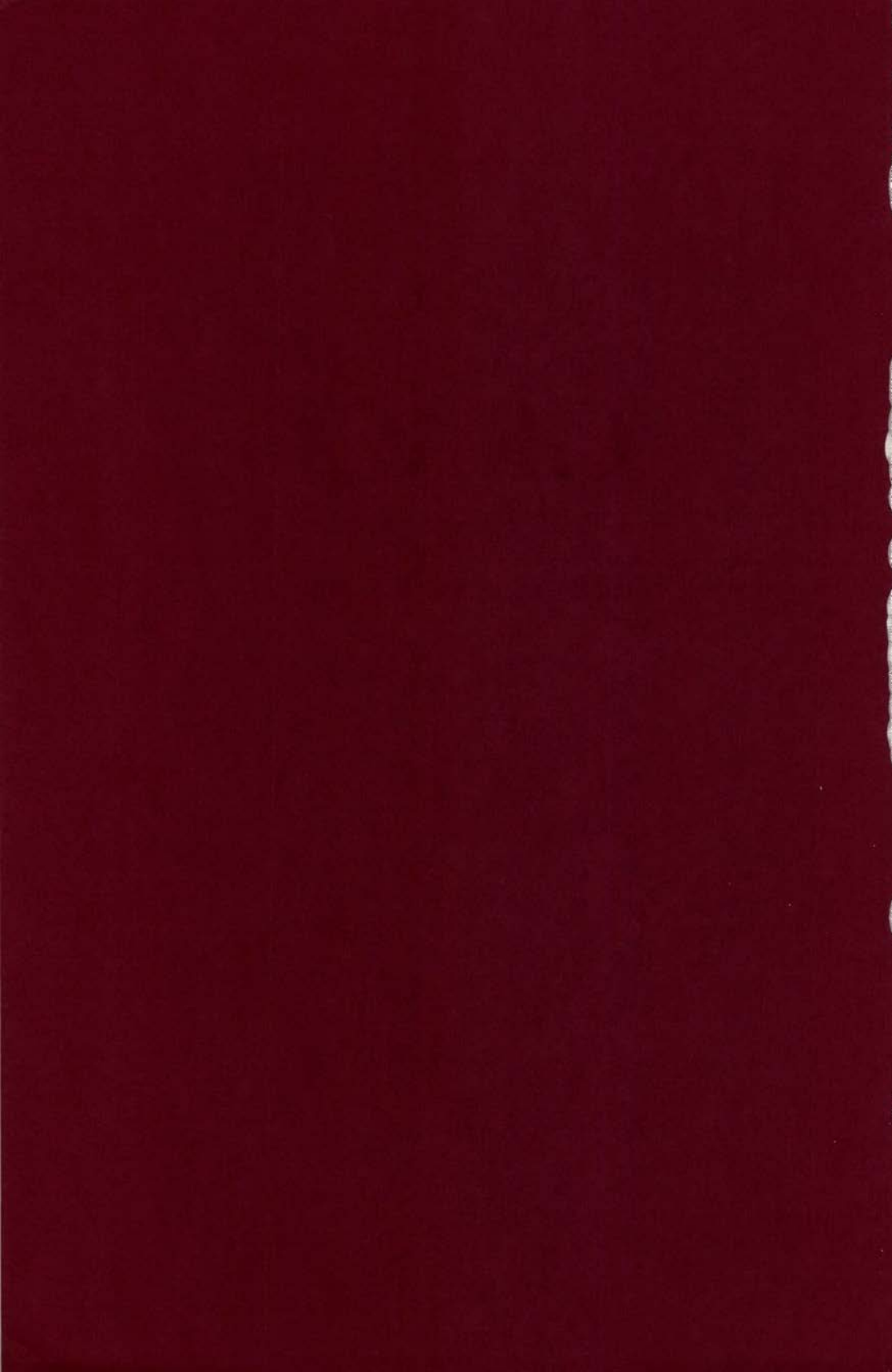


Journal of the
GRACE
Evangelical Society

"Faith Alone In Christ: Alone"



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GRACE
EVANGELICAL SOCIETY

"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"

VOLUME 5, No. 2

AUTUMN 1992

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Journal of the GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY

Published Semiannually by GES

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Journal subscriptions, renewals, and changes of address should be sent to the Grace Evangelical Society, P.O. Box 1800, Roanoke, TX 76262-1800). Subscription Rates: single copy, \$7.50 (U.S.); 1 year, \$15.00; 2 years, \$28.00; 3 years, \$39.00; 4 years, \$48.00. Members of GES receive the Journal at no additional charge beyond the yearly membership dues of \$15.00 (\$10.00 for student members).

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Third-class postage has been paid at Dallas, Texas. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Grace Evangelical Society, P.O. Box 1800, Roanoke, TX 76262-1800.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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We Believe In: SANCTIFICATION

Part 1: Introduction

ARTHUR L. FARSTAD
Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, Texas

But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Pet 1:15-16).

Blue-eyed British monk Pelagius (ca. A.D. 360-420) taught that if we *should*, we *can*. Denying original sin, he made grace essentially equal just to forgiveness, and he maintained that man was capable of doing good on his own. Pelagius naturally clashed head-on with Augustine (A.D. 354-430). The latter taught that man can do *no good* in God’s eyes on his own, that his will is bound by Satan, and that only God’s grace can set people free.

Augustine won the day. By the end of the 6th century Pelagianism had largely disappeared. Later in church history, however, semi-Pelagianism triumphed over Augustinianism in Western Christendom. This is a modified form of grace plus works, and is still popular today, especially in Roman Catholicism.

The verse quoted at the head of our article is addressed to the saved—the *saints*. And yet how difficult it is to practice this command—yes, impossible to do so perfectly or at all on our own.

We who have read the NT know what the standards are: Christ, and the glory of God. It is hard to see how *anyone* could believe in Pelagius’s views and the NT at the same time.

Many people can and do believe in *semi*-Pelagianism, however. “We’re sinful,” they say, “but not *that* bad!” With the help of the sacraments and by “co-operating” with God’s grace, they think they can earn God’s favor. Others, in Protestantism, believe similarly. To them sanctification is not *all* of God’s grace. Some even teach that we can attain Christian

perfection while here on earth. They say we can be totally sanctified on a practical level.

One of my father's favorite stories on the subject of sanctification was about a large interdenominational testimony meeting in New York City, probably before World War I.¹ A man was on his feet facing the front of the auditorium. He announced to the assembled believers:

"I praise the Lord that I haven't sinned once for six months."

Some were impressed. Others were skeptical because they realized that his definition of sin would have had to be severely restricted to make this even a remotely credible possibility. Suddenly a feminine voice was raised from the back row of seats, along with a wave of a hand: "Yoo-hoo, John—I'm here!"

Crestfallen, the speaker sat down in some confusion. He hadn't realized that his wife had also come to this testimony meeting!

Neither the Bible nor experience offers any encouragement to us to expect Christian perfection in this life. However, the fact that we can't expect to be sinlessly perfect until we are glorified should not be used as an excuse not to strive to be ever more holy each month and year. If we aim low, we will not hit a high target!

In this series of four articles we² would like to discuss sanctification and its three aspects and three tenses.

Many well-meaning Christians are not well taught on this supremely important and practical subject. A common phrase heard in Christendom (and sadly even by supposedly evangelical Christians) is "I'm a *Christian*, but I'm no *saint*." The idea is that while we can expect a person to go to church, give, and keep away from the grosser sins, don't expect too much more.

Actually, if you're not a *saint*, you're not *saved*! Don't misunderstand this: we are not saying if you're not very *saintly* you're not saved.

First Corinthians is addressed to the church "at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor 1:2). Yet just read the epistle! The Corinthians were proud,

¹ My late father, although not a preacher, missionary, or theologian, remains one of my best sources of illustrations for sermons and articles. It was his privilege for about thirty years in New York, at the then well-known "Tent Evangel" and elsewhere, to hear some of the most influential speakers in evangelicalism, such as Fanny Crosby, W. H. Griffith Thomas, and Billy Sunday. And he *remembered* so much.

² It is planned that three different writers will handle the three types of sanctification.

divisive, litigious, careless and selfish at the Lord's Supper and *agape* (love feast), and permissive of gross sin (incest) in one of the believers.³

Why would Paul call the Corinthians "saints" if they were so unsaintly? The answer lies in the different usages of the root words that are used for *sanctification* in both Testaments.

