eternal life is not obtained on the grounds mentioned in this portion of Scripture."[21]

The blessings/curses motif is a prominent OT theme. The conditions of the Mosaic Covenant are spelled out in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Obedience would be attended by temporal blessings. Disobedience would be met with temporal curses which would intensify until the nation turned back to the Lord. While salvation is indeed the subject of Ezekiel 18, that in no way suggests that *eternal* salvation is in view. As Ross notes, "Throughout the OT the salvation or deliverance Israel sought or enjoyed seems most concerned with the promises of the covenant *as they relate to life in this world* as the people of God" (italics mine).[22]

There are many OT examples of blessings and curses, both involving the nation and individuals in it. One might consider, for instance, Abraham (Gen 24:1; Heb 11:8-19), Moses (Exod 14:30-31; Num 20:12; Heb 11:23-29), the golden calf incident (Exod 32:34-35), Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:30-45), the rebellion of Korah (Num 16), Nadab and

[18] See Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 311, 559-60.
[19] Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament Edition (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 1261, edited by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck.
[20] Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 99.
[21] Ibid., 101.
[22] Ross, "The Biblical Method of Salvation," in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 163. Also see Zink, "Salvation in the OT," 405-406.

Abihu (Lev 10:1-3), Achan (Josh 7:1-26), Gideon (Judg 6:11-28), David (2 Sam 1-10, under blessing; 12-22, under cursing), Solomon (1 Kgs 3:5-15; 4:20-34; 11:1-13), and the fall of the Northern (2 Kgs 17:5-18) and Southern (2 Kgs 24:1–25:21) Kingdoms. This does not mean that all OT blessings and calamities were a direct result of obedience or disobedience (cf. Job; Luke 16:19-31; John 9:2-3). Sometimes God allowed the righteous to suffer and the wicked to prosper. However, what it does mean is that as a rule obedience brought temporal blessings and disobedience brought temporal curses.

Ezekiel 18 is simply an example of the OT blessings/curses motif.

*Third, one day the nation will turn to the Lord in faith.* A small number of OT texts use the term *shûb* to refer to a future turning of Israel (and Egypt and all the ends of the world) to the Lord. In these contexts (cf. Ps 22:27; Isa 6:10; 10:21; 19:22; Jer 24:7) turning to the Lord is used as a circumlocution for faith.

Isaiah 6:10 illustrates how this conclusion is drawn. It speaks of returning to the Lord and being healed. Christ interpreted this passage for His disciples. After presenting the Parable of the Sower, and as a lead-in to His explanation of its meaning, Jesus quoted this passage. He equated Isaiah's reference to returning to the Lord with receiving the Word and believing the Gospel (cf. Matt 13:3-23; Luke 8:5-15, esp. vv 12-13). He also identified the healing spoken of as eternal salvation (Luke 8:12).

2. The Extra-Biblical Concept. How did the Jewish rabbis understand the OT teaching on repentance?

*The rabbinic concept of teshûbah.* During the two centuries prior to the birth of Christ, rabbis and other Jewish authors wrote extensively. Their writings reflect a different understanding from the one I have suggested of the use of *shûb* in the OT. (*Teshûbah* is the noun form of *shûb*.)

Rabbis were teachers of the Law of Moses. They taught in synagogues and some of their teachings were recorded in the Mishnah and Talmud.

Regarding eternal salvation the rabbis taught that the condition for having a portion in the world to come was obedience to the Law (cf. Aboth 2:7). However, they also believed in grace. They taught that God would forgive disobedience if one truly turned from his sins and made restitution where necessary.

Commenting on the rabbinic teaching of the condition of eternal salvation Herford writes, "It is not enough merely to *know* the will of God or to *believe* in it, or in God whose will it is. Before all else

he must *do* it."[23]

Likewise Moore notes:

> For sin . . . there was but one remedy, the forgiving grace of God, and the *conditio sine qua non* of forgiveness was repentance, that is, contrition, confession, reparation of injuries to others, and a reformation of conduct undertaken and persisted in with sincere purpose and out of religious motives.[24]

Rabbis believed that the righteous surely had a place in the world to come and that the wicked did not. Concerning their view of the fate of those who were neither totally righteous nor totally wicked Moore comments:

> The School of Shammai held that those in whom good and evil were, so to speak, in equilibrium, will go down to hell, and dive and come up, and arise thence and be healed . . . For them the fires of Gehenna are purgatorial; they are refined like silver and assayed like gold. The School of Hillel maintained that God in his abounding mercy . . . would incline the balance to the side of mercy, and not send them down to Gehenna at all.[25]

These two major rabbinic schools of thought agreed that all but the very wicked will ultimately have a place in the world to come. "A marked tendency of the Rabbis is to limit, in every possible way, the number of those Israelites who will have no share in the world to come. For those who repent no sin is a bar to the everlasting felicities."[26]

In addition to the rabbinic writings in the Mishnah and Talmud, there were also many books written by Jewish authors in the second half of the intertestamental period. These writings are known as OT Apocrypha (or Pseudepigrapha). They are non-canonical, non-inspired writings.

The OT Apocrypha speaks of God weighing on balancing pans the good and bad deeds of people to determine their eternal destinies (Testament of Abraham 13:1-2, 9-14; 1 Enoch 41:1-2; 61:8). The condition of eternal salvation is specified as obedience to the Law of God (2 Baruch 51:3,7; 4 Ezra 7:19-22, 33-39; 9:30-37).

[23] R. Travers Herford, *A Comparative Study of the Jewish Ethical Teaching in the Rabbinical Sources in the Early Centuries* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1971), 52. See also 141-42.

[24] George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927-30), 2:319.

[25] Ibid., 2:318.

[26] C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 327.

The Pharisees in Jesus' day are a good illustration of this type of legalistic, self-righteous thinking (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is at least partly derived from the OT Apocrypha (2 Maccabees 12:39-45).

*Evaluating the rabbinic concept of teshûbah.* The OT does not support the rabbinic understanding. The OT teaches that eternal salvation is by God's grace and that it is received by man's response of faith, not by any acts of righteousness or by turning from any sins (cf. Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4). There is no evidence in the OT of purgatory or that the majority of people will ultimately enter God's kingdom. While there are a number of OT passages which refer to eternal salvation in some way (e.g., Gen 3:15; 22:1-19; Isa 12:23; 45:22; 49:6ff; 52:13–53:12; Jer 31:7; 46:27; Zech 8:7; 9:9, 16), there are only a few which deal with the human condition of eternal salvation, that is, faith (Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4).[27]

The passage which stands out most prominently as the paradigm for the OT's teaching on eternal salvation is Gen 15:6: "And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." Genesis 15:6 is the John 3:16 of the OT. One condition only is given: belief in the Lord.

What did Abraham believe about the Lord? He believed that the Lord would take away his sins and grant him a place in His coming kingdom. Of course, it may well be that at the moment of faith Abraham's understanding of the Messiah and His substitutionary work was not fully developed.[28] His understanding probably grew as a result of God's asking him to offer up his one and only son and then at the last moment providing a ram as a substitute (Genesis 22).[29] However, it is clear from the Pauline use of this text that it is salvific, referring to Abraham's justification by faith alone (Gal 3:6-14; Rom 4:1-25). While

[27] In addition, as discussed above, the following passages refer to a future turning of Israel and other nations to the Lord in faith: Ps 22:27; Isa 6:10; 10:21; 19:22; Jer 24:7.

[28] See Ross, "Salvation," 169-74. Jesus' own disciples, who knew that He was the Messiah and had placed their faith in Him (Matt 16:16-19), were shocked when He first told them that He was going to be put to death (Matt 16:21-23). Peter even rebuked Jesus for suggesting such a thing. Some OT believers may have trusted in the Messiah to take away their sins without contemplating how He would do it. However, Jesus' response to Peter and the other disciples' reluctance to accept His teaching about His death (Matt 16:23-27) shows that OT believers could and should have known this. Simeon, for one, surely did. When Mary and Joseph brought the Infant Jesus to the Temple, Simeon gave a veiled prophecy concerning His death (Luke 2:25-35). Genesis 22, Isaiah 53, and the sacrificial system are clear on this point.

[29] It is certainly conceivable, however, that Abraham had a fully developed messianic concept at the point of his initial faith. Not all that the Lord said to OT people is recorded in the OT. The Lord may have told Adam and Eve, for instance, about the

Abraham did many good works, none of them contributed to his justification before God in any way.

A second OT passage, Hab 2:4, also teaches that the sole OT condition for eternal salvation was faith in the Lord. The context concerns the Babylonian invasion. A proud people would be used by the Lord to judge Israel. Since proud people are not pleasing in the sight of the Lord, they will ultimately fall. (Pride goes before the fall.) "Shall live" here is not so much a promise as it is a statement of potential or a command. A man who has found acceptance with God by faith alone has the potential to live, to escape the temporal judgment of God. He realizes that potential by living in accordance with the righteous standing he has with God.

Paul's use of this verse confirms this understanding. He used it to show that one obtains the righteousness of God by faith alone (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11). Nygren forcefully demonstrates that when Paul quoted Hab 2:4 in Rom 1:17 he was joining "the righteous" and "by faith" in such a way that they are viewed as a unit: "he who through faith is righteous."[30] In Romans 1–4 Paul elaborates on the expression, "he who through faith is righteous." Then in chaps 5–8 he deals with the attending words of Rom 1:17, "shall live." The one who is righteous by faith alone is free from God's wrath (Romans 5), from sin (Romans 6), from the Law (Romans 7), and from death (Romans 8). All of these are true of believers in our position and are the basis of our striving against the flesh to live out our new natures (cf. Rom 6:11-13; 8:12-17; 12:1–15:13).

One obtains righteous standing before God by faith (Rom 1:17–4:25; Gal 3:6-14). Yet only by living out his new life does the one who is righteous by faith maintain his temporal life (Rom 8:13; Heb 10:37-38). Romans 8:13 contains an explicit allusion back to Rom 1:17 and Hab 2:4. There Paul tells believers, those who are righteous by faith and who are eternally secure (Rom 8:38-39), "if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, *you will live*."

As mentioned above, a number of OT passages (Ps 22:27; Isa 6:10; 10:21; 19:22; Jer 24:7) refer to a future turning of Israel and other

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need for a blood sacrifice (Gen. 3:31). If so, Adam and Eve would have surely passed this on to their offspring (Gen 4:5; Heb 11:4), and they in turn would have told others. It is quite possible that Abraham would have been aware of this—either from writings which are no longer extant, from oral tradition, or from direct revelation from the Lord Himself.

[30] Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), 81-92.

nations to the Lord in faith. They confirm our understanding of Gen 15:6 and Hab 2:4—that the one and only OT condition for obtaining eternal salvation was believing wholly and solely upon the Lord and His ultimate provision for one's sins.

This understanding of the OT teaching on the human condition of eternal salvation is confirmed by several NT passages.

In commenting on the OT's teaching on eternal salvation, Paul wrote in Rom 4:3-8:

> For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:
>
> "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
> And whose sins are covered;
> Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."

Likewise, in Gal 3:6-14 Paul wrote:

> For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "The just shall live by faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "The man who does them shall live by them." Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

So also, the author of the Book of Hebrews noted in Heb 10:1-4:

> For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purged, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

Luke 18:9-14 and John 1:29, both pre-Cross passages, also confirm that eternal salvation according to the OT was by grace through faith and not as a result of works.

The OT conditioned eternal salvation upon faith alone. The sacrificial system was designed to lead worshipers to see their sinfulness and to

place their faith in the Lord as their only hope of kingdom entrance (cf. Luke 18:13-14; Heb 10:1ff).

*Why were so many so wrong?* One may wonder why it is that when Jesus came the vast majority of Jews rejected Him and His message (John 1:11). If the OT taught that the sole condition of eternal salvation was faith in the Lord, why did most think that the condition was faithful observance of the Law?

From what we can tell from the NT, much of Judaism was very much in the grip of legalism, as evidenced by the attitude of the Pharisees (Matt 23; Luke 18:9-14). Most of the nation rejected Jesus Christ (John 1:11). They were not willing to own up to the fact that they were sick and needed deliverance (Luke 5:31). Most tried to approach God on their own terms—trying to establish their own righteousness rather than accepting the righteousness which God freely offered (Rom 10:2-3; 1 Cor 1:23).

The way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it (Matt 7:13-14; John 14:6). That was true in the intertestamental period and in Jesus' day, and it remains true today.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that all of the Jewish people rejected Jesus' free offer of salvation. Some did accept His offer and believe in Him (John 1:12). Indeed, John and Luke report that many (indicating a great number, not a majority) of the priests and Jewish leaders came to faith in Jesus Christ (John 12:42; Acts 6:7). Even Saul of Tarsus, an archenemy of the Gospel of Grace and the Cross of Christ, came to trust in Jesus Christ as his only hope of heaven and, indeed, to become the Apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 1:11–3:14).

## C. Conclusion

The term *shûb* was used in the OT to refer to Israel's turning toward or away from the Lord and also to His turning toward the nation with blessings or away from her with curses. In most contexts temporal blessings or curses were in view. In a few passages, however, the expression "turning to the Lord" was used in reference to the future eternal salvation of the nation. In such contexts "turning to the Lord" was used as a circumlocution for faith.

Extra-biblical Jewish sources (OT Apocrypha, Talmud, Mishnah) show that the rabbis of the intertestamental period and Jesus' day held a legalistic view of the condition of eternal salvation. They believed in salvation by grace through faithfulness instead of the OT teaching of salvation by grace through faith.

## IV. Nāḥam

The term *nāḥam* in the OT means "to be sorry" or "to comfort oneself."[31] It occurs 108 times in the Old Testament, but only three of those uses (Jer 8:6; 31:19; Job 42:6) deal with the repentance of men.

The non-technical nature of this term is shown in that most of its theological uses refer to the so-called "repentance of God."[32]

Two of the passages which use *nāḥam* to refer to the repentance of men concern temporal, not eternal, salvation. Jeremiah 8:6 indicates that because the nation *was not sorry* for her wickedness (i.e., her idolatry) temporal judgment resulted. Job 42:6 concerns Job's *remorse* over foolish words he had spoken during his ordeal.

Jeremiah 31:19 says that after Israel turns back to the Lord, *she will be grieved* as she recalls her former actions. This passage refers to the future restoration of Israel by the Lord. After the nation returns to the Lord in faith, she will be grieved over her long history of disobedience and disbelief.

## V. Conclusion

The concept of human repentance in the OT is twofold. First and foremost it means turning toward or away from something (*shûb*). A second but rare meaning is to be grieved over previous actions or attitudes (*nāḥam*).

The OT conditions temporal salvation upon turning from one's sinful behavior. God promised Israel blessings if she obeyed and curses if she disobeyed. There are numerous examples in the OT of the nation and of individual Israelites experiencing curses when they turned away from the Lord and blessings when they turned back to Him.

The OT nowhere, however, conditions eternal salvation upon turning from one's sinful behavior. Eternal salvation in the OT was conditioned solely upon turning to the Lord in faith.

Eternal salvation has always been and always will be by grace through faith. That is why the Messiah had to die on the cross for the sins of Adam's race.

> All we like sheep have gone astray;
> We have turned, every one, to his own way.
> And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
> (Isa 53:6)

[31] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "*nāḥam*," 636-37.

[32] Most of its uses are non-theological in nature. Of its theological uses most refer to the so-called "repentance of God." For further information on the meaning of *nāḥam* when used in reference to God, see H. Van Parunak, "The Repentance of God in the Old Testament" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975).

# A CRITIQUE OF

# *THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS*


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## I. Introduction

By writing *The Gospel According to Jesus*, in a sense John F. MacArthur has done the evangelical world a favor. He has raised to a level of national consciousness the contemporary confusion in the Church over the most basic issue of all—the nature of the Gospel.

MacArthur rightly suggests that there are two different gospels espoused in Christendom today (p. xiv), and he also correctly implies (by quoting Gal 1:6-8 [p. 17]) that these two gospels cannot simultaneously be correct. One of them is false and corrupt. One of them is *not* the Gospel according to Jesus (p. 15). Because the doctrine of salvation is "the base of all we teach" (p. xvi), and "a matter of eternal consequence" (p. xiv), MacArthur is also profoundly accurate in concluding that the Church must seek clarity on this issue once and for all.

We are not dialoguing over semantic differences, MacArthur affirms. The question, then, that MacArthur's book seeks to answer is: "Which gospel is which?" Again, while asking the question proves to be extremely helpful, it is in answering it that MacArthur deeply disappoints the evangelical world. The problem is not his style. The text is clear, articulate, and obviously written from the heart. The tone, though biting at times, nevertheless comes across as sincere. Even his conclusions, though an obvious problem to those of us with a different view, are not the most disturbing element of his work. The major failure of *The Gospel According to Jesus* lies in its inability to conclusively and convincingly defend the view of the Gospel it claims to support.

MacArthur states his positions with a persuasive vigor throughout, but he errs in so many foundational areas of his argument that the ultimate value of the book is seriously affected. The remainder of this review will explore several of these fundamental errors in methodology and reasoning and will attempt to show how they invalidate MacArthur's conclusions.

## II. Inaccurate Understanding of the Free Grace Position

MacArthur's first error involves a problem of perception—he doesn't clearly understand the other view. He does well when he states his own position, describing "Lordship Salvation" as a gospel that requires a faith that commits all (cf. pp. 169ff), a repentance that gives up sin (cf. pp. 159ff) and a submission to the "mastership of Christ" (cf. pp. 203ff) before eternal life is apprehended. The Lordship gospel, according to MacArthur, speaks of a "salvation that is a gift, yet costs everything" (cf. p. 140). But the "other" view which might be referred to as the "Free Grace" Gospel is misrepresented on several counts.

