

Journal of the  
**GRACE**  
Evangelical Society

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"Faith Alone In Christ Alone"



# Journal of the GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY

*"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"*

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**Purpose:** The Grace Evangelical Society was formed "to promote the clear proclamation of God's free salvation through faith alone in Christ alone, which is properly correlated with and distinguished from issues related to discipleship."

**Statement of Faith:** "Jesus Christ, God incarnate, paid the full penalty for man's sin when He died on the Cross of Calvary. Any person who, in simple faith, trusts in the risen Christ as their only hope of heaven, refusing to trust in anything else, receives the gift of eternal life which, once granted, can never be lost."

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# We Believe In: WATER BAPTISM

ARTHUR L. FARSTAD

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society  
Dallas, TX

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19, 20).*

## I. Introduction

If one were writing an article on baptism for a Baptist publication—or a Church of Christ, Presbyterian, or Roman Catholic one—the task would not be too difficult. Each group has well-defined positions on all aspects of this doctrine. The *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, however, is for evangelical Christians who believe in salvation by grace through faith and yet are found in many separate groups. Our readership holds differing views not only on the *mode* but also the *meaning* of baptism, and perhaps most important of all, the proper *candidates* for water baptism. Difficult as it may be, in this article we propose to examine the consensus of nearly all Christians on water baptism.

Many sincere Christians get a little upset when such a controversial subject as baptism is broached; however, except for those who reject water baptism, this will not be a divisive or polemical article, but rather (we trust) a unifying and edifying one.

## II. The Christian Consensus

For nearly two thousand years almost all who profess to be followers of Christ have sought to obey His command quoted at the head of this article. Through the centuries various groups have worked out differing traditions as to when, who, why, and how candidates are to be baptized.

Nevertheless there is a very broad consensus: People have universally

made contact with water in a rite signifying that they are Christians or that they are meant to be brought up in the Christian faith.

### III. The Current Exceptions

Perhaps the handful of exceptions to the practice of water baptism constitutes an example of what is popularly called "the exception that proves the rule."

Three groups in contemporary Christendom, one harking back to the seventeenth century, and two from the nineteenth, have chosen not to believe in or practice water baptism at all. Two of these, the Society of Friends (popularly called "Quakers") and the Salvation Army, have been very active in valuable social work. The third group, generally identified as "ultra-dispensationalists" (though obviously not their own chosen designation) rests on such subtle "dividing" of the Scriptures as to attract chiefly those of an intellectual bent to their circle of fellowship.

#### The Quakers

The Society of Friends has generally taught that outward rites are not necessary to the spiritually advanced. This includes the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The vast majority of people, however, strongly disagree. Aside from our Lord's *command*, most professing believers feel the need for tangible, observable helps to express their faith.

The Quaker teaching sprang from an over-reaction to the ritualistic formalism of the "Establishment" (Church of England) in the 1600's. George Fox and his followers felt that they were more advanced spiritually than their Protestant and Roman Catholic neighbors, and so did not need "the sacraments."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Salvation Army

This great evangelistic movement, patterned after a military organization, has done great charitable work and won many converts. Early Salvationists *did* practice the ordinances of water baptism and communion but because they were accused of becoming another

<sup>1</sup>"The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper have no place in Quaker Meetings. All life being considered a religious sacrament, occasional ceremonies were thought to obscure the need for continual spiritual striving, and just as a special oath was dispensed with by speaking the truth at all times, in the same way special sacraments were considered unnecessary." Sidney Lucas, *The Quaker Story* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers 1949), 52.

denomination and also because they reacted to the extreme denominational divisions of the nineteenth century, General William Booth decided in 1882 that the practice of the ordinances should be discontinued.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless many Salvationists were and are already baptized, or get baptized elsewhere. It is hard for people not to feel that omitting Christ's "standing orders" to baptize in water is an act of insubordination to the Commander-in-Chief.

### The Ultra-Dispensationalists

You will never see a sign reading "First Ultra-Dispensationalist Church." Those in this movement believe that they are more advanced than traditional dispensationalists and that there is nothing "ultra" about them. Those who look with disfavor on dispensational theology often lump dispensationalists and ultra-dispensationalists together, but they are really quite different in outlook.<sup>3</sup>

Ultra-dispensationalists believe that the Christian Church started after Pentecost, and that the earliest Church was a Jewish Church.<sup>4</sup> Hence they consider baptism and the Lord's Supper, or at least the former, to

<sup>2</sup>The Toronto *War Cry* for August, 1959, lists eight reasons why the Salvation Army abandoned the ordinances: "In discarding the use of sacraments the Army Founder was led to do so for the following reasons: 1. There was no uniformity of practice. 2. There was great argument and conflict between religious denominations. 3. The bitterness engendered was harmful to the interests of the kingdom. 4. A large proportion of Church members gave no outward sign of an inward change, although they placed great importance upon the observance of the sacraments. 5. There was no scriptural warrant for the way the sacraments were observed. 6. They were not necessary to salvation or spiritual progress. 7. Some forms were positively harmful to the Army type of converts. 8. Salvation by the blood of the Lamb and regeneration by the Holy Spirit were the essentials. The only baptism enjoined in the New Testament was the baptism of the Holy Spirit." Quoted by Alfred Gibbs, *Christian Baptism* (Kansas City, KS: Walterick Publishers, 1966), 109. Regarding the last point, it certainly is *not* true that only Spirit baptism is enjoined in the NT, as the Great Commission shows.

<sup>3</sup>All Christians who don't practice animal sacrifice are to that extent "dispensational." Those who reject dispensationalism as a theological system often think that mainstream, traditional dispensationalists are "ultra." The discussion of ultra-dispensationalist rejection of one or both of the ordinances should highlight a main difference. In all fairness, however, it should be pointed out that ultra-dispensationalists accept the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.

<sup>4</sup>Ultra-dispensationalists all reject water baptism, but the more moderate ones accept the Lord's Supper. A typical "moderate" view would be O'Hair's: "Most 'grace' preachers claim that we are working under the 'great commission' of Matthew 28:19 and 20 and that we are to baptize with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, after believers are made members of the Body of Christ by Holy Spirit baptism. But they do not know what for. Many defend their practice because 'it is too late to change.' But not one of the dozen or more water baptism theories can be proved by the Bible rightly

be “carnal” ordinances fit only for the Jewish phase of Christianity.<sup>5</sup> In 1 Cor 1:13-17 Paul tells a little about his own practice regarding baptism. Preaching the Gospel, not baptizing, was his primary mission (v 17). The important thing to note here is that Paul, the number-one “hero” of the ultra-dispensationalist movement, *did* baptize Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, and saw to it that it was done for the others.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the Lord’s Supper, the phrase “till He comes” (1 Cor 11:26) would seem to answer the question sufficiently for most. Regarding baptism, where in Scripture has the command to baptize ever been rescinded?

#### IV. Baptism and Grace

Quite early in Christian history the idea grew up that baptism was necessary for salvation. Also the notion appeared that baptism washed away original sin and (for older candidates) any sins committed before baptism.

While Grace Evangelical Society’s constituency may disagree as to the *exact* meaning of water baptism, this is a mild disagreement compared to the issue of whether or not water baptism is necessary for *salvation*!

Members of the Society, along with evangelicals generally, will strongly affirm that although commanded by Christ, and hence important, water baptism confers no saving grace.

None of us would ever suggest that any Friend, Salvationist, or ultra-dispensationalist who truly received Christ by faith will be eternally lost.

divided. They cannot prove their practice by the Bible, except by corrupting some Scriptures and wholly ignoring other Scriptures” (J. C. O’Hair, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* [Chicago: J. C. O’Hair, n.d.], 228).

One must take strong exception to O’Hair’s last statement. It is not only uncharitable; it is false. The more extreme view can be represented by Welch: “The preaching of the Baptist had been, ‘I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after Me is mightier than I . . . He shall baptize you with the holy spirit [sic] and fire’ (Matt. iii. 11). During the Gospels we find water baptism and the promise of baptism in spirit [sic]. During the Acts we find water baptism and the baptism in spirit [sic] together. During the present period we find no water baptism, but the baptism in spirit [sic] only” (Charles H. Welch, *Dispensational Truths* [London: Frederick P. Brininger, 1912], 226).

<sup>5</sup>The notion that the Church to which we belong didn’t start till after Pentecost (ultra-dispensationalists have several proposed starting points) and that the Church in Acts was “Jewish” and hence went in for “carnal” rites is ably refuted in the recently reprinted H. A. Ironside booklet, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Fourth Edition, 1989).

<sup>6</sup>Not only does this passage sit poorly with ultra-dispensationalist doctrine, but it also conflicts with baptismal regeneration. If water baptism were an essential part of the Gospel of salvation, would Paul have written, “Christ did not send me to baptize”?

We do believe, however, that they will regret not having been baptized when they stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ.

If baptism doesn't save; if it is a major cause of division in Christendom as to mode, meaning, and proper subjects of the rite; and if it isn't absolutely necessary to the Christian life, of what great importance is it?

## V. The Meaning of Baptism

The *precise* significance of baptism is still much debated. Many still teach baptismal regeneration, that is, that the person being baptized—usually an infant in circles holding that view—is actually “born again” and grafted into the Body of Christ. Others, while not holding baptismal regeneration as such, believe it is part of salvation, and without it one will be damned.<sup>7</sup>

As to mode, those who pour or sprinkle generally see baptism as a picture of the Holy Spirit coming on the believer at salvation. Those practicing immersion usually see the rite as a picture of the believer's death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.

The *general* meaning of baptism is widely, and we believe correctly, held to be *identification* with Christ and His people.

In 1 Cor 10:2 we read that the children of Israel were “baptized into Moses . . . in the sea.” What does this mean? Were they *immersed* in the Red Sea? Certainly not. Did it *pour* on them as they passed through? No. Were they at least *sprinkled* by the sea? Not even that. By going through the sea on dry land they were *identified* with their deliverer, Moses, who, under God, “saved” them from Pharaoh and the armies of Egypt.

That baptism means identification with Christ and the Christian faith is not as clearly seen in those Western countries which have a very large part of the population baptized in infancy. But it is in the so-called non-Christian world that the general meaning of baptism shines through most clearly. Robert K. DeVries, in his dissertation on NT baptism, writes:

Among educated Hindus, Moslems and Jews, total defection or apostasy from their respective faiths to Christianity comes only when the Christian convert submits to baptism. It is a mark of absolute identification with the Christian faith. Would to God this were true throughout the world.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Lanny Thomas Tanton's article on Acts 2:38 in this issue of *JOTGES*.

<sup>8</sup> Robert K. DeVries, “The New Testament Doctrine of Ritual Baptism” (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1969), 181.

## VI. The Importance of Baptism

Water baptism is important for obedience and as a testimony.

### For Obedience

"To obey is better than sacrifice," said the Prophet Samuel (1 Sam 15:22). Our Lord's command before His crucifixion was to remember Him in the breaking of bread. His command right before His ascension was to baptize disciples in all nations "in the [triune] name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." This alone should be enough to convince the ordinary Christian to get baptized. Once you have left this planet it will be too late to observe either ordinance. The time is now.

### As a Witness

As we have noted, in Muslim countries, and many other lands outside of professing Christendom, such as Israel, a person is not considered to be really a Christian until he or she is *baptized with water*. One can study the faith, attend services and other social functions, and yet not be considered a Christian.

While attending an inter-denominational Christmas service at St. George's (Anglican) Church in Jerusalem some years ago, I was told by my host that the pleasant, middle-aged couple sitting in front of us was Jewish. They obviously were enjoying the lovely music, the biblical readings, and the spirit of joy. There are many such people, attracted to various aspects of Christianity (often the cultural byproducts—art, music, and architecture) yet unwilling to take a difficult stand in a non-, un-, or often anti-Christian environment.

Only if that couple received water baptism would they be likely to receive hostile attention from the Israeli community. The same holds true in many cultures. The world, at least, recognizes Christ's badge as being water baptism. Unfortunately for sincere and practicing believers in many communions, untold millions of nominal Christians have *received the badge*—whether by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring, whether in infancy, childhood, or adulthood—without ever having personally *received the Savior*. Others have believed but are still not great advertisements for the faith. Many would say that these people are not really saved. They are judging by performance. Fortunately, God sees the heart and He knows those who belong to Him through faith in His Son.

## VII. Conclusion

In spite of all the controversy and differing viewpoints on various aspects of baptism, we of the Grace Evangelical Society firmly believe in water baptism as significant and important.

Why? Because Christ has commanded it, because it is the badge of a Christian in the eyes of the world, and because it is a privilege to obey our Lord's command. Since one of the basic meanings of baptism is identification, we as true believers want to be identified as part of His universal Body, not only by the unbelieving world, but also by Christians of every sort in every tribe and nation.

We believe in baptism. It is one of only two rites *instituted* by our Lord in the Gospels, *practiced* by the Apostles in the Book of Acts, and *explained* in the Epistles of the NT. It should be practiced by the whole body of Christ. Unbiblical ritualism, divisive sectarianism, or overly-subtle distinctions should not keep anyone from obeying Christ's beautiful ordinance of water baptism. DeVries writes:

The rise of ecumenicity with its fuzzy distinctives and subtle sacramentalism demands that this doctrine be clearly understood lest its observance deteriorate to a mere liturgical rite bereft of personal spiritual significance.<sup>9</sup>

It is commanded by Christ. It is the seal and hallmark that should identify a follower of Christ. Finally it is our privilege to obey gladly. As Ironside has well said:

To the lover of the Lord Jesus Christ there can be nothing legal about baptism. It is simply the glad expression of a grateful heart recognizing its identity with Christ. . . . Many of us look back to the moment when we were thus baptized as one of the most precious experiences we have ever known.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> H. A. Ironside, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 56.



# REPENTANCE AND SALVATION

## Part 4:

### New Testament Repentance: Repentance in the Gospels and Acts

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## I. Introduction

The books of the NT vary in the emphasis that they place on various doctrines. John's Gospel, for example, is evangelistic in emphasis (John 20:30-31). Galatians presents a defense of the Gospel in the face of the Judaizers, who were trying to pervert it. The Book of Revelation deals extensively with what is yet future.

This article will examine how Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John treat a specific doctrine—the doctrine of repentance.

Luke in his two-volume work, Luke-Acts, emphasizes repentance more than any other NT author. Nearly one half, or twenty-five of the fifty-eight uses of the primary NT terms for repentance (*metanoēō* and *metanoia*) occur in Luke-Acts. On the other hand, there is not even one use of either term in John's Gospel. This is especially surprising since John uses those terms twelve times in Revelation. Matthew and Mark use those terms eight and four times respectively.

Why this disparity—especially between Luke-Acts and John?

Scripture does not contradict itself. Different authors may have different emphases, but not disparate views, on a given doctrine.

We begin this study with a consideration of the requirement of eternal salvation as found in the Gospels and Acts.

## II. The Gospel in the Gospels and Acts

The four Gospels and Acts present a united front. There is but one condition of eternal salvation: faith in Christ alone. The following references from John's Gospel are clear on this point:

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 6:47: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life."

John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

John 20:31: "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."

Recently I read a paper on repentance and salvation at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society held in San Diego, California. I made the above point that John's Gospel is clear that the sole condition of salvation is faith in Christ. During the question and answer period a person asked me why I had limited myself within the Gospels to John's Gospel. Could I substantiate my point from the Synoptics?

Yes, the Synoptics also present faith as the one and only condition. However, they do so less often and less forcefully than John's Gospel. Why? Because the Synoptics are written to people who were already believers. References to the Gospel in them are not central to their purposes. John's Gospel, however, is written primarily to unbelievers (John 20:30-31) and references to the Gospel are central to his purpose.

The hermeneutical principle called "the analogy of faith" suggests that we can best understand unclear passages of Scripture by allowing related clear passages to shed light on them. This principle suggests that one should understand the occasional references to the Gospel in the Synoptics in light of the Gospel of John and not vice versa. John's Gospel clearly says that the sole condition of salvation is faith in Christ. That will inform our understanding of any so-called problem passage in the Synoptics.

Some passages from the Synoptics clearly confirm that the sole condition of eternal salvation is faith in Christ.

Luke 8:12: "Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts; lest they should believe and be saved." The sole condition of salvation given by the Lord here is faith in Him alone. All who believe are saved.

Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." In direct answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" Luke reports Paul's sole condition: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Other passages from the Synoptics and Acts, though less clear, conform to this understanding.

Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in

heaven." The will of the Father, in relation to the Gospel, is that one believe in the Son whom He sent. Compare John 5:24; 6:29.

Matthew 18:3: "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." Little children are naturally trusting. The sole condition of salvation is childlike trust in Christ.

Mark 16:16: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."<sup>1</sup> The Lord indicates that the sole condition for condemnation is unbelief. This is clearly parallel to the Lord's teachings as reported by John (compare, for example, John 3:18 and 8:24). Whether one views the reference to baptism as parenthetical<sup>2</sup> or the reference to salvation as broader than eternal salvation,<sup>3</sup> the sole condition of escaping eternal condemnation is given as faith in Christ.

### III. Which Views of Salvific Repentance Are Compatible with Faith as the Sole Condition of Salvation?

There are basically three views of salvific repentance: (1) Turn from or be willing to turn from one's sins—a concept which is included in saving faith, or (2) Change one's mind about Jesus Christ—a concept which is essentially synonymous with saving faith, or (3) Repentance (turning from one's sins) is not a condition of eternal salvation at all.

#### A. Turning from Sins as a Condition of Eternal Salvation: A View Inconsistent with Faith as the Sole Condition of Salvation

Some suggest that the Greek terms for faith have within their fields

<sup>1</sup>Two early Greek manuscripts and one twelfth-century one omit the so-called longer ending of Mark's Gospel, including this verse. However, the vast majority of manuscripts (over one thousand), including some early ones, include it. In my opinion there is no doubt that this is canonical.

<sup>2</sup>This view can be illustrated in this way: "Get on the bus (and take a seat) and you will get to the stadium. He who doesn't get on the bus won't get there." In this illustration taking a seat is a parenthetical thought. The sole condition for getting to the stadium is getting on the bus.

<sup>3</sup>About half of the NT uses of the terms of salvation, *sōzō* and *sōtēria*, refer to temporal salvation. If that is the case here, Jesus' point is this: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved from the wrath of God, eternal and temporal. He who does not believe will be eternally condemned." Faith is necessary to be saved eternally. Baptism, and the commitment which it signifies to begin the course of discipleship (Matt. 28:19), is necessary to be saved temporally.

of meaning the concept of turning from sins. For example, in another paper on repentance and salvation presented at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Dr. James Rosscup wrote:

The Gospel of John always refers to "believe," never using the word for repenting. The Apostle John heard Jesus's [sic] command in Luke 24:47 to proclaim repentance to Jews and Gentiles. Assuming that John obeys his Lord, and also authors the Gospel that bears his name, his use of only "believe" can have a reasonable solution. To him, believing draws into its attitude all that it means to repent, to change the attitude in a turn from the old life to Christ and the new life.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly thereafter he added:

Faith which includes repentance involves obedience. Faith is a dependence on Christ and also an appropriation of Christ's free gift. At the same time, faith also embraces repentance, repentance including a changed attitude that has commitment, direction, purpose, loyalty.<sup>5</sup>

This argument utilizes the analogy of faith in reverse. It involves reading a questionable understanding of Luke 24:47 into all of John's uses of belief. It infuses into the concept of faith ideas wholly foreign to it. This view is inconsistent with faith as the sole condition of eternal salvation. And, in spite of assertions claiming that it does not, this view violates the concept of salvation as a free gift. Salvation is not free if the recipient must change his lifestyle and pledge to serve God to obtain it.

Notice the frank admission of one holding this view who baldly asserts that to be saved one must *pay for it* by turning from his sins. Under the heading *What must I pay to be a Christian?* Dr. James Montgomery Boice answers:

I must pay the price of those sins I now cherish. I must give them up, every one. I cannot cling to a single sin and pretend at the same time I am following the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than the Lord Jesus Christ alone buying our redemption, this view demands that the recipient pay part of the price himself. Something is found wanting in Christ's work on the Cross. This view is a return to Rome.

<sup>4</sup>James E. Rosscup, "The Relation of Repentance to Salvation and the Christian Life" (unpublished paper), p.17.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>6</sup>James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 112-13.

**B. Changing One's Mind as a Condition of Eternal Salvation: A View Consistent with Faith as the Sole Condition of Salvation**

The view of Chafer, Ryrie, and this writer is that the "repentance" which is required for eternal salvation is a change of mind about Christ.<sup>7</sup> The Jews of Jesus' day knew and rejected Jesus' claims. The Apostles called on them to change their minds about Jesus Christ in light of the new evidence of His resurrection. This call for a change of mind about Christ is synonymous with the call to trust in Him.

This view is consistent with the position that faith is the sole condition of salvation. It harmonizes John's Gospel and the Synoptics by viewing saving repentance as equal to saving faith.

**C. Repentance Not a Condition of Eternal Salvation: A View Consistent with Faith as the Sole Condition of Salvation**

In his recent book *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation*, Zane C. Hodges suggests a view of repentance which approaches this subject from a completely different perspective.<sup>8</sup> He asserts that repentance is rightly understood as turning to God from one's sins. However, he goes on to say that there are no passages in which repentance is required for eternal salvation. Rather, he argues that repentance is a condition of coming into harmonious fellowship with God.

One is eternally saved, according to this view, by faith alone in Christ alone. Repentance may, but need not, occur before faith and salvation. Thus this view clearly is consistent with the faith-only view of salvation.

**D. Conclusion**

Two views are theologically possible: that repentance is a change of mind or that it is not a condition of eternal salvation.

These views need not be taken as mutually exclusive. One can take some passages one way and some the other.

However, the view that repentance is turning from one's sins and that it is required for eternal salvation is theologically impossible. Such a view

<sup>7</sup> See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 3: 372-78; Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 91-100.

<sup>8</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988). See especially pp. 143-63.

contradicts grace, faith, and the freeness of the Gospel.

The sections which follow will consider various passages in the Gospels and Acts which deal with repentance. Representative verses have been selected, since to consider every passage would require more space than is available. Most major passages have been considered, however.

#### IV. Gospels-Acts Passages in Which Repentance Is a Change of Mind about Christ and a Condition of Salvation

##### A. Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:17-18

These five references form the heart of the recorded preaching of salvific repentance in the early church.

Of the five references to the Great Commission in the Gospels and Acts, only in Luke did Christ cite the preaching of repentance. In Luke 24:46-48 He said: "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things."

The disciples were told that they would promise the remission or forgiveness of sins to those who "repent." Not surprisingly, this is exactly what we find in the recorded evangelistic messages of the disciples (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31).

It is conceivable that the forgiveness of sins in question is a non-salvific, fellowship sort of forgiveness, as in 1 John 1:9.<sup>9</sup> However, there are several reasons why this is unlikely.