English, unfortunately for us, used Anglo-Saxon-based words (holy, holiness) and Latin-based (*sanctify, sanctification, saint, saintly*) to translate the same cluster of words in the original. In the OT the words are from the Semitic root *qdsb*. In the NT they translate words with the *hagi-* root.⁴ The basic meaning of all these words is the same: "to set apart for a special use." In contexts of "sanctification," this will be for a good use, and one for God's will and pleasure.⁵

Sanctification involves a believer's conduct and character. It is both *negative* and *positive*. Too many conservative Christians accentuate the negative, as in the somewhat light-hearted (but often accurate) summary of some people's idea of sanctification: "I don't drink, don't smoke, don't chew, or run with those who do."

To be sure, there is a strong negative side to the doctrine. *We are* to be separated or set apart from evil. First Thessalonians 4:3 speaks of progressive sanctification as having to do with turning away from immorality—so rampant in today's culture, as it was in the days when the NT was written.

However, we should not merely become set apart *from evil* but we should be positively set apart and dedicated *to God*. In OT times a person could sanctify his house (Lev 27:14), part of his field (Lev 27:16), or his firstborn (Num 8:17). If the OT believers could do so, surely we NT believers should be able to set apart our homes, cars, and possessions, for God's use! We can dedicate our children through prayer and a consistent example. In the final analysis, though, they will have to consecrate their *own* lives to Christ's holy service.

Since God is all-holy, the word *sanctify* cannot mean "make holy" when applied to Him. On the practical level, sometimes progressive sanctification does mean this for us. In Ezek 36:23 the Lord speaks of

³There is no suggestion that the incestuous man was unsaved, but rather that he might be removed in death if he didn't change his ways.

⁴As in our English derivative, *hagiography* (a biography of a *saint*). This double set of root words needlessly complicates things, although giving a richer vocabulary than possessed by any other tongue.

⁵That the word doesn't always mean "make *saintly*" is clear from the fact that the Hebrew root *qdsb* is used for those set aside to be cult prostitutes, including sodomites!

Himself as sanctified, or set apart from all unholiness: “When I am hallowed in you before their eyes.” God is infinitely holy, but only as this is reflected in the lives of his saints will the world ever believe it. Likewise in the so-called “Lord’s Prayer” (better, “the *Disciple’s Prayer*,” since Christ could not pray for forgiveness, being sinless) we pray that God’s name would be “hallowed” (*hagiazō*, the same verb usually translated “sanctify”).

It is already a most holy or sanctified name. Our part is to regard it as such ourselves and influence others to set it apart as holy as well. For example, this rules out all false remarks in His name and any light or “vain” use of God’s name. The Son of God, likewise, was *sanctified* when the Father sent Him into the world for our salvation (John 10:36). He consecrated Himself or set Himself apart to the great task of redemption. Because He has redeemed us by grace we can indeed practice holiness (= set apartness).

Our story of the man who thought he had reached sinless perfection illustrates the difference between what we are as set apart in Christ (perfect) and what we are in everyday life (hopefully progressing on a practical level toward holiness, but still plagued by many “warts” on our character). A little poem that illustrates the difference between our daily progress in practical sanctification and our final sanctification goes like this:

To dwell above with those we love,
That will indeed be glory;
But here below with some I know,
Well, that’s another story!

Yes, it is sadly true. Born-again Christians (the only kind there are, really) can be hard to get along with, and downright mean at times. Also, we are only too aware of some of these flaws in ourselves, if we are honest. But there are usually other blemishes that are “blind spots.” Unfortunately, those closest to us are not blind to these unholy “warts.”

But just *knowing* that sanctification is not just one generalized, vague concept can really help us to understand other Christians’ failings—not to mention *our own!*

Three Phases of Sanctification

God’s Word presents three different aspects of sanctification: (1) Positional Sanctification; (2) Progressive Sanctification; and (3) Perfected (or Final) Sanctification.

In this first study only a brief summary of all three will be given.

1. Positional Sanctification

First Corinthians 1:30 is a good verse to summarize our sanctified, or set-apart, position in Christ: “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

This is an absolute, perfect, and objective thing. Positional sanctification takes place instantaneously at salvation, irrespective of how little it may or may not immediately show up in our lives. The Corinthians, who had a long way to go before they would be considered “saintly” by outside observers (and who did, after all, often have rather rough backgrounds), are addressed by Paul in these words: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were *sanctified*, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11, emphasis supplied).

Many evangelicals hesitate to use the word *saint* for all Christians, letting the Mormons, the so-called “Latter-day Saints,” have a corner on the word.⁶ The NT has no such reticence, because of the doctrine of positional sanctification. Whereas the word *Christian* occurs only *three* times in the NT, the word *saints* (plural, not “Saint John” or “Saint Paul”) as a term for all believers is *widespread* (e.g., Acts 9:13; Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; Eph 4:12; Phil 4:22; Col 1:4; Phlm 7; Heb 6:10; Rev 13:7).

William Evans writes bluntly, but truthfully, on this question of being a “saint”: “If a man is not a saint he is not a Christian; if he is a Christian he is a saint.”⁷

2. Progressive Sanctification

John 17:17, in our Lord’s high-priestly prayer for his saints, is a good introduction⁸ to the practical or experiential side of sanctification: “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

⁶In a street meeting in Utah, Dr. H. A. Ironside was once angrily challenged from the crowd by a man who said, “I’m an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints!” Dr. Ironside answered pleasantly, but with truth, “I’m a *junior* in the Church of Jesus Christ of *former-day* saints!”

⁷William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1912, revised 1939 and 1949), 166. He adds, for the sake of those who obscure this truth with their doctrines of works and human merit: “In some quarters people are canonized after they are dead; the New Testament canonizes believers while they are alive” (!). *Ibid.*

⁸Other verses on this aspect are 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 5:25-26; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Pet 3:18.

Although the Lord Jesus had been ministering to His disciples for *three* years, and eleven of them had indeed been already sanctified (positionally) by grace through faith in Him,⁹ He still prays for their sanctification through the application of the Word of God.

3. Perfected Sanctification

Final, ultimate, or perfect sanctification does not take place till we leave this planet through death or the Rapture. It is an event yet to come. First John 3:2 is a central passage for this:

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.¹⁰

II. The Tenses of Sanctification

Like salvation, which has a past, a present, and a future aspect,¹¹ sanctification does as well.

1. Past Sanctification

Positional sanctification is *past* (and permanent): we were set apart in Christ at our conversion.

2. Present Sanctification

Progressive sanctification is *present*: we are daily being more and more conformed to His image in holiness.

3. Future Sanctification

Ultimate sanctification is future: one day we shall see Him as He is and we shall be like Him. There will be no more sin in thought, word, or deed—and no “old man” to make us even *want* a shred of that old, shoddy condition.

⁹Judas Iscariot, the “son of perdition” (John 17:12), was never sanctified at all.

¹⁰Another important verse on future sanctification is Rom 8:29.

¹¹We were saved from the *penalty* of sin when we put our faith in Christ for salvation (*past*); we are being saved from the *power* of sin each day (*present*); we shall ultimately be saved from the *presence* of sin at our death or the coming of Christ in the Rapture (*future*).

III. Conclusion

This, then, is sanctification: a setting apart *from* a profane, secular, or sinful purpose and a dedicating of a person or thing *to* the service and glory of a thrice-holy God (Isa 6:3).

We must not confuse the past, present, and future aspects of sanctification if we expect to understand NT doctrine.

For us, the easiest aspect of sanctification is the *positional*, which was earned for us in the *past* by the sacrifice of Christ and applied to us when we believed. This will be explained in the next issue of the Journal. The present, everyday, *progressive* aspect, which is so difficult for most Christians to handle, will be explained in the third issue of our series. The *future* and final aspect will be the fourth and last of this series called "We Believe in Sanctification."

We close with some words penned many decades ago by William Evans:

The believer grows *in* sanctification rather than *into* sanctification out of something else. By a simple act of faith in Christ the believer is at once put into a state of sanctification. Every Christian is a sanctified man. The same act that ushers him into a state of justification admits him at once into the state of sanctification, in which he is to grow until he reaches the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ.¹²

¹² Evans, *Great Doctrines*, 166.

THE “OUTER DARKNESS” IN MATTHEW AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO GRACE

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I. Introduction

“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:22-24).

In this short but dynamic and emotional speech, Paul gives the Ephesian elders a concise summary of the nature and importance of what life is all about for him. It is the great task of testifying to “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

But Paul doesn’t stop there. In the last words of this farewell oration he gives his benediction to the elders: “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace” (Acts 20:32). Nothing was more important to Paul than this “gospel of the grace of God.” He had even warned them “for three years . . . night and day with tears” (20:31) that some would speak “perverse things” (v 30) and, no doubt, distort this truth of God’s grace, in order to draw away disciples¹ for themselves (v 30).