### 1. Confused with Antinomianism

First, the Free Grace position is confused with antinomianism. MacArthur suggests that the mainstream of the Free Grace Movement views the obedient Christian life as "optional" (p. 17) and that the behavior of individuals has "no relationship to their spiritual status" (p. 16). By quoting men like Lewis Sperry Chafer, Charles Ryrie, and Zane Hodges, in the context of such comments, it is implied that these men (as well as the view they represent) are only concerned with populating heaven, showing a disdain for holiness and a consistent Christian walk.[1]

Yet even a cursory glance at the writings of these men reveals a deep love for Jesus Christ and a desire both to live and teach the importance of a holy lifestyle. They, as well as the mainstream of the Free Grace Movement, are anything but antinomian in theology! However, what they are *not* willing to concede is that commitment to holiness provides either grounds for, or indispensable proof of, justification.

### 2. Linked With Various False Gospels

MacArthur lumps the entire Free Grace Movement together with those who preach the health and wealth gospel (p. 30). Decisionism—the notion that signing a card, raising a hand, or walking an aisle grants eternal life—is also suggested to be a mark of the Free Grace position (p. 21). Invitations like "ask Jesus into your heart" are implied to be the catch-phrases of the majority of those who espouse this position (p. 21).

[1] MacArthur does concede (*in a footnote*, p. 31) that Chafer would not countenance "lawless Christian living." However, such a small notation hardly justifies MacArthur's overall unfair treatment of those in the Free Grace Movement.

However, the Free Grace position declares that eternal life, not a healthy, wealthy life, is the product of faith in Christ. And while the call of the Grace Gospel is to a decision, it is only to the biblical decision of trusting Christ alone. Though it is true that there are those who inadvertently communicate the Gospel through unclear language, the primary invitation of the Free Grace view is "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

MacArthur's generalizations and misrepresentations do much more to undermine his credibility than to advance his argument.

3. Labeled as "Easy Believism"

Probably MacArthur's greatest misunderstanding of all is represented by the label "easy believism." He seems to assume that the Free Grace position thinks it "easy" for proud, unregenerate, spiritually blind, absolutely depraved, self-righteous man to trust an unseen, crucified, and resurrected Jesus alone for eternal life (p. 77)!

In reality, however, the Free Grace position acknowledges that trusting in Jesus Christ alone is hard. For pompous man to admit his sinfulness and cast all his confidence upon the work done in his behalf by an unseen Substitute is a task of the greatest magnitude. Indeed, it is an impossible task without the humbling, convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, "easy believism" is a label that cannot be accurately attached to the Free Grace Movement.

The Free Grace Movement is unwilling to concede that the difficulty in salvation lies in man's need to surrender himself totally to God as part of the act of saving faith.

4. Simply "Believing the Facts"

Finally, a corollary to this misreading of the Free Grace view is MacArthur's constant diatribe concerning "the believing of facts" (pp. 16ff). Proponents of the Free Grace Gospel are presented almost as if they were a group of unfeeling history professors proclaiming mere historical facts and promising eternal life to all who would simply affirm their accuracy. Again, this is a misrepresentation.

Certainly the Gospel consists of a set of facts and it is crucial that any presentation of the Gospel relate the correct facts (cf. 1 Cor 15:1-4). However, the concern of the Free Grace Gospel is not to ask for simple historical affirmation, but to call the individual to personal trust in the significance of these facts for himself. The moment the unbeliever recognizes his own sinfulness and believes that Christ alone has pro-

vided complete forgiveness through His death—in other words, at the moment of personal trust in Christ alone for salvation—that person is justified and receives the gift of eternal life.

This definition of "believing the facts" is a far cry from MacArthur's demeaning reference to "intellectual acquiescence" to historical data (p. 31). The former accurately reflects the Free Grace view of the Gospel. The latter does not.

Thus *The Gospel According to Jesus* begins with a major difficulty in that it is based upon a false premise—a misrepresentation (or at least a misunderstanding) of the view of the Gospel it is seeking to disprove. Attempting to torch a straw man does nothing to support the position of Lordship Salvation.

## III. Inadequate and Improper Methods of Validation

### 1. Improper Use of Proof-Texting

MacArthur too often neglects sound exegetical technique by simply substituting what is commonly known as proof-texting. While it is true that a certain amount of "proof-texting" is acceptable in a work of this magnitude, *The Gospel According to Jesus* makes this practice the rule rather than the exception. In addition, it is done without adequate validation. For example, MacArthur states a premise: "Every Christian is a disciple" (p. 196). Then he proceeds to list several verses (in this case Matt 28:19-20; Acts 6:1, 2, 7; 11:26; 14:20, 22; 15:10; Luke 14:28-30, etc.), some accompanied by a line or two of commentary, but most simply surrounded by assertive language that appears to question the intelligence of any who would doubt that these verses prove the point.

### 2. Dramatic Overstatement

Another favorite argumentative technique is the use of "dramatic overstatement." At key moments in his argument, MacArthur quotes proponents of the Free Grace Gospel (often slightly out of context) along with their apparent interpretation of a particular passage. His goal seems to be that of shocking his readers into a reaction away from such a perceived "aberrant" view of the text.

For example, Hodges is quoted (p. 23) in such a manner that it is implied that he would doubt James' obvious negative answer to the question "Can that faith save him?" (2:14). There is no attempt to exegetically explain Hodges' view of James as a whole, the context of chapter 2, the meaning of terms such as "save," the grammar of the

text, or even the translation of the question itself. All of these are crucial to Hodges' argument.

In fact, this is not simply a "dramatic overstatement" but a "dramatic misstatement," because Hodges does affirm a negative answer to James' rhetorical question, albeit with a different conclusion than MacArthur would desire. (Hodges suggests that James is denying that faith alone can save the physical life from death.[2] The Lordship view believes that eternal salvation is in view.) MacArthur's emotional tactic of dramatically overstating (or misstating) an opponent's view of a crucial text may evoke the desired reader response, but it is a poor substitute for exegesis.

### 3. Commentary Counting

"Commentary counting" or "source stacking" is another of MacArthur's replacements for in-depth, interpretive work.

In crucial sections of his argument, he often quotes a well-known speaker, author, or theologian in an attempt to validate his view of a particular text or theological point. For example, James M. Boice helps "prove" to the reader that salvation (justification) and discipleship are one and the same (p. 30). John Stott gives us the "real" interpretation of Luke 14:28-30 (p. 197). A quotation of A. W. Pink is the ultimate proof of the doctrine of perseverance (p. 98).

To be sure, the use of "big names" to support his conclusions will probably win MacArthur some converts to his view of the gospel. Unfortunately it does little to actually validate Lordship Salvation. That can be accomplished only by solid exegesis of the biblical text.

### 4. Failure to Observe Context

Of even more concern is MacArthur's overall inability to deal adequately with the context of given passages. This important weakness affects his interpretation in every area of attempted textual study.

a. The Gospel Narratives. For example, a major portion of the book (pp. 37-155) is devoted to a reproduction of the teaching and life of the Savior. It is in this section that MacArthur obviously hopes to do his best interpretive work. And while he is an effective expositor and does an admirable job of communicating his interpretation of Jesus' Gospel message, once again his exegetical method is weak, replete with omission and error.

[2] See Zane C. Hodges, *Dead Faith—What Is It?* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1987).

An instance of such neglect occurs in MacArthur's view of the story of the rich young ruler where he suggests that salvation was rejected because the ruler "was unwilling to forsake all that he had and commit himself to obedience" (p. 79). Such an interpretation totally ignores Mark's own interpretive comment in his Gospel (10:24), "Children, how hard it is for those who *trust* in riches to enter the kingdom of God," a passage MacArthur never even mentions. Mark 10:24 is overwhelmingly attested by the large majority of Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark, although it is omitted in many modern translations based mainly on its omission from two old Egyptian manuscripts of Mark. Even if the verse is rejected on textual grounds, it obviously suggests an approach to the story of the rich young ruler which MacArthur has completely ignored. The story actually revolves around the ruler's unwillingness to transfer his trust from his riches to Christ, not on the degree of his commitment to obey. To part with *all* his wealth on the bare word of Jesus, in return for heavenly reward, would have required faith in Jesus as more than a "good Teacher" (Mark 10:17, 18).

There are problems in MacArthur's discussion of other Gospel stories. For example, in John 4, instead of defining the "drink/faith" metaphor in the immediate context (where simple appropriation is the obvious intended meaning), MacArthur inappropriately superimposes the meaning of the metaphor from other passages (Matt 20:22, John 18:11) upon the text in question (pp. 52ff.).

Also, by retelling the story of Zaccheus (pp. 89-96), MacArthur attempts to prove that good works always follow saving faith, something that Luke does not really say in the text. What Jesus does say (19:9) is that salvation had come to Zaccheus' home *because* Zaccheus had become a son of Abraham (which even MacArthur links with simply trusting Christ [p. 95]).

Furthermore, Judas is used as an example of a man who thought he was a believer but proved he was not by failing to persevere in faith (pp. 97-105); yet MacArthur fails to produce one text which actually states that Judas had trusted in Jesus or even thought that he had. In fact, MacArthur completely misses the point of Jesus' words in John 6:64 where He says "There are some of you who do not believe," a category apparently applied to Judas as well. For v 64 goes on to say that Jesus knew "from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him." It is eisegesis to draw from Judas' life an example of a faith that failed, proving a lack of regeneration. Sensible analysis, however, finds Judas to be a classic example of an unbeliever knowingly feigning faith and good works for his own greedy purposes.

The point is clear: The retelling of these Gospel stories reflects MacArthur's creative ability to read his theology back into the text. This section does nothing to exegetically validate his Lordship conclusions.

b. The Parables. In the same subdivision of his book, MacArthur also struggles with the parables. First of all, building doctrine on parables is a questionable procedure at best.[3] But a secondary problem is MacArthur's failure to apply sound exegetical technique to their interpretation. For example, he chastises Scofield for "reading too much into them" (p. 136) and then promptly does exactly that with the parables concerning the treasure of the kingdom (pp. 134-41).

Assuming that Jesus' primary point is that the kingdom of heaven is a "treasure more valuable than the sum of all our possessions" (p. 136), it nevertheless goes beyond the scope of the parable to assume that man must give up all he has to enter the kingdom (pp. 135, 141). The logical conclusion of this line of interpretation is to find Jesus suggesting that we "buy" (to use Matthew's term) the kingdom for ourselves with our sacrificial commitment—a notion that is not only impossible but that also clearly contradicts the rest of Scripture concerning the reception of eternal life!

It is also important to note that MacArthur's supporting passages for his conclusions in this section come not from the context but from other sections of the Gospels and the Epistles. In addition to that, he too easily dismisses the reasonable view that Christ is the central figure of the parable. After all, the parable of the treasure (Matt 13:44) *immediately follows* our Lord's explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares (13:36-43) in which He *is* the chief figure.

Once again MacArthur seems to have read his theology back into a passage, taking interpretive liberties which have weakened, not strengthened, his position.

c. The Old Testament. Another area of exegetical difficulty involves MacArthur's use of the OT to support the Lordship gospel. Quoting passages like Isa 1:16-18 (p. 42) and Ezek 33:18-19 (p. 165), MacArthur makes no mention of the fact that the audience in these passages, Israel, included many saved individuals. The reader comes away with the impression that God's call for the repentance of an OT saint, already justified by faith, is exactly the same as the free NT offer of justification by faith to the unbeliever who has no standing with God. To apply these texts to the non-believer in a NT context, with no explanation of the different situations involved, is inexcusable.

[3] *Illustrating* clearly-taught Bible doctrines from the parables is quite acceptable [Ed.].

d. The Epistles. Though MacArthur doesn't spend a great amount of time in the Epistles, his exegesis of carefully selected passages from them is equally poor.

It seems incredible that a passage like Col 1:22-23 can be quoted (pp. 194, 216) without ever offering an explanation of the key purpose statement in the verse: "in order to present you holy, and blameless and irreproachable in His sight . . ." Since this phrase may link the "if indeed" of v 23 with the Judgment Seat of Christ instead of the believer's positional standing before God, this is an omission of the greatest magnitude.

Similar neglect is shown with other crucial texts which MacArthur arbitrarily assigns to the support of his position without any exegetical basis. Second Timothy 2:12 is one such text (p. 172). MacArthur interprets this passage to suggest that God will assign to hell any believer who does not endure in faith. There is no discussion of the context and no attempt at defining important terms such as "reign." MacArthur also suggests that 2:13 ("If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself") is a word of condemnation to the faithless (p. 172), exactly the opposite meaning of what is most naturally inferred from the text. The idea of "faithful to judge" is not only strange in a Christian context, but unparalleled.

MacArthur is under no obligation to adopt a Free Grace view of these texts, but more exegetical validation of his views is certainly in order.

5. Inaccurate Definition of Key Terms

Though the above interpretive errors are major and contribute to the ineffectiveness of MacArthur's argument, probably the most significant exegetical weakness in *The Gospel According to Jesus* lies in the area of the definition of terms.

Obviously the differences in the two views of the Gospel depend to a great degree on the definition of biblical terms such as *faith*, *repentance*, *Lord*, *justification*, *sanctification*, and *disciple*, to name a few. Unfortunately MacArthur is woefully inadequate in providing accurate, methodologically sound analyses of these important terms.

a. Justification. For example, justification, Paul's famous term for identifying the instantaneous and judicial acquittal which God gives to men at the moment of faith, is relegated to a mere two pages of explanation!

Even in those two pages (pp. 187-88), there is never any attempt to independently or systematically define justification other than in a brief parenthetical phrase. MacArthur's agenda, rather, seems to be to link

justification with sanctification in such a way that the distinct, judicial nature of justification is for all practical purposes lost.

True, MacArthur does give lip-service to the "distinction" between the two terms. But then he immediately attempts to minimize that necessary distinction by quoting D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones as saying "we must never think of sanctification as a separate and subsequent experience (to justification)." In fact, according to MacArthur, justification and sanctification are so practically merged that there seems to be no moment in time when the gavel of heaven falls and the unbeliever is declared positionally righteous.

In the opinion of this reviewer, based on the limited comment available in his book, MacArthur presents a view of justification that comes precariously close to the pre-Reformation church.[4]

MacArthur's attempts to define this term raise other questionable interpretations. For instance, he refers to Rom 10:10 as an example of faith producing practical, not positional, righteousness.

Moreover, he quotes Rom 8:30 as a promise of progressive sanctification. The text, however, guarantees future eternal perfection to those who have been predestined and justified. The interim process of sanctification is also a work of God but one which only occurs to a varying degree in each believer.

Instead of this menagerie of unfounded proof-texting and forced theological agendas, how much more helpful it would have been if MacArthur had focused on Romans 1–4 and its relationship to Romans 5–8. Then the terms justification *and* sanctification—both their meaning and relationship to one another—could have been fully explained, not simply assumed, stated, and used to support the Lordship position.

b. Faith. The term faith receives a similar fate. Though more space is devoted to its explanation (pp. 169-78), there is no carefully developed discussion of the *linguistic* meaning of this crucial word.

Instead, MacArthur strings together a series of loosely connected ideas and theological presuppositions in an attempt to prove that faith is something other than simple trust. For example, to prove that a definition of saving faith includes the idea of "commitment," MacArthur states the premise that it does, then jumps to James 2 and the statement that "faith without works is dead" (pp. 170-71). But James' statement doesn't *define* faith as including commitment or works, it simply defines *the condition* of a faith that is not accompanied by works.

[4] See Robert Preus, "Perennial Problems in the Doctrine of Justification," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 (1981): 163-79.

MacArthur employs similar methodology when trying to make general "obedience" to all of God's commands a synonym of faith. To prove his point, he quotes passages that speak of "the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5) or refer to faith as an act of obedience (Rom 6:17) (p. 174). However, this begs the question. These texts don't show this meaning for faith; they simply suggest that whatever faith is, when it is exercised it is an act of obedience. For example, in the matter of receiving eternal life, God has commanded all men to obey Him by trusting in His Son. The moment that command is obeyed with a response of simple faith, eternal life is bestowed.

MacArthur further suggests that the use of the present tense of the word *believe* in the Gospel of John proves that true saving faith "keeps on believing." This is a commonly held fallacy. The Greek present tense does not demand a continuous nuance, but receives its aspect from the context and the nature of the action itself.

Ironically, in all of his attempts to define *faith*, MacArthur ignores the chief medium that Jesus used (and the one that would have seemed most likely, given the title of his book)—the miracle stories in the Gospels!

For example, in Mark 5 Jesus commands Jairus, "Do not be afraid; only believe" (v 36). Obviously fear and faith are set in stark contrast—Jairus was to "depend on" and "trust in" Jesus to heal his little girl. The opposite is being afraid that Jesus could do nothing and that all hope was lost. Jairus' daughter is healed in response to this simple trust.

A similar case is Mark 9. In v 19 Jesus rebukes the disciples, calling them a "faithless generation," *not* because they were not committed to Him, but because they didn't depend upon Him for the power needed to heal a demon-possessed boy. To drive home His point, Jesus goes on to release the boy from the demon's power in response to the wavering, but sincere, belief (trust) of his father. Once again, simple dependence upon Christ is rewarded with the Master's healing touch.

These miracles illustrate that according to our Lord, the term "believe" implies resting in someone else's work, not producing works of our own. The fact that MacArthur overlooks such basic biblical evidence in his treatment of fundamental theological concepts drives home the inadequacy of his work in the area of defining the crucial terms under discussion.