First, the majority of the uses of the term for remission or forgiveness (*aphesis*; verb form, *aphiēmi*) refer to salvific forgiveness. "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for the remission of sins" (Matt 26:28). "Whoever believes in Him will receive the remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). "Through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified" (Acts 13:38). "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Rom 4:7). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7). "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14). "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb 9:22). "I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake"

<sup>9</sup> See also, Matt 6: 12-15; Mark 11:26; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4; Acts 8:22; Jas 5:15.

(1 John 2:12).<sup>10</sup> This is especially evident when only the noun form is considered—the form used in Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, and 5:31. There are no clear references to fellowship forgiveness using the noun. Yet it clearly often refers to salvific forgiveness.

Second, Jesus said in Luke 24:47 (and Acts 1:8) that the disciples would be witnesses concerning His death and resurrection. Witnessing to Christ's death and resurrection fits much better with the view that eternal salvation is in view.

Third, a comparison of Peter's preaching about the forgiveness of sins in Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31, and 10:43 supports this conclusion as well.

In the first three passages Peter linked forgiveness with "repentance":

Repent and let every one of you be baptized<sup>11</sup> in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:30-31).

In the last passage, however, Peter conditioned forgiveness upon believing in Jesus Christ:

To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).

It seems reasonable to conclude that Peter in each case was preaching about salvific forgiveness and that he was equating "repentance" (i.e., changing one's mind about Christ) with believing in Christ.

Peter's audience in Acts 2, 3, and 5 was Jewish. These were people who had rejected Christ and His claims. Now new evidence was in: the

<sup>10</sup> See also Matt 12:31-32; Mark 3:29; 4:12; Luke 1:77; Acts 26:18; Heb 10:18.

<sup>11</sup> In Acts 3:19 and 5:31 Peter links the forgiveness of sins with "repentance" only—not with "repentance" plus baptism. This strongly suggests that the reference to baptism here is not a condition of forgiveness. It is most likely a parenthetical thought: "Repent (and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ) for the forgiveness of sins . . ." This is much as we might say, "Get on the bus (and take a seat) and you will arrive at the destination." Those who fail to sit down would still get to the destination, although they would displease the bus driver.

For further discussion of this and other views of Acts 2:38 and baptism, see the article by Lanny Tanton in this issue of the Journal.

resurrection. Peter was a witness to this dramatic new evidence. Peter called his unbelieving Jewish listeners to change their minds about Jesus Christ. To change their minds about Him was to believe in Him.

Talbert put it beautifully:

The evangelist thinks that after Jesus' resurrection His trial is reopened and fresh evidence is presented by the apostles to get the Jews to change their verdict. The new evidence is the event of Jesus' resurrection. The condemnation of Christ had been done in ignorance (Acts 3:17; 13:27), but in raising Jesus God showed the Jews they had made a mistake: they had crucified the Christ (Acts 2:36). Now, however, the Jews are given a chance to change their minds, to repent ([Acts] 2:38; 3:19; 5:31).<sup>12</sup>

Fourth, Acts 11:18 is a commentary on Acts 10:43ff. and the conversion of Cornelius and his household. After Peter told believing Jews that Cornelius and his household had been baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, they said: "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Two points are noteworthy. One, this "repentance" was *to life*. It is quite unlikely that physical life was meant. Cornelius already possessed physical life. Two, Peter never mentioned "repentance" to the Jewish brethren. Rather, he referred to believing (Acts 11:17). Thus the text explicitly equates "repentance" to life with believing for the remission of sins and eternal salvation.

In light of all this evidence, it can be asserted with reasonable certainty that Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31, and 11:18 all refer to changing one's mind about Jesus Christ as a condition of eternal salvation.

## **B. Matthew 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32**

Several passages in the Gospels and Acts use "repentance" as a virtual synonym for eternal salvation. Matthew 9:13, Mark 2:17, and Luke 5:32 are parallel accounts. I have selected Mark's account as representative.

In Mark 2:17 Jesus responded to scribes and Pharisees who were grumbling because Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. He said: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

All are sinners. Jesus was not suggesting that some didn't need Him. Rather He was asserting the opposite. All who see their need are invited

<sup>12</sup>Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 231.

by Him to heed His call: "Repent" and be saved. "Repentance" is used here as a metonymy of cause for the effect. The cause is changing one's mind about Christ, believing in Him. The effect is eternal salvation.

Thus Jesus was saying in effect: I have not come to call those who think that they are righteous, but those who recognize that they are sinners, to eternal salvation.

## V. Gospels-Acts Passages in Which Repentance is a Turning from Sins and Is Not a Condition of Salvation

### A. Luke 17:3-4

If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, "I repent," you shall forgive him.

Clearly this passage does not refer to eternal salvation. The forgiveness in view is man-to-man. It involves fellowship. The repentance in question is a change of mind *about sinful behavior*. In such a passage the English word *repentance* is a good translation.

### B. Acts 8:22

Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

Peter spoke these words to Simon Magus. The wickedness in question was Simon's attempt to buy the power to convey the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:18-19). The English word *simony*, the buying or selling of positions in the church, is derived from Simon's act.

Luke left no doubt as to Simon's spiritual condition. In Acts 8:13 he explicitly indicates that Simon came to faith in Christ and testified to his faith by water baptism, just as many other Samaritans had (v 12). The forgiveness spoken of by Peter in v 22 thus refers to forgiveness of a believer—not to salvific forgiveness.

Peter commanded Simon to repent concerning (i.e., change his mind about) his wicked request so that he might obtain fellowship-forgiveness from God. Simon's physical life was probably on the line. The reader would not be surprised should the text go on to say that shortly thereafter Simon died and was carried away to be buried,<sup>13</sup> as was the case with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.

<sup>13</sup> For fuller details regarding Luke's account of the conversion of Simon Magus see James Inglis, "Simon Magus," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 2 (Spring 1989): 45-54.

There may be other passages in the Gospels and Acts in which repentance is a condition for fellowship forgiveness and temporal salvation. However, other passages are not nearly as clear as the ones cited. It is to the more questionable passages that we now turn our attention.

## VI. Gospels-Acts Passages Which Are Difficult to Categorize Regarding Their Use of Repentance

### A. John the Baptist's Preaching of Repentance (Matt 3:2-15; Mark 1:4,15; Luke 3:3-20; 19:1-10; Acts 19:4)

In the five years since I completed my dissertation on this subject, I have had second thoughts about my treatment of John the Baptist's preaching of repentance. I argued that John's preaching of repentance was a call to a change of mind about oneself and Jesus Christ in order to obtain eternal salvation. I am now much torn between that view and Hodges's view.

Hodges suggests that John the Baptist's call to repentance was a call for the nation to turn from its sins.<sup>14</sup> However, he also suggests that this reformation of life was not a condition of eternal salvation. Rather, Hodges suggests that John's baptism of repentance "was designed to prepare the nation for faith in the Coming One."<sup>15</sup> As self-righteous Jews recognized their sinfulness and turned back toward God, barriers to faith in Christ were removed.

Here are some excerpts from or about John the Baptist's preaching of repentance as recorded in the Gospels and Acts (*italics mine*):

Repent, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* . . . Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, *confessing their sins*. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matt 3:2, 5-8).

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins . . . Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of

<sup>14</sup> Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 158-59.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

God, and saying, . . . "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:4, 14-15).

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:4).

Then he [John the Baptist] said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Luke 3:7).

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but *that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water*" (John 1:29-31).

[John said] *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life*; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (John 4:1).

Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people *that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*" (Acts 19:4).

Several points can be observed from these passages.

First, the Apostle John presents John the Baptist as conditioning eternal salvation solely upon believing in Jesus Christ (John 3:36).

Second, John the Baptist gave two reasons for "repenting." The nation was to repent: (1) since the kingdom was near (Matt 3:2) and (2) in order to obtain the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:4).

Repenting in light of the nearness of the kingdom fits well with Hodges's view. It is a common OT theme that the nation was to turn from its sins to prepare itself for the kingdom. It is one thing to prepare oneself to meet the king. It is another to be a subject of the king. It is quite conceivable that among the many who were baptized by John there were some who had already come to faith in Christ.

On the other hand, *repenting in order to obtain the remission of sins* does not fit as well with Hodges's view. As shown above, that same expression is used elsewhere in the Gospels and Acts (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31) to refer to salvific forgiveness.

Third, those being baptized by John were confessing their sins (Matt 3:5). This may have been a spontaneous response by people. Possibly John did not call for this as a condition of baptism. However, in light

of his role as the forerunner who was to make straight the Messiah's paths (Luke 3:4) and his response to those who asked, "What shall we do?" (Luke 3:10), it seems more likely that John required the confession of sins before one could be baptized.

Fourth, it is very telling that the Lord Jesus baptized more people than John did and that He baptized "disciples" (John 4:1).<sup>16</sup> Jesus baptized those who had already committed to follow Him. Of course, some of those, Judas being a prime example, were unsaved (John 6:64). If all of the Lord's disciples were baptized by Him and some of them were unbelievers, He did not require people to believe in Him in order to undergo His baptism. Likely John did not require faith in Christ of those he baptized either. If not, then it is hard to conceive of John's call to repentance as a call to eternal salvation.

Jesus' baptism, while never called a baptism of repentance, seems to have been parallel to John's. John 4:1 mentions both baptisms without distinction as to purpose. Our Lord's first recorded exhortation in Matthew, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17) is identical to John's preaching of repentance as recorded in Matt 3:2.

Fifth, people undergoing John's baptism were fleeing from the wrath to come (Luke 3:7). While this may well refer to God's eternal wrath, it is at least equally possible that temporal wrath was meant. The Jewish Wars and the fall of Jerusalem with the resultant destruction of the temple in A.D. 66-70 could have been in view.

Sixth, after John was in prison Jesus said "Repent, *and (kai)* believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). He might have meant "Repent, *that is* (ascensive use of *kai*), believe in the gospel." If so, He equated the two. It is just as likely, however, that Jesus was distinguishing between the two. He may have called for "repentance" as one act and believing the Gospel as another—the latter being the condition of eternal salvation and the former of fellowship and temporal salvation.

What conclusion can we draw from these observations regarding John's preaching of repentance?

One element in John's preaching keeps me from wholeheartedly embracing Hodges's view: that the forgiveness of sins is explicitly linked to John's preaching of repentance (e.g., Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). As already pointed out above, repentance for the forgiveness of sins commonly refers to salvific forgiveness.

I am torn between the two views. I am slightly inclined, however, in

<sup>16</sup>The physical acts of baptizing were done by His disciples (John 4:2). However, since this was done under His direction, it could be spoken of as baptizing which Jesus did.

light of the many points in favor of a fellowship-temporal salvation view, to conclude that the forgiveness of sins mentioned looks to a forgiveness that results in temporal deliverance from God's wrath. Thus even non-believers who turn from their sins will find that God's judgment against their sin begins to subside. This seems to be the point of Rev 9:20-21 and 16:9-11. While entrance into the kingdom and positional forgiveness are conditioned solely upon faith in Christ—or changing one's mind about Him—temporal forgiveness and temporal salvation are conditioned upon obedience.

I feel that this is a topic which needs much additional attention. Hopefully someone from the Free Grace Salvation perspective will soon write a thesis, or better yet a dissertation, on John the Baptist's preaching of repentance.

## B. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

The prodigal son planned in his heart to do more than was necessary to gain reconciliation with his father. He did not need to pledge to be a servant and work for his father.

On the other hand, such a pledge did not hinder his reconciliation, since the young man understood, or possibly came to understand when he met his father, that reconciliation was available just for the asking—by grace alone with no working or pledging to work.

In the first two parables of Luke 15, the Parables of the Lost Sheep and of the Lost Coin, the term for repentance, *metanoia*, is explicitly used. It is not, however, used in the third parable, the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

When did the prodigal “repent” and what did his repentance consist of?

These questions cannot be answered dogmatically since the text does not explicitly say. It is possible that he “repented” when he met his father and found that he accepted him with open arms and would not let him finish his planned speech. Bailey argues that only when he met his father did he repent—that is, only then did he realize that reconciliation could not be earned—that it could only be accepted as a pure gift.<sup>17</sup> Alternately, he may have “repented” when he was in the far country and “came to his senses” (v 17).

The latter view allows for two possible understandings of the content

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*, Combined Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 183-84.

of the prodigal's repentance in the far country. One view is that he repented when he decided that any role in his father's house would be better than his pigpen existence outside of his house. The problem with this view is that the prodigal seemed to believe he could earn reconciliation by working. If this was the prodigal's "repentance," then that was not required for reconciliation. Indeed, this thinking would need to be corrected before he could be reconciled.

Another view is that the prodigal repented when he decided to turn from his sinful ways. Again, if one holds this view he would have to argue that this repentance was not a condition of reconciliation with the father. This is the position of Zane Hodges on the parable.<sup>18</sup>

The prodigal changed his mind in two senses at two different times. When in the far country he changed his mind about his lifestyle and decided to seek reconciliation with his father. When actually in his father's presence he realized that reconciliation was only available as a completely free gift. It could not be bought.

Which change of mind led to the prodigal's reconciliation with his father? Clearly the latter. The father would not let him buy his way into the household. The prodigal had to accept reconciliation as a free gift.

Which change of mind represented the prodigal's "repentance"? I am inclined to the view that his "repentance" was his recognition and acceptance of the free gift of reconciliation. It, of course, was built upon his recognition of his sinfulness and need of reconciliation. When the prodigal accepted his father's grace gift there was joy in heaven in a parallel fashion to the finding of the lost coin and the lost sheep in the first two parables.<sup>19</sup>

## VII. Conclusion

There are only two views of salvific repentance which are consistent with the Gospel: the view that repentance is essentially synonymous with saving faith and the view that repentance is not a condition of eternal salvation at all.

<sup>18</sup> Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 153-54.

<sup>19</sup> The problem with equating the prodigal's repentance with his change of mind regarding his lifestyle is that it is hard to see why that would necessarily lead to joy in heaven. He could have turned from his sinful ways and yet refused to accept reconciliation as a free gift. Many clean up their lives and think that by so doing they are earning reconciliation. It seems likely that the reference to joy in heaven (found in the first two parables of the triad) finds its resting place in the prodigal's acceptance of the free gift of reconciliation. And, based on the first two parables of Luke 15, joy is experienced in heaven at precisely the point at which repentance occurs.

It has been shown that in some passages one can understand repentance as a condition of eternal salvation and in others not. These views are not exclusive.

It is my view that the Gospels and Acts primarily use the terms *metanoia* and *metanoēō* essentially as synonyms for faith in Christ. The call to change one's mind about Christ, after the new evidence of the resurrection is brought forth (e.g., Acts 2:38), is parallel to calling one to place his or her faith in the Risen Christ in light of the proof of the resurrection (Acts 10:40-43).

Nevertheless, it is clear in some passages (e.g., Luke 17:3-4) that those terms are used to refer to changes of mind about one's sinful behavior. In such cases what is at stake is fellowship, not eternal salvation.

The preaching of John the Baptist and the Parable of the Prodigal Son are very difficult to categorize. At this time I am inclined to view John the Baptist's call to repentance as a call to turn from one's sinful deeds. John's Gospel is clear that John the Baptist conditioned eternal salvation upon faith in Christ alone and not on turning from one's sins as well. It seems likely, though, that temporal and not eternal salvation is what the Synoptic authors are focusing upon in John the Baptist's preaching.

The Parable of the Prodigal seems to deal with eternal salvation—this best fits the motif of "joy in heaven in the presence of the angels" in the first two parables of Luke 15. The repentance, while not clearly identified, seems to be the prodigal's acceptance of the free gift of reconciliation.

The call to repentance is not uniform in the Gospels and Acts. In some cases it is a call to eternal salvation (e.g., Acts 2:38; 11:18). In other cases it is a call to temporal salvation (e.g., Acts 17:3-4). In some cases the change of mind called for is about Christ. In others it is about one's sinful ways.

When studying the concept of repentance in the Gospels and Acts and the rest of the NT, it is important to ask two questions: (1) Is temporal or eternal salvation in view? and (2) What is one being called to change his mind about—Christ, one's sinful ways, or something else?

We will explore these questions further in the next article in this series: "Repentance in the Epistles and Revelation."



# THE GOSPEL AND WATER BAPTISM: A STUDY OF ACTS 2:38

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## Prologue

Is the demand for baptism (i.e., immersion in water) a part of the Gospel? Should every evangelistic sermon and every Gospel tract, in order to be biblical, include a demand for baptism? Should the unbeliever hear in clear and forceful terms that unless he is baptized he cannot be saved, cannot receive eternal life, cannot have the forgiveness of sins? There are many who believe that baptism is essential for salvation and is of the essence of the Gospel. Many of these same people point to Acts 2:38, 22:16, and 1 Pet 3:21 (along with other verses) to support their belief.

Many who maintain that baptism is part of the Gospel are sincere, thoughtful, Bible-loving, Bible-believing people. In fact, other than their demand for baptism, many of these same people could be considered fundamentalists! I know this for a fact because for years I was taught, and believed, and even preached that baptism was necessary for salvation. I was a minister in a denomination which proclaimed this position.

I no longer hold this position and I have left that denomination in which I proclaimed this false gospel. However, I bear no ill will towards any members of my former denomination. I left it long enough ago that I can now look back and evaluate my experience with them with objectivity, love, and humor. Nor do I have feelings of superiority in my present church. I remember all too well ministers of other churches who failed to answer squarely my questions regarding Acts 2:38, 22:16, and 1 Pet 3:21. They would cite Ephesians 2 or Romans 4 to prove that salvation was by grace through faith alone. However, when I asked them about those passages which seemed to teach that baptism was necessary, I was told that they were "problem passages" and that they were "unclear" and that one did not build a theology on passages of that nature. I eventually came to see that the "problem" was that they did not know what to do with these verses! To dismiss them, sometimes in

a cavalier manner, was their way of ignoring a crack in their theological system. (Denial is an oft-used method when applying the Word of God to our lives and theology—despite our denials to the contrary!)

Over the years I have come to see that Acts 2:38, 22:16, and 1 Pet 3:21 can be understood at face value while, at the same time, maintaining with integrity the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone. Therefore, it is my hope that over a period of time I will be able to write a number of articles dealing with each of these “problem passages,” thus sharing with the reader the fruit of my study and encouraging him or her to hold fast with confidence the Gospel of grace through faith alone.

## I. Introduction

Much heat has been generated by theological discussions and debates over whether or not Acts 2:38 and its demand for baptism is part of the Gospel. One humorous example of this “heat” is the account (probably apocryphal) of a youngster who was heard to say, “Give me an axe and two .38s and I’ll whip any Baptist preacher in the world.”<sup>1</sup> Another example, not so humorous, is of a preacher who, commenting upon the motives of those who disagreed with what he thought was the obvious interpretation of this verse, wrote, “One has to *want* to misunderstand that verse in order to do so” (*italics in the original*).<sup>2</sup> While many more examples could be cited, these are sufficient to indicate the intensity of emotion which discussions and debates over this verse and the subject of baptism can produce. These examples also remind us of the importance of stating accurately, evaluating fairly, and discussing politely the various interpretations of Acts 2:38.

The purpose, then, of this article is to explore the relationship between the demand for baptism and the promise of the remission of sins in Acts

<sup>1</sup> Bob L. Ross, *Campbellism—Its History and Heresies* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1976), 85. Ross has written two books about the Churches of Christ and their position on baptism. The one quoted here is the larger and more comprehensive of the two. The other book, entitled *Acts 2:38 and Baptismal Regeneration* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1976), limits itself more to a refutation of the position of the Churches of Christ on Acts 2:38. Both books are not above sarcasm and are, in my opinion, inadequate treatments of the arguments of the Churches of Christ. In fact, Ross does not give anywhere near enough space to the two strongest passages in favor of the Churches of Christ position, i.e., Acts 22:16 and 1 Pet 3:21. In other words, Ross is guilty of an old debater’s method of attack: Hit the weakest points in your opponent’s argument and hope that others ignore your opponent’s strongest points. Debaters win debates, but it is to be questioned whether or not they find truth.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Lewis, “The Necessity of Baptism for Salvation,” *Firm Foundation* (May 3, 1983), 6.

2:38 in order to answer a larger theological question: Is baptism necessary in order to receive the remission of sins? In order to find the best possible answer to this emotional question, we will state and evaluate the various options found within the commentary tradition.

Acts 2:38 reads as follows:

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (NKJV).

## II. The Sacramentarian Interpretation

### Definition

The first view to be considered might be called the sacramentarian interpretation.<sup>3</sup> This interpretation holds that baptism is necessary *in order to* receive the remission of sins and that the phrase "remission of sins" is a synonym for salvation and receiving eternal life. This view

<sup>3</sup> Some in the Churches of Christ may, understandably, object to this designation because they do not see baptism as a sacrament, but rather as a command to be obeyed by a believing individual. J. W. Roberts, a Churches of Christ Greek scholar (Ph.D. in Greek at the University of Texas) and Professor of New Testament at Abilene Christian University has objected to the understanding that baptism is a sacrament: "But is there no choice between baptism as a sacrament and baptism as an empty symbol? Is there no choice between the understanding of baptism as a sacrament in which the validity is in the act performed in the name of Jesus without regard to whether the recipient is an infant or a hypocrite (that is, without regard to faith and penitence of the baptized) and an understanding of baptism as an act of faith of a penitent obeying a command which the Lord in his own name has made a condition of pardon? The preaching of the Restoration Movement has been as strongly against any magical or 'sacramental' efficacy in baptism as anyone else. They have repudiated the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration and infant baptism."

"It is quite another thing to insist on the Bible teaching that baptism to a penitent believer is for (in order to) the remission of sins. This is the form the proposition usually takes in public discussions. The New Covenant sees baptism as an act of faith (Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12f.); it is part of that 'obedience of faith' unto which the Gospel was proclaimed (Rom. 16:26); it is connected with faith as a condition of salvation (Mk. 16:16) and with repentance as a condition of pardon or remission (Acts 2:38). It is precisely in this respect that the Campbells and Scott in the early Restoration Movement saw their declaration of baptism for remission of sins upon a confession of faith in Christ as a 'restoration' of the primitive practice following the centuries of 'sacramentalism' in Roman and Protestant theology." See J. W. Roberts, ("Baptism for Remission of Sins—A Critique," *Restoration Quarterly* 1 (1957): 226ff. For a similar viewpoint, yet one held by a Baptist, see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 7, 13, and his *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 20-21.

The designation "Sacramentarian Interpretation" is mine. If any object to it they may substitute whatever term they wish to describe this position (provided they avoid such tendentious appellations as "The Only True, Correct, and Biblical Interpretation"!).

would interpret Acts 2:38 in a straightforward manner: "Repent and be baptized in order to (receive) the remission of sins."<sup>4</sup> In other words, unless a person is baptized he *cannot* be saved.

### Defenders

With varying degrees of dogmatism, those denominations which are historically related to Alexander Campbell and his efforts to reform the Church (called "the Restoration Movement") hold this position. These denominations are, in alphabetical order, the Christian Church, the Churches of Christ, and the Disciples of Christ.<sup>5</sup> Of these three, the most vocal in their defense have been the Churches of Christ.<sup>6</sup> It should also be noted that the Mormons,<sup>7</sup> the Christadelphians,<sup>8</sup> and the Roman Catholic Church<sup>9</sup> largely agree with this interpretation.