Today there is a controversy over the Gospel that is being waged with great intensity. The core issue in the debate touches the very nature and being of God Himself and His eternal, glorious character. Eternal significance lies in the answer to such questions as, “Is God’s love, expressed in His free gift to mankind, truly unconditional?” And, if so, “What does free, unconditional giving truly mean?”

I often think of a pastor friend of mine who one day offered to me quite freely, without my probing, his own view of the eternal security

¹Note that Luke specifically uses the Greek word *mathētēs* and avoids the word “believer” in Acts 20:30. This is a crucial distinction that Luke makes, since our discussion of the “outer darkness” is directly related to, and even mentioned by, Luke (12:15-24).

issue. He confessed that he did believe in “eternal security” but that it *wasn't* unconditional “eternal security.” I inwardly gasped at the contradictory nature of this position. How could something be both “eternal” and “secure,” in every sense of those terms, and yet be conditional? Can it truly be said to be “eternal” or “secure” if in fact it may not be? Such inconsistency is saddening.

There are a number of Scriptures whose interpretation highlights the importance of a clear understanding of grace and the unconditional nature of God's love. Three texts that are widely misunderstood (in reference to this issue) are the passages in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus instructs His disciples on the reality of the “outer darkness” (8:12; 22:13; 25:30). These texts create confusion because of the widespread (*a priori*) belief that there really is nothing in them to closely examine, consider, or re-evaluate.

II. Need for the Study

On the surface one is hardpressed to take seriously a textual study when commentators and writers time after time, in almost boring fashion, use such words as “stereotyped formula,”² “stock phrases,”³ and “generally accepted”⁴ to describe the phrase “outer darkness” and to support the traditionally held view that it always refers to eternal punishment.⁵

Yet it is precisely for this reason that an in-depth study needs to be undertaken. The passages have been taken for granted over so great a period of time that almost no new, creative, or critical thinking has been done with them in recent years. Teachers and commentators alike have “fallen asleep” solely on the basis of past assumptions. This casts doubt

² Alan Hugh M'Neile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1915), 106.

³ A. B. Bruce, “The Synoptic Gospels,” in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, 5 vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900-10), 1 (1900):140.

⁴ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, s.v., “Punishment, Everlasting,” by Harry Buis, 4:955.

⁵ See also, R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (n.p.: Wartburg Press, 1943; reprint ed., Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964), 333; Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 1:550; Daniel McCarthy, *The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to Saint Matthew* (n.p., n.d.), 177; David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New Century Bible (London: Butler & Tanner, Ltd., 1972), 159.

on the hermeneutical methods employed on these passages.

While space does not permit an in-depth study here, there will be enough probing to cast doubt on the traditional view. Perhaps some will be spurred on to new thinking in this area.

For the most part we will look at the phrase “outer darkness” as it is used in Matt 22:13. But before doing so, it would be helpful to address, at least in part, the issue of “stock phrases” and “stereotypical formulas.”

III. Problems with the Traditional View

Matt 8:12—“The Sons of the Kingdom”

In the references to “outer darkness” in Matt 8:12 and 25:30, a sticky problem arises if we are to employ the argument of “stock phrases” consistently.

In 8:12 it is said that the “sons of the kingdom” (*hoi huiioi tēs basileias*)⁶ are thrown into this “outer darkness.” The normative interpretation of these “sons” is that they are Israelites, i.e., those Jews who were part of the national entity we call Israel, but who eventually showed by their rejection of Jesus as Messiah,⁷ that they were “unsaved.” Yet in the parable of the tares in Matt 13:38, the only other usage of this phrase is clearly defined as the “good seed.” The traditional “stock phrases” hermeneutic must now be abandoned at this point, leaving us with no *objective* guidelines to determine when, or when not, to use it. With the inconsistent application of this in 8:12, we are left strictly with the whim of the individual interpreter.

25:30—“Slaves”

A similar problem exists in 25:30, which concludes the parable of the talents in which the master has entrusted varying sums of money to his three servants (*v* 14; *douloi*, lit., “slaves”) for investment while he is away. There is no problem with the traditional view assigning the first two industrious slaves to the realm of the “saved,” but when it comes to the unwise third slave, who is said to be cast into the “outer darkness,” the ‘tune’ changes. Because the “stock phrase” method is applied to the “outer darkness,” this third slave must, by interpretive tradition, be designated as unsaved.

Yet the very method which is used to establish this conclusion is *at the same time* violated in the very same passage. The word *slave* (*doulos*)

⁶This is mistranslated as “subjects of the kingdom” in the NIV.

⁷McCarthy, *Matthew*, 177.

is used to describe all three individuals, not just the first two. The text offers *no differentiation* in their relation to their master. To consistently use the “stock phrase” method, we must apply the status of “saved” to *all three* individuals. Yet we cannot do this because that would violate the same method used for “outer darkness.” What we wind up with is a hopeless situation involving inconsistent reasoning and arbitrary hermeneutical decisions.

The word *doulos*, used many times by Paul to describe himself, is pregnant with meaning and significance. We cannot arbitrarily dismiss the third slave as being “unsaved” simply because we do not understand the cryptic, hard-to-understand expression “outer darkness.”

Hermeneutical Problems

This process of probing and digging uncovers a new problem for the traditional hermeneutical approach in these passages. Upon careful observation, thought, and reflection over a number of years on this issue, I have come to realize that traditional teachers and authors on these passages use what I shall call the “self-centered, emotional” method of interpretation. By “self-centered” I do not mean that these individuals are selfish people. By “emotional” I do not mean that these same individuals are overly emotional. Instead, the “self-centered, emotional” method goes like this: The reference to the “outer darkness,” with its inclusion of “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” cannot refer to Christians because *we* simply cannot envision this happening to a true believer. It is simply too *emotionally* disturbing and doesn’t fit *our own* stereotypical view of heaven. It is “self-centered” in that it interprets the text on the basis of the perspective of the individual interpreter rather than the perspective of the biblical author.⁸ It is “emotional” in that psychological factors enter into the interpretation and bias its outcome.

This method, of course, must be rejected at once if we are to discover the truth in these passages.⁹ Also, it would be helpful if we looked briefly at some biblical evidence for rejecting the “emotional” side of this method. Let us digress here momentarily.

With respect to the point just made, 1 Cor 10:1-13 is truly an amazing

⁸ For a discussion of interpretation based on the intended meaning of the author, from the author’s perspective, see E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

⁹ It is ironic that many of the commentators and teachers who use this method here will also boast of how their theology is God-centered, holding strictly to a “high” view of God’s sovereignty.

passage of Scripture. Paul is relating to the “brethren” (v 1) in Corinth examples from the people of God in the OT, particularly the wilderness wanderings, as being *directly applicable* to *all* believers of the church age. Note that Paul even includes *himself* in this group (“for *our* admonition,” v 11).

Observe the four experiences Paul ascribes to these people (“our fathers,” v 1) in the wilderness: (1) They were *all* under the cloud. (2) They *all* passed through the sea. The spiritual significance of these two happenings is enormous and too lengthy to cover here. Let it be said simply that there was *not the distinction* of some being “true wanderers” and some being “pseudo-wanderers.” They *all* experienced these things. Even more amazing are the next two: (3) They *all* “ate the same *spiritual* food”¹⁰ and (4) They *all* “drank the same *spiritual* drink” (vv 3-4). To leave no doubt whatsoever in anyone’s mind, Paul specifically defines the *spiritual* drink as being from the *spiritual* Rock of which they drank, which was none other than Christ! Paul could not have made it more plain. There are here no “pseudo-people of God”! They all had an authentic spiritual experience¹¹ with God in the exodus.

The telling blow comes in v 5: “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies *were scattered in the wilderness*” (emphasis mine). Paul goes on to mention the idolatry, sexual immorality, and mass death that occurred among those who partook of the spiritual drink from the Rock which was Christ.

Looking at the phrases “outer darkness” and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” honestly, by themselves, and apart from any theological grid (which we shall do later), it is difficult to see how these expressions can be seen as so much worse than what Paul ascribes to the wanderers who “experienced Christ.”

¹⁰ I am convinced that when the traditional interpreter’s eyes reach the word “spiritual” here his *mind* either sees nothing or it deletes the word “spiritual” and re-inserts the word “physical.”

¹¹ A great deal of confusion and misunderstanding is found in evangelical circles concerning this matter of “salvation” in the OT. In these circles, “saved” is a cliché and is too narrowly interpreted in the NT. But when this faulty framework is used as a grid for looking at the OT people of God, the result is major confusion. The topic is a big one and cannot be covered here. Suffice it to say that the exodus wanderers had an authentic spiritual experience of some kind with God and, more importantly, that their experiences are used by Paul as being *directly applicable* to believers today. Many traditional thinkers go on to say that the “brethren” of v 1 make up both “true believers” and “pseudo believers.” However, not only can this not be substantiated, it is again another example of the “self-centered, emotional” method of interpretation.