## IV. Theological Weaknesses

A third major area of difficulty in *The Gospel According to Jesus* lies in the area of theology. Several major theological categories are either given too little attention or simply explained inadequately.

1. The Doctrine of Assurance

The doctrine of assurance is a case in point. For example, on p. 23 (one of only three references to this crucial doctrine, the others being pp. 98, 172), MacArthur says: "Genuine assurance comes from seeing the Holy Spirit's transforming work in one's life, not from clinging to the memory of some experience." While it is true that the presence of a religious experience does not give one assurance of regeneration, it is also true that firm assurance can never be drawn from observing one's own life.

The problem of self-examination is that the question will always linger, "How much of the Spirit's work must I see before I can know that I have eternal life?" This is a question that MacArthur never answers. Even if this problematic question could be answered with any degree of certainty, several others would immediately present themselves. (1) What about times when the Spirit's work is not quite as evident? (2) Is the believer truly capable of a proper evaluation of the Spirit's work in his or her own life? (3) How can one be sure that one's works are produced by the Holy Spirit and not one's unregenerate flesh? These are very real questions produced by MacArthur's view of assurance which he nowhere addresses.

It may be added that John Calvin emphatically warned against the teaching that we must examine our works for assurance of salvation.[5]

On p. 98, MacArthur produces more confusion by linking assurance with perseverance. First he states his premise: "True believers will persevere." Then after quoting two proof-texts, 2 Tim 2:12 and 1 John 2:19, he suggests that any believer who gets discouraged in the Christian life to the point of apostasy gives definite proof that true justification never occurred.

If MacArthur were correct, another question would loom large on the theological horizon: Does any believer really have absolute assurance at any given moment, knowing that the next hour might bring a test that results in his own withdrawal from the faith? The fact is, in MacArthur's view true assurance is impossible before death. But this contradicts the plain sense of 1 John 5:9-13.

2. God's Sovereignty as Applied to Faith and Works

MacArthur also makes a key theological error in the way he attempts to use the doctrine of sovereignty to defend the Lordship position.

[5] For references, see M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 28-29.

For example, when the Free Grace position suggests that his view of the terms *faith* and *repentance* include the element of human effort, MacArthur replies, "Salvation by faith . . . does away with works that are the result of human effort *alone*" (p. 33; italics mine). He goes on to say that redemption is a "sovereignly bestowed gift of God. . . . If God is the One who grants repentance [or by implication, faith], it cannot be viewed as a human work" (p. 163).

In other words, there *are* works attached to the Lordship gospel's definition of faith and repentance, but they are allowed as a requirement for eternal life because they are not "human works," but works that God sovereignly enables the believer to perform.

This argument has a fatal flaw. The distinction between "human" good works and "divine" good works is a theological fiction, and cannot be supported from Scripture. Paul's point in passages like Eph 2:8-9 and Rom 4:5 is not to distinguish between God-empowered and man-empowered human works, but to show that salvation is wholly apart from human works of any kind.

3. The Power of Sin

Another theological difficulty surfaces in MacArthur's treatment of sin's power. Though the doctrine of sin is not dealt with in a categorical manner, a shallow view of the power of sin comes through in the way MacArthur describes the heart of an individual who is either already regenerate or truly ready to receive the Gospel.

For example, those ready to express true faith "no longer love to fulfill the passions of the flesh" (p. 106) or "enjoy their sin" (p. 111). As well, the true believer is no longer "unwilling to obey Christ" and has given up being "consciously rebellious" (p. xiv). "Flagrant" (p. 17) sins are a thing of the past.

It is interesting to note that to MacArthur the homosexual or the fornicator (p. 17) who claims Christianity seems far more suspect than the long-term Christian gossip or complainer. (Lists of less notorious sins are noticeably absent!) The implication is that the real Christian only sins in "small" ways and then accidentally, never finds it pleasurable (where then is the attractiveness of sin?), and maintains an innocent attitude of submission to Christ throughout. Not only does this view of "the truly regenerate heart" misunderstand the depth of human depravity (suggesting a form of eradicationism or of a holiness doctrine of perfectionism), but it also directly contradicts the biblical illustrations of lives like Abraham's and David's.

Both men made active choices to violate God's law. In David's case,

his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah went unconfessed for an entire year! And to suggest that an unbeliever can and will develop mature Christian attitudes towards sin as a sign of readiness for regeneration (p. 106) is beyond comprehension.

Clearly, *The Gospel According to Jesus* fails to provide the reader with a biblical and realistic view of the power of the flesh and man's inherent sinfulness, both before and after salvation.

4. Substitution and the Cross

One final theological inconsistency. In a book claiming to explain Jesus' personal view of the Gospel it is inconceivable that MacArthur spends so little time explaining the significance of the work of the Cross! There is a noticeable omission of key Gospel texts concerning Christ's death (e.g., Mark 10:45). Concepts like the substitutionary nature of the atonement and the finished nature of the work of the Cross are never fully discussed.

In fact, in reading *The Gospel According to Jesus* one is left with the impression that the crucifixion is almost incidental to salvation; necessary, but not central to man's acquisition of eternal life. MacArthur's emphasis is not on man simply *receiving* what Christ Himself actively accomplished through His death, but on man actively working with Christ to appropriate the benefits of the work of the Cross (again, shades of pre-Reformation theology!).

Thus, man's devotion, and blood spilled, in taking up the cross becomes the central focus of the way of salvation. Christ's blood spilled on the Cross is largely ignored. The very least one can say is that *The Gospel According to Jesus* provides a view of salvation that is out of balance. What man must do should be balanced with and preceded by a theologically adequate discussion of what Christ *has already done* to provide eternal life. Dr. H. A. Ironside used to say that there are really only two religions in the world: the religion of "do" and the religion of "done." The true faith is the religion of "done." It is the biblical Gospel expressed by Christ on the Cross: "It is finished!" All the rest of the religions of men (including, sadly, many forms of Christendom) are religions of "do." This is the only methodology which would mirror a biblical emphasis and it is notably absent from MacArthur's work.

## V. Practical Errors

As one might imagine, the exegetical and theological problems discussed above erupt into a host of practical difficulties.

1. Unclear Communication of the Gospel

Clear communication of the Gospel message emerges at the top of the list. If one adopts MacArthur's view of salvation, then gone are the days of responding to an unbeliever's questioning heart with, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31)! Simply quoting John 3:16 or Eph 2:8-9 would also not be enough.

Evangelism "Lordship style" has become a detailed series of explanations of theological terms and texts, conditions and promises. Consider what must be explained: Faith as commitment and obedience; repentance as a willingness to turn from and forsake all sin; submission to Christ as Master; and the relationship between taking up the cross and the work of Christ's Cross.

The evangelist must also communicate to the new convert that he or she can be sure of eternal life as long as there is a continuance in faith (or, commitment and obedience). In all of this, the evangelist must be sure to communicate that salvation is not of works, but is a gift of God that man can never earn or contribute to. The practical inconsistencies are obvious.

With all of these criteria for receiving eternal life, how does the evangelist know when the Gospel has really been shared? And more importantly, how does the unbeliever know when it has been received? One wonders whether the woman at the well, the Philippian jailer, or the thief on the cross would have understood or had time to believe the complex and cumbersome gospel message implied by the Lordship position.

The Gospel message was meant to be simply stated and easily understood. *The Gospel According to Jesus* leaves that as a practical impossibility.

2. Security Destroyed

Another practical difficulty with MacArthur's position is that it destroys the base of security necessary for consistent living.

The Lordship gospel wrongly assumes that "healthy" (non-obsessive) doubts (p. 190) about one's salvation will actually produce a greater fervency in following Christ. This is a practical impossibility. As an illustration, it is common knowledge that children in the home produce better behavior in the context of absolute assurance of parental acceptance, in spite of their failures. In fact, for a child, there are no "healthy" doubts about the long-term acceptance of their mother and father. Insecurity produces problems with behavior.

So it is in the spiritual realm. When a believer begins to question

his or her assurance of eternal life, that doubt is inevitably "nursed," and doubt becomes the focal point for despair. The ultimate outcome is often a falling away from holiness and practical Christian living.

Only absolute security provides the necessary basis for an enduring, consistent, and fruitful Christian life (cf. Rom 8:35-39). Any theology that suggests otherwise, no matter how viable it sounds, is not capable of being lived consistently in the real world.

3. Spiritual Fruit and Assurance

One final practical difficulty lies in the area of "fruitbearing." In *The Gospel According to Jesus* MacArthur insists that external manifestations of spiritual fruit bring absolute proof of eternal life (e.g., p. 23). If that is true then a series of practical questions present themselves.

First, what about the believer whose growth occurs primarily in the inner man, beginning with a regenerated heart and followed by a slow change of attitudes and direction in the mind? Does this individual have assurance even though the fruit is not evident to others? Does the Lordship position allow time for the Holy Spirit to overcome years of sinful attitudes with the inner fruit of love, joy, and peace? Or does true assurance demand change that is both immediate and observable?

Second, if assurance of salvation is based on external works, how does one differentiate between works produced by the flesh and those produced by the Spirit? Did not Paul suggest that an evaluation of the nature of our works should wait until the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 4:1-5)? If there is no infallible way to determine the difference between works motivated by the flesh and those produced by the Spirit, is assurance through works practically possible?

Third, what about the apparent believer who has seemingly manifested a solid, observable Christian experience for many years and then, suddenly, trauma enters his/her life and a degree of defection from Christianity occurs? At what point in the defection process is the assurance of eternal life lost? At the first moment of anger and unbelief? After a year of bitterness, or after ten years? After fornication or divorce or after a long term bout with gossip? Obviously, assurance of salvation based on the observance of works in one's life is a position that brings more practical problems than solutions to the life of the believer.

Indeed, in its entirety, MacArthur's Lordship theology clearly lacks practical consistency. The thinking evangelical must reject it as invalid on practical grounds as well as on biblical ones.

## VI. Logical Difficulties

One more problem area merits our attention. The Lordship gospel as presented in *The Gospel According to Jesus* presents some difficulties of logic that MacArthur fails to address adequately.

### 1. "Free and Costly"

For example, MacArthur claims that "salvation is both free and costly" to the unbeliever (p. 140)—a tenet that he suggests is a biblical paradox. However, a paradox, correctly defined, is a statement that may seem unbelievable or absurd but may be actually true in fact. Thus, in this situation, to be a true paradox the term "gift" must be able to involve the concept of "necessary cost" to the receiver. This is, however, a logical (as well as theological, cf. Rom 11:6) impossibility. Just as "up" cannot equal "down," or it is no longer "up," as soon as a "gift" necessitates a price from the receiver, the gift is no longer a gift. It has become a possession *purchased* by the receiver.

Applied to the question at hand, to say that the gift of eternal life involves necessary cost to the unbeliever is not to state a paradox but a logical absurdity. It is a statement that has no possibility of being true if language is to retain meaning and ability to communicate. Truly, Christ calls the believer to a life of costly discipleship *after* receiving the gift of salvation. But to imply that the price of commitment is demanded as part of *receiving* the gift is to portray a gospel of nonsense.

### 2. Obedience and the Inevitability of Works

Interestingly enough, MacArthur's Lordship gospel is not only illogical at the core of its theology, but it reduces a certain portion of the NT to a level of absurdity.

For example, if living the Christian life is as "inevitable" in the life of the true believer as is claimed by *The Gospel According to Jesus*, then why does Paul devote so much attention to long sections of ethical demand in his writing to the early church? If MacArthur is correct in assuming the inevitability of good works, then why would Paul command the Ephesians to have a walk worthy of their calling (4:1)? And why are the Roman believers so strongly urged to present their bodies as living sacrifices, if Paul knew that they would certainly do so (12:1)? Equally, the warning of stern discipline in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 becomes absurd if it is inevitable that all the true believers in the Corinthian church will submit.

Commands to obey become irrelevant and illogical if obedience is assured. Either the NT honestly exhorts believers to obedient Christian living, understanding the very real possibility of failure, or the strong ethical sections of the Apostles' writings are reduced to logical absurdity. Unless these and other questions of logic are dealt with by MacArthur in a more detailed and coherent fashion, it is the Lordship gospel that will suffer under the label of absurdity.

## VII. Conclusion

If *The Gospel According to Jesus* is evaluated on the basis of John MacArthur's ability to communicate, then the book is a smashing success. His style is strong, clear, and persuasive. As well, no evangelical committed to biblical holiness would be displeased with MacArthur's ultimate purpose in writing this work, that is, to see that the body of Christ once again reflects the character of her Savior.

However, the character of a book (especially a book on the theology of salvation) must be evaluated on a much more critical and foundational level. The ultimate questions that must be asked of *The Gospel According to Jesus* have little to do with style or purpose. Rather the reader must determine the value of MacArthur's work based on the accuracy of his conclusions and the validity of the methodology which takes him there.

More precisely, does MacArthur understand the view he seeks to disprove? Does he seek to validate his own view on the basis of sound exegetical and theological argumentation? Does he adequately deal with the practical and logical difficulties presented by his position? Does the reader walk away from *The Gospel According to Jesus* convinced by scholarly interpretive methodology that the NT teaches the gospel of Lordship Salvation?

The success of *The Gospel According to Jesus* and its defense of the Lordship gospel must rest solely on honest answers to the above difficult and probing questions.

If Lordship Salvation theology is to continue to gain a hearing in the evangelical world it must be supported by an adequate defense of its views. Among the undecided are those who have long waited for such a work. They are still waiting.

A Voice from the Past:

# SIMON MAGUS

## JAMES INGLIS*

Among other important parts of Scripture, that which teaches and illustrates the discipline which God maintains in His own house, and His jealous care over the purity of the Church, is often overlooked and misunderstood. Apart from the doctrine of Scripture, no inconsiderable portion of the history and narratives contained in the Old and New Testaments are practical lessons on these subjects, though their value is, in many instances, lost to us by the two-fold error of treating sin, when it is judged, as a proof that the person committing it was unregenerate; and regarding salvation by grace as excluding the exercise of discipline. We thus lose the warning which the faithful record is designed to enforce upon believers, and the instruction which it is designed to afford regarding the method of God's dealing with His children.

The Holy Spirit has, with perfect impartiality, recorded the sins and failures which marred the earthly lives of the most eminent saints; not to perpetuate the memory of sins which God has forgiven, but to show over how great evils grace triumphs; and to warn believers of the necessity of sleepless vigilance, and of abiding dependence on Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. The Holy Spirit also honors the holiness of our Heavenly Father by showing us that His love is not blind to the faults of His children, nor lax in the government of His family; and thus, much that would otherwise be inexplicable in our own experience as well as in the history of our brethren is made plain.

Distinct from the discipline of His children, yet allied to it, is the jealous love which He manifested over the purity of His Church and the honor of His ordinances, while the Church stood in its divine order and unity. The mistakes to which we have alluded are therefore well illustrated by the prevailing impressions regarding the case of Simon: that his sin proved that he was not a believer; and that Peter,

* This article originally appeared just two years after the American Civil War in the periodical *Waymarks in the Wilderness*, 5 (1867): 35-50. The editor, James Inglis, was most likely the author. Our uncertainty is due to the nineteenth century custom of certain evangelical writers to remain anonymous in order to avoid undue praise or recognition.

in rebuking the sin, was simply unmasking a hypocrite. This conclusion is unhesitatingly embraced, in the face of the divine testimony that Simon believed, by men who are daily dishonoring the name which they bear by their flagrant inconsistencies, and who still claim that they are not hypocrites, and who do not despair of their own salvation. Whatever difficulty there may be in determining the comparative enormity of sins committed by individuals in circumstances so various, it will at least be safe to avoid an undue leniency in judging ourselves.

Without anticipating any decision in the case before us, let us take the whole account of it, and endeavor to give its proper force to the inspired language, so that we may not substitute our own impressions for the testimony of the Spirit of God. An inquiry into the moral condition of Samaria when Philip arrived there, would no doubt magnify the grace which so signally triumphed amid darkness and delusion; but we must, for the present, leave it unnoticed except to say that the readiness with which the people of that city had acknowledged the high pretensions of Simon, the influence which he wielded among them, and the divine honor which they paid him, are important considerations in estimating the subsequent particulars of his case.

The general result of Philip's visit is thus stated: "And when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." This general statement, it may be claimed, does not exclude the possibility of instances of false profession and hypocrisy. But if there were such instances, the next statement seems to exclude the thought that Simon might be reckoned among them; for language could not be more explicit: "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." This special mention of his conversion is apparently a testimony to the grace which abounded toward this great leader of iniquity, and to the power which brought an arrogant pretender to the place of a lowly disciple, waiting upon the teaching of the missionary of the cross. On the understanding that he did believe as is recorded, his wondering contemplation of the miracles and signs stands as a striking testimony to their true character, from one who had sounded the depths of imposture and sorcery. Those who regard Simon as a hypocrite must own that, on the supposition that he was a true believer, it would have been impossible to state it more plainly than in the language of the passage, which records not merely the fact of his public profession of the faith, followed by the natural evidence of his sincerity, but the express testimony, "Simon himself believed also." We shall see as we advance whether there is any thing in the narrative inconsistent with this statement in its plain import.

When the report of these signal triumphs of the Word of God reached the Apostles at Jerusalem, they sent Peter and John, partly, it may be, to inquire into the truth of the report, and then, in the event of finding that these things were so, to communicate spiritual gifts to the believers. The result of this apostolic visitation was much more than a human recognition of the reality of the work of grace in Samaria, it received the manifest sanction of God; for when the Apostles laid their hands on those who believed, "they received the Holy Ghost." Thus far there is no reason to suppose that Simon did not participate in the common seal and sanction of the faith. On the contrary, there is every reason to conclude that he was not excepted from the enjoyment of the gift, however it may have been manifested, especially since we find that, in his subsequent application to the Apostles, he did not ask for that which was common to believers, but for a superior privilege, to which it seems incredible that he should have aspired had he not received that which other believers had received.