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Campbell published a translation of the Bible entitled *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, Commonly Styled the New Testament*, which was shortened to *The Living Oracles* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1954). To this translation Campbell also wrote prefaces, various emendations, and an appendix, all of which are quite interesting. In other words, this translation had Campbell's "seal of approval." Therefore, it is of interest to note its translation of Acts 2:38, "And Peter said to them, Reform, and be each of you immersed in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

<sup>5</sup>Of the many works dealing with the history of the Restoration Movement, some of the best are James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing Co., 1962); Louis Cochran and Bess White Cochran, *Captives of the Word* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1969); J. W. Shepherd, *The Church, the Falling Away, and the Restoration* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1964); and Earl West, *The Search for the Ancient Order*, 3 vols. (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1965).

<sup>6</sup>For example, see the large volume of recorded debates by Churches of Christ preachers and scholars, a sample of which might include *Hardeman-Bogard Debate* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1938); *The Nashville Debate on Baptism* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1951); *Smith-Bogard Debate: The Plan of Salvation* (Dallas: Gospel Broadcast, 1953); *Warren-Ballard Debate* (Longview, TX: Telegram Book Co., 1953).

<sup>7</sup>It is most interesting to note that two associates of Alexander Campbell left him. One of them, Sidney Rigdon, left to join the Mormons (Murch, *Christians Only*, 120). For more information about the activities of Rigdon after he espoused Mormonism and about his high status and influence in that movement, cf. John Ahmanson's *Secret History: A Translation of "Vor Tids Muhamed,"* translated by Gleason L. Archer, Jr. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1984).

<sup>8</sup>It is also interesting to note that the second of the two associates who left Campbell, Dr. John Thomas, formed the Christadelphians (Murch, *Christians Only*, 120). Thus two cults were formed by followers of Campbell. We, of course, must avoid the trap of "guilt by association." Many of the doctrines of both the Mormons and the Christadelphians are strongly denounced by members of the Churches of Christ.

<sup>9</sup>François Amiot, in the Roman Catholic *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), edited by Xavier Léon-Dufour, writes: "But faith in Christ does not only mean that the mind accepts the messianic message; it involves a total conversion, a complete abandonment to Christ, who transforms the whole of a man's life. It normally leads to a request for baptism, which is its sacrament and in the reception of which it finds

## Defense

This position, as I have noted, has been held with varying degrees of dogmatism. Some, like the Churches of Christ, would hold that the demand for baptism as a condition for salvation is absolute and has no exceptions (i.e., unless a person is baptized *cannot* be saved). However, others are a little less dogmatic and would see Acts 2:38 as expressing the "normal" manner in which people are saved and are also willing to admit the possibility that a person could be saved without baptism. An example of this less dogmatic position would be, surprisingly, Alexander Campbell himself.<sup>10</sup>

Be that as it may, I will record here the defense of the more absolute and dogmatic position (i.e., the position which says that if a person is

its perfection. Paul never separates the two, and when he speaks of justification by faith it is only in contrast with the alleged justification by the works of the Law, to which the judaizers appealed. He always takes it for granted that the profession of faith is crowned by the reception of baptism (Gal. 3:26f.). By faith a man responds to the divine call that has become clear to him through the preaching of the apostles (Rom. 10:14f.), and this response is, moreover, the work of grace (Eph. 2:8). At baptism the Spirit takes possession of the believer, incorporates him into the body of the Church and gives him the certainty that he has entered the Kingdom of God.

"It is quite clear that the sacrament does not act in any magic way. The total conversion that it calls for must be the start of a new life in a spirit of unshakable faithfulness." ("Baptism," *Dictionary*, 42-43.)

<sup>10</sup>In his famous reply to the "Lunenburg Letter," Campbell responded to a lady who wrote him asking if the unimmersed were Christian. In part, he replied: "Who is a Christian? I answer, Everyone that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins, and obeys him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will . . . I cannot . . . make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and in my heart regard all that have been sprinkled in infancy without their own knowledge and consent, as aliens from Christ and the well-groomed hope of heaven.

"Should I find a paedobaptist more intelligent in the Christian Scriptures, more spiritually-minded and more devoted to the Lord than a Baptist, or one immersed on a profession of the ancient faith, I would not hesitate a moment in giving the preference of my heart to him that loved most. Did I act otherwise, I would be a pure sectarian, a Pharisee among Christians. Still I will be asked, How do I know that anyone love my Master but by his obedience to His commandments? I answer, In no way. But mark, I do not substitute obedience to one commandment, for universal or even general obedience. And should I see a sectarian Baptist or a paedobaptist more spiritually-minded, more generally conformed to the requisitions of the Messiah, than the one who precisely acquiesces with me in the theory or practice of immersion as I teach, doubtless the former rather than the latter, would have my cordial approbation and love as a Christian. So I judge, and so I feel. It is the image of Christ the Christian looks for and loves; and this does not consist in being exact in a few items, but in general devotion to the whole truth as far as known." (*Millennial Harbinger*, September, 1837.) For further analysis of this letter see Glenn Paden, "The Lunenburg Letter," *Restoration Quarterly* 1 (1958), 13-18.

not baptized he *cannot* be saved). The defense of this interpretation can be summarized in four points.

First, this interpretation has in its favor the *prima facie* reading of the text. In other words, they take the passage at face value. In fact, it is argued, that if theological issues were not involved one would naturally come to this interpretation.<sup>11</sup> Also, the force of the *prima facie* reading is strengthened upon consideration of many of the proposed alternatives which fail to give a convincing assurance of their validity (i.e., some of the proposed alternatives give evidence of a special pleading and use lexical and grammatical subtleties in the hope of finding anything that will support a meaning other than the *prima facie* reading of the text).<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, this interpretation harmonizes easily with other passages, also taken *prima facie*, which connect baptism with the remission of sins and salvation. Two especially strong passages which are consistent with this interpretation are Acts 22:16 ("And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord") and 1 Pet 3:21 ("There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"). Thus this interpretation provides theological consistency on the subject of the necessity of baptism for salvation.

Thirdly, this interpretation gives a stated purpose of the demand for baptism. Baptism is for (in order to receive) the remission of sins. Some of the other interpretations of this verse leave the demand for baptism unexplained. In fact, other than Acts 2:38 and 22:16 and 1 Pet 3:21 is there any verse in the NT which *clearly* states the purpose of water baptism? Would God leave such an important command and act unexplained in all of the NT?

Fourthly, this interpretation places an emphasis on Acts 2:38 that, according to the defenders of this position, fits the uniqueness of the occasion in Acts 2. Acts 2 records the beginning of the Church Age and contains the *first* evangelistic sermon after the death and resurrection of Christ. For the *first* time in this dispensation people ask what they must do in light of the fact that the Messiah was crucified. They are told to repent and be baptized in order to be saved (cf. also Acts 2:40). Because

<sup>11</sup> Roberts, "Baptism," *Reformation Quarterly* 1 (1957), 233.

<sup>12</sup> This should become evident as we discuss the various alternatives stated in this article. This is the reason why it was so difficult for me to leave the Churches of Christ: I could see clearly my position, but to refer to Greek and other grammatical niceties which are not reflected in any well-known translation was to leave me unable to judge whether what I was being told was the truth or not.

of the uniqueness of Acts 2 (i.e., its place in the dispensational scheme of the history of salvation) the quest for a proof-text for the terms of salvation should start here rather than in Ephesians 2 or Romans 4. Acts 2 is, as one Churches of Christ author describes it, "the hub of the Bible."<sup>13</sup>

### Deficiencies

Obviously, this interpretation is highly debated and a number of objections have been made stating what are believed to be its deficiencies. We will cite only a few of these objections.

First, the most popular objection to the sacramentarian interpretation is theological: If correct, this interpretation would make salvation the result of faith and works. Ephesians 2:8-9 and Rom 4:4-5 and 11:6 are quite clear that salvation is by faith and *not* works. According to this objection, the sacramentarian interpretation makes baptism a means by which a man actively participates in receiving salvation, i.e., he does something: He works to get salvation.

However, in all fairness, it should be said that this objection has received a strong counter-objection. The *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, a work of Roman Catholic scholars, points out that faith is contrasted with works of Law, not obedience.<sup>14</sup> Also, some Churches of Christ writers point out that because baptism is a once-for-all, non-repeatable act and is related to the free gift of salvation, baptism is, therefore, not to be considered a "work."<sup>15</sup> In this there may even be some support

<sup>13</sup> In fact, this is the title of James D. Bales's exposition of Acts 2. Cf. *The Hub of the Bible* (Rosemead, CA: Old Paths Book Club, 1960). Bales, a Ph.D. from U.C.L.A., was Professor of Christian Doctrine at Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas (a Churches of Christ school).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. footnote 9.

<sup>15</sup> Actually, there are a number of attempts to answer this objection that baptism is a work. One approach is to deny that the Bible teaches the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Dr. Thomas B. Warren, in his debate with L. S. Ballard, states, as one of his arguments that a salvation by faith without works is a salvation by a dead faith, according to James 2. Also, he points out that the only time the Scriptures use the phrase "justification by faith alone" is in James 2 where it is plainly stated that one is *not* justified by faith alone (*Warren-Ballard Debate*).

A second approach is to argue that faith, when cited alone, is often used as a figure of speech (metonymy) which puts a part for the whole. The Bible teaches that repentance (Acts 11:18), confession (1 John 2:23), and baptism (1 Pet 3:21) are also necessary. It is useless to point to a passage and say "It does not mention baptism here, therefore, it isn't necessary," since passages can be found that do not mention faith. All of the conditions are necessary, but not all are found in a single verse. (This is a second argument which Warren used in his debate with Ballard; cf. *Warren-Ballard Debate*.)

A third approach is to admit that baptism is a work, but an allowable type of work, i.e., one which is not forbidden by Paul in Eph 2:9. Tom Montgomery attempts to support

from evangelicals who, while rejecting the position that baptism is necessary for salvation, would admit that it is not a work, at least on the basis that the passive voice ("let every one of you *be baptized*") indicates that the one being baptized is not "doing" anything.<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, this interpretation contradicts the Gospel of John's teaching on the means of receiving eternal life. This Gospel, based upon the purpose statement of John 20:30–31, nowhere makes baptism a condition for receiving eternal life.<sup>17</sup> In fact, if baptism is necessary for receiving

this position as follows: "The New Testament mentions at least four kinds of works. There are (1) works of the flesh (Gal 5:19–21), (2) works of the law (Gal 2:16; Rom 3:20), (3) works of merit (Titus 3:5; Eph 2:8–9), and (4) works resulting from faith (James 2:14–26).

"Baptism does not merit our salvation. Please note that (1) Naaman did not merit his cleansing from leprosy by dipping in the water of the Jordan seven times (2 Kings 5:1–14), (2) Saul did not merit his cleansing from sin by being baptized (Acts 22:16) and (3) we are not attempting to merit our salvation by being baptized in response to our Lord's statement in Mark 16:16. But it is clearly inconsistent to call Jesus "Lord" and refuse to do what he said (Luke 6:46).

"Baptism is a work. However, it is a work (or deed) that God requires as an outgrowth of our faith . . . A faith that will not produce these deeds (works) required by our Lord is a dead faith (James 2:26) and a dead faith cannot save anyone (James 2:14)." (Tom Montgomery, "Is Baptism a Work?" *Gospel Advocate* [May 18, 1982], 243.)

A fourth approach is to say that baptism is not a work because the verb *baptizō* is almost always in the passive voice, indicating that it is something done to the person and not something the believer does. Cf. David Lipscomb, *Romans* (Nashville: *Gospel Advocate Co.*, 1950), 82.

A fifth approach is based upon an effort to define the concept of "works." Alexander Campbell argues: "We do not, however, place baptism among good works. Good works have our brethren, and neither God nor ourselves, for their object. They directly and immediately terminate upon man; while, in the reflex influence, they glorify God and beautify ourselves." (Alexander Campbell, *Gospel Advocate* [April 7, 1983], 198.)

A sixth and (for our purposes) final counter-objection pressed by a Churches of Christ writer is that used by Bales: Baptism is not a work because it is performed only once. He writes: "If baptism is an act of obedience performed by the Christian, a good work which the Christian does, why is not the act repeated from time to time? What good works are there which are bound on the Christian which should not be performed more than once if the individual has the opportunity and ability to do good work? Why, among all the works that a Christian is to do, is baptism the only one which is done once for all? Observance of the Lord's Supper is a privilege and a responsibility of the Christian. Does anyone maintain that it should be done *once for all*? that we should not partake of it but once in a lifetime, even though we have opportunity to partake of it more than once?

"Does not the fact that baptism is once for all—when it is done scripturally—indicate that it is not in the category of works which a Christian should perform?" (James D. Bales, *The Case of Cornelius* [Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1964], 50).

<sup>16</sup> An example of this is a Dallas Theological Seminary professor who readily admitted to me that baptism was *not* a work because it was related to salvation (however, not in the same cause and effect relationship that the Churches of Christ taught!)

<sup>17</sup> The only place in John where baptism might be considered as having some bearing upon salvation is Jesus' reference to water in His conversation with Nicodemus: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). For

eternal life, the Gospel of John, a self-designated "Gospel tract," with its sole emphasis on faith, is both incomplete and, to that extent, misleading.

Thirdly, this interpretation makes the "gift of the Holy Spirit" something that is given *after* baptism. However, it is clear that Cornelius received the gift of the Holy Spirit *before* his baptism (Acts 10:44-48; cf. especially 10:45 where the identical phrase "the gift of the Holy Spirit" used in Acts 2:38 occurs). Also Acts 19:2 indicates Paul's assumption that the Spirit was given at the moment of faith. Efforts by Churches of Christ writers to explain away this difficulty have not been successful.<sup>18</sup>

In summary, while this view appears to be grammatically strong, it is theologically weak.

### III. The Causal *Eis* Interpretation

#### Definition

This interpretation understands the preposition *eis* ("for") in Acts 2:38 to be causal, indicating the reason or *cause* antecedent to the act of baptism, rather than telic, indicating purpose or result (Gk., *telos*). Accordingly, Acts 2:38 should be translated: "Repent and be baptized . . . *because of* the remission of sins." Thus salvation occurred before, not at, the moment of baptism.

#### Defenders

This interpretation has the support of such outstanding evangelical scholars, past and present, as W. A. Criswell, Julius R. Mantey, A. T. Robertson, Charles C. Ryrie, and Kenneth S. Wuest.<sup>19</sup> Also, the eminent

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an excellent refutation of this view and a statement of the various options possible, cf. James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975): 1:243-48; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 215-19; Zane C. Hodges, "Water and Spirit—John 3:5," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (July-Sept., 1978), 206-20. The strength of the position that water baptism is indeed meant in John 3:5 primarily rests upon the assumption that the mention of water refers to water baptism. This assumption is gratuitous.

<sup>18</sup> Cf., for example, the already cited work of James D. Bales, *The Case of Cornelius*. Bales tries to argue that the gift of the Holy Spirit which Cornelius received was not the same gift of the Holy Spirit promised in Acts 2:38. This fails to seriously grapple with the fact that the same phrase is used in both Acts 2 and 10. The same author, the same speaker, in the same book, in the same kind of context, the same phrase—with two different meanings? This is most unlikely.

<sup>19</sup> W. A. Criswell, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1978), 96; H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 103-104; also Ralph Marcus, "The Causal Use of *Eis* in the New

British grammarian, Nigel Turner, admits that in some contexts, such as Acts 2:38, a causal usage is possible if demanded by one's theology.<sup>20</sup>

### Defense

This position has been supported basically for two reasons. First, this interpretation is able to maintain an evangelical theology, since it holds that salvation is by faith alone—not faith plus baptism.

Secondly, this interpretation has been defended by comparing parallel passages where a causal usage is possible. These passages are Matt 3:11; 10:41; 12:41; Rom 1:16; 4:20; 11:32. To use just one of these parallels, Matt 12:41 states that the people of Nineveh repented *because of* (*eis*) Jonah's preaching. To say that they repented "for," or "in order to," the preaching of Jonah is impossible. They heard his message and then repented. Other parallels have been found in extra-biblical Greek by Mantey.<sup>21</sup> Some support comes from the overlap between *eis* and *en* ("in," "by") and since *en* has some causal force it is possible that *eis* has some too.

### Deficiencies

Despite the respected and scholarly defenders of this position, the weaknesses of this position have limited its acceptance.

First, although it is "commentary counting" and, therefore, no sure proof of truth, this interpretation has found limited support from other Greek scholars.<sup>22</sup> Neither Liddell-Scott nor Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker (BAGD) lists any causal usages for *eis* in their respective Greek

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Testament," *Journal of Biblical Studies* 70 (1951), 45–48; and "On Causal *Eis* Again," *Journal of Biblical Studies* 70 (1951), 309–11; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 389; also his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 3:34–36; Charles C. Ryrie, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1961), 24; Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), 3:76–77.

<sup>20</sup> Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1963), 3:266.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. footnote 19.

<sup>22</sup> Roberts observes that the following do not accept this position: "Thayer (p. 94); AG (p. 240); Zorell, F. *Lexicon Graecum Novi Testamenti* (Paris, P. Letheilleus, 1931); Hermann Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (N.Y., Scribner's, 1885), p. 126f.; Albrecht Oepke in *Theologisches Woerterbuch*, Vol. I, p. 537; Grundmann on 'sin' in *Theologisches Woerterbuch*, Vol. I, p. 308." See his "Baptism," 227.

Also Roberts notes: "One finds *eis* listed for this passage as purpose (final or telic) in the following works: Winer, *N. T. Grammar* (p. 397); Vincent, M. R., *Word Studies in the N. T.* (p. 280); R. J. Knowling, *Expositor's Greek New Testament*; E. DeWitt Burton,

lexicons. Furthermore, BAGD cites Acts 2:38 under the category of "purpose." A causal *eis* is not a normal usage and may indicate special pleading.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, the reasons the causal *eis* sounds plausible is because, as J. W. Roberts has pointed out,

... it has long been noted, even by ancient writers, that there is little difference between causal and telic statements especially in statements about the past. If one said, "I went to town because of a suit (of clothes)," he would naturally be understood to mean not because he already had a suit, but in order to buy one. This is a loose use of causal expressions, but it is common. It follows that if a causal *eis* is established, it must be a clear-cut case of retrospective action in order to parallel the argument on Acts 2:38. Further, it ought to be obvious that if such a clear example is found (which has not been found), that it does not follow that Acts 2:38 is another such example. Certainly purpose is the natural sense of the construction where two imperatives with a conjunction follow the question. It is quite certain that if there were no doctrinal issue involved a causal meaning would never be suspected.<sup>24</sup>

Thirdly, in regard to the other passages in the Scriptures which have been cited for support of this position, Roberts makes this forceful objection:

All the samples of the so-called causal uses will bear closer scrutiny . . . . In Romans 11:32 *sunekleisen eis* ("shut up together into") is the regular idiom for handing over or shutting something to or *into* something: a pregnant use with the idea of giving over so that nothing escapes (Sanday, *ICC*); compare 2 Mac 5:5; Luke 5:6; Gal 3:22f . . . Nor does the causal sense of Rom 4:20 ("He wavered not in unbelief *eis* the promise of God") commend itself. The promise was not the cause of Abraham's unwavering; he did not waver "at" the promise; he believed it in all its staggering implications . . . . The more common

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*International Critical Commentary on Galatians*; C. F. D. Moule, *Idiom Book of N. T. Greek* (p. 70); F. F. Bruce's new commentary on Acts (75-77), etc." ("Baptism," 228.)

<sup>23</sup>It is interesting to note that the only translation I found which adopted the causal usage was Kenneth S. Wuest's *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961): 276. Wuest translates Acts 2:38 as follows: "And Peter said to them, Have a change of mind, that change of mind being accompanied by abhorrence of and sorrow for your deed, and let each one of you be baptized upon the ground of your confession of belief in the sum total of all that Jesus Christ is in His glorious Person, this baptismal testimony being in relation to the fact that your sins have been put away, and you shall receive the gratuitous gift of the Holy Spirit."

<sup>24</sup>Roberts, "Baptism," 233-34.

explanation of Matt 3:11 "I baptize unto (*eis*) repentance" is that the baptism of John bound those receiving it to a life of continued repentance. It is adopted by Lenski; the RSV says "for forgiveness"; Allen (*ICC*) says, "It symbolized both a present and a future state of repentance." This is the natural meaning; why seek for another? Matt 12:41 reads "They repented at (*eis*) the preaching of Jonah." "Because Jonah preached" misses the point. Thayer is undoubtedly right in holding that it indicates the direction towards which their repentance looked. Compare Acts 20:21: "repentance toward (*eis*) God; faith toward (*eis*) Jesus Christ." Thus Blass-DeBrunner says it has the sense of *epi* or *pros* and cites Herodotus (3.52): *pros touto to kērugma* of the attitude of subjects "towards the proclamation of a king."<sup>25</sup>

Also, parallels in non-biblical Greek which have been used to support the idea of a causal *eis* have been likewise debated.<sup>26</sup>

Fourthly, the phrase "for the remission of sins" is found five times in the NT (Matt 26:28; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38). Matthew 26:28 has our Lord saying concerning the Lord's Supper: "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (NKJV). Since no one would argue for a causal usage in Matt 26:28 no one should argue for it in Acts 2:38 either.<sup>27</sup>

In summary, the causal *eis* interpretation is theologically strong, but lexically weak. The causal usage is, in the words of M. J. Harris in his grammatical supplement to *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, "unlikely."<sup>28</sup>

## IV. The Syntactical Break Interpretation

### Definition

The syntactical break interpretation<sup>29</sup> holds to the normal meaning of *eis* ("for") as indicating purpose, but understands the phrase "for the remission of sins" to be connected with the command for repentance and not directly related to the command to be baptized, which is seen as a parenthetical comment. Thus, this interpretation would translate

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Marcus, "On Causal *Eis*," 309-11; and "The Elusive Causal *Eis*," *Journal of Biblical Studies* 71 (1952):43-44.

<sup>27</sup> J. C. Davis, "Another Look at the Relationship Between Baptism and Forgiveness of Sins in Acts 2:38," *Restoration Quarterly* 24 (1981), 80-81.

<sup>28</sup> M. J. Harris, "Appendix," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978) 3:1187.

<sup>29</sup> Again, this is my designation of the position. I never found anyone who held this position give it a name. I hope that is acceptable; if not, then anyone can give it a more suitable, objective title!

Acts 2:38 as follows: "Repent (and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ) for the remission of sins."

### Defenders

While this interpretation has been held at least as early as 1860,<sup>30</sup> more recent defenders include Aubrey Malphurs, Bob L. Ross, Frank Stagg, Ned Stonehouse, and Stanley Toussaint.<sup>31</sup>

### Defense

The syntactical break interpretation rests on two major arguments, one grammatical and the other theological.