It is, therefore, not these phrases themselves that tell us whether the individuals described are “saved” or “unsaved”; rather, both the immediate and broader contexts must determine this.

Let us move on, then, to a closer examination of Matt 22:13 where new problems arise with the traditional view, especially for those who are premillennial. We will then look at how this relates to grace and the issue of eternal security.

IV. The Parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt 22:1-13)

This is the parable in which Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a king whose invitations to his son’s wedding feast are repeatedly ignored for varying reasons (22:1-5). The last wave of servants is severely mistreated by the rejectors (v 6) and the king takes vengeance (v 7). The story then takes a dramatic turn at midpoint, when the previous group of rejectors is no longer called, but rather, the invitation is given out to the public at large (vv 8-10). The second half of the story is more sharply contrasted to the first half with the strange inclusion of a man found (surprisingly, it would seem) without proper attire within the feast itself (vv 11-12). Having made this discovery, the king then orders this individual to be cast outside into the darkness (v 13).

The Wedding Feast

The major interpretive problems of the commentators in regard to the feast are (1) the nature and (2) the time of the feast, especially in relation to the entrance of the king into the wedding hall and his exchange with the maldressed¹² man (vv 11-12). McCarthy, an amillennialist, targets the issue squarely and rightly challenges both amillennialist and premillennialist alike when he says concerning the maldressed man of verse 11:

It is hard to explain this clause in the view of those comm. who suppose the banquet to be celebrated in heaven [or the millennium for the premillennialist], where no one enters without the wedding garment, and whence no one is cast out. But if we understand the guests to be gathered together in the Church, there is no difficulty. In the

¹²Huber has coined a term that is not in any of my dictionaries; it nevertheless seems fitting to convey being inappropriately, incorrectly, or unsuitably attired. For another discussion of this parable see Gregory P. Sapaugh, “A Call to the Wedding Celebration,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 5 (Spring 1992):11-34. Ed.

Church are found "good and bad" members, when the Great King comes to examine His household.¹³

In making this statement, McCarthy is assuming the traditional view that the "outer darkness" is hell. His challenge is legitimate and has not been answered. If this maldressed man is being consigned to hell, and if this feast *in which* the man is found is either in heaven or in the Millennial Kingdom, we must conclude that the man, having once been saved, goes to heaven or enters the Millennial Kingdom. Yet, while being in heaven or in this kingdom, he totally loses his salvation and is immediately cast into hell. It is very doubtful whether any of the generality of commentators, regardless of their view on eternal security, actually believe this. Yet many, if not all of them, are guilty of this inconsistency.¹⁴

For example, one amillennial writer says that Matthew is describing the messianic kingdom in its final phase, that is, the new heavens and the new earth, which are often pictured under the symbolism of guests reclining at a marriage feast.¹⁵ On the other hand, a well-respected premillennial writer states that this banquet refers to participation in the Millennial Kingdom.¹⁶ Both inconsistently hold their position along with the traditional view of the "outer darkness."

The same problem arises when considering the entrance of the king to observe the guests in the wedding hall (v 11). The major question is: "When does this entrance take place?" Some say it is at the time of Christ's Second Advent, when He will judge the unbelieving world *prior* to the state of glory. This causes considerable problems for any premillennialist who views the feast as a millennial event. If the feast is a millennial event, how can the king be entering the hall with the purpose of judging and casting men into hell when this has already taken place at the judgment of the sheep and goats (Matt 25:31-46), as a result of which it appears that no unbeliever enters the Millennium?

In order to hold to both the traditional view of the "outer darkness" and the millennial significance of the feast, it must be concluded that

¹³ McCarthy, *Matthew*, 432.

¹⁴ It was recently suggested to me by a well-respected theologian who is a former professor at an evangelical seminary that I explore the aspects of the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory with respect to this idea. While I was intrigued with his inquiry, this topic cannot be taken up here.

¹⁵ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 792.

¹⁶ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), 254.

some who *enter* the Millennium are not saved and will be judged during the Millennium and cast into hell prior to the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium.

This problem is closely connected to the king's conscious intention to observe the guests in the wedding hall when he enters (v 11). The king addresses the man as "friend" (*hetaire*).¹⁷ Regarding the observation by the king, Bruce writes, "We are not to suppose that the king came in to look out for offenders, but rather to show his countenance to his guests and make them welcome."¹⁸ This idea is much more consistent with the premillennial view that the feast is a millennial concept. The king does not come in to cast anyone into hell, since the feast is in the Millennium and *follows* the judgments of the Second Advent. The king comes in to welcome and greet all the saved people who have entered into the Millennial Kingdom. This seriously endangers the traditional view of the "outer darkness."

In this light, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the "outer darkness" in Matt 22:13 does not refer to everlasting punishment of hell.

Instead, the feast in this passage, as well as in 8:11-12, is related to the cultural background of the Jewish wedding feast. Woodard relates the great joy of this occasion when he writes, "Commentators agree too that the processional was a march of pomp and gait which was only excelled by the joys of the marriage feast itself."¹⁹ Gaebelein says, "The marriage feast which the king makes for his son and to which he invites guests typifies the gracious offer of God to give joy, comfort, blessings to those who [sic] he wishes to partake of it."²⁰

This background, namely, the great joy of the Jewish wedding feast, forms the foundation for a correct interpretation of the "outer darkness." It is necessary to realize that Matthew is speaking in terms of culture and personal experience. Against this background alone can Matthew's meaning be understood.

¹⁷ This originally meant "comrade" or "companion." See James Morison, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1870), 442. See also James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (1930; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 256-57. See also, Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 314.

¹⁸ Bruce, "Synoptic Gospels," 1:272.

¹⁹ Thomas W. Woodard, Jr., "Neglected Millennial Terminology in the Synoptics" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1966), 7.

²⁰ A. C. Gaebelein, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2 vols. (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1910), 2:141.

The Wedding Garment

Andrew Paris provides the common denominator of most of the existing views of what the wedding garment is:

This garment must at least symbolize the necessary "qualifications" for "admission" into the Bridal Banquet. So the garment must at least portray the conditions of salvation such as trusting in Jesus' meritorious blood, repentance, and immersion unto the forgiveness of sins.²¹

This idea fits in with the traditional view of the "outer darkness." Both amillennialist and premillennialist alike hold to this general conception of the garment. However, this view may only be consistently held by the amillennialist who sees the feast as symbolic solely of the present church age.²²

The premillennialist, however, cannot be consistent and hold to this traditional view of the garment. If entrance into the Millennium is obtained by accepting the invitation and acquiring the wedding garment of righteousness, then the question must be answered as to how the maldressed man got into the Millennium without this garment of righteousness. For the premillennialist, this robe cannot be symbolic of righteousness imputed through saving faith. For there will be *no unbelievers* entering the Millennial Kingdom, yet this maldressed man does so!

Some commentators offer different variations of the traditional view which are very helpful, even though they maintain the traditional view. One states that the garment is the symbol of everything that renders a man fit to share in the joys of the kingdom. This idea captures the significance of the great joy of the feast.²³ The maldressed man thus suffers a loss of joy by being evicted from the wedding feast.

Filson compares the maldressed man to Judas Iscariot having every privilege but lacking the wedding garment of obedient discipleship.²⁴ From this idea it may be concluded that the maldressed man, though

²¹ Andrew Paris, "The Bride of Christ," *Seminary Review* 20 (Fall 1973): 10-11.

²² This, then, would logically force the individual holding this position to believe in the potential loss of salvation, since the guest is escorted from the feast.

²³ M'Neile, *St. Matthew*, 316.

²⁴ Floyd V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1960), 234. Care should be taken by the reader not to enter into a debate here as to whether or not Judas was saved. This issue is not under examination here.

saved, was not a committed disciple. While Allen also holds the traditional view, he has the right idea when he says that the garment is the condition of readiness and equipment.²⁵

There is good evidence that the garment should not be taken as merely symbolic or allegorical in the parable,²⁶ but should first be interpreted literally based on the Jewish cultural background. Matthew's own usage of the word *endyma* supports this idea. This noun is only found eight times in the NT. Seven of these are found in Matthew. Four of the five instances outside of 22:11-12 refer to a physical piece of cloth/clothing which covers a man's skin (3:4; 6:25, 28; 28:3). In 7:15 it refers to the sheep's clothing as worn by the wolves. To be sure, this is a figurative use, but not an allegorical one. Matthew also uses the *verb* form literally for the physical act of putting on clothes (6:25; 27:28, 31). In Matthew 22 the interpretation of the wedding garment, as well as the "outer darkness," should have a literal foundation. That is, in the culture of the day the wedding garment was a piece of physical clothing to be worn to a wedding feast, while the "outer darkness" refers to the darkness of night outside the brilliantly-lit, joy-filled banquet hall.

The Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

As mentioned previously, the general view regarding this phrase is that it is a "stereotyped formula" descriptive in all instances of the anguish of hell. Russell writes, "The Gr. noun occurs repeatedly in the sayings of Jesus . . . concerning the remorseful gnashing of teeth by those excluded from heaven."²⁷

However, Schweizer expresses doubt as to this confident conclusion:

It is impossible to determine whether "crying and gnashing of teeth" merely represent oriental gestures of remorse, rage and horror, or go back to the idea that the place of damnation is "hot as fire and cold as snow" (Eth. Enoch 14:13).²⁸

²⁵ Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*, 5th ed., The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), 236. This suggestion is supported by the context of chaps 24 and 25, where the main emphasis is on the preparation and readiness of the disciple.

²⁶ See Johannes Bapt. Bauer, "De veste nuptiali: (Matth. 22,11-13)," *Verbum domini* 43:1 (1965):15-18.

²⁷ The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, s.v. "Gnash, Gnashing of Teeth," by Emmet Russell, 2:735.

²⁸ Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, trans. by David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 215.

Rengstorf strongly implies that this phrase is *not* a stereotyped formula:

The NT usage is thus independent of the general Gk. and also of the OT attestation. It cannot be understood directly in the light of the phrase *brychō tous odontas* but takes its meaning from its context. The solid place of the formula in Mt. suggests that it is really peculiar to him though there can be no certainty of this point.²⁹

The usage of both of these descriptive terms in the OT and the NT verifies that they should be interpreted at face value as simply cultural and emotional terms with no theological significance inherently attached. What is crucial is whether or not believers are said to be the subjects of these terms. In Acts 20:37 (mentioned at the outset of this article) the term for weeping (*klauthmos*) is used to describe the sorrow of the Ephesian elders because of Paul’s imminent departure from them. The Septuagint has a host of similar uses. This word is used in reference to Joseph in Gen 45:2; 46:29; it is used of the Israelites who wept over Moses’ death (Deut 34:8); Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:3); of Job (16:1; 30:31); of David in Psalm 6:8 (appropriated by Jesus Himself in Matt 7:23 and Luke 13:27).

Examples of the phrase “gnashing of teeth” are considerably more rare. However, Job does use it as a description of God’s anger toward him in 16:10. It is clear again that this term is not used strictly for those suffering in hell. By using the deductive method commentators have assumed this phrase to refer to hell and have gone on from there to interpret the passage. This should not be done. This phrase should be interpreted from the *context*. In Matt 22:1-14 it has been determined from the details of the context that, for the premillennialist in particular, the “outer darkness” is not symbolic of hell. Neither, therefore, is the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” descriptive in this passage of one suffering in hell. This phrase again fits into the cultural background.

A Comparison with Luke 14:15-24

Outside of Matthew’s Gospel, the parable of the wedding feast is found only in the parallel in Luke 14:15-24. Characteristic of the Lucan passage are its notable omission of the severe mistreatment of the king’s servant, of his subsequent destruction of the perpetrators’ city, and of

²⁹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, s.v. “*brychō, brygmos*,” by Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, 1 (1964):642.

the incident involving the maldressed man. Because of these omissions, some have suggested that the two stories are entirely different. But there are no adequate grounds for this conclusion, and it must be rejected. A look at the context in Luke's Gospel reveals some valuable insights into Matthew's usage.

The emphasis of Luke's account is on sacrificing worldly interests and pleasures for the sake of discipleship to Christ. The distinction thus is not between unbeliever and believer, but between the committed and the uncommitted believer. This is a major theme of Luke, and the preceding context, as far back as chap 12, deals with this very subject. The parable of the rich man in Luke 12:13-21 is a good example. So, too, the parable of 12:35-40 deals with readiness and preparation for the master when he returns from the wedding feast. Jesus is giving these teachings, including the warnings, to His twelve disciples, not to unbelievers (see, e.g., 12:32-34).

Most significant for the parallel to Matthew found in Luke 14:15-24 is the passage that immediately follows (i.e., 14:25-35), where Jesus gives one of His most famous sayings: "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My *disciple*" (v 27; emphasis mine). Where the parable in Matthew is essentially the same as Luke's (cf. Matt 22:5 with Luke 14:18-19), the basic idea in Matthew is also the same as Luke's. Though Matthew's special details shift his emphasis a little, Matt 22:5 deals with the priority of discipleship just as does Luke 14:18-19, read in the light of 14:27 (see 14:33). This is where Matt 22:11-14 fits into the scheme.

Some feel that Matt 22:11-14 is hardly suitable as a conclusion to Matthew's parable. However, once it is seen that the traditional view of the "outer darkness" must be rejected here, and once the connection with Luke's parable is made, there is no problem seeing how vv 11-14 fit into Matthew's parable. These verses could easily follow v 24 of Luke's parable. In fact, Luke 14:24 is a summary statement for which Matt 22:11-13 is an example. That is, the maldressed man in Matthew's parable is one of those of the group that gave priority to worldly interests and as a result was not adequately prepared for the wedding feast.

The invitation originally went out for the noon meal (*ariston* in Matthew), but due to the difficulty in getting people to attend, the afternoon wore on. It was not until the evening meal (*deipnon* in Luke) that enough people were gathered in for the feast finally to take place.

When the maldressed man quite unexpectedly showed up at the evening feast, it was apparent that he had spent his afternoon

concentrating on his worldly interests rather than preparing for the meal. Because he placed his own interests above those of the king, he was cast out of the feast into the night where he felt deep remorse and anguish. Thus it seems that he really did want to attend the feast, but he made no personal sacrifice to be prepared for it.

Summary

What has just been discussed places the parable within the cultural background that underlies our interpretation of the "outer darkness." The feast is the Jewish wedding feast, often celebrated in the evening. On the occasion in question, the celebration was originally scheduled to begin at midday, but was delayed by the refusal of the guests to come.

For most premillennialists, this image signifies an event in the Millennial Kingdom. The wedding garment is the appropriate piece of clothing to be worn to the wedding feast. The significance of the lack of the garment is a lack of preparation and readiness due to the priority of worldly self-interest. The "outer darkness" is that darkness which is outside the banquet hall within which the evening feast is taking place. As it would in the literal setting, exclusion from the feast signifies a loss of the joy and the closeness of fellowship that occurs inside the feast. As a result of not being able to take part, due to giving priority to self-interest rather than to commitment to discipleship, these privileges are lost. But this loss is not due to a lack of "saving" faith.

The enigmatic v 14 also becomes clearer now. The "elect" are those who obtain the inheritance of joy characterized by the feast in the Millennium. The "called" are all those, both unbeliever and believer,³⁰ who were invited to the feast but did not respond to the invitation. They either overtly rejected it or allowed worldly interests and pleasures to interfere with their preparation and readiness. The unbeliever loses joy totally in hell. But the "poorly dressed" believer, represented here, enters the Millennium but loses that *fullness* of joy portrayed by the wedding feast. For the believer this is no special judgment after the Millennium starts, but simply the execution of the judgment already given at Christ's *bēma*.

³⁰ Matthew is concerned in his Gospel with whether or not his Christian readers are willing to commit themselves to following the Lord Jesus no matter what the cost. Interestingly enough, the preponderance of conservative, premillennial teachers, though inconsistently holding to the traditional view of the "outer darkness," maintain that Matthew wrote his Gospel primarily with believing Jews in mind.

V. Grace and the “Outer Darkness”

Matthew’s inclusion of our Lord’s instruction concerning the “outer darkness” clearly raises the issue of what grace really means and how unconditional God’s love really is.

What, then, is grace? Have we now so lost sight of the true meaning of this precious word that we must go to great lengths to define it in terms of its unconditionality? It appears that this is the case, and that the maldressed man of Matthew 22 is a nagging example.

As we have seen, there is widespread agreement among conservative premillennialists that the clothing of the maldressed man symbolizes his “unsaved” condition and that the “outer darkness” represents eternal punishment. Normally we would rejoice at such unanimity. However, in this case, there is reason for calling this view to task and for a renewed look at grace itself and at God’s own character.

The traditional view suggests a disquieting—and even disturbing—lack of authentic grace in God’s character. God, having “saved” the maldressed man “enough” so that he is, in fact, in heaven (amillennial view) or in the Millennial Kingdom (premillennial view), now evidently reneges on what was originally presented as a free and everlasting gift! (See John 1:12-13; 3:16; 5:24; 20:31; Rom 5:15; 10:10; Eph 2:8-9). God is thus portrayed as One who cannot (or will not) keep His promises and is, in fact, a liar! Nothing is more demeaning to the trustworthiness of the character of the Divine Parent than this.