For let us notice precisely what was the proposal which called forth the apostolic rebuke: "When he saw that through laying on of the hands of the apostles, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." He had looked on with wonder when he saw Philip, in the power of the Holy Ghost, performing miracles, the true character of which was probably more strikingly apparent to him in contrast with the sorceries by which he had bewitched the people. But here was a farther wonder: that power which he had seen as an attestation of the messenger of God he now finds might be communicated to those who believed the message. The communication of the gift was through laying on of the hands of the Apostles: even Philip could exercise no such power as this. The distinction was one which naturally presented extraordinary incentives to the ambition of one who had occupied the position which he had recently abandoned. We do not excuse the unhallowed desire when we suggest how naturally it fell in with the current of his previous life. Not only was the ambition itself impious, but the means by which he sought to accomplish it were base and most insulting, both to the Apostles and to Him whom they served.

The proposal, altogether, betrayed an arrogance and a debasement which were the natural results of his life of imposture. There is no palliation of it. But before we conclude that it is utterly inconsistent with the plain testimony of the Spirit that he believed, we might inquire if the sin is without parallel among ourselves. Is there no such thing as self-seeking in the desire for spiritual gifts, or in the discharge of

spiritual functions? No unholy ambition or rivalries in the Church of God? If there be, then it is difficult to see how the single act of a man emerging from such a life as that of Simon had been, and so little instructed in the truth of God as he then was, must be taken as outweighing the plain statement that he believed, while we recognize men as Christians who, after enjoying so much higher advantages, must confess before God that a whole life of service has been marred by the mingling of unworthy motives. There is, indeed, no longer a present apostle, whose office requires vindication against the arrogance of men, though we have men who seem to approach Simon's sin in their claims to apostolic succession. It may be that this accounts for the prompt judgment with which Simon's sin was visited; but it does not sustain the conclusion which men have been in haste to pronounce against the reality of his faith.

But instead of attempting to estimate the guilt of the proposal, let us listen to Peter's rebuke of it: "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." If this word "perish" is equivalent to the second death, then indeed all question is at end, however difficult it would still be to dispose of the statement that "Simon himself believed also." But then is it not evident that the "second death" is a doom which his money could not share with him? If his money and he were to perish together, the word cannot be stretched beyond a temporal calamity. The language is no stronger than that which is used in other passages of Scripture with reference to acknowledged believers. Nay, it is the very word that expresses the fatal consequences of leading the brethren of Christ to dishonor Him by eating things offered to idols. "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish" (1 Cor 8:11). The meaning of this warning is explained by the parallel passage (Rom 14:21): "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." To illustrate the meaning of the Apostle's rebuke, we might farther quote passages in which temporal death and temporal loss are clearly shown to be the consequences of the sin of believers.

The gift of God, which Simon thought might be purchased with money, was, as he expressed it, "the power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." It is of this the Apostle was speaking when he added, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." The connection is evident, though it has been common to sever these words from that to which they relate, and to quote them as an appalling intimation that Simon had neither part nor lot in the common salvation. The very matter in question was the distinguishing

apostolic prerogative of communicating the Holy Ghost by laying their hands on believers. And the desire to possess it, as well as the means by which Simon sought to obtain it, abundantly justify the conclusion, "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God."

But let us see whether the counsel which Peter gives to this greatly erring man is such as he would give to an unbeliever convinced of sin: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." The first clause, it may be claimed, might be addressed either to a believer who had fallen into sin, or to an impenitent man; though we question whether the Word of God sanctions such an address to an impenitent man in which a single sinful act is thus held up to view. But without insisting on this, we may ask if there is, in the New Testament, anything that at all resembles this addressed to the impenitent, "Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee"? Is this the Gospel to the perishing: "pray" and "perhaps"? Is there only a "perhaps" to be held out to the sinner as the alternative of everlasting condemnation? My soul! It was not thus that the message of the grace of God met thee at that hour of brooding despair, but with the unfettered certainty of the divine announcement, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And we entreat our brethren to bethink themselves ere, by their hasty inferences in Simon's case, they lend the sanction of an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ to Satan's most cunning device against the peace of convicted sinners—"pray" and "perhaps"—instead of God's sure word, "Believe, and live."

But some one may allege that it is only confusion worse confounded to apply such language to a believer, as though there could be any uncertainty about the forgiveness of his sins. The weight of the objection would depend upon the scope of the word "forgive." So far as the guilt and condemnation of sin in the sight of God is concerned, the Word of God testifies that the believer is justified from all things; he cannot be brought into the position even of an accused person, "For who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Yet, as a child of God, he is subject to discipline; and his sins may often be visited with fatherly chastisements, such as temporal sufferings, bodily sickness, or death, as in the case of the Corinthians who perverted the Lord's Supper: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Now in the case of such a judgment, believers are encouraged to pray for its remission: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." Here it is supposed that a *brother* may commit sin which God will judge by sickness or even by death,

and the forgiveness of it in certain circumstances is promised as an answer of prayer. So James says, also, with reference to acknowledged believers, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The sickness may or may not be God's judgment against sin; if it is, the removal of the sickness is the forgiveness intended.

That these cases are parallel with the case of Simon is evident, not only from the connection of prayer with his deliverance from the threatened consequences of his sin, but also from the appeal which Simon makes to the Apostle: "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." This surely is not the language of a convicted sinner seeking salvation. But it is perfectly intelligible as the language of one who, saved by grace, sees with shame the sin into which he has fallen, and seeks, if it be consistent with the honor of Him whom he has insulted, to be delivered from the chastisement which he owns to be just. "None of these things which ye have spoken," he says, and what had they said? "Thy money perish with thee"—the solemn vindication of the authority and purity of the Apostles, and above all the judgment of God on the insulting thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money.

Even the uncertainty of the issue of prayer—"if perhaps"—is perfectly in accordance with what is elsewhere taught regarding prayer for the remission of judgment on the sin of a believer. For in the passage already quoted, from 1 John 5:16, the same thing is implied. The whole passage is: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." The word rendered "pray" in the last clause is not the word rendered "ask" in the former part of the verse. There the word *aitēsei* means "he shall ask or pray," but in the last clause the word *erōtēsēi* signifies "he shall inquire into," with which the negative should be joined, so that the clause reads, "I say he shall not inquire into that." The question might arise, How may we know when a sin is unto death? This last clause is the Apostle's answer. As Dr. Bonar paraphrases the verse: "If any one see his brother in Christ sin a sin, and see him also laid upon a bed of sickness as a consequence of this, he shall pray for the sick brother; and if the sin be one of which the punishment is disease and not death, the sick man shall be raised up; for all sins that lead to sickness do not necessarily lead to death; and as to the difficulty, How shall we know when the sin is one which merely infers sickness, and when it is one which infers death? I say this, Ask no questions on this point, but pray and leave the case with

God." Here is precisely where "if perhaps" comes in. Even among men, when the law has pronounced sentence on a criminal, his entreaties are not to set aside the sentence. But the objects of family discipline may often be best secured by listening to the cry of an erring child, or to the cry of the other children on his behalf. The principle underlying the administration of law is entirely different from the principle which underlies family discipline. What was the issue in the case of Simon we are not informed, but the silence of the record would rather favor the supposition that prayer was heard on his behalf.

Thus far it would seem that the Apostle addresses Simon and deals with him as one who believed. And there remains to be considered only the Apostle's judgment regarding the moral state of Simon, or his frame of mind. "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Strong language indeed! but does it necessarily mean that he was still dead in trespasses and sins? Is it consistent with the fact that Simon believed also? There is no question that they were believers whom the Apostle charged to look diligently "lest any root of *bitterness* springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." It is the same word which is used in an exhortation to the saints at Ephesus: "Let all *bitterness*," etc., "be put away from you." The word commonly means harshness or austerity of temper; but taking it in the widest sense that can be given to it, these warnings and exhortations to believers plainly intimate that the root is there. Sin in the flesh—the flesh that lusteth against the Spirit—demands their ceaseless vigilance, that it may not reign in their mortal body. In Simon that root had sprung up in God-insulting sin, and the Apostle saw, probably, as he spoke to the offender, that the rebuke had only irritated him.

We would be careful not to weaken the force of the expression, "bond of iniquity," in contemplating the humiliation of a believer yielding to the tyrant from which he had been set free. It is not unmeaning language which the Apostle uses in his exhortation: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Simon, alas! had obeyed it, even after grace had made him free. We do not palliate sin, and least of all the sins of believers. In man's estimate it might seem a light thing that Simon should aspire to the gift of an apostle, and approach an apostle with a bribe. But the Apostle saw in it a fresh outbreak of the fountain which had poured its poisoned stream over the life of the sorcerer; a return to the beggarly elements to which he had so long been enslaved. And now it was the very love which had met him in the depths of degradation and had raised him up to a place among the children, that made him a subject

of discipline. A Father's displeasure must be manifested against the attempt to introduce the principles of the world into the relations of the Church: making the highest gifts the objects of unhallowed ambition and the subjects of corrupt traffic; yet, taking it in its connection and according to the use of the words in other passages, "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity," describes not the state in which Simon committed the sin, but the mood in which he received the rebuke; for "bitterness" elsewhere evidently means irritation or displeasure, and the gall of bitterness would signify the heat of displeasure which brought the scowl upon his countenance, and showed that the influence under which he had sinned was not yet dissolved. If so, then may we not understand that these words brought the wanderer to himself, and that he expressed his humiliation and penitence when he entreated the Apostle to pray for him?

In view of the whole case, we ask an impartial verdict; nay rather—for we are not made judges here—we claim that you may not tamper with the statement of inspiration, "Simon himself believed also." Had the circumstances of the case required that you should get rid of that statement, it is not easy to see how you could have disposed of it except by a point-blank denial of its truth. Men have indeed quoted as parallel to it John 2:23, "Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did;" and John 6:14, "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." In these cases "believed" means "believed;" but then what they believed about Him was not the truth. They believed in Him on grounds and in a character which He could not recognize. They supposed that they saw in Him powers which might serve the purposes of a carnal life, and minister to their comfort, ambition, indolence, or avarice. They said, "This is that prophet;" but what their idea of that prophet was, is manifest by their purpose "to take Him by force, to make Him a king." They believed in Him as the Messiah of their own carnal expectations.* But it was very different with Simon. The word "also" in the statement links Simon's faith with that of the Samaritans; and they, we read, "believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ." And if you explain away that as other than saving faith, you make the Gospel itself of no effect and undermine the whole foundation of faith. Of what value are any of the promises

*Ed. note: Another interpretation views these individuals as actual believers in Christ. See, for example, Zane C. Hodges, "Untrustworthy Believers—John 2:23-25" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (1978): 139-52. A review of this article appears on pp. 89-90 of this issue of the Journal.

to faith or any of the records of faith, if the testimony before us does not mean that Simon believed to the saving of his soul?

We scarcely fear that one to whom the Word of God is precious will ask, Why spend so much time in this inquiry? Of what consequence is it to us whether Simon was a believer whose sin was judged, or an unbeliever whose doom was sealed? It can never be a trifling thing to us whether a man, even living at so remote a period and in so distant a land, was saved or lost. But this is not the great point before us. The determination of this question affects the import of the whole narrative. If the facts prove that Simon was not a believer, then the record yields no great practical lessons to believers, and it would be difficult to see any important use to be served by preserving it in the volume of Scripture. But it is very different if we take the testimony of the Spirit to the fact that he "believed also" in its plain and unsophisticated import. Then we see not only into what a believer may be betrayed through the deceitfulness of sin, we see also with what holy severity God chastises sin in His children, and just because they are His children. This is an important point; and so far as we can understand the Scriptures, it was the very fact that Simon was a believer that brought upon him that judgment, "Thy money perish with thee." The heathen philosophers might deride, and the heathen mob might rage against all these things unscathed—it only furnishes new opportunities for the divine forbearance. The unbelieving Jews and Gentiles might unite, not only to insult the Apostles of Christ and load them with contumely, but to inflict upon them a death of ignominy and torture, like that from the midst of which their Master said, "Father, forgive them." But when a believer only comes to offer them money for a spiritual power, with what righteous severity is he at once met! And why this difference? Ah brethren! the presence of God, the temple of the living God, is a holy place. And do we know any thing of the holy fear that becomes it? From amidst the idle pomps, the carnal display, the luxurious equipments, the polished entertainments, the flippant levities of our so-called worshipping assemblies, we may do well to look back to the lowly gatherings in the name of Jesus, where even the unbelieving were constrained to own that God was in them of a truth, and where He came forth to vindicate and defend the purity of His dwelling-place in such ways that "great fear came upon all the church," and "of the rest durst no man join himself unto them."

Again, Why this difference? Is it that God treats the sins of the world with indifference, and, like some earthly fathers, is only exacting and stern within the limits of His own house? Perish the thought! Nay, brethren, but those who are now despising the riches of His goodness

and forbearance and long-suffering, will find that after their hardness and impenitent heart they are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And then as to His own children—who will tell the measure of His love even in those chastisements which attest the holiness of Him with whom we have to do? It is not that He is lenient with the world and exacting in His own house; but "when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

We might profitably inquire why it is that the levity of these assemblies where fashion flaunts its vanities, intellect wins its laurels, and carnal art mimics the grand realities of the spiritual temple, is never arrested by the solemn judgment of an insulted God, and the assemblies scattered in terror from the sight of their impious entertainers, stricken dead in the very act. But for the present we only accept the fact that it is not so. They are as safe as the crowds who thronged heathen temples to regale their fancies with artistic ceremonials which charmed the wanton eye and ear. Yet, so far as the individual believer is concerned, it remains unalterably true that, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." But alas! how often we miss the blessing He designs, and fail to recognize His hand! He chastens for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. There are two words with which we would close a subject on which much remains unsaid. One is, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of Him;" and the other is, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

Grace in the Arts:

# THE LIMITS OF GRACIOUSNESS

## A Study of Grace-Resisters in Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" and Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence*

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## I. Introduction

How far does the Hound of Heaven[1] pursue? And how far should heaven's earthly representatives pursue those who are recalcitrant to their expressions of graciousness? Is there a cutoff point to God's grace? Does grace have a temporal terminus, or does it extend in any sense (as some Bible students might suggest God's love does) even into the precincts of hell? If divine grace undergoes a cutoff point (due to persistent human rejection of it to the end of this earthly existence), then should human graciousness toward the recalcitrant ever experience a similar cutoff point *within* this life? In other words, practically speaking, is there a time when Christians should stop "cast[ing our] pearls before swine" (Matt 7:6)? Is it ever proper protocol for people of grace to "shake off the dust from [their] feet" (Matt 10:14) toward the ungracious in any final sense during this life?

This question of how far to extend practical grace to unresponding (or calloused) individuals is the tension point in two pieces of secular literature. Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" and Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* have as their chief characters two individuals who are very unlike (on the surface). However, at a deeper level Bartleby (Melville's principal character) and Charles Strickland (Maugham's central character) are very much alike—both are resisters of grace. Each in his own way defies another character in the story who reaches out to him with gracious overtures. It is the main purpose of this article to analyze and compare these two very different resisters

[1] See Francis Thompson's classic poem, "The Hound of Heaven" for this expression.

of human graciousness. Furthermore, we will ask: (1) Was it actually grace (or something less) being extended to each chief character? and (2) How far is it proper to extend grace to the recalcitrant rebel?

First, some comparison and brief biography of the two authors is appropriate. Herman Melville (1819–1891) is best remembered for his masterpiece *Moby Dick*. Critics of Melville are intrigued by his interplay with symbolical subjects and theological themes. Darrel Abel claimed that "the work of Herman Melville is the most crucial achievement in American literature."[2] Abel went on to assert that "his grapple with good and evil was as profound as Hawthorne's . . ."[3] Bradley, Beatty, and Long speak of "the abhorrence, expressed throughout his [Melville's] fiction, of the darkness of man's deeds, and the evil seemingly inherent in nature itself."[4]

British writer Somerset Maugham (1874–1965), an author of eighty books and twenty-nine plays, experienced "a life that began with [Queen] Victoria on the throne and ended with the . . . Beatles."[5] Maugham's most famous work is his most autobiographical one, *Of Human Bondage*.

Both Melville and Maugham had at least one parent who died by the time they were twelve years old. Both authors spent time in the South Seas.

## II. "Bartleby the Scrivener"

Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" is the memorable tale of one person who is unmoved by another's graciousness. Bartleby is the name of a scrivener, i.e., a copyist of legal documents. Bartleby is the stereotype of the scribal drudge—one who copies law papers with avidity, but whose personality is singularly undynamic. Initially, Bartleby's boss appears to approve of his new recruit, for the mild-mannered scribe seems to furnish a low-key counterpoint to several of his more disgruntled copyists in the same law office. Yet over the long haul this meek-and-mild drudge proves to be the most annoying and irksome of his employer's workers.

One day Bartleby is summoned by his employer to perform the reasonably perfunctory task of proofreading a copied manuscript along with several co-workers. Out of the blue, Bartleby's voice presages the

[2] Darrel Abel, *American Literature* (Woodbury, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1963), 2:366.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Sculley Bradley, Richmond Beatty, and Hudson Long, *The American Tradition in Literature* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, Inc., 1956), 472.