The *grammatical* argument is subtle, especially for those who read only the various English translations, and points to a difference in number in the two Greek verbs *metanoēsate* ("repent" which is a second person plural) and *baptisthētō* ("be baptized" which is a third person singular) and the plural found in the phrase "for the remission of *your* sins." Toussaint states clearly his defense of this position:

A third view takes the clause **and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ** as a parenthetical . . . . The verb makes a distinction between singular and plural verbs and nouns. The verb "repent" is plural and so is the pronoun "your" in the clause **so that your sins may be forgiven** (lit., "unto the remission of your sins," *eis aphesin tōn harmartiōn hymōn*). Therefore, the verb "repent" must go with the purpose of forgiveness of sins. On the other hand the imperative "be baptized" is singular, setting it off from the rest of the sentence.<sup>32</sup>

The *theological* argument is based on the relationship between repentance and remission of sins found elsewhere in the writings of Luke. In Luke 3:3 and 24:47, and in Acts 3:19 and 5:31, repentance and the remission of sins are directly linked and baptism is either not mentioned or subordinated. In Acts 10:43 the remission of sins is linked directly to

<sup>30</sup> Roberts cites A. P. Williams as holding this position in a work entitled *Campbellism Exposed*, written in 1860 ("Acts 2:38—A Study in Syntax," *Gospel Advocate* [July 22, 1984], p. 704).

<sup>31</sup> Aubrey M. Malphurs, "The Soteriology of the Churches of Christ" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1981), 167–69; Ross, *Acts 2:38*, 45–49; Frank Stagg, *The Book of Acts* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), 63; Ned Stonehouse, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," *Westminster Theological Journal* 13 (1949–1951), 1–15; Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Press, 1983), 359.

<sup>32</sup> Toussaint, "Acts," 359.

faith alone. This is used to argue that baptism is not directly related to the remission of sins. In fact, in light of Luke 3:3 ("a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins"), it could be argued that baptism is the outward symbol of repentance, but that it is repentance and not the outward symbol that brings remission of sins.

### Deficiencies

This position is impressive. However, a number of serious objections have been raised which we need to consider.

First, the defenders of this position have not demonstrated that a comparable syntactical break exists elsewhere in the writings of Luke, nor have they tried to demonstrate it from any parallels from non-biblical Greek sources. While this does not negate the possibility of such a break existing in Acts 2:38, it does raise the issue of whether or not there is here a special pleading using niceties of Greek grammar.

Secondly, this interpretation leaves the purpose of baptism unexpressed in the passage. According to this interpretation, one never learns from reading Acts 2:38 why one is to be baptized. Actually, it would be more natural to extend the parenthesis (if there is one here) to read: "Repent (and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins) and you shall receive . . ."

Thirdly, it is more natural to connect the prepositional phrase "for the remission of sins" to the nearest antecedent or to both verbs (they are connected with *kai*, "repent *and* be baptized") rather than to connect it to the first verb only.

Fourthly, this interpretation reflects some misunderstanding about Greek grammar. This position rests upon a difference in number between the two verbs and the prepositional phrase. This is something which the standard Greek grammars do not address. While the grammars do discuss the agreement of subject and verb, they do not discuss the idea of agreement between verb and prepositional phrases. In other words, the argument that a syntactical break occurs here which makes for a parenthetical statement is very hard to support. In fact, there is evidence that a change in number in the verbs, as in Acts 2:38, strengthens the demand for baptism and in no way affects its natural relationship with the phrase "for the remission of sins."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Carroll D. Osborn, "The Third Person Imperative in Acts 2:38," *Restoration Quarterly* 26 (1983), 81-84. Osborn's work is based on Judy Glaze's excellent work, "The Septuagintal Use of the Third Person Imperative" (Master's thesis, Harding Graduate School of Religion, Memphis, n.d.), 24, 33.

Fifthly, the theological argument for this interpretation is very interesting and not without merit. Baptism can, in the light of the passages cited for support of this position, be understood as expressing ceremonially the repentance which by itself brings forgiveness (cf. Luke 3:3). However, while this *may* explain Acts 2:38, it may be questioned whether this approach gives us a method for dealing with the more difficult passages of Acts 22:16 and 1 Pet 3:21. These verses are not easily dismissed as speaking merely of the importance of the symbolic value of baptism. These two passages, however, must await further articles in this Journal.

In summary, this view is grammatically weak, but theologically possible. However, for an excellent presentation of the theological support of this position see Robert N. Wilkin's article on repentance in this issue (pp. 16-18).

## V. The Conversion-Initiation Interpretation

### Definition

We now come to the view called "conversion-initiation."<sup>34</sup> In essence, this position holds that a person becomes a Christian (i.e., receives the Holy Spirit) by a complicated process composed of three elements: faith, water baptism, and the reception of the Spirit. However, the reception of the Spirit may come before or after water baptism. While faith and the reception of the Spirit work an inner transformation called conversion, water baptism works at an objective and ritualistic level called initiation. This position would not change the translation of Acts 2:38, but would refrain from using this verse as an *automatic* formula for every conversion.

### Defenders

Several contemporary scholars hold this position. Some of these advocates include F. F. Bruce, James D. G. Dunn, and Richard N. Longnecker.<sup>35</sup> Others, who have not designated their interpretation of Acts 2:38 as "conversion-initiation" but who have a view compatible with it are G. R. Beasley-Murray, Richard Averbeck, Ian Howard

<sup>34</sup> This designation is made by James D. G. Dunn in his book *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970).

<sup>35</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 185-87; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*; Richard N. Longnecker, "Acts," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 9:336.

Marshall, and even John Calvin.<sup>36</sup> I should also include here, as my personal belief, that the less dogmatic sacramentarian position of Alexander Campbell would also fit here fairly easily!

## Defense

This position is basically a theological one composed of three points.

First, according to this position, there is no set theological sequence (i.e., no simple cause and effect order) within the "conversion-initiation" experience of the NT. Acts itself shows that the gift of the Holy Spirit is sometimes contrasted with water baptism (Acts 1:5; 11:16), sometimes unconnected (Acts 2:4; 8:16f.; 18:25), sometimes in natural sequence (Acts 2:38; 19:5), and sometimes in a different order (Acts 9:17f.; 10:44–48).<sup>37</sup> The ambiguity which is seen in Acts should be taken seriously since it shows that God exercises His freedom. Life is more complicated than formulations of doctrine, but the Lord is able to look after the exigencies of life outside the range of the formulas.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, the "conversion-initiation" interpretation basically consists of three elements: faith, water baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Faith is the "efficacious" element and the reception of the Spirit is the climax. Water baptism is important for faith as "the necessary step of commitment, without which they could not be said to have truly 'believed.'"<sup>39</sup> But, the Spirit is given in response to faith, not baptism. Dunn goes to great length to make this clear:

Luke never mentions water-baptism by itself as the condition of or means to receiving forgiveness; he mentions it only in connection with some other attitude (repentance—Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38) or act (calling on his name—Acts 22:16). But whereas water-baptism is never spoken of as the sole prerequisite to receiving forgiveness, Luke on a number of occasions speaks of repentance or faith as the sole prerequisite (Luke 5:20; 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; cf. 4:4; 9:35, 42; 11:21; 13:48; 14:1; 16:31; 17:12, 34). In other words, water-baptism is neither the sole preliminary nor in itself an essential preliminary to receiving forgiveness. . . . The view which regards 2:38 as proof that water-

<sup>36</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*; Richard Averbeck, "The Focus of Baptism," *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (Fall, 1981), 265–301; Ian Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 5:80–81; John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), 1:78–82.

<sup>37</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 90.

<sup>38</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 301–302.

<sup>39</sup> Dunn, *Baptism*, 96–97.

baptism is the vehicle of the Spirit is one which has no foundation except in the theology of later centuries. Baptism may be a necessary expression of faith, but God gives the Spirit directly to faith, as the case histories of the 120 and Cornelius make abundantly clear. The highly critical audience in 11:15-18 were not at all concerned with the issue of Cornelius's water-baptism. Only one baptism is mentioned—Spirit-baptism; God had baptized them, and that was all that mattered.

If Luke is to be our guide, therefore, water-baptism can properly be described as the vehicle of faith; but *not* as the vehicle of the Spirit. It enables man to approach God, and represents what God has done for men and still does in men, but otherwise it is not the channel of God's grace or the means of his giving the Spirit, as Acts 8 makes clear.<sup>40</sup> (Emphasis is Dunn's).

Thirdly, regardless of how complicated and irregular the process of "conversion-initiation" may be in Acts, those who hold this view often agree that Acts 2:38 states the normal and expected order for salvation. Dunn states:

... Luke probably intends Acts 2:38 to establish the pattern and norm for Christian conversion-initiation in his presentation of Christianity's beginnings. . . . Furthermore, it is the only verse in Acts which directly relates to one another the three most important elements in conversion-initiation: repentance, water-baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit—repentance and faith being the opposite sides of the same coin. . . . Those who repent and are baptized will receive the gift of the Spirit. It should be noted that no possibility of delay is envisaged here. As with the command and promise of 16:31, the act of obedience to the command receives the promised result.<sup>41</sup>

Longenecker, in his commentary on Acts, also agrees that Acts 2:38 sets the pattern:

... enough has been said here to suggest that we should understand Peter's preaching at Pentecost as being theologically normative for the relation in Acts between conversion, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the situations having to do with the Samaritan converts, Cornelius, and the twelve whom Paul met at Ephesus (which is something of a case all to itself) to be more historically conditioned and circumstantially understood.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>42</sup> Longenecker, "Acts," 336.

Thus Acts 2:38 is considered the norm for salvation in Acts in that it mentions the three elements of "conversion-initiation," but Acts 2:38 should not be understood as stating the exact, always-followed order for salvation. The exceptions are many and striking.

### Deficiencies

While I like the fact that the "conversion-initiation" interpretation attempts to be evangelical and tries to account for all of Luke's soteriology instead of simply finding a solution to Acts 2:38 alone, there is something in this position which is very frustrating: It is too ambiguous! In fact, there is so much ambiguity in it that both Alexander Campbell and a modern evangelical could hold this position—as long as no one pressed the implications of the statements too much or asked for too precise a definition of the terms used!

For example, it is claimed that Acts 2:38 is the theological "norm" for Lucan theology. But then numerous examples are cited which are contrary to this "norm." To me this raises the question of whether Acts 2:38 is indeed the "norm," or, if the statements about it need to be more carefully and clearly modified than they are at present.

Another example is the role of water baptism. Dunn says that the reception of the Spirit is in response to faith, not water baptism. However, to believe and to be baptized are

interchangeable ways of describing the act of faith; baptism was the necessary expression of commitment, without which they could not have truly "believed." . . . Water-baptism is therefore to be regarded as the occasion on which the initiate called upon the Lord for mercy, and the means by which he committed himself to the one who was named over him. Properly administered water-baptism must have been the climax and act of faith, the expression of repentance and the vehicle of commitment.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Dunn, *Baptism*, 96-97. No doubt this is why Beasley-Murray (*Baptism*, 393-94), states that "... there ought to be a greater endeavour to make baptism integral to the Gospel . . . Baptism is . . . a proper subject for exposition in the enquirers' class, along with instruction as to the nature of the Church, of worship, of Christian obligation in the Church and to the world, etc. Peter's response, however, to the cry of his conscience-stricken hearers on the Day of Pentecost was not, 'Repent and believe,' but 'Repent and be baptized'! (Acts 2:38). Naturally faith was presumed in repentance, but Peter's answer told the Jews how to become Christians: faith and repentance are to be expressed in baptism, and so they are to come to the Lord. Baptism is here a part of the proclamation of Christ. In an Apostolic sermon it comes as its logical conclusion. . . . Baptism and conversion are thus inseparables; the one demands the other, for neither is complete without the other. . . . Finally, there should be an endeavour to make baptism integral to Church membership."

Although I know that Dunn and the others would reject it, I still feel that this statement could be acceptable to many sacramentarians and used to prove the necessity of baptism. Dunn appears to say that C (the reception of the Holy Spirit) comes because of A (faith), but A is not truly A unless it is accompanied by B (baptism). This raises the question: how does this argument avoid the logical deduction that B is as necessary as A in order to receive C?

This position is certainly in need of better articulation. However, until it becomes clearer it will, I believe, be rejected by the vast majority of Bible students.

## VI. The Ultra-Dispensational Interpretation

### Definition

The ultra-dispensational interpretation understands Acts 2:38 in a straightforward manner (much like the sacramentarian view) but believes that Acts 2:38 applies only to Israel and to a special situation which is no longer applicable. In other words, Acts 2:38 is not for today.

### Defenders

This interpretation has been held by Charles F. Baker, E. W. Bullinger, Harry Bultema, A. E. Knoch, Cornelius Stam, and Charles H. Welch.<sup>44</sup>

### Defense

The defense of this position is basically theological. It teaches that since the concept of the Church *as the Body of Christ* (Jew and Gentile in one body with full equality) was revealed only to Paul during his prison ministry (Eph. 3:1-9) after the Book of Acts was written, the whole of Acts is not directly applicable to us today any more than the OT is directly applicable. Acts 2 concerns Israel and the judgment coming upon her for her rejection of her Messiah-King (Acts 2:39-40).

<sup>44</sup> Charles F. Baker, *Understanding the Books of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College Publications, 1981); E. W. Bullinger, *How to Enjoy the Bible* (London: The Lamp Press, n.d.); Harry Bultema, *The Bible and Baptism: A Re-Examination* (Muskegon, MI: privately published, 1952); A. E. Knoch, *On Baptism* (Los Angeles: Concordant Publishing Concern, n.d.); and *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament* (Saugus, CA: Concordant Publishing Concern, 1968); Cornelius Stam, *Acts Dispensationally Considered* (Chicago: Berean Bible Society, 1954); Charles H. Welch, *An Alphabetical Analysis* (Surrey, England: Berean Publications Trust, 1955), 1:102-109.

Also, this position makes a distinction between the forgiveness of sins and the doctrine of justification by faith. A. E. Knoch explains:

Repentance and baptism lead to a probationary pardon, which may be withdrawn. This pardon is extended by Christ as the King. Its operation is illustrated by the parable of the ten thousand talent debtor (see Matt 18:27-34) whose debt was remitted, but who refused to remit the smaller sum which his fellow slave owed to him. Hence the remission of his debt was canceled. So it is with Israel in this chronicle. Many of those who, in the beginning, received the pardon of their sins, refused to share their pardon with the other nations, objecting to proselytes like Cornelius, raising a riot on the supposition that an alien had entered the sanctuary, seeking to kill Paul even though he brought alms to Jerusalem. They finally fall away (Heb 6:6; 10:27) where there is no longer any room for repentance, but a fearful prospect of judgment. This pardon, however, is in sharp contrast to our justification, or acquittal, from which there can be no fall, as it places us beyond the sphere of judgment. Conciliation (Rom 5:11) is immeasurably beyond any pardon, as it places us in the unclouded favor of God's grace.

The promise was to Israel, both in the land and in the dispersion (Dan 9:27). Those "afar" were Jews in the lands where God had driven them, and not Gentiles or the church.<sup>45</sup>

### Deficiencies

As a dispensationalist, I find this position attractive. However, the idea that Acts 2 is not the birth of the Church and is unrelated to this dispensation is a serious deficiency. This view has been so thoroughly refuted in Charles C. Ryrie's excellent book *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965) that we need not restate the arguments here.

While the idea that forgiveness is different from justification has merit (and will be considered in our next interpretation), the claim that the Church was not in existence in Acts 2 and, therefore, Acts 2 is not applicable today, is by itself enough to make us look for a better interpretation.

<sup>45</sup> Knoch, *Concordant Commentary*, 181.

## VII. The Transitional Interpretation

### Definition

This "transitional interpretation"<sup>46</sup> holds that those who heard Peter's message in Acts 2 and believed it were regenerated at the moment of their faith, whether that occurred before or after their repentance. However, in order to receive the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter's audience had to repent and be baptized. This condition is applied in Acts only to Palestinians exposed to the baptizing ministry of John and of Jesus. It is not applicable to Gentiles at all as the case of Cornelius's conversion shows. Cornelius received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith, along with regeneration and justification.

### Defenders

This view has not had a wide hearing and, therefore, its advocates are few. However, this position is held by Zane C. Hodges and Craig Glickman.<sup>47</sup> Others who held a position which is somewhat compatible with it are Arno C. Gaebelin and Harry A. Ironside.<sup>48</sup>

### Defense

The defense for this position is intricate since each of its points builds on the one before it. Broadly speaking, the support for this view is both grammatical and theological.

The grammatical support for this interpretation comes from the *prima facie* reading of the text. In this it agrees with the sacramentarian view. The normal force of both the words and the grammar all point to understanding Acts 2:38 as saying that one must both repent and be baptized in order to receive the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. All efforts at lexical and grammatical subtleties are rejected.

However, the burden of support for this position is theological.

First, this interpretation affirms its belief in the evangelical position that John's doctrine of regeneration and Paul's doctrine of justification

<sup>46</sup> Again, this is my designation of this view. This position was never designated by anyone who held it. I took this title from a phrase in Zane C. Hodges's defense.

<sup>47</sup> Steven Craig Glickman, unpublished class notes in 903 Soteriology and Evangelism (Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall, 1982); Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1981); and unpublished class notes for 227 Acts (Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall, 1984).

<sup>48</sup> Arno Clemens Gaebelin, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Our Hope, 1912); Harry A. Ironside, *Baptism* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, fourth edition, 1989).

are both by faith alone. In this, it disagrees with the sacramentarian interpretation. Hodges notes:

It should be kept in mind that the key word in the Johannine doctrine of eternal salvation is "life," specifically, "eternal life." For Paul the key word is "justification." Neither writer ever associates his basic idea with anything other than faith. For John, baptism plays no role in the acquisition of "life." For Paul it plays no role in "justification." But the further statement may be made that there is no New Testament writer who associates baptism with either of these issues. The importance of this cannot be overstated.<sup>49</sup>

This observation allows the transitional interpretation to take Acts 2:38 at *prima facie* understanding and yet remain evangelical. Acts 2:38 is not telling anyone how to be eternally saved, justified, regenerated, or how to avoid the lake of fire!

Secondly, this interpretation holds that some of Peter's hearers did believe and were, therefore, justified before Acts 2:38 was spoken. The question of Acts 2:37 ("Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" ) implies that faith was already present. Again, Hodges writes:

... Peter concludes his address with the assertion that "God has made this Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (2:36). His hearers then reply, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (2:37). But such a reaction presumes their acceptance of Peter's claim that they have crucified the one who is Lord and Christ. If this is what they now believe, then they were already regenerated on Johannine terms, since John wrote: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1; cf. John 20:31).<sup>50</sup>

Thirdly, this interpretation holds that Acts 2:38 as well as the rest of Acts 2 is unique and is not directly applicable to us today. This uniqueness is seen in three ways.

First, Acts 2:38 is unique in regard to its situation. On this point Hodges writes in detail:

The requirement of baptism in Acts 2:38 has its full relevance in connection with the guilt of that generation of Jews. Note 2:40—"Save yourselves from this untoward generation." By the crucifixion of Christ this generation had become the most guilty in all the history of

<sup>49</sup> Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, 100.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

Israel (cf. Matt 23:33-36). When one of these Jews on the day of Pentecost was baptized, he was, in effect, breaking with his generation. He was declaring his death to his past life and relationship, and professing a new relationship to the name of Jesus Christ.

Note the threads of truth: an evil generation—baptism and repentance—baptism with the Holy Spirit; all these recall the ministry of John the Baptist to Israel (cf. Luke 3:3-18; Matt 3:5-12). That this requirement of baptism before the reception of the Spirit is somehow linked with the Jewish responsibility because of John's ministry to that generation is implied in Acts 19. There is no evidence that anyone not actually, or potentially, reached by the ministry of John receives the Spirit this way (except Samaritans). It is then a condition laid down for the generation to whom John ministered, and, of course, his greater Successor—our Lord Himself. If we do not belong to that generation of Jews we have no real biblical ground for supposing that the Spirit is only bestowed after baptism. If we are Gentiles we clearly come under Acts 10 and Romans 8:9!

... In Acts 2:38, forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit are *both* viewed as benefits to be bestowed subsequent to the realization that Jesus is both Lord and Christ (2:27). That realization in itself would be regenerating (cf. 1 John 5:1)—it was inherent in "repentance," but baptism must precede the other two experiences. Forgiveness would restore harmonious relations between the baptized person and God and would put him in a category where God could bestow the gift of the Spirit upon him. (The gift was only being granted to the forgiven.) The sequence of events is clearly transitional in God's dealings and is not normative today (Acts 10; Rom 8:9). It is directly related to the special guilt of Peter's audience.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, Acts 2:38 is unique in regard to the matter of forgiveness. The other interpretations considered in this article assume that forgiveness is roughly the same thing as justification. It is not. Again, a detailed distinction is made by Hodges:

The final destiny of the soul is based upon his possession (or not) of eternal life (cf. Rev 20:15). Forgiveness of sins is not the determinative issue. This matter is virtually passed over in the Gospel of John in favor of the subject of "life." The reader of John could get no very clear idea of how his sins could be forgiven, but he would certainly know how to obtain eternal life. Indeed a man may die with unforgiven sins and yet go to heaven (cf. 1 Cor 11:30-32).

Forgiveness is not a legal, but a personal matter. A judge is concerned with carrying out the law, not with personal injury. So in

<sup>51</sup> Hodges, "Acts," 15-16.

the day of judgment men are judged according to their works—their legal claims to anything from God are searched out—and the final determination of destiny is made from the contents of the book of life. Men go to hell unforgiven, but men do not go to hell *because* they are unforgiven. (Judgment has been committed to the Lord Jesus because He is the Son of Man. He will sit on the Great White Throne *not* as an angry, offended person, but as the unbiased Executor of God's laws.)

Forgiveness, then, is not directly related to eternal judgment. Forgiveness removes the barrier of sin, its estrangement and distance, between man and God. It enables fellowship and communion. Since it is a personal thing, God determines in every age and circumstance what the conditions of forgiveness, the conditions of fellowship, are to be. Under the law a sacrifice might be a means of forgiveness (cf. e.g., Lev 4:10, 26, 31, 35). On the day of *Pentecost* for the Jewish crowd to whom Peter spoke, it was baptism (which, of course, is a specific kind of confession).