But it will be objected by the traditional proponent: “The maldressed man was not really a *true* believer but simply a ‘pseudo-Christian’ who was eventually found out for what he really was.” To this same critic these questions must be addressed: How then did this “unsaved” individual get into heaven under the eye of the perfectly omniscient God? And if God lets him in “by mistake,” how can I put my trust in a God who either errs or changes His mind and reneges on His promises?

Grace, by definition, is unconditional and thus unmerited. What does this mean? It means that God “risked” everything on our behalf *including* allowing for the possibility of our choosing to turn from Him after having taken His free gift. But that gift is so free that it cannot be taken back (Rom 11:29). It is pure and unadulterated grace. It means, therefore, that God’s grace allows for “maldressed” Christians. It allows for those who have been “born again” and may have once been excited and active in their new spiritual life, but the “everydayness” of life and the priority of seemingly more important endeavors have slowly and

quietly, over time, eroded their deep intimacy with their Heavenly Father.³¹

Grace is so free that it gives unconditionally, with full knowledge and without the expectation of return, that is, without the subtle threat that unless certain conditions are met (e.g., moral living, participation in "Christian" activities, commitment) this "free" gift will be nullified or withdrawn.

It is this "conditional eternal security" that is ravaging the Church today by robbing the believer (and unbeliever, of course) of the only transforming power available to him or her for breaking the shackles of emotional and spiritual bondage. Many Christians, frustrated by years of attempting to be a "good Christian," are flocking to counselors' offices with burned-out lives. Regrettably, their church has only offered them a form of grace without "the power thereof," that is, without the power of unconditional love and grace.

As a pastor I saw these devastating effects firsthand. I have seen how many Christians, out of fear, are imprisoned by the lie of self-empowerment conveyed under the subtle guise of so-called "grace."

Now, as a therapist, I have seen, in the quiet miracle of the choices my clients make, how the only hope for *real* transformation to Christlikeness is the power of God's unconditional love and grace. Those who enter a Christian counselor's office are often some of the most likely to see Christlike change. They have come to the point of admitting that the heavily-traveled road of performance-related assurance leads to a dead-end.

³¹ Oddly enough, there is a reasonable amount of agreement among conservative evangelicals that the Bible teaches there will be rewards and loss of rewards in heaven (or the Millennial Kingdom). A clear passage often used by eternal security proponents is 1 Cor 3:10-15, where Paul states that a person, once having laid the foundation of Christ (clearly indicating a saved individual), may then go on to build on that foundation a layer of "wood, hay, and stubble." These materials represent a lack of Christian integrity, and they are said to be "burned up." "He will suffer loss," Paul emphatically states, "but he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping *through* the flames." Here is a saved individual who actually goes through "fire" but clearly is not in hell. I sometimes find it incongruous how certain evangelicals can hold to this idea of loss of rewards, but are emotionally scandalized when it is suggested that the "outer darkness" is simply an example of what they (and we) already believe!

THE MAKING OF A DISCIPLE

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How does God make a disciple? Does a person who becomes a Christian also automatically become a disciple? When Jesus said, "Follow Me," was He inviting people to salvation or to something more? This second article in our series on the nature of discipleship will continue to explore the two different views of discipleship espoused today and how they relate to the issue of salvation.

I. Disciples: Born or Made?

The opening questions can be phrased simply: *Are disciples born or made?* In the first article of this series we concluded that a disciple is someone who is a learner or follower of a teacher or master. We learned that in relation to Jesus Christ, the term was used of those unsaved, those saved, and those saved who have made a serious commitment to Jesus as Lord and Master of their lives. What all three groups had in common that merited the designation *disciples* was that all were following Jesus Christ to some degree. Discipleship is therefore best understood as a journey, a direction, an orientation of one's life toward becoming like Christ. This can only be accomplished by following Christ.

The most common use of the term in the Gospels was in reference to those believers who followed Christ wholeheartedly, especially those who were later called *apostles*. This fullest sense of discipleship is the focus of this second article. Are such committed disciples born or made? Is the call to salvation the same as the call to discipleship? We will examine specific calls to discipleship in the Gospels to see if they are calls to salvation or something more, that is, if they are calls to a life-commitment beyond the issue of one's eternal destiny. The calls we will consider are those that relate to the life of the Apostle Peter, for reasons which will be explained later. First we will summarize the two basic views about the relationship between the call to discipleship and the call to salvation.

A. View 1: Disciples Are Born

This view claims the call to discipleship is the call to salvation. The calls are identical. The conditions of discipleship, hard as they may sound, are also the indispensable conditions of salvation. This teaching is basic to the Lordship Salvation position, which teaches that one cannot merely relate to Jesus as *Savior*, but one must also give total control of his or her life to Jesus as *Lord* and *Master* in order to be saved. The term *disciple* therefore emphasizes the obedience and “costliness” of salvation in contrast to the “cheap grace” purportedly found in “easy believism,” which is the name given the opposing view (called here the *Free Grace* view). Likewise, the term *follow* denotes a commitment to faithfulness and obedience by which true believers can be identified.

This view is set forth by a number of Bible teachers and theologians. John MacArthur states, “The gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow Him in submissive obedience.”¹ He adds,

Every Christian is a disciple. . . . Disciples are people who believe, whose faith motivates them to obey all Jesus commanded.²

James G. Merritt likewise asserts,

The fact is, Jesus sought more than a superficial following; he sought disciples. In short, the evangelistic call of Jesus was essentially a call to repentance and radical discipleship.³

James Montgomery Boice also argues that

. . . discipleship is not a supposed second step in Christianity, as if one first becomes a believer in Jesus and then, if he chooses, a disciple. From the beginning, discipleship is involved in what it means to be a Christian.⁴

To support their views these proponents of commitment-salvation appeal to the early calls of Jesus to the first disciples, as we shall see.

Neglecting the demands of discipleship is considered by these and

¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 21. See also 29-31, 196-98.

² *Ibid.*, 196.

³ James G. Merritt, “Evangelism and the Call of Christ,” in *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues*, ed. Thomas S. Ranier (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1989), 145.

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Christ’s Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 16.

other Lordship teachers to be an error of the contemporary church. Modern evangelism (they claim) should include a call to follow (= submit and obey) in the proclamation of the Gospel.⁵

B. View 2: Disciples Are Made

The opposing view, here called the *Free Grace* view for the sake of simplicity, holds that discipleship is a separate issue from salvation. This does not mean that committed discipleship *cannot* be a continuum originating with one's initial faith in Christ for salvation from sin. Obviously, discipleship *should* be the logical choice of those who truly understand the issues of salvation, and often it is. However, the call to salvation is distinct from the call to follow Christ in discipleship.

The Grace Evangelical Society states this position in its purpose statement: "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* (emphasis added)."⁶ Authors such as Zane C. Hodges, Charles C. Ryrie, Robert N. Wilkin, and Roy B. Zuck are also careful to separate the call to salvation from the call to discipleship.⁷

In the remainder of this article, our examination of Christ's calls to discipleship will show that the "Disciples-Are-Made" view is more biblically informed. We will accomplish this by observing how Peter was made a disciple.

II. Peter as a Model Disciple

When we examine the calls of Christ to discipleship in the Gospels, we find ourselves constantly crossing paths with one character in

⁵ E.g., Richard P. Belcher, *A Layman's Guide to the Lordship Salvation Controversy* (Southbridge, MA: Crowne Publications, 1990), 94-95; Boice, *Discipleship*, 13-16; MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 15-17; John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1958), 108.

⁶ The purpose statement can be found in past issues of the newsletter, *The Grace Evangelical Society News*.

⁷ Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free!* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1989), 67-76; *The Gospel Under Siege*, 2nd ed. revised and enlarged (Redención Viva, 1992), 39-50; Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 103-14; Robert N. Wilkin, "'Soul Salvation,' Part 3: Saving Your Soul by Doing Good—James 1:21," *The Grace Evangelical Society News* 7 (February 1992), 2, and "Part 4: Gaining by Losing—Matthew 16:24-28" (March-April 1992), 2; Roy B. Zuck, "Cheap Grace?" *Kindred Spirit* 13 (Summer 1989), 7.

particular, the Apostle Peter. Though the calls to salvation and discipleship can be separated without focusing on the person of Peter, attention to this prominent disciple is helpful in forming a cohesive picture of the progression of discipleship. But a focus on Peter is motivated by more than pragmatic convenience; there is also a theological basis. Peter is presented by the Gospels as the model disciple with whom readers can identify as disciples themselves.