[5] R. Z. Sheppard, "The Old Man by the Sea," *Time* (March 10, 1980), 80.

trouble to come when he mildly announces, "I would prefer not to." This line becomes the major motif of the story. With increasing temerity—no matter what his boss asks of Bartleby beyond his routine copying—the eccentric clerk always rejoins with "I would prefer not to" (meaning that he refuses to comply with any demand).

Bartleby's increasingly exasperated employer resorts to every conceivable psychologically and socially approved tactic in his attempts to get Bartleby to conform to the normalcy of job requirements. While most bosses would have simply fired the uncooperative employee, Bartleby's gracious overlord commands, entreats, coaxes, inquires, seeks other employees' opinions on the subject, etc. In short, he leaves no stone unturned in his attempts to elicit Bartleby's cooperation—only and always to be confronted by the seemingly unpresumptuous remark, "I would prefer not to."

At first, Bartleby's "prefer not to's" extend only to anything beyond his daily copying duties. Eventually, however, Bartleby refuses to do any work whatsoever. His overly gracious employer accords him the benefit of the doubt, assuming that Bartleby's eyesight has failed him. Consequently, the employer (who is also the storyteller) seeks more suitable employment for Bartleby. All the gracious overtures are rebuffed by the persistent "I would prefer not to."

One weekend, the employer—to his chagrin—discovers that (unknown to him) Bartleby has been making his permanent home in the office. Once more, the story narrator's humaneness seeks Bartleby's best, but Bartleby has established squatter's rights, and he will not be moved. In one consummate appeal of graciousness, the bachelor employer even invites Bartleby to come and make his home with him —only to be met with the unvarying five words—"I would prefer not to."

The reader is naturally drawn into the narrator's predicament. The narrator has tried every imaginable overture, when strict justice demanded that he make no effort at all. What is the employer to do? After his repertoire of grace is exhausted, the employer himself eventually evacuates the premises. Rather than inflict police measures on Bartleby, his boss vacates the office and rents other quarters. In effect, the narrator surrenders to Bartleby's unflinching and unrelenting stubbornness.

One would expect at that point that the employer's predicament would now find complete release. But alas! The new tenants of the old office somehow hold the former employer responsible for the unmoved Bartleby! In the end, the mild-mannered Bartleby is carried off to jail by the police. In the jail, he slowly starves to death (despite all his old

employer's pleadings) because he "prefers not to" change his situation. Bartleby won't be made to budge.

In Melville's Bartleby, we confront the epitome of unyielding inflexibility. Bartleby is not loud, vociferous, or grossly rude. He offers no disputations, no tirades, no four-letter invectives, no clenched fists, no high-powered refutations—only resolute, recalcitrant resignation and refusal.

Melville is an acknowledged master of symbolism. Robert Kirsch designated Melville one of the "divers" into the sea-depths of symbolism.[6] Throughout the Bartleby tale, however, appear few telltale clues of any deeper, hidden significance—until we arrive at the very last line of the story. The final four words of the narrator are: "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!" Only at the conclusion is the unquestionable note of a broader theme sounded. Bartleby and humanity are equated or at least merged. Bartleby is but a miniature of an inflexibly (but politely) unyielding humanity.

While we do not wish to import vast alien meanings into Melville's simple story, the theological mind naturally contours a striking representation of biblical truth from "Bartleby the Scrivener." Despite all our ultimate Master's measures, a significant sector of humanity still aligns itself with the scrivener's persistent resistance to graciousness. The Master's politeness, persuasiveness, and pleadings have fallen on deaf ears. We spurn the gracious offer. We respond to the divine demand-turned-invitation: "I would prefer not to." Sovereign graciousness is met with stubborn ungraciousness. We are even offered the Master's own home—with no strings attached—but we politely, pertinaciously, and perniciously refuse. No wonder, Isaac Watts felt driven to postulate a sovereign grace that "compelled" sinners to accept God's invitation. Watts penned:

> 'Twas the same love that spread the feast
> That sweetly *forced* us in;
> Else we had still refused to taste,
> And perished in our sin.[7]

Yes, for the theologian, Bartleby is the story of a race entrenched in resolute refusal of divine grace. Bartleby is only the more meek-and-mild, private version of willfulness. Indeed, Bartleby is no less a monomaniac of will than Melville's more famous Captain Ahab (in

[6] Robert Kirsch, " 'Fathoms Down' in the Depths of Herman Melville," *Los Angeles Times* (November 23, 1975), 1.

[7] *Hymns of Worship and Remembrance* (Fort Dodge, IA: Gospel Perpetuating Fund, 1950), 158.

*Moby Dick*). Bartleby's obsession of will may be less overt, less public, less extravagant than the whale-obsessed Ahab, but it is no less real and deeply entrenched. Indeed, it only makes Bartleby a more realistic representative than Captain Ahab of the average person in his or her response to God's graciousness.

Two questions are apropos here. First, was Bartleby's employer an appropriate reflector of God's grace or was he simply a pushover? Bartleby's boss mirrors God's graciousness on two counts. His gracious overtures did not fizzle out after his first try. Indeed, his gracious pleadings were just as unrelenting, as unretiring, as ever-repeated as were Bartleby's stubborn refusals. To use the phrase from Kathy Troccoli's popular song, it was his "stubborn love [that] never lets go" of the refuser. Furthermore, Bartleby's employer was gracious in his multiform grace. His attempts toward the inflexible Bartleby were not merely repetitious, but were creative and manifold.

Second, how far was it proper to extend graciousness to the recalcitrant rebel (Bartleby)? Certainly the generous employer outstripped most of us in what we would have done. Was he merely weak-willed (in not firing Bartleby on the spot)? Perhaps he was a tinge too spineless, but can we not hear some echo of that greater Entreater who asks, "How can I give you up . . ." (Hos 11:8)? "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!"

## III. *The Moon and Sixpence*

As exasperating as a Bartleby proves to be, probably most believers would prefer to deal with him rather than with a Strickland of Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919).[8]

In this novel the chief character, named Charles Strickland, would seem on a surface reading to classify for our Lord's epithets "dogs" or "swine" (Matt 7:6). Yet concerning this most inhumane of characters, Maugham said in the later part of the book: "I felt an overwhelming compassion for him." Strickland appears very unlike Herman Melville's (harmless though uncooperative) "Bartleby the Scrivener," whom the narrator regards as "greatly to be compassionated."

Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* is partly descriptive of the famous French painter Paul Gauguin.[9] Just how much is fact and how

[8] W. Somerset Maugham, *The Moon and Sixpence* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968).

[9] See Shelden Cheney. *The History of Modern Art* (New York: The Viking Press, 1941); Raymond Cogniat, *Gauguin* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1963); Paul C. Nicholls, *Gauguin* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1961).

much is Maugham's fictionalizing is hard to say. However, both Strickland and Gauguin abandoned their wives and children to pursue their painting careers. In the book Charles Strickland had two children, whereas Gauguin had five in real life. Strickland dies in Tahiti, whereas Gauguin spent time in Tahiti, but died in the Marquesas Islands. Hence, it is difficult to know just how much of Charles Strickland's character we should extrapolate and attach to Gauguin. It would appear to be a safer procedure simply to treat Charles Strickland on his own terms rather than assume we should transfer all of Strickland's moral blotches onto Paul Gauguin.

Strickland is in some ways as fascinating as he is horrid, for he is—hopefully—different from anyone we will ever meet. Strickland appears virtually bereft of any decency, courtesy, or even polite feeling. He is portrayed as morose, self-circumscribed, uncompassionate, and inhumane. Maugham has him as an arrogant, detestable jackass who curses others out of hand and is for all practical purposes a sociopath (i.e., antisocial to the point of being devoid of conscience). He displays absolutely no qualms of regret about deserting his children. In short, Strickland appears totally devoid of the "milk of human kindness" or common graces.

In the story, one character demonstrates considerable graciousness to Strickland. His name is Dirk Stroeve. Unfortunately, Dirk is not a one-dimensional character. That is, he is not simply a winsome, attractive, solid model of admirable character. Then again, maybe that is fortunate. As a result, we can't simply categorize one as the "good guy" (Stroeve) and the other (Strickland) as the "bad guy." In Christian circles, that is too often the way novels are written. In them, Christians are presented as the "good guys," and then there are the rest. However, life is not quite like that.

Stroeve the Dutchman is something of a buffoon. Maugham's narrator makes him out to be a lovable but pathetic character. Stroeve would "give you the shirt off his back." He is generous to a fault. The writer keeps saying that no matter what serious thing Stroeve does, he has to struggle to keep from laughing at him. Maugham represents Stroeve as a Paris painter who has acute ability to critique everyone else's art but his own. Maugham considered Stroeve's painting second-rate.

The issue which encapsules the tension-point of this article comes to a head in relation to Blanche Stroeve, Dirk's wife. She is described as both pretty and plain. On more than one occasion, Maugham makes remarks about her figure being worthy of an artist's model. Through most of the book, she simply sits and sews as if she were merely on

pose for one elongated painting.

Dirk Stroeve thinks Strickland possesses artistic genius—despite the fact that in six years in Paris Strickland epitomized the starving artist by not having sold a single painting. At one point Strickland is missed as a frequenter of a particular Paris restaurant, so Dirk and the storyteller surmise that he must be sick. When they eventually find him in some bleak garret, Strickland is burning with fever and without food or help.

Despite the fact that Strickland had borrowed money from Stroeve, never repaid it, and treated Stroeve's painting as if it were dirt, Stroeve wants to do good to his despiser (Matt 5:44). Stroeve wants to extend grace to Strickland by taking the extremely sick man into his home and doctoring him until he is well. Initially, however, Blanche Stroeve is absolutely adamant against this. She protests with an icy hatred. After a multitude of his protestations, Blanche reluctantly yields to her husband's request.

The bombshell is dropped when Strickland finally gets well. Not only does he take over Stroeve's art studio as if it were his own, but he kicks Stroeve out of his own home. Finally, Stroeve asks Strickland to leave—and Blanche announces that she is leaving with Strickland! No amount of her husband's effusive splutterings can prevent Blanche from leaving him.

In what might be deemed a gesture worthy of Hosea, Dirk tells Blanche that when she gets sick of Strickland (which he knows she will), he will graciously take her back—no strings attached. Is Dirk Stroeve modeling the grace of the Heavenly Hosea?

The tragic story does not even end there. When the brute Strickland manifests his contempt for his new mistress, Blanche commits suicide by pouring a form of acid down her throat which burns up her vocal cords and neck. Naturally Dirk is almost inconsolable in his grief. Later, however, Dirk Stroeve stumbles upon a painting Strickland has done of Blanche, and he is again awed by Strickland's artistic genius. Dirk (even to the storyteller's appalled amazement) invites Strickland to go home to Holland with him!

It is as if Strickland thought that a painting of Blanche could atone for her human life. Upon reading this brutal piece of tragedy one keeps asking if Dirk Stroeve is the epitome of grace (in lavishing unmerited favor upon one so exceedingly ungracious and disgraceful as Strickland), or is something badly awry here? Is Stroeve an updated Hosea or merely a stupendous fool?

Two considerations keep this reviewer from appraising Stroeve as Hosea *redivivus*. First of all, despite all his lovability (much as Dickens'

Fegans are often portrayed as lovable thieves in film and stage versions of *Oliver Twist*) and compassion, Stroeve exhibits very little in the way of moral firmness. At best, we might envision him as a showcase of *ḥēn* (the basic Hebrew term for unobliged "grace" or "favor"), but we sense virtually no *ḥesed* in him. *Ḥesed* is God's "loyal love" that combines both softness and solidity, mercy and steadfastness, leniency and loyalty, tenderness and toughness.

Stroeve thinks too little of himself and too much of Strickland. Is it grace simply to be a doormat? Stroeve seems almost to wallow in letting people kick him around. The Apostle Paul, the premier exemplar of grace, insisted that the Philippian governing magistrates come and escort him from prison after they had abused his civil rights as a Roman citizen (Acts 16:35-40). Alas, too many Christians confuse the concept of receiving *grace* or being *gracious* in the face of recalcitrance with making oneself into a person to be *disgraced.*

Another reason keeps us from a facile pronouncement that he is a model of biblical graciousness and compassion. It is the motivation by which he does what he does. Why is Stroeve willing to sacrifice his own wife and forgive Strickland *carte blanche* for driving her to suicide? It is because, above all else, art is a god for Stroeve (as very probably it was for Maugham also). Stroeve can get over his own wife's tragic death when he picks up a mere painting of her created by an artistic genius! He can forgive Strickland because he worships the brute-genius in Strickland. The truth is that Stroeve all along thought more of Strickland than he did of his wife (despite all his effusive expressions toward her).

There could hardly be a more strategic lesson for our age—with its rock stars, sports celebrities, and even pulpit idols. Why do people overlook the shenanigans of a man who falls face down in his chicken-rice soup because he is a drug addict? Why, because he's *Elvis*, of course! If the guy down the block from us were pronounced dead from having his face in a soup bowl (as Elvis Presley might have been), people would shake their heads over such pitiable behavior. But because a human is adulated for some giftedness, his worshipers will let him get away with anything (as colleagues obviously did with a recently deposed "televangelist").

God is the Giver of *charis* ("grace") and *charisma* ("giftedness"). When humans elevate beyond measure those who are gifted (as in the case of Charles Strickland's artistic genius), there is no moral accountability required. The same notion warns us with respect to classes of "gifted" children where sometimes "anything goes."

Biblical graciousness (in the form of compassion) lets the prodigal

descend into the pigpen of the far country rather than chasing and pleading with him. The prodigal son independently "came to himself" (Luke 15:17) when "no one gave [notice "gave" in relation to grace and giving] him anything" (Luke 15:16). Jesus "loved" (Mark 10:21) the rich young ruler even as he "went away sorrowful" (Mark 10:22). By contrast with this "tough grace," many modern Christians would want to sing just one more stanza of "Just As I Am" in order to cajole the impenitent sinner down the church aisle.

The Rich Young Ruler narrative suggests that God's love is still being extended irrespective of the retreating sinner. In spite of the young man's self-righteousness and selfishness, Jesus loved him. While divine compassion continues steadfastly, OT texts indicate that God's compassion is not unrelated to human response: "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you" (Deut 30:1-3). If the Spirit's striving in Gen 6:3 can be equated with the extension of divine grace, then a definite cutoff ("not . . . forever," NIV) of that grace is envisioned. First Peter 3:20 represents this same idea. Indeed, the very fact of death (Heb 9:27) and a biblical hell call for a terminus point to grace (as extended in salvation). There are those (of the Charles Strickland variety?) who twist "the grace of our God into lewdness" (Jude 4). In fact, in *The Moon and Sixpence* Maugham refers to Strickland's sensuousness on at least six different occasions and even toys with the notion on five occasions that Strickland might be possessed by a demon.

There is great irony in Maugham's depiction of Charles Strickland as almost without virtue. The irony consists in the fact that Maugham's most definitive biographer paints Maugham's own character hardly much different from that of the semi-fictional Strickland's! Like Strickland, Maugham divorced his wife and sought to disinherit his own daughter (so as to bequeath his inheritance to his own adopted son and second homosexual lover). Maugham's wife was a successful businesswoman after the fashion of his pen portrait of Mrs. Strickland. Maugham possessed a lifelong stutter, while Strickland is portrayed as taciturn to the point of moroseness. Ted Morgan's *Maugham* (the

definitive biography)[10] was described by *Time* magazine[11] as "by far the most . . . balanced and tolerant portrait available." Yet concerning the Maugham portrayed by the biographer, Edmund White wrote: "His vanity, his deviousness, his vindictiveness and his outright cruelty came together in a record of appalling unpleasantness."[12]

The more one compares Maugham and Maugham's character, Strickland (the unvirtuous artistic genius), the more one wonders if Maugham isn't penning the self-justification for his own disgrace and ungraciousness. Theologically inclined readers may pick up a deliberate play on words, for we are "*justified by . . . grace*" (Titus 3:7), but justifying grace does not leave us ungracious or in disgrace. Rather "grace" teaches us that "we should live soberly, righteously, and godly" (Titus 2:11-12).

Maugham's empathetic reader would conclude that one should justify the artist on the basis of genius (*charisma*) rather than a *charis* which transforms our ungraciousness and disgracefulness. It says, in effect: "Forgive him. He was a great artist." Biblical reality says: "NO. In the act of *owning* our sin we are also *disowning* our sin." We do not *justify* our *sin*, although we are *justified sinners*. We are justified by God (as in the parable of the Publican and Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14) when we no longer seek to justify our sin—or our (supposed) righteousness—at all. The God "who justifies the ungodly" (Rom 4:5) does not justify us in our wickedness, but in spite of our wickedness. We are justified because "the just [One died] for the unjust," to "bring us to [a just] God" (1 Pet 3:18). James Sanders claimed: "Grace is a form of divine injustice."[13] Not really, for justice has been exacted (Rom 3:26). Therefore, grace is not simply blind Justice merely meting out leniency.

It is here that Dirk Stroeve's acting out of grace toward Strickland appears to be less than healthy and less than an accurate mirror of God's grace. If "grace . . . came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17), so did truth. If Jesus is the perfect reflector of God's character (as the very next verse—John 1:18—asserts), then the script of Christ's life must provide us with a docudrama of God's grace. Yet the Jesus of the Gospels is anything but a candidate to be walked over. The same one who "was led [meekly] as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa 53:7) defies all comers with His self-made whip in the temple precincts (John 2:15).

[10] Ted Morgan, *Maugham* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980).

[11] Sheppard, ibid.