Two kinds of forgiveness in the NT must be clearly distinguished. The first of these may be called positional, i.e., it is ours "in Christ" (Eph 1:7; 4:28 [Grk.]; Col 1:14). Because it is involved with our being "seated in heavenly places" in Christ, it necessarily involves an instantaneous and perfect relationship with God which cannot be disturbed. Thus it covers all sins, past, present, and future. But the other kind of forgiveness is practical and experiential, and in the nature of the case can only deal with sins as they occur. Thus, at conversion, on a practical level we are forgiven for all the sins of our past and, as we confess our sins, these too are forgiven (1 John 1:9). This is to say that, at conversion, we begin communion with God and we sustain it by acknowledging the failures that can, and do, disrupt it. If a man were converted, yet unforgiven, he would be a person possessing eternal life but unable to enjoy communion with God (Paul is for three days like this . . .). What is involved in Acts 2:38 is an experience of regeneration (at the point where faith occurs . . .) with real communion begun only when baptism is submitted to.<sup>52</sup>

Thirdly, Acts 2:38 is unique in regard to the Holy Spirit when compared with the rest of the book of Acts. Concerning the offer of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38, Hodges makes four points:

(a) There was a time when no believer had—or could have as yet—the Holy Spirit (cf. John 7:38-39).

(b) On the day of Pentecost the Spirit did not become the immediate possession of every believer. Baptism had to precede the giving of the Spirit . . .

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 14.

(c) In Samaria, Samaritans receive the promised Spirit through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, that the Jewish-Samaritan schism might be prevented from injuring the unity of the Church.

(d) In the house of Cornelius the Spirit is received upon the exercise of faith and *before* baptism. No pure Gentile, according to Scripture, has ever been required to receive baptism before receiving the Spirit.

From Rom 8:9 it may be inferred that the transitional requirement of baptism had vanished and the Apostle equates possession of the Spirit with the mere fact of being a Christian. To this agree also Eph 1:13 and, by inference, Acts 19:2.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, in regard to the gift of the Holy Spirit three observations follow: (1) although the OT saint was regenerated, he did not permanently possess the Spirit (John 7:37-39); (2) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is a sign that one has entered the Church Age, was given to the Jews in Acts 2 upon their baptism; and (3) as one goes through the Book of Acts it becomes apparent that regeneration, forgiveness, and the reception of the Holy Spirit occur, normatively, at the moment of faith (Acts 10:44-48). "No Gentile exceptions are noted by Luke in the remainder of Acts, so that in Cornelius Luke no doubt sees normative Gentile experience."<sup>54</sup>

The unique manner in which the gift of the Holy Spirit is given in Acts 2 could be compared to the empowerment of the Spirit which came to our Lord at His baptism. On this analogy, S. Craig Glickman offers this insight:

Furthermore, the church was born on the day of Pentecost, a unique event and *perhaps* the gift of the Spirit to this body following baptism served also to make correspondence with the head of the body, Jesus Christ, who did not receive the special empowerment of the Spirit until after baptism, but thereafter his body always possessed it, as is the case with his body the church. It received the Spirit after baptism on its inauguration but (shortly) thereafter, to be in the body was to possess the Spirit! (Rom 8:9).<sup>55</sup>

## Deficiencies

Because this view has not been widely circulated it has not been widely criticized. One work was found by a Churches of Christ debater which criticized this interpretation.<sup>56</sup> However, its objections are of marginal

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>55</sup> Glickman, "Soteriology," 148.

<sup>56</sup> Jerry Moffitt, *Is Baptism Essential to Salvation?* (Austin, TX: Jerry Moffitt, 1979).

worth because the polemical tone did not allow the transitional interpretation to be understood accurately. However, the chief objection (besides the objection that the view may be too complex) is found in the assumption that in Acts 2:37 some actually believed in Christ. This boils down, naturally, to the nature of faith and repentance (a subject beyond the scope of this paper).<sup>57</sup> As a result of this article perhaps someone who accurately understands this interpretation will write a paper that surfaces more numerous and difficult objections. However, unless and until insurmountable problems arise, this interpretation is the one that I hold.

### VIII. Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to state and evaluate the major interpretations of Acts 2:38. Every position has problems, but the goal is to find the position which has the fewest major objections and solves the greatest number of problems. I hope that my article will help the reader to see a refutation of the argument that the Gospel contains a demand for baptism. The Scriptures state that Satan blinds the eyes of the unbeliever so that he will not see the Gospel clearly (2 Cor 4:4). Let us not do Satan's work for him by further confusing the unbeliever with an unclear gospel of faith plus water baptism.

<sup>57</sup> See the chapter on "Repentance" in Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Dallas and Grand Rapids: Redención Viva and Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 143-63. Cf. also Robert N. Wilkin's series on repentance in *JOTGES*, vols. 1 and following.

# A Voice from the Past:

## MAN DOES NOT KNOW GRACE\*

W. P. MacKAY‡

Man does not know GRACE: When unadulterated grace, unmixed grace, the grace of God, God's own love to sinners, is preached, man cannot take it in: "Oh, this is downright Antinomianism." This is the cry that was raised against Luther when he preached "full free justification by grace through faith without the deeds of the law." The cry that was raised against Paul, that he made void the law, that he told the people they might sin that grace might abound. Now, unless our Christianity provokes this opposition, it is not scriptural Christianity. Unless the gospel we preach, when presented to the natural mind, brings out these thoughts, it is another gospel than Paul's. Every Christian—mark, not some of them—has the Antinomian or God-dishonouring "flesh" within him to be watched over and mortified; but this is a different matter. People will readily quote "Faith without works is dead," "We must have works," and so on; and we most certainly coincide. But follow up the argument by inquiry about the works, and you will too often find that such have very loose ideas of Christian holiness. Such will quite go in for having a Christian name, going religiously to church, being able to criticize a sermon and a preacher, being acquainted with good people, abstaining from all immorality, being honest and respectable; but the moment we cross the boundary line that separates respectable and easy-going make-the-most-of-Christianity, into the rugged, thorny path of identification with a rejected Christ, separation from the world's gaieties, splendours, and evil communications, dead to it and all that is therein, taking up Christ's yoke, and denying self—we are met with the expressions "too far," "pietism," "righteous over-much," "we don't like extremes," "legal preaching."

\* This article is excerpted from the Introduction to *Grace and Truth*, vii-viii, 1874. It is used by the kind permission of Marshall Pickering of London. The punctuation has been only slightly modernized; otherwise it is identical to the 1874 text.

‡ The author, W. P. MacKay, was a preacher and writer among the Open Brethren at Hull, England during the nineteenth century.

The grace of man would be this, "Do the best you can by the help of grace, and then wherein you fail grace will step in and make up." But the first thing the *grace of God* does is to bring "*salvation*" (Titus ii. 11).

Or, again, man's grace may take this shape, "Oh yes, we believe in the blood, the precious blood of Christ—only faith can save; and now we have found an easy road to heaven—a sort of short cut in which we can live on good terms with the world and worldly men, and also on first-rate terms with religious men, spend our money to make ourselves comfortable, get a name, honour, or riches here, make ourselves as happy as can be in this world, just take of it what we can enjoy, and go on thus so nicely to heaven." This is another view of the *grace* that *man* knows about; but the *grace of God* teaches us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 12). Thus man knows nothing whatever about this GRACE of GOD.

Grace in the Arts:

# THE CORONATION OF THE KING

An Annotated Work of Fiction

## Part 2

FRANK D. CARMICAL\*

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And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.<sup>1</sup>

—Daniel 12:11-12

*The forty-five days following the return of King Jesus to earth had seen the defeat of the world's armies, the overthrow of the world empire of the Beast, the rescue of friends, the capture of foes, and the cleansing and healing of a planet reduced to smoldering ruins by judgments and wars both terrestrial and supernatural.<sup>2</sup>*

*As the final hours ticked away, the last preparations were being made to re-establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Three solemn, televised-to-the-whole-world ceremonies would mark this occasion: the judgment of the Earth-Dwellers (resulting in punishment of the Beast-worshippers and the reward of those who aided the people of Israel during the brief reign of the Beast), the inauguration of a new ruling aristocracy (the former mortal, now immortal saints of history) over the governments of*

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Since this story is a work of fiction rather than a theological treatise, we have put the author's notes at the end so as not to mar the story by breaking up the pages with footnotes. The notes are important, however. They show that this fictional story has a factual basis in Scripture and theology. Ed.

*the world, and the climax of history itself, the coronation of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords over all nations of the Earth.*

*Rudy, a member of the aristocracy, was assigned part of the final worldwide inspections for this historic occasion. Rudy took time during the last day of his hectic schedule to take along a friend named Joe. Also a member of the body of Christ and a recipient of eternal life, Joe had lost his rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ<sup>3</sup> for preaching a different Gospel,<sup>4</sup> and was confined to the dismal region of the Zone of Darkness<sup>5</sup> at the South Pole for the next one thousand years.*

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The sun shone high and hot over the bombed-out city as the inmate from the refugee camp was running for his life. His camp jumpsuit torn and splattered with his own blood, the man darted around massive slabs of concrete and ducked under steel girders that had been mangled like coathangers by nuclear blasts. He dared not stop even to catch his breath.

Pursuing him was a flying, glowing giant, at least nine feet tall and with a wingspan of twenty feet. Not even the terrors he had seen and experienced in the empire of the Beast had prepared him for this!

He had once scoffed at his idea of an angel, a cherubic-faced flower child. Now he was escaping with an angelic guard in fast pursuit—an angelic hulk that would pygmy a linebacker. Behind the angel flew two others, unseen and unknown to the man, Rudy and Joe.

At last, the desperate man saw his only hope of escape—a storm sewer big enough for him to crawl through, but too small for his pursuer. With one last spasm of energy, he threw himself into the opening of the pipe.

Down on his hands and knees, he started crawling into the darkness. At last, he was headed for safety—somewhere, anywhere the angel would not fit.

But not ten feet inside, the entire pipe began to shake violently and the man was tossed helplessly from side to side. Soon he saw daylight ahead, and realizing that this was yet another earthquake, he crawled forward as quickly as possible to get out of the pipe and not be buried alive.

As soon as he was out of the pipe, he jumped forward to find a place of cover from falling debris. Suddenly, he realized that there was no earthquake. Only the pipe had been shaking. In front of him was a solid wall. He turned to his right. Another wall. He snapped around to the left. A third wall—this was a dead-end street. He whirled around to his

only remaining exit.

There stood the angel, balancing the entire concrete pipe on his hip like a plumber. The man started to run past the angel along the side wall. Rudy and Joe waited behind, still unseen by the man, using their powers of invisibility.

The angel extended his free hand, emitting a beam of light that struck a section of the wall right in the man's path. Instantly, there was a gaping hole in the wall, the hard concrete melted into its original liquid form.

The man froze for a second, but seeing this as his only way of escape, he made a dash for the hole in the wall. Just as he was about to jump through, his legs caught in something. They wouldn't move. Looking down he saw that the concrete, liquid only seconds before, had solidified around his feet.

Exhausted and overwhelmed, the man fell to his knees. Then he noticed that the concrete had changed again—into its original dusty powder. The man sat down on the ground, covered with gray cement dust, and began to cry for the first time since he was a child.

"Please . . . let me go!"

Having no more need for the pipe, the angel tossed it aside effortlessly and spoke, his words reverberating with more bass volume than any speaker system could simulate. "What are you asking us to do?" At this signal, both Rudy and Joe became visible.

The man's reply was almost unintelligible, because of his tears and the strangling in his throat. Seeing Rudy and Joe as someone, anyone, besides an angel, he turned to them with pleading eyes. "Please . . . have mercy on me!" Joe turned away, unable to look further.

The angel's impassive face could have been carved from Italian marble. "Do you believe that mercy is being extended to you?"

"I don't know . . . I don't know."

At this point, Rudy spoke. "You have a new King now. Do you believe that in this moment He is offering you mercy, that He is offering you life? Answer the angel's question."

The man's tears changed from those of panic-stricken pleading to heart-broken contrition. "I don't know what to believe. I don't deserve anything. I don't deserve your mercy. I don't deserve to live. But I don't want to be punished. I don't want to die. Please, don't kill me."

Rudy remained firm. "Then answer the question."

The angel spoke again with not the slightest trace of impatience in his voice. "Do you believe that mercy is being extended to you?"

The man hesitated, as though he wanted to answer, but no words

would come out. He waited a moment and then quietly, almost meekly, he said, "I don't know why, but . . . I believe."

After a terrible pause, the angel reached forward, a gesture that could mean nothing but certain death. The man cringed, expecting to be transformed into liquid or dust as rapidly as the wall had been.

The angel extended his open palm to the man and spoke with no change in volume or intensity. "Then you shall have mercy."

Rudy also spoke reassuringly. "You shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord."<sup>6</sup>

Not yet fully comprehending, the man sniffed noisily, the tears and cement dust smearing dark gray across his face. The angel gestured again with his hand. Understanding at last, the man reached out his hand. It was swallowed up in the angel's like a toddler's in the hand of a father.

The two lifted off from the dead-end street, the angel's wings glowing iridescently and flapping more gracefully and majestically than any monarch butterfly. The two had begun the flight back home.

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"Well, Joe," asked Rudy somewhat playfully, as they watched the angel fly away with the man. "Would you say that that man was just born again or not?"

Joe shook his head. "I don't think I know any more than he knows. Only God knows."

"True, and I'm not pretending to know for sure either, but I can get a pretty good idea when a person responds according to God's Word. In my opinion, the angel offered another chance for eternal life and I believe that man took it."<sup>7</sup>

"But the man was terrified. How could he make an intelligent decision about eternity when he was scared out of his wits?"

Rudy arched his eyebrows. "I think God prefers a decision from someone scared to death of the consequences than a person who says no after having time to make an intelligent decision. This poor man was grabbing a lifeline thrown to him—I think that's one way to look at saving faith."

"We're back to our old argument. Let's not talk any more about this."

"I was half joshing you, Joe."

"Were you? Or were you reminding me of the past, Rudy? I can't bear that, not from you, of all people."

"I'm sorry!" cried Rudy. "I wasn't saying anything about the past."

Joe, how do you ever expect to get along in this Kingdom unless you realize that the past is gone forever and you've got to go on from here?"

"Can you honestly tell me that you never remember the past? Your failures? Your sins?"

"I remember. But I don't let those memories defeat me."

"Nothing can defeat a defeated man. It's very easy for you to talk confidently with your rewards and your rulership!"

Thoughts came to Rudy's mind of how exasperated he would have been in his old life, but a marvelous new peace and patience was in control of his emotions. He knew that he had to finish his morning duties. All that was left on his schedule was to inspect a few sites in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Afterward he could join the others in the aristocracy for the ceremonies starting at 7:30 AM, Israeli time. But in the meantime, there was Joe . . .

"Joe, are you going to come with me while I finish my inspection?"

Joe looked at the hole in the wall where the angel had melted the concrete. "Why not? I don't have anything else to do."

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The valley created by the earthquake when King Jesus' feet had touched the Mount of Olives was soon to become a vast waterway. Fresh spring water from under the Temple site already flowed outward in two directions. The eastern branch of this new river flowed to the Dead Sea, anticipating the day not too many years hence when this would be called "the Living Sea," because of the swarms of fish and the tree-shaded banks. Fishermen would clean their nets along the entire shoreline, except for a few salty marshes. The western branch flowed out toward the Mediterranean Sea, a river that would soon make Jerusalem a year-round seaport to all the world.<sup>8</sup>

Rudy could barely contain his enthusiasm when he saw how much progress had been made. "Joe, this is one of the grandest parts of the whole reconstruction of Israel. What better way to help Jerusalem become the capital of the worldwide Kingdom of God than by turning it into a seaport! A brilliant idea! And Ezekiel and Zechariah told us all about it over twenty-five hundred years ago!"

Joe peered out over the landscape. "I visited the Holy Land a number of times back in life." He paused and then continued, a slight tone of disappointment in his voice. "It all looks so different now."

"Well it should," said Rudy, "the whole thing's been a battlefield for three and a half years." I believe it's going to take seven years to burn

all the tanks and armor. And seven months just to bury the corpses<sup>9</sup>—the ones the birds haven't already eaten.<sup>10</sup>

Joe sighed one of his very loud and long sighs. "It all seems very depressing."

Rudy shook his head in amazement at how anyone could fail to marvel at the miraculous accuracy of the prophecies in God's Word and the wonderful potential of the Temple waters flowing and bringing life to a valley strewn with death. Indignation slowly rose up inside Rudy, and then he checked it, speaking quickly. "Let's get on to the next site before I get depressed!"

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Joe was even more let down when he saw Jerusalem. More than half of the city had been destroyed.<sup>11</sup> A sea of green flags marking the location of corpses snapped in the wind for blocks and blocks of Jerusalem's bombed out suburbs. Most distressing of all was the smoke that constantly rose from the Valley of Hinnom, smoke belching out of the dreaded entrance to Hell.<sup>12</sup>

Looking east was much more encouraging. Rudy found that the entire valley outside the East Gate had been cleared and readied for the coronation parade route. There were bald spots on the ground where piles of trash had been burned and every trace of refuse or rubble removed. On these spots, young, tender grass sprouted up like baby hair and would soon make a carpet of green across the eastern face of the City of David. Already millions of people were assembling in the valley for the ceremonies later that morning.

Rudy checked with the attendants who would serve the largest meal in history later that day. Looking into the distance, Rudy could see innumerable rows of tables, their white, red, blue, and purple tablecloths whipping in the breeze.

Rudy pointed. "Do you see those?"

"Yes, I see them."

"Those are the tables for the Lord's first Passover and Communion here on Earth since the night before His crucifixion. Do you realize that not a week has ever passed since that night when His memorial Supper has not been observed somewhere in the world? But this is the first time since that night that the Lord Himself will be in actual attendance. Before He's always been absent.<sup>13</sup> What a celebration!"

Actually seeing the tables was almost too much for Joe. He had looked

once and could not bring himself to look again. Rudy was so wrapped up in the moment that he failed to notice the state of his friend and kept chattering along.

"Joe, just yesterday as they were setting these tables, I came by for an early inspection. I had one of the little refugee boys with me. He asked me what all the tables were for and I explained. Then he asked me where they were going to get all the bread and wine to feed so many people—most of the aristocracy will be here—and I don't know why it took me a minute to think of the answer. Can you answer his question?"

Joe was silent.

"Joe?"

"What?"

"Haven't you been listening?"

"Sure. What did you ask?"

"I asked if you could answer the boy's question—where is all the bread and wine coming from for the grand banquet here today?"

"Where?"

"Who's the Guest of Honor?"

Joe looked down, taking deep breaths.

Rudy answered his own question: "Jesus, of course. The One who turned water to wine and multiplied the loaves is the Host and Provider for the largest Passover and Communion in history!"

Suddenly, Joe broke down and began to sob. "Take me away from here, please. I can't take it any more! I can't stand it!"

"What's wrong?" Rudy asked, shocked at Joe's reaction.

"Don't you understand?" Joe sobbed. "I'm not invited! I'm not invited! I'm not invited!"<sup>14</sup>

Knowing that he had to finish the inspection, but that he couldn't just leave Joe in such a condition, Rudy quickly bowed his head in prayer and summoned Joe's old guardian angel. As soon as the angel arrived, Rudy took off.

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Rudy hastily finished his duties, checking with the television crews to ensure that all was ready for the worldwide satellite telecast of the coronation. The entire event was to be recorded, not just with crude video equipment, but also with Heavenly electro-magnetic spectral recording material—the same material that could replay every thought, word and action of every man, woman, and child who had ever lived.

The grandstands for the guests of honor—the aristocracy—were the

most unusual that Rudy had ever seen. Appropriate for glorified beings capable of flight, these tiers of seats were suspended in midair, forming a literal mile-high stadium surrounding the eastern part of Jerusalem and the Temple precincts. Because the chairs were made of the same gold as the New Jerusalem, they were not only antigravitational, they were also as transparent as glass.<sup>15</sup> A billion seats suspended in midair and they were nearly invisible!

Rudy finished his inspection jubilantly. Then he remembered he had to take Joe home. This wasn't going to be easy.

When Rudy returned, Joe had calmed down, thanks to the guardian angel that Rudy had summoned to help. The angel had come to the rescue many times before and Joe's present needs were not overlooked by his faithful old guardian nor by Joe's faithful Father. Soon the angel left.

"Are you feeling better?" asked Rudy.

"Yes," replied Joe, "I'm exhausted. I don't know where you get the energy to do all this."

Rudy smiled. "I never think about how much I'm doing. Because I'm doing it for Him, it always seems easy."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean . . . it's a joy to do anything for Him. All these inspections we've gone on today seem like such a little thing to do for Him. Each time we stopped, it was always in my mind that this thing or that thing was ultimately for Him—not for the Earth or the plants or animals, or the people, not even for the aristocracy. It's for Him.

"This planet is in ruins. What a terrible homecoming present for the King of kings! He deserves so much more. He is worth so much more than forty-four days of cleanup and patchup can give Him."

Joe smiled for nearly the first time since Rudy had seen him earlier this morning. "You know, Rudy. I felt just the opposite. Each time we stopped I could only think of how terrible it was that I was going to miss it all."

Suddenly Rudy's longsuffering patience gave way to righteous indignation—one of the first times since his unglorified state that he had ever felt genuine holy anger without sinning.

"Can't you think of someone besides yourself for once? Even now, after all you've lost out on, can't you think of Him?"

"I'm afraid my greatest mistake in life—"

"*This is life!*" shouted Rudy. "*This is eternal life right now! Wake up, Joe. Don't talk about the old days like we were still back there living in sin. They don't exist any more. Today, right now, is what life is all*

about.”

“Eternal life for me . . .”

Rudy interrupted. “Eternal life is knowing Him forever.<sup>16</sup> You need to start acting like that. Count your blessings, man! Think about how privileged you are. God’s grace has given you fellowship with Him forever, citizenship in the New Jerusalem permanently, service and worship before the throne for all eternity—and you sit here drowning in self-pity over a measly thousand years when you’re going to miss out on a few blessings!

“I’d give you my own rewards if I thought it would shut you up! Can’t you see it’s the greatest of privileges just to *be* here? You could be over there in the mouth of Gehenna if it weren’t for God’s grace!”

After Rudy’s explosive comeback, there was a long awkward silence between the two. This time, Joe was the first to speak. “I was just about to confess to you, when you gave me that tongue-lashing—a tongue-lashing I deserved. I was about to say that of all my many mistakes in life, even greater than not preaching the Gospel clearly or correctly, my greatest mistake of all was never getting to know Him.

“It was always ministry—sermons to preach, books to write and autograph, radio shows to tape, meetings to attend—and never enough time just to get alone with Him.

“I studied the Word. I memorized the Word. I taught the Word. I waxed eloquent with the Word. People pre-set their clock radios to turn on to the Word in my mouth. But, I never got to know the Word Himself.

“You don’t have to be hard on me, Rudy. Even *He* isn’t that hard on me! He knows I’m fully capable of punishing myself. You’re absolutely right about my not thinking of Him. I don’t think of Him now, because I didn’t think of Him then.

“I preached about God and His grace to millions and yet I never really knew Him and I never really understood what His grace was. Maybe I understand grace less today than I ever have.”

His anger quickly melting into compassion, Rudy softened his tone. “I don’t pretend to plumb the depths of grace either, but at least now, I’m a little more at home in its waters.