This point can be argued from all the Gospels in their general presentation of Peter. Simon Peter was the prominent disciple. Not only is he always listed first (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16), but as the spokesman for the disciples as a group, he represents the consensus of the group's opinion of Jesus and His teaching (e.g., Matt 16:15-16; 17:24; Mark 8:29; 16:7; Luke 9:20; 12:41; John 6:67-69). Peter is also given the privilege of being one of the three in Jesus' inner circle along with James and John (e.g., Matt 17:1; 26:37; Mark 9:2; 14:33; Luke 9:28).

We see Peter's role as the representative disciple most clearly in Matthew and Mark's presentation of him. In these Gospels Peter serves as the vehicle for Matthew and Mark's message and the point of identification with the readers in their discipleship. Michael J. Wilkins notes Peter's prominence in Matthew:

Even as the disciples function in Matthew's gospel as an example, both positively and negatively, of what it means to be a disciple, so also the portrait of Simon Peter in Matthew's gospel provides a personalized example of discipleship for Matthew's church . . . Peter functions exemplarily in much the same way as does the group of disciples. While Matthew concentrates on the disciples as an exemplary group, Peter is seen as a "typical" individual. . . . The church would find much in common with Peter's typically human characteristics. He is much like any ordinary believer with his highs and lows, and he, therefore, becomes an example from whom the church can learn.⁸

⁸ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 185. See also his study, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term Mathētēs*, Novum Testamentum Supplement 59 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988); and Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple—Apostle—Martyr. A Historical and Theological Essay*, trans. Floyd Filson, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 25-33; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 332, 334; Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Figure of Peter in Matthew's Gospel as a Theological Problem," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 72, 80.

A similar case can be made for the presentation of Peter in Mark as noted by Paul J. Achtemeier:

One must keep in mind that Peter may have representative value for Mark, so that he is not to be considered only as an individual. For instance, Mark may think of Peter as a representative of the disciple or of discipleship, both in his generosity and in his failings. As a disciple he is called to be a fisher of men, and he and his brother set an example in immediately leaving their nets and following Jesus (1:16-18), so that he can speak for the group when he says, "We have left everything and followed you" (10:28). Yet in his falling away at the time of the passion, he is also typical of the group (14:29-31). Moreover, if Peter is a typical disciple, since the disciples of Jesus are meant to serve as lessons for the readers of the Gospel, Peter may also be the lesson *par excellence* for Christians as to the demands of discipleship upon them.⁹

Peter's experiences encompass those of a typical believer. His life is presented from the time of initial faith and recognition of Jesus as the Messiah (John 1:40-42), through stages of development, to a fuller understanding of what Jesus' ministry encompassed. In the process, he precipitates Jesus' instruction on what it really means to be a committed disciple. Positively, Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God (Mark 8:27-29) is central to his role as a disciple. But on the negative side, so is his failure to comprehend Jesus' ministry in suffering and death (Mark 8:31-33). Peter's experiences of following Christ take all believers through their own failures and successes.

Peter's name change from *Simon* also has a representative function in the Gospels. Jesus' new name for him, *Cephas* in Aramaic or *Petros* in Greek, means "rock." In spite of his failures, Peter the Rock would represent discipleship. Carsten P. Thiede writes:

The early Christians, and this includes the apostles and their pupils, could therefore look to Peter and his experience as a kind of model—Peter was the *petros*, the rock, not because of his strengths, but in spite of his weaknesses, "deputizing" for the weaknesses of them all.¹⁰

⁹ Paul J. Achtemeier, "Peter in the Gospel of Mark" in *Peter in the New Testament*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1974), 62. See also W. S. Vorster, "Characterization of Peter in the Gospel of Mark" *Neotestamentica* 21 (1987): 74.

¹⁰ Carsten P. Thiede, *Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988; first published in 1986 by The Paternoster Press), 36. See also Gundry, *Matthew*, 334.

For these reasons, when we view the life of Peter, we see the life of a typical disciple as designed by God. This informs us about the nature of discipleship, when it begins, how it develops, and the end toward which it is directed. In short, when we study Peter's life we see the making of a disciple.

III. Peter as a Progressing Disciple

When we study the life and progress of Peter in the Gospels, we find definite stages in his commitment of discipleship based on his responses to Jesus' calls to "follow" Him. As noted in the first article in this series, Jesus' call to "Follow Me" was a call to follow Him in a life of discipleship. The various calls to follow serve as a helpful framework in understanding the progression of discipleship or how a disciple is made.

A. Following in Salvation

Peter's first encounter with Christ is described in John 1:40-42. The setting for this meeting is Bethany beyond the Jordan (1:28).¹¹ Andrew, Peter's brother, first meets Jesus, then goes to find Peter. When Simon Peter meets Jesus, we have no record of his words or thoughts, only that Jesus changed his name from Simon to *Cephas* (=Peter, John 1:42). Whether Peter was saved here we do not know. But Jesus knew he would be saved and useful to Him. However, Andrew's faith¹² implies Peter's. We know that Peter is at least saved by the time of the wedding in Cana, for there we have the scriptural confirmation that "[Christ's] disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11).

In neither John 1 nor 2 is there any call for Peter to follow Christ as a disciple. Neither do we find conditions of commitment required by

¹¹ Suggestions for the location of this "Bethany" (MjT and NU text reading; "Bethabara" in the TR is least preferred) vary from the Bethany near Jerusalem to the region of Batanea in the Transjordan and to the north. For the purpose of our study, we only note that the setting of this encounter is *not* in Galilee. For more discussion, see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1991), 146-47; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 142.

¹² The account of John 1 leads us to believe that Andrew believed in Christ: (1) He followed John the Baptist (John 1:35) and evidently believed John's witness about Christ (1:36-37); (2) He followed Christ (1:37, 39-40); (3) He believed Jesus was the Messiah (1:41; cf. 20:30-31); (4) In the following story, Philip and Nathaniel obviously believe (1:45, 49-50); (5) Andrew's faith is confirmed in John 2:11.

Christ nor any commitment expressed by Peter. A. B. Bruce notes the significance of Jesus' meeting in John 1 with those who would later become His disciples:

We have here to do not with any formal solemn call to the great office of the apostleship, or even with the commencement of an uninterrupted discipleship, but at the utmost with the beginnings of an acquaintance with and of faith in Jesus on the part of certain individuals who subsequently became constant attendants on His person, and ultimately apostles of His religion. Accordingly we find no mention made in the three first Gospels of the events here recorded.¹³

The encounter with Peter in John 1 clearly happened in the early phase of Jesus' ministry. Timing is important in understanding the significance of Jesus' later calls to follow. The story shows that God's first call to unbelievers is a call to salvation.

B. Following in Commitment

The first call to Peter to follow in discipleship is issued in Matt 4:18-22 and Mark 1:14-20, in *Galilee* (Matt 4:12, 18, 23; Mark 1:14, 16, 21). Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, and James and John, the sons of Zebedee, to become "fishers of men." Is this episode also a call to salvation? Some of the Lordship Salvation school believe it is.

Commenting on this call, Boice assumes this interpretation to support his argument for commitment-salvation:

... discipleship is not a supposed second step in Christianity, as if one first becomes a believer in Jesus and then, if he chooses, a disciple. From the beginning, discipleship is involved in what it means to be a Christian.¹⁴

There is no dispute that in these passages Jesus is calling Peter and the others to a further commitment of discipleship. The command "Follow Me" and the promise that they will become "fishers of men" correctly denote the obedience and submission essential to discipleship. However, there is no support for Boice's assumption that this encounter is either chronologically or theologically parallel with the first encounter of Jesus with Peter and the other disciples in John 1.¹⁵

Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:14-20 could not possibly be the same event described in John 1:35-42, which is clearly Jesus' first encounter

¹³ Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971), 1.

¹⁴ Boice, *Discipleship*, 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

with Peter and the other disciples. In John 1 the setting is Bethany beyond the Jordan (John 1:28), not Galilee, as in Matthew and Mark (cf. John 1:43).¹⁶ In John there is no mention of a seaside setting nor of fishing for men. Furthermore, Peter is brought to Jesus (1:41-42) rather than being already present as Jesus walked by (Matt 4:18; Mark 1:16). Finally, in the first chapter of John, Peter is obviously introduced to Jesus for the first time, while Matthew and Mark's accounts report no introduction of the men to Jesus, and appear to assume a degree of familiarity with Jesus.