[12] Edmund White, "Maugham: A Story of Human Degradation," Chicago Sun-Times (March 30, 1980), 13.

[13] James A. Sanders, "Isaiah in Luke," *Interpretation* 36 (April 1982): 155.

all comers with His self-made whip in the temple precincts (John 2:15). No one could picture Dirk Stroeve doing this. The same Jesus who "as a sheep before its shearers is silent" (Isa 53:7) opens His mouth in Matthew 23 to flay the scribes and Pharisees with words that crack like the bullwhip of Lash LaRue.

Either we must conclude from Jesus, our Paradigm, that (1) grace (i.e., graciousness) is not called for on every occasion, or (2) grace has rougher guises than we would ever have suspected. At any rate, Dirk Stroeve's mawkish treatment of Charles Strickland (who combines both the calloused condition of the Pharisee with the fleshly appetites of the Publican) is an all-too-flabby forgiveness in light of the Embodiment of grace.

## IV. Conclusion

The Lord Jesus did not hold private tutorials for His religious opponents nor did He speak softly to them apart from some sense of openness on their part (e.g., John 3:1-13). There is a time to hold the Stricklands accountable, to withhold pearls from swine (Matt 7:6), to shake dust off one's feet (Luke 10:10-11), to acknowledge insensitivity (Acts 5:34; 8:22-23). This is no campaign for a spiritual McCarthyism, nor an apologetic for extreme right-wing rabble rousers. Grace is not an all-tolerantism.

As practitioners of God's grace, then, we do not seek stridency (Matt 12:18-20), but gentleness. On the other hand, backing down from belligerence, brutishness, or brusqueness may not necessarily be genuinely gracious. "Adorn[ing] the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Titus 2:10) included for Titus the consonant need to "exhort, and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15). The apostolic author (of 1 John) who urged love more than any other NT writer saw nothing incongruous in this policy with branding some individuals as antichrists and liars (1 John 2:22; 4:3).

Unlike God, we are not omniscient (1 John 3:20), so whether it is either practical or loving to cut off relationships with the adamantine non-believer or apparent apostate becomes a delicate and discretionary matter. Indeed, might not many modern believers have branded the pre-Christian Paul as beyond the pale of grace?

Perhaps the question can be best concluded with an anecdote attributed to Walter Martin. Martin was walking on Donald Grey Barnhouse's large farm with its owner. Barnhouse was an amateur ornithologist, but he carried a gun with him to scare off pesky grackles. The two men were discussing cults and whether one borderline group

ought to be labeled as a cult or not. At one point in the conversation, Barnhouse raised his rifle and fired at what he supposed was a grackle. When the two arrived at the scene, Barnhouse was appalled to find that he had shot down one of his beloved bluebirds. Cupping the bluebird in his hands, he left a lesson with Martin: "Better to let a stray grackle get away than to shoot down a bluebird and have to answer for it at the judgment seat of Christ."[14]

[14] Quoted from memory by author.

# BOOK REVIEWS

*Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649.* By R. T. Kendall. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. 238 pp. Paper, $21.95.

Though this review comes ten years after the publication of this controversial work, its consideration is merited by the continuing discussion that the book has generated in Reformed circles. Originally an Oxford dissertation, Kendall's thesis is that English Calvinism took its theological cues not from Calvin, but from Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor at Geneva. Thus English Calvinism differed from Calvin himself in three important ways.

*First*, it abandoned Calvin's belief that Christ's atonement was universal in intent ("Christ died for all") for the doctrine of particular redemption ("limited atonement").

*Second*, this change necessitated a redefinition of faith. For Calvin, faith was rooted in the "understanding," a response of the heart to the truth of the Gospel (pp. 19-20). But with particular redemption it was no longer sufficient to believe that Christ had died for the ungodly. Instead, one must now come to a volitional assurance that Christ had died for *him*, "apprehending and applying Christ," making faith an act of the will (pp. 62-63).

*Third*, for Calvin there was no distinction between faith and assurance. If one *believed* that Christ died for him, he had the *assurance* that Christ died for him. But in later Calvinism, assurance became a reflexive action, a secondary act in which one had to "put faith in his faith" (pp. 71-72, 179-83). A person had to scrutinize his or her faith to determine whether it was genuine, with the final step being that the ultimate evidence of true faith was godliness. This leads Kendall to the startling conclusion that the Westminster divines had adopted a definition of faith and a ground of assurance which was in complete agreement with Arminius and very alien to Calvin (pp. 184, 209-13)!

As one might expect, Kendall's thesis has been strongly contested. Calvin's belief concerning the extent of the atonement has been the

subject of vigorous debate long before Kendall's work appeared. Suffice it to say that neither side will ever be convinced of the other's interpretation. Yet most have agreed that Kendall is correct in his presentation of Calvin's understanding of faith, and in his comprehension of Calvin's view of assurance.

However, what Kendall cannot dispute is that perseverance was for Calvin the indicator that one truly had saving faith. Nevertheless, for Calvin the question was whether one persevered *in faith*, while in English Calvinism it was whether one persevered *in works*. Kendall clearly lays out one of the more troubling aspects of Calvin's theology, the belief that God gives temporary, non-saving faith to those whom he has destined for damnation (pp. 21-24). Calvin described this faith as one which "puts forth not only blossoms and leaves but even fruits; nevertheless it withers with the passing of time" (*Institutes*, 3.2.12), while saving "faith can never be torn from the godly breast" (3.2.21).

Calvin recognized the fears this teaching would arouse in the hearts of those whose faith was weak, and tried to encourage them that it was not the *condition* of their faith which was important, but that they *had* faith. And this raises the question of whether the roots of examining oneself for the presence of faith may be found in Calvin's discussion of assurance.

As a matter of primary importance, Kendall has clearly shown that with its emphasis upon examination of fruit for assurance of faith, modern Reformed thought has departed from Calvin. In a brief aside, it might also be added that Calvin's definition of faith, which completely excluded the operation of the will, also strictly eliminates an intermingling of Lordship in the salvation process. The benefits of the death of Christ alone are in view at the moment of conversion. Furthermore, Kendall is yet another witness that Calvin did not subscribe to particular redemption, and indeed his understanding of faith presupposes that Christ's death provided for the redemption of all men from sin. Finally, through his detailed description of the development of Reformed dogma Kendall establishes what for many is a needed assurance. Contrary to Warfield, Calvinism has not been a monolithic structure, but a living theology which has provided a welcome abode for a spectrum of beliefs.

This reviewer found several other aspects of the book very beneficial. Regardless of one's theological perspective, Kendall's presentation of the historical background serves as a profitable introduction to the men who contributed to the development of Reformed theology. His synthesis also provides a broad panorama of the developmental stages of Calvinism from Calvin to the 1600's. However, some may find the

argument difficult to follow, and the presentation is decidedly in the form of a dissertation rather than a book.

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*Faith and Saving Faith*. By Gordon H. Clark. Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1983. 118 pp. Paper, $5.95.

Of the perennial queries that surface in the ongoing debate over the nature of the Gospel, perhaps none is as fundamental as: "What constitutes saving faith?" No recent work responds as effectively to this end as Gordon H. Clark's *Faith and Saving Faith*. The thesis that Clark presents is a marked departure from the creeds of his Reformed heritage: "Faith, by definition, is assent to understood propositions. Not all cases of assent, even assent to Biblical propositions, are saving faith; but all saving faith is assent to one or more Biblical propositions" (p. 118). At given points in his book the author qualifies his thesis by suggesting that "saving faith is volitional assent to an intellectual proposition" (p. 56; see also pp. 16, 48, 58, 68). Hence, from Clark's point of view, there is an operation of volition coupled with mental assent in the occurrence of salvific faith.

Clark, a staunch Calvinist scholar whose pen was only a short time ago laid down by death, wrote this monograph in response to a perceived decline of intellectualism in American evangelicalism (pp. 110-18). In this work as in all of his other works, the author's epistemological base is a rigorous appeal to rationalism. While rationalistic underpinnings are evidenced throughout Clark's argument, his thesis is well-balanced and fully conversant with the data of Scripture.

The author begins his book by interacting with secular and Roman Catholic concepts of faith. According to Clark, the recurring tendency among secular philosophers is to draw a false disjunction between "belief in a proposition" and "belief in a person." The former is said to be a factual and impersonal belief, whereas the latter is said to be an evaluative belief of the "heart." As Clark notes, this false dichotomy also emerges in Protestant and Roman Catholic discussions of faith (p. 16). The author tackles this notion head-on and demonstrates that it is impossible to place trust in someone without prior propositional

knowledge of that person's worthiness as an object of trust (pp. 19, 50, 104). In other words, propositions serve as the qualifying factors for the trustworthiness of a given object of faith. Clark also points out that the constructions *pisteuein eis* ("belief in") and *pisteuein hoti* ("belief that") are used interchangeably throughout the NT (p. 101). Consequently, "belief in" and "belief that" carry equal semantic force. As the author well notes, efforts to differentiate between "proposition belief" and "person belief" result in a hopeless display of philosophical casuistry. Where the author's argument falls short is in his failure to acknowledge that theologians often—and without warrant—delimit the sense of "believe" to "understand."

From a collective consideration of biblical data, Clark concludes that faith refers both to "the mental activity of believing" and "the propositions believed" (p. 32). With regard to the latter, the author argues that saving faith is a subspecies of the broader genus of "generic faith," i.e., faith that is common to all human experience (p. 32). Hence, in the matter of distinguishing saving faith from that which is "spurious," contrasts are not to be drawn between faith and knowledge. Neither is the act of faith to be subjected to an overly scrupulous analysis. Instead, saving faith is authenticated by *the object* wherein one places his trust. It is somewhat astonishing that this critical observation has not merited greater consideration in recent evangelical discussions of saving faith.

The author devotes a substantial portion of his text to a critique of Reformed discussions of faith. From the crucible of incisive analysis, a fair amount of pure doctrine is drawn from the colloquium of Reformed men of old. Particularly engaging are the remarks of Calvin who defined saving faith as "nothing else than to *assent* to the *truths* which God has revealed" (pp. 50, 112). At the same time, the author draws forth a sizable portion of theological dross from his Reformed predecessors! Most notable in this regard is the longstanding tripartite definition of faith as: "*notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*, or understanding, assent, and trust" (p. 46). According to Clark, if the Latin term *fiducia* means "trust," and if *fides* ("faith") and *fiducia* are virtual synonyms, then the tripartite definition of faith is, in effect, a tautology which makes faith a constituent part of faith (p. 52).

The author draws attention to another telling flaw in Reformed analyses of faith, namely, the vague articulation of what constitutes the "crowning component" of saving faith. Clark argues that abstruse aphorisms such as "being one with Christ" (p. 49), "consent to take Christ" (p. 50), and "a giving out of oneself to another" (p. 103) do nothing but consign saving faith to an ineffable, supra-psychological

"something" (pp. 47, 53-54, 82). The author also points out that the Lutheran description of *apprehensio fiducialis* (i.e., the faithful apprehension that grasps the knowledge of Christ and completes faith) is likewise tautological in that faith is said to include "a faithful apprehension" (p. 90).

One of the compelling points of Clark's argument is his enumeration of a number of biblical texts that demonstrate the interchangeable usage of the terms "heart" and "mind" (pp. 66-78). While the will and the emotions are recognized as faculties of the soul, it is the mind that serves as the controlling nucleus in the activity of faith (p. 78). This is important to recognize in discussions of saving faith, inasmuch as it demonstrates that faith is *largely* an act of the mind. Despite the commendable treatment that Clark devotes to this area, an expanded discussion of biblical psychology would have added significantly to his argument.

As is the case in the development of any given doctrine, there is always need for further elucidation. In the opinion of this reviewer, this is one area where Clark's book evidences weakness. That is to say, there is an absence of qualification and subsequent rebuttal to the preliminary points raised in his argument. A few examples will suffice to illustrate.

While Clark believes that the essence of faith is volitional assent, he does not thoroughly define of the Latin term *assensus* ("spiritual acknowledgment" or "agreement"). Neither does the author expound upon the dynamic—if any—that exists between the will and the mind in the exercise of faith. Another crucial oversight is that the author fails to press the point that Gospel propositions carry substantial implicative freight. Gospel propositions are *both* historical facts and inspired *logia* that serve as a *person-to-person* communiqué to lost and guilty sinners of all generations. Further qualification is likewise due in the distinguishing between "generic faith" and saving faith. In the case of the latter, this reviewer suggests that the pre-regenerating work of the Holy Spirit affects the will and enlightens the mind to the truth of the Gospel; whereas the former does not necessarily include divine intervention. Finally, Clark concludes that it is volitional assent to any number of biblical propositions that bring men into regenerate status (p. 110). Broadly speaking, this is certainly true. However, it seems altogether clear that volitional assent to given propositions from the Gospel of John would of themselves suffice for salvation. This is substantiated by the Apostle John's own purpose statement: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

Apart from the above-mentioned shortcomings, *Faith and Saving Faith* is a positive contribution that serves as theological grist for the continued analysis and development of the soteric doctrine of faith. It behooves the readers of this Journal to glean the profitable insights of Clark. In a word, *Faith and Saving Faith* succeeds in highlighting the simplicity of the act that brings eternally condemned men into a justified standing before God. But more than that, this book assigns due credit to Jesus Christ, Object of faith par excellence, the Divine Protagonist of salvation history.

**Gary L. Nebeker**
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***Power Evangelism.*** By John Wimber with Kevin Springer. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986. 201 pp. Cloth, $14.95.

This controversial book brings a new slant on evangelism from John Wimber, the founder and principal figure behind the "signs and wonders" movement. He comes from an evangelical Friends background, but in this book promotes charismatic-style practices for evangelistic purposes (Wimber prefers to be identified with non-charismatic evangelicals). Wimber says this display of the Spirit's power is "key for effective evangelism: combining the proclamation with the demonstration of the gospel." The demonstrations include the casting out of demons, healing the sick, and raising the dead (p. xx).

The book gives the personal journey of Wimber as he "discovers" these "charismatic" principles of power that assist in evangelism. He defines power evangelism as

> a presentation of the gospel that is rational but that also transcends the rational. The explanation of the gospel comes with a demonstration of God's power through signs and wonders. . . . It usually takes the form of words of knowledge . . . , healing, prophecy, and deliverance from evil spirits (p. 35).

Wimber provides a statement of his gospel in the first chapter under the subtitle, "The Gospel of the Kingdom." He says:

> Proclamation of a faulty gospel will produce faulty or, at best, weak Christians. Such is the case all too often today. Instead of a call to the

> lordship of Christ and membership in his kingdom, people are hearing a gospel that emphasizes self: come to Jesus and get this or that need met, be personally fulfilled, reach your potential. This, however, is not the costly kingdom gospel that Christ proclaims: "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35).

The problem of low commitment and weak Christians is all too often found in modern churches, but the solution to this problem is not found in adding to the Gospel message. Wimber's gospel presents the idea that salvation costs men something and makes no mention of trusting Christ's work on the Cross or His resurrection.

Another concern is that *Power Evangelism* lists case after case in which God is said to give someone a "word of knowledge" of some important information with the results that people are healed or commit themselves to God. It sounds very biblical to have God communicating with people through direct revelations, but John 1:18 and Heb 1:2 speak of Christ as the perfect revelation through whom God has spoken. Also, 2 Tim 3:17 says that the Scriptures are all that is necessary for living a godly life. The post-resurrection experience of the apostles and the early Church seems to present *direct* revelation as the exception not the rule (e.g., Paul on the Damascus Road or visions and revelations of 2 Cor 12:1-10; even Acts seems to be the "Certain Acts of Certain Apostles," namely Peter and Paul).

Wimber's book focuses on the need for power in evangelism as expressed by words of knowledge, healing, prophecy, or deliverance to energize modern-day evangelistic efforts. In doing this he not only moves away from his evangelical roots in handling miraculous sign gifts, but at times presents a confused or faulty gospel message. He also departs from the sure anchor of God's Word and presents the experience of himself and others as the basis for reality.

*Power Evangelism* attempts to wed evangelical theology with charismatic practice. What is so alarming is that many people today are more concerned about the use of miraculous gifts than a clear Gospel message that is true to the NT.

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***Stand Up and Be Counted.*** By R. T. Kendall. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985. 127 pp. Paper, $3.95.

This author, R. T. Kendall, needs little introduction. He became the minister of the famous Westminster Chapel in London with the blessing of his predecessor, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. This is interesting since Lloyd-Jones was a five-point Calvinist who had long vocalized his opposition to the public invitation. Kendall's defense of the public invitation in this book is an extension of his book *Once Saved Always Saved* (see review in *JOTGES* 1 [Autumn 1988]: 74-76), although both books can stand on their own and be read in any order.

*Stand Up and Be Counted* (subtitled, "Calling for Public Confession of Faith") has three major themes. It records Kendall's personal struggle of introducing public invitations into the Sunday evening services of a church highly influenced by Calvinism. Kendall also offers a defense (personal, biblical, and historical) of the practice of making what he calls a "public pledge." Kendall then gives practical advice on how to give a public invitation and what to expect when giving one.

This review is limited to three observations about Kendall's book. First, the key to Kendall's thinking is Rom 10:9-10. A public confession of faith in Jesus is necessary to prove that one's faith is saving faith. Kendall does not hold the traditional perseverance view of either Calvinism or Arminianism. He opts for eternal security. A person can apostatize from the faith, and though he may be disciplined and lose his rewards, he remains saved. However, public confession, whether before one person or before a whole congregation, is a necessary element in saving faith.