“Joe, what you just said could have described every one of us back then. I know it describes me, how I thought and lived and acted. My eyes were always turned inward too. But over the years He taught me to think and act differently, to see things from His viewpoint. But even that has been superseded now. Now I am beginning to see things from

the Father's viewpoint and that's why I can't help but rejoice to see what today means to His only begotten Son. Think of Him! Not yourself!"

"I do think of Him and it's His very grace that melts me beyond words and tears, beyond despair. I swore my allegiance publicly to Him and His grace a thousand times and then turned around and did everything possible to defeat His grace. And yet He is gracious still!"

Rudy caught the tone in Joe's voice. "Why does that surprise you so?"

"I guess it does surprise me. And I don't know why. Maybe I never really believed He could be so gracious. I thought of my relationship to Him like . . . just like Satan and Job's friends in the Book of Job, who saw the relationship between God and man like a business deal.<sup>17</sup> I was like Jonah in his self-centered nationalism and prejudice, wanting all of God's grace for himself and Israel and none for their enemies!<sup>18</sup> Just like the older son in our Lord's parable, who lived in his father's house, but never shared his father's heart.<sup>19</sup> I was like the unrewarded servant in another parable.<sup>20</sup>

"I saw God as a stern Father; a tough business Dealer. If I did my part, I expected Him to do His part. When others didn't play fair, I didn't expect them to get a cut. I buried the real treasure of the Gospel that God gave me as a child and lived my life and carried out my ministry in spiritual poverty.

"The thing that always stuck in my craw was how God could be gracious to others and treat them the same way He treated me when I was more deserving than they were."

"But . . ."

"Let me finish this time, Rudy! What I never saw was that my self-righteousness, my reliance on my own righteousness was more sinful than those who were out-and-out unrighteous. I was truly a pharisee and now I have a pharisee's reward.

"I never understood the idea that God could love us so much that His greatest sacrifice, even the shame of the Cross, was a joy to Him. That He could love us unconditionally and accept us without holding anything back. There were never any strings attached to salvation. I put a price tag of works on it when all along it was absolutely free.

"But it wasn't just *the Gospel* I was unfaithful to. I was unfaithful to Him. I couldn't see that any other gospel except a Gospel that gives everything and expects nothing in return was an insult, an affront, a smear on His character and Person. Only a salvation that He alone gives is an accurate reflection of Him. I never saw that when I changed *the Gospel*, I was really changing *Him*."

When Joe fell silent, Rudy knew that he could give his friend no more

time. His inspections were at an end and the ceremonies were only minutes from starting. In the time since he had finished the inspection and returned to talk to Joe, millions of the aristocracy had arrived in the vicinity, dropping out of the sky like myriads of snowflakes on a wintry day. At last, Rudy used the powers of transport that he had rarely used in the last decade. He and Joe vanished.

They reappeared back in the Zone of Darkness, on the vast continent-sized island that was once frozen over and called Antarctica.

Rudy turned to his old friend and put his arms around him. "I'm sorry I have to leave . . ."

"No more so than I. Do you have to go?"

"Yes, I must return for the ceremonies."

"Will you come back and visit me?"

"Sure, Joe. I promise. You know you can watch the recordings of the whole proceedings today."

"I always hated television. *Real* Christians don't watch it!"

They both laughed and hugged each other again.

"Anything else I can get you before I go?" asked Rudy.

"There is nothing left for me except to weep."

"Someday, He'll wipe away all your tears."

"Yes, but a thousand years is a long time to cry."<sup>21</sup>

"It's not long compared to those who'll weep forever."

"He may dry my eye, but I will always have a sob in my heart. If only . . . if only . . ."

Rudy knew he had to be at the ceremonies on time, but he hated to leave this brother in such a state. But alas, this *was* Joe's state, for at least the Millennium to come.

When Joe burst into a new round of tears, Rudy could bear no more and left. As Rudy flew away into the light, he turned one last time to glance back in the darkness. Joe was sitting there, weeping inconsolably, every once in a while his cries breaking into wails so violent that his teeth ground together.

One last time, Rudy thought of his friend. Then he thought of the King and resolved that nothing would spoil this precious day. The Lord Jesus loved Joe and somehow in infinite mercy and an infinity to come, the Lord would bring some good from Joe's dilemma and all those like him. The ancient Scripture came to mind that had always been such a comfort: "Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?"<sup>22</sup>

When Rudy arrived at his reserved seat near the coronation site, he still could not believe how many people, saints, and angels had gathered.

All Jerusalem and its surrounding vicinity for hundreds of miles was filled with people from the nations. All of the airspace around the city stretching upward into the atmosphere a mile high was crowded with an innumerable multitude of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.

From the Temple precincts, Rudy would have one of the best views of this never-to-be repeated event. It was a privilege only God's grace could provide. And the moment came exactly on time.

Neither Rudy nor anyone else around or above Jerusalem was quite sure what had happened until after the entire event had taken place. For one moment the sun shone in its usual brightness, seven times its previous splendor,<sup>23</sup> and then the truly incredible happened. The sun flared up a thousand times its normal brightness, yet blinding no one, and dimmed. Then its fiery ball appeared to split in half, a second brighter ball of fire moving away from the first. Then the second began to grow in size and in brightness. Soon everyone realized it wasn't growing in size. It was heading for earth!

Finally, it was clear what had happened. The Son of Righteousness had materialized in front of the sun in the sky. His glory was greater than the light of the sun. When He moved away from the sun toward earth, His glorious appearance shone brighter and appeared to grow larger. What a spectacular entrance for the King to make on His coronation day!<sup>24</sup>

But it wasn't over yet. Only after this blinding, blazing ball of light had entered the atmosphere and started descending upon Palestine did the figures inside become visible. Four living creatures and the whirling wheels of Heaven's number one chariot, last seen leaving the temple precincts by Ezekiel, carried the Son of God on its central throne.<sup>25</sup>

The entire vehicle, if something as intricate and sophisticated as this could even be compared to a machine, touched down on the Mount of Olives. As the Son of Righteousness stepped from His portable "sun chariot," thundering applause and a deafening roar of voices rose up from the multitudes far and wide. The cheers continued as His feet touched a crimson flying carpet unfurled by two rows of shining angels. Walking the length of the carpet, the Son of Man mounted His white charger and the parade began.

For this was not just any parade. There was but one central attraction and all eyes were on Him. Speed was not a factor, for the Rider was in no hurry. After all, He had waited from eternity past for this moment.

From time to time along the route, He would stop and greet those by the roadside. Sometimes He would shake some hands or give some kisses

or hold a child. His magnificent heavenly charger was gentle enough for the smallest of these children to ride, yet so fierce that only forty-five days earlier, at their first descent on the Mount of Olives, the horse had literally breathed fire and smoke through its nostrils and trampled the armies of Beast-worshippers beneath its hooves into the mud, splattering the garments of the King with their blood.<sup>26</sup>

The procession passed Bethany where Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were waiting. As the procession neared the stretch of road to Jerusalem that He had once taken, many in the crowd, especially the Apostles, could remember the original shouts and the palm branches. There were still branches and clothes spread in the road, but the choruses were all sincere this time: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"<sup>27</sup> And this time, when He saw the City of David, there were no tears in His eyes.

Nearing the city, the entire procession took a turn, and for a while it was not apparent which route He would take. Then it was all clear. Past the empty Garden Tomb where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus waited. Past the Place of the Skull where He was joined by the converted Roman centurion and the thief on the cross. Simon of Cyrene and the daughters of Jerusalem also joined them at this point, retracing in reverse the exact steps of the Via Dolorosa—now and forever afterward the Via Gloriosa!

Through the East Gate King Jesus rode, His horse stepping in time as the music of countless bands and orchestras along the way were joined by the New Jerusalem Philharmonic playing the strains of a brand new coronation march composed in the King's honor for this day by J. S. Bach, the grand master of the passion of his Savior, soon to be the grand master of His Savior's glorification.

This was a perfect counterpoint to Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha. The site of the ancient fortress of Antonia that had once echoed with mobs screaming "Crucify Him!," now rang with worshipers singing "Crown Him!" He wore a crown, no longer made of cursed thorns, but a crown of gold and diamonds clear as crystal and white as fire atop his white hair.<sup>28</sup>

The Cross had been the time of His public humiliation that made possible the justification of the world. Now this was the time of His public glorification, *His* justification, an event as necessary in the Divine economy as the Cross itself. The heavenly scales were now balanced between grace and justice—for *Him*. History and time and eternity had come full circle.

Finally, the procession stopped at the Temple site, desecrated by the

Beast<sup>29</sup> and blasted by his bombs. A temporary tabernacle had been pitched until the Millennial temple in all its holiness could be built. Now even the horse's bridles were engraved with "Holiness to the Lord."<sup>30</sup>

Dressed in the blue, scarlet, and purple garments of the High Priest, with the crown of the nation of Israel on His head and the scars of the office of Prophet on His glorified Body, the King-Priest-Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lion and Lamb, the Alpha and Omega stood before the assembled billions of the nations, aristocracy, and angels in Palestine. Billions more watched simultaneously by television scattered around the globe and uncountable hosts throughout the galaxies desired to look into these things.<sup>31</sup>

The King raised His hands and there was an instant hush. Only the wind flapping the bright panoplies of flags and fabrics could be heard among the assembled multitudes.

The moment had come. One by one the entire assembly fell to their knees and then on their faces. When the Blessed Spirit descended in the form of a heavenly Dove, no eye saw Him but the Son and the Father.

And then from Heaven, the voice of the Father spoke these words for all to hear, audibly and eternally:

"You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.  
Ask of Me and I will give You  
the nations for Your inheritance  
and the ends of the earth for Your possession.  
You shall break them with a rod of iron;  
You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

"Now therefore, be wise, O kings;  
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.  
Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,  
and you perish in the way,  
When His wrath is kindled but a little.  
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> See Ps 2. The significance of this last sentence in Ps 2:12 can scarcely be exaggerated. Not only during Christ's future rule on Earth, but right now, it is true that those who put their trust in Him for salvation are blessed forevermore with eternal life. If you do not know for sure that *you* are going to Heaven or if you have never put your trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, please write to *JOTGES* or to Mr. Carmical for more information about how you can have eternal life. Ed.

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version, copyright 1984, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville.

<sup>2</sup> For numerous other Scripture references supporting the events described below, see Part 1 of this story in the Autumn, 1989 issue of the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Vol. 2, Number 2).

<sup>3</sup> That some believers will lose their *rewards* (not their salvation) at the Judgment Seat of Christ is a clear and consistent teaching throughout the NT (Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27; 1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Tim 2:11-13) and it is the necessary counterpart and balance to the teaching of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone, apart from any works.

<sup>4</sup> See Gal 1:6-9.

<sup>5</sup> In the NT, this place is called the "outer darkness" (Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). See Part I, note number 17 for elaboration of this concept.

<sup>6</sup> See Ps 118:17. The person speaking these words in their final fulfillment can only take place in the context of the Millennial Kingdom when this Messianic Psalm will ultimately be fulfilled.

<sup>7</sup> The final proof and basis for assurance of salvation is not how much a person's conduct conforms to God's Word, but how truthful is God's promise of eternal life offered freely to those who will only believe.

<sup>8</sup> See Ezek 47:1-12 and Zech 14:4-8 for the prediction of the creation of this waterway. Clarence Larkin, in *Dispensational Truth* (Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Estate, 1920), 92-95 supplies charts, illustrations, and descriptions of this millennial river predicted in Ezekiel. This author knows of no other work that has ever attempted a systematic delineation and description of the conditions of the millennial earth other than Larkin and J. Dwight Pentecost in *Things To Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958). Considering the large amount of God's Word devoted to the subject of the millennial earth, there is certainly a need in the Body of Christ for an exhaustive treatment of this subject in both written and graphic form.

<sup>9</sup> See Ezek 39:8-16.

<sup>10</sup> See Ezek 39:17-20; Matt 24:28; Rev 19:17-18.

<sup>11</sup> See Zech 13:8-14:3.

<sup>12</sup> See Isa 65:24; Rev 14:9-12.

<sup>13</sup> Contrary to the teachings of much of Christendom, the Lord is not physically or spiritually present in the Communion meal. On the contrary, the meal is a remembrance of Him in His absence and observed until He returns (1 Cor 11:23-26). The Lord Himself predicted the glorious day when believers will share this meal with Him in Person in His Kingdom (Luke 22:15-18, 28-30).

<sup>14</sup> There is a difference of opinion among interpreters as to the identity of those not invited to the table of Christ in His Kingdom (Matt 8:11-12; 22:1-14; Luke 13:24-30; 14:15-24). Most interpreters believe that only unbelievers are uninvited, but it is possible that unrewarded believers may also be in view.

<sup>15</sup> See Rev 21:10-12, 18, 21.

<sup>16</sup> See John 17:3; 1 John 5:20.

<sup>17</sup> The Book of Job is often misinterpreted as an apologetic about the problem of evil and suffering. The Book of Job is really about the basis of the relationship

between God and man. Both Satan and Job's friends (and, before his repentance, Job himself to some extent) saw man's relation to God in terms of impersonal law—a business contract. Job's great lesson in the book is that his relationship with God is based on personal grace—if you know the grand God of the universe personally, nothing that happens in life needs an explanation.

<sup>18</sup> The great lesson of Jonah is that whereas God's people selfishly want grace for themselves or for a select few, God wants to be gracious to everyone.

<sup>19</sup> See Luke 15:11-32.

<sup>20</sup> See Matt 25:14-30.

<sup>21</sup> Since the eternal prophecies of Revelation 21-22 follow the millennial prophecies of Revelation 20, it is possible that the tear-drying promised to all believers in Rev 21:4 will not take place until the eternal state.

<sup>22</sup> See Gen 18:25. It is this author's hope that no one will take him to task for overplaying the plight of the character named Joe. For those readers who would deny that such a judgment could ever happen to a true believer, this writer challenges them to examine seriously the passages mentioned in both parts of this story. At the very least, may we all take heed to the warning expressed to Christians in Heb 12:25-29!

<sup>23</sup> See Isa 30:26.

<sup>24</sup> See Mal 4:2.

<sup>25</sup> See Ezek 1:3-28; 10:1-22; 11:22-25.

<sup>26</sup> See Isa 63:1-6; Rev 14:20; 19:11-15. One of the vivid contrasts between the First and Second Comings of Christ can be seen in His clothing. At His First Coming, Christ's garments were soaked with His own blood, because He bore the judgment of God for the sins of the whole world. At His Second Coming, the Jewish nation will see their Messiah coming in garments stained red with the blood of His enemies, Christ having meted out the judgment of God personally against sinners who will have rejected Him.

<sup>27</sup> See Ps 118:26; Matt 23:39; Luke 13:34-35.

<sup>28</sup> See Dan 7:9; Rev 1:13-14.

<sup>29</sup> See Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15.

<sup>30</sup> See Ezek 40:1-47:12; Zech 14:20.

<sup>31</sup> See 1 Pet 1:12.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Tyndale's New Testament.* Translated from the Greek by William Tyndale. Edited and introduced by David Daniell. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989. 429 pp. Cloth, \$28.95.

King Henry VIII's Chancellor "for all seasons," Sir Thomas More, called Tyndale "a beast," one of the "hell-hounds that the devil hath in his kennel," discharging a "filthy foam of blasphemies out of his brutish mouth," and *more* of the same. Stripped down to bare facts, Tyndale's crime consisted of translating *ekklēsia* as *congregation* (not "church"), *agapē* as *love* (not "charity"), *metanoēō* as *repent* (not "do penance"), and *presbyteros* as *elder* (not "priest"). All of Tyndale's translations are accurate, as any first-year Greek student knows. The bishop of London had given More permission to read the NT in English (forbidden by the "Constitutions of Oxford," 1408) with the very purpose of discrediting the man and his ministry. The bishop's seeking out and burning of these New Testaments bordered on the rabid and inquisitorial.

David Daniell, the editor of this large-size (10¾ by 8 inches) volume begs to differ in his evaluation of Tyndale as a translator:

William Tyndale's Bible translations have been the best-kept secrets in English Bible history. Many people have heard of Tyndale: very few have read him. *Yet no other Englishman—not even Shakespeare—has reached so many* (p. vii, italics supplied).

This last remark takes on more color when we realize that Daniell has a Ph.D. in Shakespeare and has published widely about the Bard of Avon. He demonstrates that much of the King James NT is pure Tyndale (some, not Daniell, say 90%) and that this is never acknowledged in "The Translators to the Reader" prefacing the 1611 version.

Yale's splendid reprint of the definitive 1534 Tyndale NT consists of the following: a fascinating 36-page introduction, a short glossary of really difficult terms (such as *Candy* [=Crete!], *liefer*, *noosel*, *pyght*, *stert*, and *witesafe*); 429 pages consisting of two introductions by Tyndale himself, the complete text of the 1534 NT *in modern spelling and Roman type* (easy to read!), Tyndale's prologues to the books, his marginal notes, a selection of readings of the church year from the OT (showing Tyndale's great skill with Hebrew and poetry), a table of Epistles and

Gospels, and finally a page of explanations of words such as *Gehenna*, "added to fill up the leaf withal." Quite a volume.

Daniell illustrates the great linguistic genius of Tyndale and how his style is truly *English*, and not filled with the flowery "Latinat" phraseology that so marred the Douay-Rheims Version, to a lesser extent the Bishops Bible, and even on occasion the Authorized Version. While Tyndale sought to reach the boy "that driveth the plough," he could be powerful and elegant where the original is—such as in Romans and Hebrews. The translator was not some homely unlettered genius, as some have averred, but spoke at least several languages fluently and was a master of Greek and Hebrew, the latter rare talents in the 1520's and 1530's. In spite of his very cultural gifts in classical and continental tongues, Tyndale manfully resisted the temptation to show them off in his NT.

Tyndale's first edition, 1525 or 1526 (only two copies escaped the flames of the Inquisition, which the translator himself did *not*) is the *first printed English NT in history*. This should be enough to make Tyndale famous if that was all that he ever did. There is a Tyndale Press, a Tyndale series of commentaries, statues of the translator, and a number of theological schools named after the martyred translator—all well-deserved honors. Until you actually read his translation, however, you cannot know how great was his contribution to evangelical life and letters. In the reviewer's recently published book—*The New King James: In the Great Tradition* (Thomas Nelson)—a whole section is devoted to Tyndale's amazing legacy. No better way exists to show how correct Daniell's evaluation is than to compare Tyndale, King James, and the New King James to demonstrate how much of his work is still current. The archaic spelling is retained for historical interest. (It also shows the need for this Yale reprint in modern spelling!)

### Tyndale (1526)

AND he sayde vnto hys disciples: Lett nott youre hertes be trubled. Beleve in God and beleve in me.

In my fathers housse are many mansions. If it were not soo/ I wolde have tolde you. I goo to prepare a place for you.

I will come agayne/ and receve you even vnto my selfe/ that where I am/ theare maye ye be also.

### KJV (1611)

1 Let not your heart be troubled: yee beleue in God, beleue also in me.

2 In my Fathers house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would haue told you: I goe to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I goe and prepare a place for you, I will come againe, and receiue you vnto my selfe, that where I am, there ye may be also.

### NKJV (1985)

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

And whither I goo ye knowe/ and the waye ye knowe. Thomas sayde vnto him: Lorde we knowe not whyther thou goest. Also how is it possible for vs to knowe the waye?

Jesus sayd vnto him: I am the waye/ verite/ and lyfe. Noman cometh vnto the father/ but by me.

4 And whither I goe yee know, and the way ye know.

5 Thomas saith vnto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest: and how can we know the way?

6 Jesus saith vnto him, I am the Way, the Trueth, and the Life: no man commeth vnto the Father but by mee.

4 "And where I go you know, and the way you know."

5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Theologically Tyndale was a strong Protestant, heavily indebted to Luther, but not as clear on grace at times. GES supporters who read this reprint will notice the strains of legalism in the translator's notes and introductions, as does Daniell:

Though [the first preface] begins with a ringing sentence, it is not quite like his usual explanation of the law and the gospel, being more concerned with declaring that the key to understanding the New Testament is the "covenant" made between God and man. It seems to a modern eye not quite the expected Reformers' liberation: "All the promises of the mercy and grace that Christ hath purchased for us are made upon that condition that we keep the law." Later he swings to the classic Protestant emphasis on faith: "Faith unfeigned in Christ's blood causeth to love for Christ's sake" (p. xv).

Tyndale's apparent vacillation between law and grace might suggest that he was more talented as a translator than as a theologian. At any rate, this reviewer (and I feel sure most of our readers) prefers Tyndale in his "grace mode," to say the least.

Who should get this book? Obviously all libraries and advanced schools, but also all lovers of the Bible, Bible translation work, church history and biography, the English language, and the Reformation.

Except for some almost inevitable typographical errors in a work of this size and such trivial faults as *bible* lower-cased on the dust jacket (oddly capitalized when used as an adjective on the same back flap), this is a fine piece of work. Get one.

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society  
Dallas, TX

*Gentle Persuasion*. By Joseph C. Aldrich. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1988. 247 pp. Paper, \$7.95.

The Church desperately needs new models for evangelism. Dr. Aldrich, the leading advocate for what has been called "relational evangelism" in the conservative camp, provides a consistently biblical and refreshingly creative alternative to "Tuesday evening visitation."

Convinced that only 10% of believers are gifted to share Christ using traditional approaches to evangelism, the author's passion is to launch the other 90% into redemptive lifestyles. Using the sending of the seventy (Luke 10) as his basic text and the analogy of their going "like lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:3) to make primary observations for application, Aldrich challenges and encourages everyday Christians to use their giftedness to reach the lost.

This book is the perfect sequel to his more theological treatment of the subject, *Life-Style Evangelism*. This work is a user's handbook. Much more applicational than his former book, *Gentle Persuasion* gives the frustrated and defeated believer specific guidance for reaching his friends and relatives for Christ. The style is conversational; the main points are clearly stated and reinforced through humor and real-life stories. It is not designed for the scholar. (Though most theologians would do well to find practical ways to share their faith.) This is a book for those who want to find creative ways to introduce their friends to Christ.

The careful reader will notice some unfortunate terminology. After relating how he pressured a man to pray a prayer to receive Christ, Aldrich concludes that his insensitivity to the man's pain led to a decision which was not "genuine faith" (p. 131). His point, that pressing for the close may not be in God's timing, is legitimate. His intimation, that pressure always results in less than saving faith, leaves the reader wondering what "genuine" faith looks like and whether it is the pure motives of the communicator or the belief of the listener which saves. A book on evangelism must be very careful not to confuse method with message. The author himself clearly understands this distinction. Later, Aldrich states that people need to "hear the words" [of the Gospel] to be saved (p. 234), and, "The goal of all our efforts is that people will hear the gospel and respond to Christ" (p. 182).

All in all, this is a great book. Aldrich speaks from a personal experience, which sets him apart from many theologians and Bible school presidents or professors. He *knows* evangelism because he *does* evangelism. His approach to faith-sharing revolutionized this reviewer's

perspective of evangelism years ago. Much of my success in personal witnessing can be traced back to *Life-Style Evangelism* and its liberating teaching. Now, with *Gentle Persuasion*, there is a more readable and practical companion to challenge the ineffective status quo and launch the saints into a lost and dying world.

Ed Underwood  
National Board  
Grace Evangelical Society  
Glide, OR

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*Dead Faith: What Is It?—A Study on James 2:14-26.* By Zane C. Hodges. Dallas: Redención Viva, 1987. 32 pp. Booklet, \$1.95.

The Church has never been fully satisfied with traditional understandings of James 2:14-26. Foreboding practical questions have loomed large. How could we honestly share a Gospel of pure grace and full assurance when in the background lurked James's still unexplained assertions concerning the necessary and inevitable partnership between good works and justifying faith?

However, even in the midst of frustration and confusion over James 2, the Church has failed to state the obvious. That is, until recently. Finally someone has openly approached the difficulties in the history of the interpretation of James 2 and suggested a bold new option for its understanding. That someone is Zane Hodges. In his booklet *Dead Faith: What Is It?*, he offers the Church an interpretation of this difficult text that is both contextually sound and theologically congruent with the rest of the canon.

Several bold propositions characterize the uniqueness and power of Hodges's study. First, he dares to take us back to the text as our final authority. Submitting the history of interpretation to the authority of a thorough exegetical study opens the way for a new synthetic understanding of James 2.

Second, according to Hodges, the key to understanding James's argument is the body/spirit analogy of 2:26. He suggests that the point of the metaphor is not that faith must animate works to prove it is alive, but that *works must animate faith to keep it alive!* Believers who do not persevere in good works do not thereby prove they have never had or do not presently have genuine faith; they simply stand dangerously close to killing their faith and substituting dead orthodoxy as their companion in the Christian life.

Third, Hodges believes that in the theology of James, the object of "salvation" is the physical life, not the eternal soul (Jas 1:21; 5:19-20). Thus when James asks the question in 2:14 "Can faith alone save?" he is not referring to salvation from hell, but deliverance from the temporal, death-dealing consequences of sin in the life of the believer. James's purpose is to warn believers who already possess eternal salvation (1:18) that faith alone will not be enough to save them from the full-grown fruit of sin—physical death (1:15).

Fourth, the justification of 2:21-25 is not analagous to judicial justification before God, which Paul said comes by faith alone (Rom 4:5) and results in salvation from hell. Rather, the justification of James is a vindication before men that results in friendship with God (v 23) and the prolonging of the physical life (v 25).

A concluding section of endnotes lends a great deal of clarity and credibility to this already instructive book. Not only do the notes amplify key points, but it is comforting to the reader who is new to this understanding of James 2 to see the names Frank E. Gaebelein, A. T. Robertson, Calvin, and others, supporting certain aspects of Hodges's view which may seem novel upon first reading.

For the believer who is tired of living with the apparent theological and practical tensions between James and Paul, for the believer who is weary of practicing exegetical gymnastics in order to adhere to the "party line" on James 2, Hodges's booklet will provide relief.

**Kevin Butcher**

National Board

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Detroit, MI

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*The Gift of God.* By Richard A. Seymour. Kissimmee, FL: Clarity Publications, 1985. 117 pp. Paper, \$3.00.

As many will attest, searching for an objective treatment of the subject of "how to be saved" today can be frustrating indeed. Richard Seymour, Dean of the Florida Bible College (Orlando), has no doubt sensed this same frustration. His response, *The Gift of God*, provides an answer which fills the void and offers readers an excellent study of this important subject. Although Seymour's prime focus is on the clear passages of Scripture on salvation, he carefully examines a significant number of

problem passages and capably weaves them into a consistent biblical theology.

After a personal word, Seymour begins the book by reviewing principles of interpretation which he follows. He insists on taking Scripture at face value (literal grammatical interpretation) except where the text is clearly figurative (e.g., John 7:38). He regards thorough lexical study, contextual harmony, grammar, and consistent biblical theology as essential to discovering the meaning of a passage. Stressing common sense and patience, Seymour notes that clear statements should never be interpreted by unclear statements. He views this approach, along with subjectivity, i.e., interpreting Scripture based on experience, as springboards to false doctrine. Overall, his interpretive method is healthy, and critics will strain to find fault with it.

Seymour groups his first five chapters under the title "Important Doctrines to Understand." This section approaches salvation from the positive side, covering the essentials of the Gospel and the soteriological significance of the new birth and indwelling Holy Spirit. Because these topics point to a free and eternally secure salvation, by addressing God's loving nurture and discipline toward believers, Seymour anticipates the age-old charge that a free salvation encourages antinomianism. He covers this subject in three chapters on chastening, growth, and rewards.

Next the author turns to problem passages, i.e., those which some claim to teach that salvation once attained can be lost. He examines a remarkable number of these texts and treats them thoroughly. This is the longest chapter in the book, which reflects the author's concern over their frequent misinterpretation in evangelical literature.

Seymour concludes the book by providing an in-depth discussion of two of the clearest passages in Scripture on salvation, Eph 2:8-9 and Rom 4:1-5. He points the reader to the forthright meaning of grace and works in these passages, and then highlights Rom 11:6 to show that in biblical theology they are mutually exclusive. Much confusion could be lifted if Christians could grasp this important truth, and thus, Seymour's emphasis is warranted.

In summary, *The Gift of God* is an excellent treatment of salvation by a writer with a special sensitivity toward those who are struggling with doubts about the freeness of God's offer of eternal life. He focuses upon the clear passages of Scripture relating to salvation by pointing readers to their obvious meaning, and ably handles "problem texts" by integrating them into the "soteriological" big picture. Because the book is inexpensive, it may be used as a ready tool in both evangelism and in helping those who struggle with grace/works controversies. All in all,

the book is a valuable contribution to those writings which favor God's free offer of eternal life.

**Raymond M. Isbell**

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*Colossians and Philemon.* By R. Kent Hughes. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989. 185 pp. Cloth, \$10.95.

This volume is the first of a new series entitled "Preaching the Word." Crossway Books has commissioned Dr. R. Kent Hughes, the Senior Pastor of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, to author this entire series, which when completed at the anticipated rate of one or two books per year will cover all of the twenty-seven NT books. If this first commentary is any indication of those to come, evangelical pastors and Bible teachers will welcome the entire series. As this work is expressly designed to aid those who will preach through Colossians, the first chapter is preceded by "A Word to Those Who Preach the Word." Here Dr. Hughes encourages preachers to actively allow the truths of Colossians that they will proclaim to their congregations to touch and change their own lives as well.

This work is not a technical exegetical treatment of Colossians but rather a warm expositional commentary. The chapters are sermon in tone, with each one covering a preaching portion of the biblical text. In his exposition of the Epistle the author includes a remarkable collection of extremely helpful quotations and illustrations. This illustrative material includes references to a wide range of individuals from Billy Graham and Howard Hendricks to Lee Harvey Oswald and George Bernard Shaw!

Theologically the commentary runs both hot and cold. On the "hot" side, Hughes does a nice job in treating the meaning of "firstborn" in Col 1:15-18. On the "cold" side, the author directly espouses a Lordship Salvation approach to the Gospel (p. 60), while strangely seeming to contradict himself theologically when he discusses faith (p. 16) and faithlessness in some Christians (p. 59). Because of his lack of clarity on grace and the Gospel, the author's book must be used with cautious discernment. However, despite this glaring weakness the book is one which this reviewer would not want to be without the next time he teaches through Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, because it offers outstanding illustrative material and practical insights.

The treatment of Philemon is extremely superficial and appears to be almost an afterthought. Only six short pages are devoted to dealing with this Epistle.

The body of the commentary is followed by endnotes in which the author gives credit to his sources and occasionally includes some technical asides. Here Dr. Hughes demonstrates his acquaintance with the standard literature on Colossians and Philemon. Also the book includes a Scripture Index and a General Index, which further enhance the usefulness of the book to expositors.

**Brad McCoy**

Pastor-Teacher

Tanglewood Bible Fellowship

Duncan, OK

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*Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues.* Edited by Thom S. Rainer. Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1989. 227 pp. Paper, \$12.95.

This collection of twenty-one essays, with foreword by Billy Graham, was published as a tribute to Lewis A. Drummond. Drummond served many years as the Professor of Evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and is now President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Thom Rainer earned his Ph.D. in evangelism under Dr. Drummond.

The book is an interesting look into the theology and practice of evangelism largely, but not exclusively, from a Southern Baptist perspective. The balance of authors tips towards pastors, with most of the others being seminary professors or those from academia. Scholarship and critical depth, therefore, range from very competent to somewhat shallow.

The essays span the spectrum of evangelistic concerns, including these divisions: Evangelism and contemporary issues, theological issues, the call to discipleship, reaching people, and the local church. Depending on one's interests, one section may capture the attention of the reader more than another. However, every section has something to offer.

I found several articles to be especially helpful and well written. Delos Miles, Professor of Evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, presented a good case for Christian social work and evangelism as partners. The essay by Edward C. Lyrene, Jr., pastor of

Trinity Baptist Church in Foley, Alabama, was one of the most motivating and convincing articles I have ever read on the need to pray in evangelism. His sermon style in this case added to the impact, since we scarcely need another sterile study of prayer.

Three articles were of the most interest to me and also the greatest disappointment. The first, by David S. Dockery, Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is titled "A Theological Foundation for Evangelism." Though most of the article was agreeable (good theology), his section on *how salvation is applied* displayed a need for clearer thinking and more biblical conclusions. For example, what are we to understand from a statement like this: "Only persons who receive and are transformed by divine grace can make a favorable response to God's salvific invitation, but only those who do respond are indeed transformed by grace" (p. 83)? This sounds like doubletalk. Dockery goes on to define faith as a full commitment involving obedience and complete submission, and repentance as the turning from and renouncing of sin. No wonder he says our assurance of eternal security is "experiential and subjective" (p. 86). It is distressing to see "a theological foundation for evangelism" laid on such sinking sand, for surely message and method will eventually erode.

Two more essays share a similar thesis: The evangelistic call of Jesus Christ was a call to repentance and radical discipleship. Harry L. Poe, Associate Professor of Evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, contributed "Evangelism and Discipleship" and James G. Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Snellville, Georgia, wrote "Evangelism and the Call of Christ." Both confuse salvation with discipleship, with the result that God's grace is obscured. Poe states that unless the costly demands of discipleship are presented as part of the Gospel, "Christians have no basis for pursuing Christ" (p. 141). But just as the reader begins to scream, "Read Romans 12:1, Galatians 5, and Titus 2:11-12!"—Poe says "discipleship will grow increasingly more prevalent as we give more attention to the gracious benefits of Christ in the gospel" (p. 143). Merritt's article is equally confusing in its understanding of the Gospel.

Fortunately, the theology of Southern Baptists is diverse and not everyone in the denomination holds to such a Reformed and Lordship Salvation understanding of the Gospel. These three articles show how the issue is discussed and influenced at the seminary and pastoral levels. Obviously, our SBC brethren are struggling with how to cure the problem of false professions. Hopefully, they will turn to a clear

presentation of God's grace in the Gospel rather than to a legalistic gospel.

I strongly recommend this book to all who want valuable insights into some aspects of evangelism among Southern Baptists. Practical helps and renewed motivation can also be gained by reading this book. But go elsewhere for soteriology.

**Charles C. Bing**

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society  
Burleson, TX

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*If By Any Means.* By R. E. Neighbour. Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985. 128 pp. Paper, \$5.95.

The confusion over the condition, confidence, and consequences of salvation is by no means limited to this generation. *If By Any Means*, written in 1940 by R. E. Neighbour, is a beautiful theological tapestry that champions the cause of a free Gospel, and challenges the Christian community to a faithful life of service in this world that will be worthy of rewards in the world to come.

The author begins by clarifying that it is by grace through faith alone that one appropriates the gift of eternal life. He then puts together a clear-cut theological mosaic of the security of the believer and the subtle Satanic strategy to undermine that security.

The remainder of Neighbour's book deals with biblical teaching concerning our Lord's rewards to faithful Christians. There is an enlightening discussion of the meaning of the "out resurrection" (*exanastasis*) from the dead (Phil 3:7-12). In his treatment of the passage, Neighbour surfaces the theological options and unveils his interpretation that sees the "out resurrection" as being a "special" resurrection given to those believers who remain faithful to Christ. The argumentation and style is not technically exegetical in nature, but his examination of the text is cogent and complete, followed by a theological synthesis of his argument.

The section concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ is a beautiful exposé of the theology of the "Bema." The author intertwines biblical theology with personal poetry.

The final section deals with Hebrews 3-4 concerning "the rest of God." This section is a condensation of the author's commentary on

Hebrews, *If They Fall Away*. Neighbour teaches that the rest under discussion is not the rest of "salvation," nor the "faith walk" of the believer, but the rest of *reward* in the Millennium. At risk is the loss of the believer's reward by the King-Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Although Neighbour does not hold to a partial rapture theory, as do G. H. Lang and Robert Govett, his strong and forceful language concerning "missing the rest" could lead the reader to that conclusion.

R. E. Neighbour's desire was "to clear away the debris that has all but covered the glories of God's grace, and place service and rewards in their scriptural position" (p. 3). This delightful work has accomplished both with theological consistency and pastoral compassion.

Fred Chay

Associate Pastor  
Grace Bible Church  
Dallas, TX

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*This Present Darkness*. By Frank Peretti. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988. 376 pp. Paper, \$8.95.

*Piercing the Darkness*. By Frank Peretti. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989. 441 pp. Paper, \$9.95.

It was exhilarating, thrilling, reviving, rewarding—everything an angelic warrior was made for! The Host of Heaven had waited so long and had built up such fervor that when the signal finally came, they broke over the crests of the mountains on every side like a violent, shimmering ocean wave and showered down like hail upon the dark cloud of demons in the valley . . .

So what are angels and demons doing while we pray, preach, and persuade? No one knows with certainty, but for an imaginative, prayer-provoking, incredibly encouraging presentation of the way it just might be, read these books.

The stories of both books are set in small towns in small churches led by very human but God-fearing pastors. In the first, the enemy is within, trying to destroy God's work and pave the way for a New Age takeover of the town and its college. In the second, the enemy is without. A church is subjected to litigation when its administrator tries to deal with a demonized child. The major themes of these novels ring true with convicting clarity, and the theology taught throughout is stirring. God does permit believers to suffer and be humiliated, but always with a plan.

The believer is never alone, even in the darkest circumstances. And most of all, we must never underestimate or neglect the power of prayer.

There are times when Peretti may cross the line of good theology for the sake of good fiction. Do angels really cut off each others wings with lightsabers, sending them spiralling to the earth below? Do angels really infiltrate demonically-controlled territory by stowing away in the trunks of incoming cars? Who knows! But however one might feel about the imaginative aspects of the novels, Peretti is opening up a completely new genre in evangelical literature. Peretti's ability to blend concurrent story lines is engaging, his plots are believable, and his character development satisfying.

On a more personal level, in nine years of pastoral ministry I have never read two books which have as successfully motivated me either to daily prayer for the people under my care, nor to take so seriously Paul's statement that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood." I cannot recommend these books too strongly for encouragement, comfort, and simple pleasure.

**Mark A. Ellis**

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Wylie, TX

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*Outgrowing the Pain: A Book For and About Adults Abused As Children.* By Eliana Gil. New York: Dell Publishing, 1983. 88 pp. Paper, \$5.95.

Authorities now suggest that one in three adults today was abused as a child. What impact does this abuse have on adults who are believers? This is not a Christian book. It is, however, one which many of our readers will find very helpful. It proposes the view that recovery from childhood abuse is a process which requires information and effort; it is not something which just goes away.

This book is must reading for those who were abused as children, for those married to such people, and for Christian professionals who counsel hurting believers. It is short, easy to read, and filled with very helpful illustrations.

**Bob Wilkin**

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Roanoke, TX



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## PERIODICAL REVIEWS

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**"A Gospel Without Law,"** Maurice Roberts, *The Banner of Truth*, April 1989, pp. 1-6, 18.

In recent years Reformed and dispensational theologians have arrived at agreement in specific points of doctrine. Yet, one of the existing impasses between the two systems is the debate over the form and function of Mosaic Law in the NT. Many dispensationalists argue that the Mosaic Law was God's prescribed method of administering moral precepts primarily and solely to *Israel* as a theocratic community. Reformed theologians, on the other hand, hold that the Mosaic Law has a specific application to *the Church*. In essence, this is the view expounded in Roberts's article. His thesis is stated at the outset: "*Somehow modern evangelicalism has got itself into a false position on the subject of God's law. We mean here, of course, not the ceremonial law, which passed away at the death of Christ, but the moral law, which is permanent*" (p. 1). And more specifically, suggests Roberts, "If a church loses the moral law, it will not be long before it loses the gospel" (p. 1).

According to Roberts, "Much chronic anaemia in the modern Christian church is traceable to its neglect of the moral law" (p. 2). This neglect of "the moral law" is said to be fostered by the following problems: (1) "the problem of *the low view of sin* which is to be found in the churches at the theoretical level" (p. 2); (2) "the problem of *shallow professions of faith* which leave discerning Christians perplexed" (p. 2); (3) "the problem of *chaos in the public worship of God*" (p. 2); (4) "the closely related problem of *what we might call 'heresy of spiritual character'*" (p. 3). In light of these problems, Roberts believes that there are two fundamental reasons for renewed stress upon "the moral law": (1) "men need to be more thoroughly wounded in soul than is generally the case at present" (p. 3); and (2) "we need to teach Christians that the rule of their daily life is to be found in the moral law and what the law involves and what the law implies" (p. 4).

At the very outset, Roberts's article betrays a lack of awareness of recent doctrinal developments within Reformed orthodoxy and within evangelicalism as a whole. In the early 1980's a leading evangelical scholar observed that, "the threefold distinction of moral, ceremonial, and civil law as separate categories with varying degrees of applicability is simply

unknown in the first century, and there is little evidence that Jesus or Paul introduced such a distinction" (Douglas J. Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 [1983]: 85). Likewise, Knox Chamblin, Professor of NT at Reformed Theological Seminary, has pointed out that, "Such a [threefold] distinction can be misleading, because both OT and NT normally use the term 'law' to speak of the *whole* Mosaic Law rather than a particular aspect of it; and moral, ceremonial, and civil laws are inextricably bound together in the OT, each being intelligible and operable only in relation to the other two" ("The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ," *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*. Edited by John S. Feinberg. [Weschester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988], p. 183). (For further critique of the traditional threefold distinction of Law, see F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977], pp. 192-93; and A. T. Lincoln, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Edited by D. A. Carson. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982], p. 392.)

Rather than tracing current spiritual lethargy to "neglect of the moral law," as Roberts suggests, it seems that any number of factors might be adduced to this end (e.g., shallow teaching in the Church, the infiltration of secularism, and even die-hard appeal to Church tradition over against appeal to Scripture). Moreover, Roberts is unduly optimistic when he suggests that spiritual indolence will be rectified by a renewed emphasis upon "the moral law." On the contrary, a renewed emphasis upon the grace of God with the accompanying teaching of the future judgment of believers is the preferred alternative to combatting spiritual malaise in the modern evangelical Church.

One might argue that the disagreement between dispensational and Reformed theologians is simply at the semantic level, i.e., by "moral law" what Reformed theologians really mean is the moral injunctions of God contained in the NT. But this is not what is meant. In Reformed thinking, the "moral law" is the Mosaic Law code, a law code which is inseparably bound to the character of God. As Roberts notes, "the moral law is a transcription of the character, attributes, and holiness of God. It is for that reason perfect and permanent. If the character of God could be altered, then and only then might there be irrelevance or impermanence in the moral law" (p. 5). It should be noted here that the concept of "moral law" enunciated in Roberts's article finds its origin in John Calvin, who deductively arrived at the threefold distinction through "theological" analysis of Scripture. Because Calvin *a priori* assumed that Israel and the

Church constituted *one* people of God and that God is unchanging in His character, it was thereby concluded that *one* system of administering God's moral precepts was in order for the people of God of all ages (*Institutes* 2. 7. 1-2; 2. 7. 12-13; 2. 8. 1-2; 3. 17. 23).

Reformed and dispensational theology will continue to remain at loggerheads as long as Reformed theologians appeal to an unchanging continuity in the programmatic outworkings of the purposes of God. Although dispensationalists recognize that the moral absolutes of God are unchanging, it is argued that *they have been administered differently by God at different periods in history*. Hence, at present the Christian is not under the Mosaic Law; but on account of the finished work of Christ, the Christian has the Law written upon his heart (2 Cor 3:3, 6) so that obedience to God is made possible through the Holy Spirit and correspondingly prompted by God's love and grace (Gal 5:6, 18).

Of course, the real problem with the Reformed view of "moral law" which Roberts holds is that ultimately it makes obedience a condition for salvation. In other words, as long as one is keeping "the moral law," he can be reasonably certain that he is elect. But this misses the picture of NT revelation wherein *grace*—not law—is depicted as the believer's "instruction" to righteous living (Titus 2:11, 12).

To conclude, Roberts is to be complimented on his concern for moral laxity evidenced within evangelicalism. However, the Reformed concept of "moral law" as addressed in his essay is not only exegetically tenuous and theologically contrived, but it tends to impede any true sense of grace-motivated holiness in Christian living.

Gary L. Nebeker

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

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"The Key Term 'Believe' in the Gospel of John," Elizabeth Jarvis, *Notes on Translation* 1988, pp. 46-51.

Much philosophical discussion has revolved around the distinction between "belief *in*" statements and "belief *that*" statements. "Belief *in*" statements are said to be statements tied to belief *in* a person or *in* particular values, whereas "belief *that*" statements relate to "factual" belief of propositions. On more than one occasion, however, this distinction has been proven faulty. For example, in his article on *pistēnō* Bultmann demonstrated that the *pistēnein eis* ("to believe in") and *pistēnein hoti*

("to believe that") constructions in the NT are linguistically interchangeable (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 6:203-208). Elizabeth Jarvis's article is another witness to the fact that the *pisteuō eis* ("I believe in"), *pisteuō hoti* ("I believe that"), and *pisteuō en* ("I believe in") constructions of the NT serve a similar semantic function.

After comparing the nearly one hundred occurrences of the verb *pisteuō* in the Gospel of John, Jarvis draws the following conclusions:

Apart from the specialised use of *pisteuō* in 2:24 ("Jesus did not trust himself to them"), we find two senses of *pisteuō*: to trust in a person; and to accept a fact or someone's words as true. The former implies the latter, and when Jesus (or God) or a statement about him is the object, the latter tends to imply the former. Hence, although *pisteuō eis* is used regularly in the first sense, and *pisteuō hoti* in the second sense, the use of *pisteuō* + dat. is not quite so clearcut; it is used mostly, but not exclusively, in the second sense. *Pisteuō* used absolutely [i.e., without a stated object] is even more ambiguous, but unless the context indicates to the contrary, it should be understood in the second sense (p. 49).