Leaving to one side the exegetical difficulties in Rom 10:9-10, there are theological problems with Kendall's emphasis. In spite of his disclaimer, does he really make public confession a condition for salvation (cf. *Once Saved*, p. 22)? Also, why should one stop with confession? Is it possible that the same line of reasoning could be used to include baptism, which is admitted by Kendall to be another form of public confession (p. 45)? He has excellent intentions, but it seems he has drawn the line at the wrong point and thus defeated his own position.

Second, his detailed argument for a public pledge based on OT examples (especially Abram's pledge to the king of Sodom in Genesis 14) raises hermeneutical questions. Admittedly, there are many similarities to be found in all public confessions of faith, but do Kendall's OT examples prove the necessity for public confession of a NT faith? It may be that Kendall has committed overkill. It might have been better to state that public confession of NT faith is in line with

the pattern found in the OT, but that the necessity for it today is to be found in the NT.

Third, this reviewer is very sympathetic to Kendall's concerns as well as his emphasis on the importance of a public confession of faith. However, some readers of *Stand Up and Be Counted* may wish to balance his view with the sound scriptural approach of Lewis Sperry Chafer in his work *True Evangelism*. Chafer also calls for a public confession of faith, but only after the issue is made clear that salvation is by faith and that walking down an aisle does not save. If one has just been saved, or if he has never publicly confessed his faith in the Savior, then, according to Chafer, the invitation is appropriate and significant.

Theological problems aside, Kendall's book offers sensibly practical steps to implementing public confession in the worship service. It is a readable and reasoned treatment which will prove worthwhile reading for any preacher considering the giving of invitations and who wonders how to go about it.

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*The Effective Invitation.* By R. Alan Streett. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1984. 252 pp. Paper, $6.95.

For those who believe the evangelistic invitation has a legitimate and important use in Christian preaching, there has long been the need for a helpful book. Streett's work could be that book, if one is willing to forgive some theological loose ends.

Any book on the sensitive subject of the evangelistic invitation will incite disagreement over theology and method because cherished theological convictions and tradition are at stake. Streett's work is not theologically exacting and the reader may detect a bias towards the traditional Southern Baptist altar call (when he wrote the book, Streett was Professor of Evangelism and New Testament at Criswell Bible College in Dallas, Texas), but the book nevertheless has its broader value.

Streett begins with a discussion of the Gospel and other theological concerns, then attempts to support the public invitation from Scripture,

tracing the historical use of the invitation, and answering criticisms about the invitation. Though the title suggests a "how to" book, only one-fourth of the book is devoted to practical suggestions.

The other sections have their value, however. Theological issues are important, and history always adds helpful perspective. One most interesting and valuable chapter is "Billy Graham's Use of the Public Invitation" where the reader is allowed a profitable inside glimpse and analysis of this celebrated evangelist's use of the public invitation. Also, criticisms commonly leveled at the public invitation are ably answered in chapter six. Chapter seven argues convincingly for the use of a public invitation. Nevertheless, a caveat is in order here; that is to say, this reviewer believes Streett has taken some questionable liberties in finding *public* invitations in the Scriptures and in the history of evangelism (as also in chapters three and four).

However, those in the mainstream of GES may be less than satisfied with Streett's first chapter, "Tell Me, What Is the Gospel?" At the outset, the reader gets the impression that Streett recognizes the free offer of salvation: "No one can work for or earn his salvation. It is a free, unmerited gift . . ." (p. 32). Still, one wonders why he quotes a proponent of Lordship Salvation on the Lordship of Christ (pp. 29-30). This reviewer is also confused by such statements as, "Until the hearer believes the facts of the gospel and receives Jesus Christ as his own personal Lord and Savior, the gospel message offers no hope for salvation" (p. 33). It is not that Streett presents an *unacceptable* view of the Gospel; on the contrary, he lacks *clarity* on a foundational issue that determines one's understanding and use of the public invitation.

His section on repentance may also raise questions, although many will find his view acceptable. Streett suggests that repentance "signifies the willful inward change of mind, not an initial outward action. The sinner must be transformed inside-out, not vice versa" (p. 41). He views repentance as a synonym for faith so that they are two sides of the same coin (p. 46). The question arises, however, in his application of the doctrine of repentance to Gospel preaching today. On account of the examples of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels, and Peter in Acts, the author feels that the preaching of repentance must receive due emphasis in the present generation (pp. 43-44). But it is a bit careless to equate the evangelistic invitation today with that in the Gospels and the early chapters of Acts without acknowledging dispensational differences between the invitation to God's covenant people, Israel, and the "other sheep." He also answers those who say that the absence of the mention of repentance in salvation-related passages (in particular, the Gospel of John, which never mentions it)

should restrain the preaching of repentance in modern evangelistic preaching. His answer that faith and repentance are synonyms and therefore deserve equal emphasis does not answer the biblical evidence satisfactorily (p. 46).

Streett also places undue emphasis on the public nature of confession. He says that a person who truly believes "will willingly make a confession of the fact" (p. 72). The problem is that confession is equated only with a *public* display: "A heart full of faith will express itself in a public witness. A faith that does not produce an open confession is not a saving faith" (p. 73). However, many would rather allow a new believer to confess Christ in more reserved ways than through the cultural altar call which Streett seems to favor. Furthermore, what *constitutes* a confession is a source of debate. Streett does not explain why, according to his view, baptism alone does not suffice.

These theological snags should not keep one from profiting from the practical aspects of the book. Contained within are balanced insights for preparing and delivering invitations, and helpful suggestions for the use of different kinds of invitations, the use of music, and inviting children to trust in Christ. Above all, Streett is to be commended for promoting integrity and opposing fleshly manipulation which uses undue pressure tactics in invitations.

If one has already resolved the theological issues relating to the invitation, this book can be used to great profit. It will surely be worth the price for those who are privileged to preach the Gospel and desire to do so more effectively.

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***The Omega Reunion.*** By Frank D. Carmical. Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1986. 101 pp. Paper, $3.95.

Technically a short novel, *The Omega Reunion* combines the best features of fantasy, science fiction, and biblical eschatology and blends these features into a practical study of the speculative future. Those who enjoy this particular genre of Christian literature (after the manner of J. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and C. S. Lewis' Space Trilogy) will find that this book makes for exciting reading.

Setting his story 150,000 years after the Millennium, Carmical intro-

duces the reader to Alcemene, a young married woman reporter who lives on New Earth. Her happy and peaceful life suddenly accelerates to rapid-fire frustration as she is commanded to whisk off to the New Jerusalem, the immense capital city of the universe in orbit over New Earth. Her assignment is to broadcast a live television feature on the Reunion that Jesus Christ, the King of the cosmos, plans to celebrate with the famed "Thirty-Seven." Now resurrected men, these honorees were the baby boys murdered by the wicked King Herod in Bethlehem in "ancient times." The grand celebration is to take place in a gigantic hall atop one of the fifty-mile high radial towers of the New Ephrathah Inn.

The reader journeys with Alcemene and beholds the breathtaking majesty of the universe of eternity future. Once in the Holy City, she meets the noble Aristocracy. These chivalrous magistrates possess powers of flight and instantaneous transport from one place to another at the speed of thought.

Amidst these stunning vistas and from these rulers of time and space, Alcemene learns the answers to some of the most puzzling dilemmas that have ever perplexed humanity. Her learning comes through personal and moving conversations with members of the Aristocracy. Also, Ben, one of the "Thirty-Seven" who bear the scars of Herod's once mortal sword wounds, gently inspires her to comprehend the wisdom of God in allowing undeserved suffering. And just as these interviews leave her mind dizzy with excitement, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself makes His grand entrance to the Omega Reunion!

The greatest practical value of this little volume is that it gives both the young Christian or the more mature believer a glimpse of the future that is not only appealing and in harmony with biblical revelation, but *specific* and *realistic*. Readers will also profit from the explanations of perplexing problems such as that given for undeserved suffering. Carmical includes helpful endnotes of both theological and literary interest.

Although one might wish the author had developed the plot more and introduced greater conflict for a longer story, as it stands the book is an effective picture of things to come. No longer will the reader fail to find motivation for faithful living in the present because of a nebulous or fuzzy concept of eternity future. Carmical has done an excellent job of giving the reader a taste of the hereafter.

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# PERIODICAL REVIEWS

**"A Review of *The Gospel According to Jesus*,"** Darrell L. Bock, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January–March 1989, pp. 21-40.

(Editor's Note: The writer of the following review, Zane C. Hodges, served on the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary for twenty-seven years in the department of New Testament Literature and Exegesis. His commitment to students and to the theological position of the school is well known by those who had the privilege of sitting under his teaching, including your Editor.)

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary and its first president and professor of systematic theology, was known for his commitment to the clear teaching of the grace of God in salvation. He was opposed to anything that might today be called "Lordship salvation." Now, however, in a *Bibliotheca Sacra* review of a recent volume promoting this doctrine, a Dallas Seminary professor has himself taken a "Lordship" position.

In the January–March issue of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Dr. Darrell L. Bock, Associate Professor of New Testament Studies, reviewed *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan, 1988), by Dr. John F. MacArthur, Jr. Bock's review is basically irenic in tone, and this writer is pleased that Bock has spoken graciously of him by saying, for example, "This reviewer sat under Hodges' teaching . . . and can testify . . . that Hodges strongly emphasized the importance of holiness. . . ." (p. 36). Also, Bock's desire for some kind of accommodation between the two sides in the debate over the Gospel (pp. 37-40) is undoubtedly sincere, even if it is unrealistic.

One would be hard-pressed, however, to pick up from Bock's review the real nature of MacArthur's book. In reality, MacArthur's volume is a vigorous attack on the doctrine of salvation as it has been historically taught at Dallas Seminary. MacArthur explicitly disagrees with the teachings of Dr. Chafer, as well as those of Dr. Charles C. Ryrie, long a professor of theology at Dallas and a well-known exponent of a completely free salvation.

For example, MacArthur collides directly with the historic view of the Seminary when he writes:

> The centrality of Jesus' lordship to the gospel message is clear from the way Scripture presents the terms of salvation. Those who dichotomize between believing on Christ as Savior and yielding to Him as Lord have a difficult time with many biblical invitations to faith. . . . [p. 207].

Contrast with this Chafer's own words:

> As all this is true, it follows that to impose a need to surrender the life to God as an added condition of salvation is most unreasonable. God's call to the unsaved is never said to be unto the Lordship of Christ; it is unto His saving grace [*Systematic Theology*, 3: *Soteriology*, p. 385].

In his review, Bock runs up the white flag of surrender to the "Lordship" position. Thus he writes:

> What then is the message of the gospel and how should one describe a response to it? As already noted, to trust Jesus is to recognize His authority to save, His authority to be honored, and His authority to be followed [p. 38].

Shortly Bock adds in reference to someone who comes to Jesus for salvation:

> In fact he volitionally accepts a change of masters, from sin to God (Rom. 6:16-18) [p. 38].

This is nothing but "Lordship Salvation" pure and simple.

Of course, Bock is not as strident as MacArthur is, but there is no mistaking the underlying unity in their theological positions. For example, one of Bock's stated "areas of agreement" with MacArthur is this:

> *Repentance from sin is a part of the gospel call and is a part of what is entailed in faith* [p. 27; italics in the original].

Bock then proceeds, wrongly, to place himself within the framework of Dallas Seminary's doctrinal position:

> The Doctrinal Statement of Dallas Theological Seminary makes the same point in Article VII: "We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in Christ and that repentance is a vital part of believing, and is in no way in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation." Lewis Sperry Chafer . . . was responsible for this statement which represents the Seminary's position. And yet MacArthur says Chafer denied the role of repentance in saving faith.

> What Chafer argued is that repentance alone, without the positive side of faith, is not enough. Regret or sorrow for sin is not enough if it is not wedded to trust. When Chafer affirmed that repentance alone is inadequate for salvation, he had in mind the "anxiety benches" in the tent revivals of his day [p. 29].

This is quite wrong. The reviewer seems to be seriously misinformed about Chafer's actual position on repentance. Chafer held that repentance was simply a change of mind, and thus he writes:

> As before stated, repentance, which is a change of mind, is included in believing. No individual can turn to Christ from some other confidence without a change of mind, and that, it should be noted, is all the repentance a spiritually dead person can ever effect [Chafer, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 107 (Oct.–Dec. 1950): 392].

This is light years removed from the position of John MacArthur, who explicitly objects to Chafer's teaching on the theme of repentance (p. 160). MacArthur also rejects as inadequate Chafer's definition of repentance as a change of mind (p. 162). Hence he writes as follows:

> Repentance is not merely being ashamed or sorry over sin. . . . It is a redirection of the human will, a purposeful decision to forsake all unrighteousness and pursue righteousness instead [p. 163].

Chafer would most certainly have rejected this definition of repentance for salvation. See his discussion in *Systematic Theology* (3: *Soteriology*), pp. 371-78. Indeed, after affirming that repentance is simply turning from some other object of trust to Christ, Chafer concludes his whole discussion like this:

> Upwards of 150 texts—including all of the greatest gospel invitations—limit the human responsibility in salvation to believing or to faith. To this simple requirement nothing can be added if the glories of grace are to be preserved [p.378].

The effort by Bock to place Chafer and MacArthur basically within the same camp on the subject of repentance is a serious disservice to the memory of the school's founder.

Not surprisingly, then, Bock places himself on MacArthur's side of the equation on the doctrine of assurance. As yet another area of agreement with MacArthur, Bock gives the following:

> *Once-saved, always-saved assurance applies to* true *profession, and there is such a thing as false profession to which assurance does not apply* [pp. 30-31].

The discussion that follows this statement in Bock's review is remark-

able for its lack of historical perspective. The historic position of Reformed theology has been that true and false faith can only be distinguished by means of "the fruits" of the Spirit in the believer's life over time. This means, of course, that assurance is actually impossible at the moment of saving faith, since the genuineness of that faith can only be verified by subsequent events.

MacArthur's position is categorically that of Reformed theology. He states:

> Genuine assurance comes from seeing the Holy Spirit's transforming work in one's life, not from clinging to the memory of some experience [p. 23].

Of course, this represents a false dichotomy, one of many with which MacArthur's volume is filled. The alternatives are not: the evidence of the Spirit's work in the life versus "clinging to the memory of some experience." The correct alternative is: the promises of God's Word to the believer.

But Bock does not seem to be aware of the profound problems created for the doctrine of assurance when the weight of our assurance is made to rest on the "transforming work" of the Spirit in our lives. His agreement with MacArthur in the area of assurance is a capitulation to Reformed thought. It is also unmistakably in conflict with Dallas Seminary's doctrinal position on assurance.

Article XI, "Assurance," in the Seminary's doctrinal statement states that it is "the privilege . . . of all who are born again by the Spirit through faith in Christ . . . to be assured of their salvation from the very day they take Him to be their Savior. . . ." But this view of assurance is *impossible* in terms of Reformed thought. For if my lack of works can after all disconfirm my salvation, then any assurance I thought I had was a mirage. To put it another way, on "the very day" one "takes Him to be" one's "Savior" I cannot really know for sure whether I have *truly* trusted Christ or *falsely* done so.

No wonder that in the Reformed communions, as also in "Lordship Salvation" thought, the struggle with assurance is a downhill slide into a doctrinal and emotional quagmire. Neither is it surprising that in our day, from within Reformed theology itself, there has come a clarion call to return to the position of John Calvin, who held that *assurance is of the very essence of saving faith* (see R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* [Oxford Press, 1979]; and M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* [Handsel Press, 1985]). But about all of this discussion we get not a syllable in Bock's review.

Yet despite its grave inadequacies (not to say, doctrinal error), Bock's review is printed in *Bibliotheca Sacra* not merely as a review, but as a review elevated to the status of a major article. This suggests that, from the standpoint of the Seminary's administration, Bock's review is more or less an official response to MacArthur's highly controversial book.

Nevertheless, the theology represented by Bock is a clear and distinct departure from the Seminary's prevailing historic position on salvation—a position still firmly held by hundreds of its graduates. This can only be described as tragic. If Dr. Chafer were alive, he would be deeply grieved.

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**"Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance,"** Anthony N. S. Lane, *Vox Evangelica*, Issue 11, 1979, pp. 32-54.

Lane's purposes in this article appear to be: (1) a clear presentation of Calvin's doctrine of assurance, and (2) a refutation of the Barthian ideas of a certain Dr. W. H. Chalker. Lane first explains Calvin's understanding of assurance. He concludes that Calvin did not separate faith and assurance—faith was "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favor," and necessarily included certainty (p. 33). A telling statement is found on page 33: "Assurance is not a second stage in the Christian life, subsequent to and distinct from faith. In the following century some of his [Calvin's] followers did separate them in this way and this, together with a departure from Calvin's ground of assurance, led to a widespread loss of assurance."

What then was "Calvin's ground for assurance?" Lane individually considers and eliminates (1) trying to discern if one was elect, (2) one's works, and (3) a self-examination of the genuineness of one's faith. The only basis for assurance was outside of oneself, in the Gospel of Jesus' act of mercy toward mankind. Only by looking to His sacrificial work could one have faith and assurance of God's forgiveness.

He then considers the deductions of Dr. Chalker from this doctrine. Chalker had asserted that there is no knowledge of God apart from saving knowledge, and that people can have no knowledge of their lost condition until after they have accepted Christ as Savior. Suffice it to

say, Lane establishes that these are not legitimate deductions from Calvin's theology. However, an important addition made by Lane is that faith does not merely recognize the saving merits of Christ; there is an actual appropriation. Calvin himself had stated that "We should make these promises of mercy ours by inwardly embracing them" (p. 43).

What of perseverance in Calvin? Lane clearly explains Calvin's understanding of those who seem to all to have faith and then fall away—they were given *temporary* faith by God which *deceived* them into believing they were saved, though the elect always know when they are saved and should never be disturbed by God's actions in the non-elect. A troubling position, to say the least! However, Calvin would deny the salvation of anyone who fell away. A failure to persevere was proof of the spurious nature of one's faith.

Lane then concludes with an interesting analysis and comparison. With *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, R. T. Kendall had offended many when he wrote that the Westminster Confession, in looking to works, had taken a position similar to that of Arminius. Lane goes even further than this. In its practical syllogism, its separation of faith from assurance, and in looking for the evidence of one's faith in one's works, English Calvinism was on a level with the Roman Catholicism of Calvin's day, expressing ideas which Calvin had *specifically rejected*. Lane quotes Calvin: "Doubtless, if we are to determine by our works in what way the Lord stands affected toward us, we cannot even get the length of a feeble conjecture. But since faith should accord with the free and simple promise, there is no room left for ambiguity" (p. 49).

Lane concludes, "It is ironical that (the words) written against Calvin's opponents in his own time should so accurately portray the situation of many of his would-be followers in the following century" (p. 48).

"Equal to Roman Catholics!" These are strong words in an age when many are calling "antinomian" the belief that faith in Christ alone, apart from works, necessarily includes assurance of salvation. Rather than antinomian, as Lane has suggested, we are in agreement with Calvin on this point, who insisted that "Assurance is based not on anything in ourselves but on Christ and the promises of God" (p. 49).

However, there are indications that Lane feels that the NT supports the idea that works are an evidence of one's salvation (pp. 34, 40). And one must still acknowledge that Calvin linked perseverance with assurance. If one did not have faith, since faith and assurance are one and the same, it necessarily follows that there are no grounds for assurance.

Lane's article is highly recommended for its clear, even-handed treatment of a difficult subject.

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**"Doctrinal Development in Orthodoxy,"** Craig A. Blaising, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April–June 1988, pp. 133-40.

Painting others into a corner sometimes serves as a favorite pastime of theologians in determining what is and what is not orthodoxy. Discrediting different positions as unorthodox may be the norm in popular evangelicalism, but the practice should be dissatisfying to most thoughtful exegetes. Loaded terms such as "cheap grace," "easy-believism," "antinomianism," and "the gospel *which is not* according to Jesus," are attacked by those who claim to be defending orthodoxy as representative of the positions of those who seek to destroy that same orthodoxy. Straw men and red herrings notwithstanding, how can one know if some doctrinal development is orthodox? Craig Blaising lays some helpful groundwork which answers this question in his article on doctrinal development. Blaising traces the history of modern dispensationalism in terms of its development and place in orthodoxy, demonstrates how one may recognize orthodoxy, and offers suggestions on how the exegete may be involved in the proper development of doctrine.

Blaising uses an historical sketch to prove that it is not unreasonable to expect a progressive development of doctrine within orthodoxy, and that such development is to be encouraged. He uses a comparison of John Nelson Darby and John Henry Newman, two original and influential British church leaders of the nineteenth century, to emphasize separate struggles with methodology as a foil to underscore the problem of theological development. The need for a discussion of development of doctrine was raised by Newman with questionable results. Nevertheless, the desire for this discussion has not disappeared, although it has been continually ducked by evangelicals. A properly understood method is to be pursued, and dispensational scholars should lead the way. Blaising offers some constructive seminal thoughts on the methodology.

The author continues by saying that though there are competing systems within orthodoxy, development should move in the direction of more accurate conformity to the Scriptures and improved hermeneutics. Particularly helpful is the realization that orthodox development occurs as a theological system better "fits" its scriptural source. Four epistemological areas which guide the understanding of a "fit" are *comprehension*, which deals with how much of Scripture is accounted for in the expression; *congruity*, or how well one accounts for the biblical data; *consistency*, which is lack of contradiction; and *coherence*, which is a conceptual unity within the expression itself.

Furthermore, the exegete need not fear theological development. The evidence Blaising presents in the article should lead one to conclude that doctrinal development is a fact and that it should be encouraged. The starting point is methodology with an expectation that improved hermeneutical method will contribute to a more accurate understanding of what the biblical author intended. As Blaising puts it, the "center of tradition" is in the Scriptures rather than in a human word (p. 140).

Legitimization of a theological expression comes on the basis of Scripture in an atmosphere of tension with older theological syntheses. Blaising applies this useful observation to substantiate the legitimacy of doctrinal development in dispensational theology. The theological world is replete with those who allow themselves doctrinal development but deny it to others. As those who desire to communicate the Gospel clearly, we must not practice this double standard. In fact, we ought to emphasize that our soteriology, which emphasizes that the sole condition of salvation is faith in Christ apart from works, is developing. This Journal is evidence of that development. At the same time, the doctrinal emphasis of this Journal is an orthodox development that, upon inspection, advances the strongest of soteriological positions. To argue this we may point to Blaising's four epistemological tests. That salvation is the giving and receiving of a free gift is biblical. Any theological articulation or development which returns us to the Word of God as our "center of tradition" is legitimate and worthy of being called orthodox.

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**"Faith and Works in the Pastoral Epistles,"** I. Howard Marshall, *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 9 (1984): 203-18.

The purpose of Marshall's article is to refute the notion that the Pastoral Epistles are inconsistent in their theology, i.e., that they teach two kinds of justification: one by faith and one by works. Marshall also discusses the relationship between faith and works. The author is the Senior Lecturer in New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and author of numerous books, including: *I Believe in the Historical Jesus*, *The Epistles of John* (NICNT), and *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGNT). He is also the editor of *New Testament Interpretation*.

There are four major topics of discussion in the article: (1) salvation not by works, (2) an overview of the theological structure of the Epistles, (3) the concept of faith in the Pastorals, and (4) a short analysis of good works, righteousness, and judgment. Most of the work revolves around salvation not by works and the concept of faith.

Marshall rightly deplores the lack of attention given to the Pastorals by recent NT scholars. This neglect is due to the disputed authorship of these Epistles as well as to their having been labeled as "secondary writings" in the Pauline corpus. The author endeavors to demonstrate the theological contribution to, and consistency of these Epistles with, NT theology, and Paul's theology in particular.

In his discussion of salvation, Marshall effectively refutes the charge that the Epistles teach two kinds of soteriology: a justification by faith and one by works. This charge comes from B. S. Easton, in his *The Pastoral Epistles* (London, 1948), with whom the author interacts extensively. Salvation is not by works, as is clearly specified in 2 Tim 1:9 and Titus 3:4-7. Salvation is a work of God and not of man; this is the Gospel which runs throughout the Epistles. However, Marshall's explanations of 1 Tim 2:15 and 4:16 are vague and not as helpful as they should be, since these are the two primary references cited by Easton as teaching justification by works or performance. For example, Marshall explains 1 Tim 4:16 in light of 1 Cor 9:27: that there is a possibility that Paul himself might end up as a "castaway" and could be in "spiritual danger." What these expressions mean is not explained and might give rise to the thought of loss of salvation, which Marshall thinks possible. Marshall does not hold to the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. Rather, he feels that the Scriptures teach that a believer, by lack of faithful perseverance, can fall away and lose his eternal life (cf. Marshall's *Kept by the Power of God*, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1969).

The real "danger" in 1 Cor 9:24-27 is a loss of the "prize" or eternal reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which might also be in view in 1 Timothy. Marshall does not deal with the possibility that "save" (*sōzō*) might have a different meaning in those contexts than a reference to salvation from eternal death or to justification. In fact, *sōzō* has a wide range of meanings and in its rudimentary sense has the idea of "preserve or rescue" from something (BAGD, p. 798). The question to ask in each context is, "*Save* from what?" In 1 Tim 4:15 the danger might be an ineffective ministry or life and refer to a salvation in this life or an eschatological salvation (future reward). In 1 Tim 2:15 women are "saved" or "preserved" from a life without impact and significance not by usurping the man's role in the local church, but by their ministry in the home.

The Pastorals' theology revolves around the Gospel: its proclamation in sound teaching and in sound living. The concept of faith held by the Pastor (Marshall seems reluctant to name Paul the Apostle as the author of these Epistles and refers to the author as "the Pastor") includes the element of trust. So when certain sayings are said to be "faithful" (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8); it means that they are unfailingly dependable. "Faith" is used in the Pastorals as a characteristic of believers as being "faithful" (1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 2:2), or more broadly, to believers as a class (1 Tim 4:3, 12).

Marshall gives a good analysis of the "faith" word group in the Pastorals by showing the variety of nuances that these words possess. The faith word group can refer to "faithful" sayings deserving the reader's full confidence or "trust," an essential element of "faith" (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8). It can refer to the faithfulness of the Savior (2 Tim 2:13) and that of His followers (2 Tim 2:12). Faithful believers are those who remain true to Jesus Christ and His Gospel in the face of opposition and heresy. But the term can also be a broad equivalent for Christians as "the believers" (1 Tim 4:3, 12). Yet even here Marshall sees the connotation of a continued state of believing. His statement on 1 Tim 4:16 that "to believe in Christ is not simply to believe certain things about him but to take up an attitude of trust and commitment" (p. 212), is disappointing because it fails to demonstrate *from the text* this idea of commitment as part of believing. Many today likewise want to make the element of "fiducia" in saving faith (*notitia, assensus, fiducia*) to mean both faith *and commitment*, but faith is trusting God to do the work of salvation, not committing to help Him get the job done or to pay Him back through our feeble efforts.

Yet Marshall correctly stresses this aspect of trust in a person: "Faith

is by no means a formal attitude. It is a living, personal relationship of trust in God" (p. 213). In other words, to him it is not just intellectual assent to a creed. Faith begins the Christian life and that life is sustained by a lifetime of faith. Yet the author recognizes the danger of "apostasy from 'the faith' " and that the "good fight of faith is an active struggle" (p. 214), not a guaranteed result from the first experience of faith. Faith is continually renewed by sound teaching. Marshall does not elaborate that it requires more than listening to sound teaching to sustain faith, but that obedient response to that teaching is needed.

Overall, this is a helpful article to stimulate more biblical inquiry in the faith and works debate, but its main purpose is to vindicate Paul from the charge of justification by works. Marshall's work provides a framework for a biblical theology of the Pastorals that integrates the teaching of all three Epistles. Thus the article gives a good overview of the theology of the Pastorals as a whole.

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**"Untrustworthy Believers — John 2:23-25,"** Zane C. Hodges, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April–June 1978, pp. 139-52.

For the sake of their clarity in dealing with oft-disputed passages in the Gospel of John, Zane C. Hodges' series of articles on problem passages which appeared in 1978, is still worth reading in its entirety. For those concerned with the Evangelist's perspective on soteriology, this article, the second in the series, is the most informative of the four. Hodges holds that Jesus does not entrust Himself to genuine believers (2:24) because of their unwillingness to express their faith publicly.

Hodges begins with a polemic against inadequate views of the passage. He points out that efforts to make *episteusen eis to onoma autou* (2:23) mean anything but genuine faith are unwarranted. Hodges reviews the commentary traditions that are greatly exercised by the kind of faith that is said to be "imperfect and liable to be overthrown." The author ably demonstrates that the usage of *pisteuō* in 2:23 is consistent with its other occurrences in John and refers to an adequate, saving faith. He also discards any attempt to discredit a faith that is based

upon signs which Jesus performed, a position that ignores the fact that signs have a central place in John as an *aid* to faith.

According to Hodges, a solution to the interpretive inconsistencies of John 2:23-25 begins with an understanding of the sub-theme of intimacy with Jesus in the Gospel of John. He points out that intimate fellowship with Christ is offered to every believer if that believer is obedient to His commands. This position correlates with "servants" who have exercised genuine faith and who have become "friends" (John 15:15). Untrustworthy believers, like those in John 2, are believers who have not entered into this intimate fellowship with the Savior.

Hodges undergirds this understanding by drawing the readers' attention to the context immediately following the paragraph under consideration. Nicodemus was a seeker of God who feared giving an open testimony to Christ. He illustrates the untrustworthy believer of John 2 who fails to enter into intimacy with Jesus, and stands in contrast to John the Baptist who openly declares his allegiance so that it may be made evident that God is working through him (John 2:21). (See Hodges, "Coming to the Light—John 3:20-21," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 [October-December 1978]: 321.)

Hodges also offers a valuable discussion of confession and its relationship to faith in the Gospel of John (pp. 148-49).

Hodges' clear exposition of John 2:23-25 makes a valuable contribution toward an understanding of Johannine soteriology, i.e., one may exercise genuine faith and yet resist intimacy with the Savior. This interpretive approach to John 2:23-25 will help believers encourage one another to obedience rather than to cast doubts on the validity of their faith. It will also help maintain the integrity of the meaning of *faith* in John, which is nothing less than saving faith.

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## A HYMN OF GRACE

# Grace! 'Tis a Charming Sound

Grace! 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.

'Twas grace that wrote my name
In life's eternal book;
'Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,
Who all my sorrows took.

Grace taught my wandering feet
To tread the heavenly road;
And new supplies each hour I meet,
While pressing on to God.

Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made mine eyes o'erflow;
'Twas grace which kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.

O let Thy grace inspire
My soul with strength divine:
May all my powers to Thee aspire,
And all my days be Thine.

— Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751
(Stanzas 1, 3.)
— Augustus M. Toplady, 1740-1778
(Stanzas 2, 4, 5.)

# BOOKS RECEIVED

All books for possible review should be sent to the Editor, 6218 Prospect Ave., Dallas, TX 75214. Titles of all volumes received which are related to the interests of the Journal are listed here in the Spring edition of the Journal. Inclusion in this section does not rule out later review of any book. It is impossible to acknowledge or return unsolicited books submitted for review or listing.

ANDERSON, DON. *Joseph: Fruitful in Affliction*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1988. Pp. 356. $9.95 (paper).

BARBER, CYRIL L. *Your Marriage Can Last a Lifetime*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989. Pp. 192. $7.95 (paper).

BULLINGER, ETHELBERT. *Number in Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988 reprint. Pp. 312. $9.95 (paper). Originally published in 1894.

BULTEMA, HARRY. *Commentary on Daniel*. Tr. by Cornelius Lambregtse. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988. Pp. 368. $12.95 (paper).

CAMPBELL, ROGER. *Preach for a Year*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988. Pp. 224. $9.95 (paper).

DAHL, GERALD L. *How Can We Keep Christian Marriages from Falling Apart?* Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989. Pp. 192. $7.95 (paper).

ELLIOT, ELISABETH. *Loneliness*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988. Pp. 158. $12.95 (paper).

FAIRBAIRN, PATRICK. *Commentary on Ezekiel*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989 reprint. Pp. 512. (paper). Originally published by Zondervan, 1960.

GRAHAM, RUTH BELL. *Legacy of a Pack Rat*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989. Pp. 224. $14.95 (cloth).

HABERMAS, GARY R. *The Verdict of History: Conclusive Evidence for the Life of Jesus*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984. Pp. 187. $7.95 (paper).

HABERSHON, ADA R. *The Study of Types: Priests and Levites, A Type of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988 reprint. Pp. 240. $7.95 (paper). Originally published as "The Study of Types" and "Priests and Levites," by H. Holness, n.d.

_____. *Types in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988 reprint. Pp. 304. $9.95 (paper). Originally published as *Hidden Pictures, or How the New Testament is Concealed in the Old Testament* by Oliphant, 1916.

HENGSTENBERG, E. W. *Christology of the Old Testament*. Tr. by Reuel Keith. Includes an introduction by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989 reprint. Pp. 716. $19.95 (paper). An abridgement of the 1847 original.

MANTON, THOMAS. *Commentary on Jude*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988 reprint. Pp. 375. $13.95 (paper). Originally published by L. Fawn, 1658.

MACDONALD, GORDON. *Rebuilding Your Broken World*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988. Pp. 224. $12.95 (cloth).

_____. *Renewing Your Spiritual Passion*. Expanded Edition with Study Guide. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989. Pp. 240. $7.95 (paper).

McGEE, J. VERNON. *The Best of J. Vernon McGee*. Vol. 1. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988. Pp. 239. $12.95 (cloth).

McGEE, J. VERNON. *Ruth and Esther: Women of Faith*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988. Pp. 336. $9.95 (paper).

RYRIE, CHARLES C. *The Miracles of our Lord*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1988. Pp. 186. $11.95 (cloth). Originally published by Thomas Nelson, 1984.

SHORROSH, ANIS. *Islam Revealed*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988. Pp. 313. $12.95 (paper).

SHOWERS, RENALD. *The New Nature*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1986. Pp. 182. $12.95 (cloth). Abridgment of a dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1975.

SPURGEON, CHARLES HADDON. *Commenting and Commentaries.* Includes "A Classic Bible Study Library for Today" by Warren Wiersbe, et. al. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989 reprint. Pp. 270. $8.95 (paper).

STANLEY, CHARLES. *Temptation.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988. Pp. 191. $12.95 (cloth).

STRAUSS, RICHARD L. *The Joy of Knowing God.* Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1988 reprint. Pp. 303. $8.95 (paper).

THOMAS, W. H. GRIFFITH. *The Apostle John: His Life and Writings.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989 reprint. Pp. 376. $10.95 (paper). Originally published by Eerdmans, 1944.

_____. *The Apostle Peter: His Life and Writings.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989 reprint. Pp. 304. (paper). Originally published by Eerdmans, 1946.

WIERSBE, WARREN W. *Classic Sermons on Prayer.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989 reprint. Pp. 160. $8.95 (paper). Fourteen sermons by various speakers, all previously published.