Ironically, Jarvis concedes to a conceptual distinction between "religious truth" and "intellectual belief," and she expresses the difficulty of translating this distinction into other languages (p. 49). In drawing this distinction between "religious truth" and "intellectual belief," Jarvis is no doubt influenced by certain theological presuppositions. Yet from her study of the *pisteuō* constructions in the Gospel of John, the distinction between "religious truth" and "intellectual belief" cannot be adequately substantiated. If anything, Jarvis's study unintentionally undermines her distinction between "personal" belief and "factual" belief. Notwithstanding, Jarvis's essay is a significant contribution toward understanding the characteristic simplicity of saving faith depicted in John's Gospel.

Gary L. Nebeker

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

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"The Meanings of *Pisteuō* in the Greek New Testament: A Semantic-Lexicographical Study," J. Eugene Botha, *Neotestamentica*, 21 (1987), pp. 225-40.

The primary interest in this article for many will be Botha's objection

to Brown's assertion that "*pisteuein eis* involves much more than trust in Jesus or confidence in him; it is . . . a dedication of one's life to him. The commitment is not emotional but involves a willingness to respond to God's demands as they are presented in and by Jesus."

Botha argues strongly that there are only four ranges of meaning for *pisteuō* in the NT: "to accept something as correct and truthful," "to entrust somebody to something," "to place trust on something or somebody," and "to be a Christian." However, several lexicons add the category "to obey." Botha rejects this because, although it is a possible *implication* in some contexts, "it is not the word *pisteuō* which contributes this meaning to the context." NT evidence for the previous four meanings is then offered.

The article provides challenging and interesting reading, and there is clear confirmation for the person looking for grace-oriented support for his understanding of the definition of *pisteuō*. However, Botha's perspectives on linguistics are complex, and may well puzzle both the average pastor and most laymen. In order to fully appreciate Botha's observations, one must not only be aware of James Barr's conclusions (from *The Semantics of Biblical Language* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; reprint ed., London: SCM Press, 1983]), but also be in agreement with them.

Mark A. Ellis

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Wylie, TX

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### "Has Lordship Salvation Been Taught Throughout Church History?"

Thomas G. Lewellen, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January–March, 1990, pp. 54–68.

In a valuable and well-written article, Thomas Lewellen, senior pastor of Grace Countryside Church in Milford, Michigan, has responded to the claim made by Dr. John MacArthur (*The Gospel According to Jesus*) that Lordship Salvation is the historic teaching of the Church. Lewellen, who is a member of the Grace Evangelical Society and has served a term on its board, shows that MacArthur's claim is not valid.

In the crucial area of the nature of saving faith, Lewellen properly argues that "recent works have conclusively demonstrated that . . . Calvin taught that faith is a passive response by which a sinner simply receives the gift

of God in Christ" (p. 57). He points out that this was also the position of Luther and Melancthon. By contrast, Lewellen writes, "in the Puritan era . . . there was a shift in the definition of saving faith" so that there was a subtle change made in "the Reformers' definition of faith from a passive receptivity to an active response on the part of the sinner, centered in the will and containing both commitment and obedience" (p. 58). This whole section of the article is of the utmost value, since at its core the Lordship Salvation debate must be resolved at the level of this specific issue. Lordship theology—and its Reformed precursors—have taken a backward step from Reformation thought toward a view of faith more consonant with Roman Catholic dogma.

Also valuable and crucial, however, is Lewellen's discussion of the relationship between faith and assurance. Here, too, he finds Lordship thought to be out of harmony with the views of the Reformers. On the matter of the effect of regeneration, Lewellen concludes that the "issue is not whether Christians should produce good works" but instead whether good works "have a decisive value in determining whether individuals are saved or not" (p. 66). In his overall conclusion, Lewellen rightly points out that in the final analysis what is crucial is not what has been taught throughout history, but rather the testimony of God's Word. As Protestants our fundamental criterion remains *sola Scriptura*.

If there is any point at which this fine treatment of history and soteriology could be improved, it would probably be this: The doctrine of repentance in relation to salvation could have been discussed with considerable profit. After all, the doctrine of repentance is a major issue in the Lordship Salvation debate. But even so, the reader will find Lewellen's treatment of his topic most informative and helpful.

Zane C. Hodges

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Mesquite, TX

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**"Abiding is Remaining in Fellowship: Another Look at John 15:1-6,"**

Joseph C. Dillow, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January–March, 1990, pp. 44–53.

The author of this excellent study of John 15:1–6 is a Dallas Seminary graduate and currently the Director of the European Center for Biblical Education by Extension, based in Vienna, Austria. He even brings to

bear upon the interpretation of the text (15:2) an observation about viticulture in Austria.

Dillow's article is more or less a response to a previous *Bib Sac* article (J. Carl Laney, "Abiding is Believing: The Analogy of the Vine in John 15:1-6," January-March, 1989). Dillow's response is carefully reasoned and effective. Correctly, he focuses on the crucial issue of the definition of key terms, since most misunderstandings of this passage arise from erroneous definitions.

In particular Dillow argues that the expression "every branch in Me" ought not to be defined in terms of organic union (i.e., as a reference to salvation) but rather in terms of a dynamic union (i.e., fellowship). Moreover, Dillow maintains that the key word "to abide" does not mean "to believe" but rather (as the article's title indicates) signifies "to remain in fellowship." Likewise, the fire referred to in 15:6, to which unfruitful branches are consigned, does not, according to Dillow, refer to hell. Instead, he argues that fire is "a common symbol in the Bible for God's judgment on His people in time" (p. 53).

There is little to disagree with in Dillow's article as far as this reviewer is concerned. Perhaps one may wonder whether the explanation Dillow gives for the use of "abide" in John 6:56 might not admit of an alternative interpretation. Perhaps, rather than referring to the fellowship union, in that context "abide" may be understood as a reference to eternal life as the shared possession of Christ and the believer. If so, then John 6:56 restates John 6:54. In any event, Dillow is quite right to argue that "abide" cannot equal "believe" in 6:56, since the phrase "he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood" refers to believing (as it does also in 6:54). The result of equating "abiding" and "believing" is a tautology—in Dillow's words, "6:56 would be reduced to the absurd statement 'he who believes in Me believes in Me'" (p. 49).

*Bib Sac* is to be commended for running this fine response article which so successfully addresses the earlier one.

**Zane C. Hodges**

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Mesquite, TX

**"The Atonement in John's Gospel,"** Leon Morris, *Criswell Theological Review*, 1988, pp. 49-64.

According to Rudolf Bultmann, "the thought of the atonement for sin has no place in John" (R. Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament* [2 Vols. SCM, 1952-55] 2.54). Dr. Leon Morris takes issue with this statement, however, by showing that Bultmann's assessment "runs clean counter to the evidence" (p. 49). He says of the fourth Gospel that, "in this Gospel the cross is the climax of the whole story, that to which everything else leads up" (p. 50). In this article Morris demonstrates that John's emphasis on the Atonement may be seen in his emphasis on the significant aspects related to that event. These include the human problem of sin and judgment, the death of Christ, the substitutionary nature of Christ's death, and eternal life.

John's emphasis on the human problem of sin and judgment may be seen in his use of these terms. He uses the word *sin* (*harmartia*) seventeen times, and the word *judgment* or *judge* (*krisis*, *krinein*) thirty times. The seriousness of sin is such that apart from divine help it goes virtually unrecognized (16:8). Sin is followed by judgment, which occurs both in this life and in the world to come. At present, those who reject Jesus remain in darkness. This is their judgment now because they love "the darkness rather than the light" (3:18-19). In the world to come, they face God's wrath at the judgment (5:28-29).

John's emphasis on the death of Christ may be seen in the structure of his book. Of the twenty-one chapters, the last nine concern the events of the last week of Jesus' life. Aspects of His death, however, may be seen throughout the book. Jesus is the "Lamb of God" who takes away the world's sin (1:29); He is the "Savior of the world" (4:42), "the Good Shepherd" who voluntarily laid down His life for the sheep (10:11). His death was also a substitutionary death. As John says, quoting Caiaphas, "It is expedient that one man should die for the people" (11:50; cf. 18:14). A final related aspect of the Atonement that John emphasizes is eternal life. "Life eternal" and "life" are terms used over fifty-three times in John. Christ's death meant life. It is God's free gift; the water which wells up into eternal life (4:10, 14).

Overall, Morris's work offers a study in literary technique. Unlike Bultmann's statement, which apparently arose "out of an undue emphasis on the place John gives to revelation" (p. 49), Morris draws his conclusion from a combination of literary themes displayed within the Gospel. This is his greatest strength. He recognizes that John is a literary artist who paints a portrait. John *shows* his audience what happened instead of *telling*

them what happened. Morris says John never “works out a theory of the Atonement,” but what he *does* is to “show us that we are sinners who stand under judgment and that left to ourselves we will never escape” (p. 64).

But Morris’s article is also recommended because it contributes to the continuing discussion of Lordship Salvation. His focus on the Cross removes any doubt about the role man plays in salvation. He says “life does not come as a result of any work the pious may accomplish . . . , that is always the gift of God” (p. 63). Indeed, the Cross “points to a complete reversal of human values” (p. 55). It rivets our attention upon Someone other than ourselves.

Hank B. Slikker  
Dallas, TX

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“The Great Option: A Study of the Lordship Controversy,” Kenneth L. Gentry, *Baptist Reformation Review*, Spring 1976, pp. 49-79.

This older article merits review because it is a classic statement and defense of the Lordship Salvation position. It has done much to shape subsequent Lordship presentations and free grace responses. Interestingly, the author views the Lordship position as a *minority position* in conservative churches and acknowledges its association with Reformed theology.

What is most commendable about Gentry’s work is its clear and logical organization. He addresses each of the four issues around which the controversy revolves: faith, repentance, the Lordship of Christ, and discipleship. Each segment first states the problem, then presents lexical evidence, then pertinent Bible passages. The reader follows him easily. However, some readers may pick up on Gentry’s linguistic fallacies related to improperly defining *pisteuō* (“believe”). (See reviews by Nebeker and Ellis in this issue of *JOTGES*). Equally fallacious is his stereotypical description of the Gospel presentation of the “average Non-Lordship churchman” who “can often be heard saying in his witnessing: ‘Give Jesus a chance’” (p. 53). Though a good number of key Bible passages are treated, discussion of them appears conveniently cursory.

Actually, the article contains little that has not been argued by more recent Lordship works. Still, here is as clear and concise a statement of the position as can be found anywhere. Gentry’s arguments are forceful,

and though most have been answered in the public forum, some (e.g., interpretations of specific passages) deserve an equally forceful response from free grace advocates.

I recommend this article to all who want a succinct explanation of the Lordship Salvation position by a confirmed Lordship Salvationist. It will help define the crux of the debate and hopefully stir the reader to seek and refine answers to the most frequent and formidable Lordship arguments.

**Charles C. Bing**  
Editorial Board  
Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society  
Burleson, TX

## A HYMN OF GRACE

### Where Shall My Wond'ring Soul Begin?<sup>1</sup>

- 1     Where shall my wond'ring soul begin?  
      How shall I all to heaven aspire?  
      A slave redeemed from death and sin,  
      A brand plucked from eternal fire,  
      How shall I equal triumphs raise,  
      Or sing my great Deliverer's praise?
- 2     O how shall I the goodness tell,  
      Father, which thou to me hast showed?  
      That I, a child of wrath and hell,  
      I should be called a child of God!  
      Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,  
      Blest with this antepast<sup>2</sup> of heaven!
- 3     And shall I slight my Father's love?  
      Or basely fear his gifts to own?  
      Unmindful of his favours prove?  
      Shall I, the hallowed cross to shun,  
      Refuse his righteousness t'impart  
      By hiding it within my heart?
- 4     No, though the ancient dragon rage,  
      And call forth all his host to war;  
      Though earth's self-righteous sons engage,  
      Them and their god alike I dare:  
      Jesus the sinner's friend proclaim,  
      Jesus, to sinners still the same.

<sup>1</sup>I have asked my friend Jim Townsend, Bible Editor for the David C. Cook Publishing Company, to choose and comment upon a Charles Wesley hymn because he wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on "Feelings Related to Assurance in Charles Wesley's Hymns" (Fuller Theological Seminary). While neither of us can agree with all of Wesley's teachings, we certainly laud his great stress on grace. Ed.

<sup>2</sup>Archaic for foretaste, that is, a first course to whet the appetite.

- 5      Outcasts of men, to you I call,  
          Harlots, and publicans, and thieves!  
       He spreads his arms t' embrace you all;  
          Sinners alone his grace receives:  
       No need of him the righteous have;  
       He came the lost to seek and save.
- 6      Come, O my guilty brethren, come,  
          Groaning beneath your load of sin;  
       His bleeding heart shall make you room,  
          His open side shall take you in.  
       He calls you now, invites you home—  
       Come, O my guilty brethren, come.
- 7      For you the purple current flowed  
          In pardons from his wounded side;  
       Languished for you th' eternal God,  
          For you the Prince of glory died.  
       Believe, and all your sin's forgiven,  
       Only believe—and yours is heaven!<sup>3</sup>

—Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

In terms of both quantity and quality of Christian hymnody, Charles Wesley is unrivalled in history. Only Isaac Watts comes anywhere close to Wesley, and that is only as measured by the criterion of quality. According to Dr. Frank Baker, one of the world authorities on Wesleyana, Charles Wesley left behind at least 8,989 hymns!<sup>4</sup> The same authority owned that Wesley produced “27,000 stanzas and 180,000 lines. This is something like three times the output of . . . William Wordsworth, and even more than that of the redoubtable Robert Browning. . . . Taking the average . . . Charles Wesley wrote ten lines of verse every day for 50 years, completing an extant poem every other day.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>The Works of John Wesley, Edited by Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Becherlegge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 7:116, 117.

<sup>4</sup>Representative Verse of Charles Wesley, ed. by Frank Baker (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), xi.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Charles and John Wesley were converted several days apart from each other in 1738. The hymn mentioned below is very likely his conversion hymn referred to in Charles's Journal for Tuesday, May 23, 1738: "At nine I began an hymn upon my conversion, but was persuaded to break off for fear of pride. Mr. Bray coming encouraged me to proceed in spite of Satan. I prayed Christ to stand by me, and finished the hymn." The next evening, on the day of John's conversion, Charles wrote: "Towards ten my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, 'I believe.' We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer."

In the fifth stanza of our current hymn of grace Charles wrote: "Sinners alone his [i.e., God's] grace receives [sic]." He certainly is in accord with the Protestant Reformation in the last couplet:

*"Believe, and all your sin's forgiven,  
Only believe—and yours is heaven!"*

Notice also that Wesley captures the exhilarating spirit of grace in the parallelism registered in the first two stanzas. Each starts with a question—"Where . . . ? How . . . ?"—and each is followed in lines 3 and 4 by a backdrop of sin and its consequences. Amazingly, stanza 5 was almost prophetic, since the disgraced "harlots, and publicans, and thieves" were to become the clientele of these outdoors preachers who offered life-changing grace to the unchurched.

This hymn bears the distinctive hallmarks of a Charles Wesley hymn. A first trademark is the emotional and experiential element. For instance, "Should know, should feel my sins forgiven" (stanza 2). Secondly, it is peppered with personal pronouns. Observe that in the final stanza "for you" appears three times. If God "spreads his arms, t' embrace you all" (stanza 5), then God's grace is "for you." Charles Wesley had the genius of making God's amazing grace experiential and personal.



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## BOOKS RECEIVED

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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. *Joy Comes in the Morning*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1990. Pp. 247. \$14.95 (cloth).

BARBER, CYRIL. *Ruth: A Story of God's Grace*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989 reprint. Pp. 198. \$12.95 (cloth).

BOICE, JAMES MONTGOMERY. *Christ's Call to Discipleship*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986. Pp. 170. \$12.95 (cloth).

BURKETT, LARRY. *Debt-Free Living: How To Get Out of Debt (And Stay Out)*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989. Pp. 249. \$12.95 (cloth).

CAMERSON, NIGEL M. de S. *Are Christians Human? An Exploration of True Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989. Pp. 113. \$7.95 (paper).

CHITWOOD, ARLEN L. *Prophecy on Mount Olivet*. Norman, OK: The Lamp Broadcast, Inc., 1989. Pp. 329. n.p. (paper).

CLEMONS, JAMES T. *Perspectives on Suicide*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. Pp. 132. \$11.95 (paper).

CRAWFORD, NORMAN. *What the Bible Teaches. Luke*. Ritchie New Testament Commentaries. Vol. 7. Kilmarnock, Scotland: John Ritchie Ltd., 1989. Pp. 416. \$24.95 (cloth).

CURRY, DEAN C. *A World Without Tyranny: Christian Faith and International Politics*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1990. Pp. 256. \$9.95 (paper).

FARSTAD, ARTHUR L. *The New King James Bible: In The Great Tradition*. Nashville: Nelson, 1989. Pp. 171. \$8.95 (paper).

FEREDAY, W. W. *Elijah The Prophet*. Kilmarnock, Scotland: John Ritchie Ltd., 1988. Pp. 136. \$7.95 (paper).

FLYNN, LESLIE B. *The Miracles of the Lord*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990. Pp. 168. \$6.95 (paper).

FOULKES, FRANCIS. *Ephesians*. Tyndale NT commentary. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. 1st ed. 1963. Pp. 189. \$7.95 (paper).

FRIEDEMANN, MATT. *The Master Plan of Teaching*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990. Pp. 252. \$9.95 (paper).

GEISLER, NORMAN L. *The Battle for the Resurrection*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989. Pp. 224. \$9.95 (paper).

GEISLER, NORMAN L. and RON BROOKS. *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990. Pp. 348. n.p. (cloth).

HAGBERG, JANET O. and ROBERTY A. GUELICH. *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989. Pp. 162. n.p. (paper).

*The Holy Bible. Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books. New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989. Pp. 1,472. \$19.95 (cloth).

HORTON, MICHAEL. *The Agony of Deceit: What Some TV Preachers are Really Teaching*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990. Pp. 284. \$12.95 (cloth).

HOUGHTON, JOHN. *Does God Play Dice? A Look at the Story of the Universe*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989. Pp. 160. \$7.95 (paper).

HUGHES, R. KENT. *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ*. Preaching the Word. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989. Pp. 185. \$10.94 (cloth).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*. Vol. 1. Preaching the Word. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989. Pp. 224. \$11.95 (cloth).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*. Vol. 2. Preaching the Word. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989. Pp. 249. \$11.95 (cloth).

IRONSIDE, H. A. *Baptism*. Eagle Books. Booklet. 4th ed. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989. Pp. 32. \$7.50—Pack of five (paper).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Death and Afterward*. Eagle Books. Booklet. 2nd ed. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989. Pp. 40. \$7.50—Pack of five (paper).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Eternal Security*. Eagle Books. Booklet. Revised, Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1986. Pp. 45. \$7.50—Pack of five (paper).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Full Assurance: How to Know You're Saved*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1937. 1988 reprint. Pp. 128. \$3.95 (paper).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Letters to a Roman Catholic Priest*. Eagle Books. Booklet. 2nd ed. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989. Pp. 40. \$7.50—Pack of five (paper).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Not Wrath but Rapture*. Eagle Books. Booklet. 2nd ed. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989. Pp. 47. \$7.50—Pack of five (paper).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Eagle Books. Booklet. 4th ed. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989. Pp. 58. \$7.50—Pack of five (paper).

JAMPOLSKY, GERALD G. *Out of Darkness into the Light: A Journey of Inner Healing*. New York: Bantam Books, 1989. Pp. 266. \$9.95 (paper).

KRAUSS, PESACH and MORRIE GOLDFISCHER. *Why Me? Coping with Grief, Loss, and Change*. New York: Bantam Books, 1990. Pp. 176. \$4.50 (paper).

KROLL, WOODROW. *Early in the Morning—Book Two*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1990. Pp. 110. \$5.95 (paper).

LEWIS, RALPH L., with GREGG LEWIS. *Learning to Preach like Jesus*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989. Pp. 159. \$8.95 (paper).

LITTLE, DAVID. *The Tabernacle in the Wilderness*. Eagle Books. Booklet. 2nd ed. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989. Pp. 59. \$7.50—Pack of five (paper).

MADDOUX, MARLIN. *Free Speech or Propaganda? How the Media Distorts the Truth*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990. Pp. 224. \$9.95 (paper).

MARSHALL, CELIA BREWER. *A Guide Through The Old Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. Pp. 158. \$14.95 (paper).

McARTHUR, JOHN, JR. *Matthew 24–28*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1989. Pp. 359. \$16.95 (cloth).

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

NEEDHAM, DAVID C. and LARRY LIBBY. *Close to His Majesty*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1990. Pp. 154. \$8.95 (paper).

NELSON, C. ELLIS. *How Faith Matures*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. Pp. 252. \$13.95 (paper).

*The New Open Bible. New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990. Pp. 2,030. \$34.95 (cloth).

*The New Scofield Study Bible. New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989. Pp. 1,810. \$32.95 (cloth).

- NIEBUHR, H. RICHARD. *Faith on Earth: An Inquiry into the Structure of Human Faith*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. Pp. 123. \$17.95 (cloth).
- NÚÑEZ, EMILIO A., and WILLIAM D. TAYLOR. *Crisis in Latin America*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989. Pp. 439. \$19.95 (paper).
- PAYNE, LEANNE. *The Healing Presence*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989. Pp. 236. \$14.95 (cloth).
- PENTECOST, J. DWIGHT. *Thy Kingdom Come*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990. Pp. 360. \$17.95 (cloth).
- PERSCHBACHER, WESLEY J. *Refresh Your Greek*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1989. Pp. 1269. \$39.95 (cloth).
- POLLOCK, JOHN. *The Apostle—A Life of Paul*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990. Pp. 311. \$8.95 (paper).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Master: A Life of Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990. Pp. 240. \$8.95 (paper).
- RATLIFF, J. BILL. *When You Are Facing Change*. Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1989. Pp. 135. \$9.95 (paper).
- REED, JOHN P. *When You Feel Insecure*. Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1989. Pp. 132. \$9.95 (paper).
- RUSSELL, D. S. *Daniel: An Active Volcano*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press. Pp. 140. \$11.95 (paper).
- SCOTT, BUDDY. *Relief for Hurting Parents*. Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1989. Pp. 237. \$14.95 (cloth).
- STANLEY, CHARLES. *How to Handle Adversity*. Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1989. Pp. 192. \$13.95 (cloth).
- STEVENSON, KENNETH E. & GARY R. HABERMAS. *The Shroud and the Controversy*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990. Pp. 224. \$15.95 (cloth).

*Tyndale's New Testament.* Translated by William Tyndale. Edited with an introduction by David Daniell. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. Pp. 429. \$28.95 (cloth).

VANCEBURG, MARTHA and SYLVIA SILVERMAN. *Family Feelings: Daily Meditations for Healthy Relationships.* New York: Bantam Books, 1989. Pp. 384. \$6.95 (paper).

WINDSOR, CARL D. *On This Day . . .* Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989. Pp. 384. \$14.95 (cloth).