Many commentators agree that Matthew and Mark's accounts of Jesus' call to follow and become fishers of men *presuppose* the facts of the John 1 encounter.¹⁷ Since Peter was saved in John 1 or at latest by John 2 (see v 11), then the call to follow in Matthew and Mark cannot be a call to salvation. James Donaldson writes on the call to become fishers of men:

The response of the disciples is not an act of faith in Jesus, but more significantly an act of obedience. Mark's Gospel issues no call to repentance here but only a call to discipleship.¹⁸

Hans Conzelmann makes the same distinction between salvation and discipleship in this narrative: "Jesus does not make this discipleship in the external sense a general condition for salvation."¹⁹ Even A. W. Pink, a strong Lordship Salvation teacher, agrees: "John tells us of the *conversion* of these disciples, whereas Mark (as also Matthew and Luke) deals with their *call to service* . . ." (emphasis his).²⁰ After salvation, Jesus calls those who have believed to a life of evangelism.

¹⁶ See footnote 11 for a discussion on the location of this Bethany.

¹⁷ See William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 245-46; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 169-70; Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew* (London: Robert Scott, Paternoster Row, 1909), 48; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, trans. Ray Tegtman, The Bible Student's Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 77; Frederick Louis Godet, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 1:330.

¹⁸ James Donaldson, "'Called to Follow': A Twofold Experience of Discipleship in Mark," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 5 (February 1975), 69.

¹⁹ Hans Conzelmann, *Jesus*, trans. J. Raymond Lord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 35; in agreement, see Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 77.

²⁰ A. W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, 4 vols. (Ohio: Cleveland Bible Truth Depot, 1929), 1:62-63. Jesus' call to Philip to "Follow Me" (John 1:43) may seem incongruous with the argument thus far, as Jesus' encounter with

C. Following in Obedience

Another time we find Peter following Christ is in the seaside account described in Luke 5:1-11. After an unfruitful night of fishing, Jesus finds Peter washing his nets. He tells him to launch the boat and let down the nets. Peter objects, but obeys, and catches a huge haul of fish. The results produce in Peter a broken spirit as he now learns to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus tells Peter, "From now on you will catch men" (5:10), and the text notes that Peter and his companions "forsook all and followed Him" (5:11).

The story has many similarities to the seaside call in Matthew 4 and Mark 1, and not surprisingly, some have interpreted it as a parallel account. Such an interpretation adds fuel to the Lordship Salvation fire, for now they have Christ calling Peter to salvation in such a way that it includes Christ's lordship over him (v 8) and the forsaking of everything. For example, Merritt writes, "the evangelistic call of Jesus was essentially a call to repentance and radical discipleship." He adds, "the call of Christ to discipleship is a multi-faceted call which demands a singular commitment of faith and obedience." Merritt next argues from Luke 5:1-11 that part of obedience is the evangelistic task. He then states the inevitable conclusion from his interpretation of Luke 5:1-11:

To be a disciple one must follow Jesus. But to follow Jesus, one will become a fisher of men. Therefore, "if you are not fishing, you are not following!" The call to discipleship is indeed a call to evangelism.²¹

Merritt's equation of this episode with Matthew 4 and Mark 1 and his interpretation of them as a call to salvation virtually forces him to

Philip in John 1:43-45 appears to be His first. However, there is much evidence in the passage that Jesus was calling him to discipleship, not to salvation. Hendriksen notes: "We may probably assume that Andrew and Peter had told their friend and townsman about Jesus" (William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953], 1:108). See also John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospels: John* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), 45; and R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 161. Indeed, John makes a special note that Philip was from the same city as Peter and Andrew (1:44). Also, while 1:43 says Jesus found Philip, in 1:45 Philip says he found the Messiah, indicating a previous knowledge, expectation, and even faith. It may also be possible that in 1:43 Jesus simply meant "accompany Me on this journey" (so Godet, *John*, 1:331) in much the same sense as He told the first two disciples, "Come and see" (1:39).

²¹ Merritt, "Call of Christ," *Evangelism*, 145-46.

include evangelism as a condition of salvation. One might wonder, since Christ's *lordship* is in view, why stop at evangelism?

Merritt's conclusion comes from confusing the calls of Christ. However, just as John 1 was shown to be different from Matthew 4 and Mark 1, so also Luke 5 can be shown to be different from Matthew 4 and Mark 1. Admittedly, there are some similarities, such as the seaside setting in Galilee, the context of fishing, and the immediate response of the fishermen who follow Jesus. However, there are many differences. For example, in Luke there is a multitude pressing Jesus as He stands on the shore, while in Matthew and Mark He is apparently alone and walking. Also, in Luke the fishermen are *out of* their boats *washing* their nets, but in Matthew and Mark they are *in* their boats *casting* their nets. In Luke Jesus gets into one of the boats for a fishing excursion, but in Matthew and Mark it is obvious He does none of this. Plummer recognizes some similarities, but separates Luke's account from Matthew and Mark's:

Against these similarities however, we have to set the differences, chief among which is the miraculous draught of fishes which Mt. and Mk. omit. Could Peter have failed to include this in his narrative? And would Mk. have omitted it, if the Petrine tradition had contained it? It is easier to believe that some of the disciples were called more than once, and that their abandonment of their original mode of life was gradual: so that Mk. and Mt. may relate one occasion and Lk. another. Even after the Resurrection Peter speaks quite naturally of "going a fishing" (Jn. xxi. 3), as if it was still at least an occasional pursuit.²²

Plummer's observation fits the model of discipleship proposed in this article. In a progression of commitment, a disciple requires continual challenges or calls to become more of a disciple. This progression is seen in some of the details of Luke's account. For example, Jesus does not

²² Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896), 147. In agreement, see Lenski, *Matthew*, 168-72, and *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 276-77; William F. Arndt, *Luke*, Concordia Classic Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 155-56; Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, revised ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 124; Norval Goldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), 181; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 279-80.

actually call Peter to follow here, yet Peter follows. Evidently Peter already knew the Lord's will, for earlier Jesus did actually call him to follow (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:14-20). For Peter, the question was one of *total* submission to that call. Indeed, Luke notes that in this instance he "forsook all," while Matthew and Mark both note that he only left the boat and his father. Jesus' words also seem to mark a progression, for while in Matthew the promise is "I *will* make you fishers of men" (Matt 4:19) and in Mark "I *will* make you become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17), in Luke Jesus moves from the future promise to the initiation of a present fulfillment when He says, "From *now on* you will catch men" (Luke 5:10). Jesus could say this now that Peter had learned the lesson of submission and obedience. "It was one thing to call the four apostles, it was quite another thing to demonstrate to them the power of the gospel they were to handle as fishers of men."²³

The significance of this episode in the progression of Peter's discipleship is noted by Richard D. Calenberg:

This event seems to mark an important step in the process and progress of commitment to Christ in discipleship on the part of Peter, James and John. Never again will they return to fishing until after the Passion. Peter, in particular, will faithfully follow Christ through every experience and his presence is repeatedly noted by the Gospel writers. Not until the events immediately preceding the crucifixion will his commitment to discipleship falter.²⁴

It should be no surprise that Peter had returned to his fishing in Luke 5, for as Calenberg and Plummer both noted, we see he does this again in John 21. A number of other commentators have noted this obvious progression in discipleship in the Gospels.²⁵

As we examine the calls of Christ to discipleship in Matthew 4 and Mark 1, and later in Luke 5, we find no mention of the Gospel, no call to believe unto salvation. The calls were, after all, to become *fishers of men* as they followed Christ in obedience. Peter initially followed with some enthusiasm (Matthew 4; Mark 1), but not with the submission and obedience he finally manifests in Luke 5:1-11. Jesus calls those who are his disciples to submissive obedience.

²³ Lenski, *Luke*, 277.

²⁴ Richard D. Calenberg, "The New Testament Doctrine of Discipleship" (Th. D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 121.

²⁵ See Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 245-47; Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 181; Arndt, *Luke*, 156. For other excellent presentations of this idea, see Bruce, *Training*, 11-12, and Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 48-49.

D. Following in Sacrifice

Now that Peter has learned his first lesson in submission and obedience, Jesus advances him in the school of discipleship with a lesson on what it really means to be a disciple. On the occasion of Peter's climactic confession (Matt 16:13f.; Mark 8:27f.; Luke 9:18f.), Jesus instructs all the disciples in the conditions or cost of continuing in discipleship. Though all the disciples are addressed, Peter becomes the principal character in precipitating this instruction.

The interesting juxtaposition of Jesus addressing Peter as "Blessed" (Matt 16:17) and then as "Satan" (Matt 16:23) shows that, though Peter was saved, he was limited in his understanding of suffering in relation to discipleship. He is praised for his proper understanding of who Jesus is, but rebuked for his lack of understanding about what Jesus must do in following the Father's will. Peter's incomplete comprehension of Christ's submission to God's will indicates a parallel deficient comprehension about what it means to be a disciple submitted to God's will in the fullest sense. This prepares the way for Christ's well-known instructions about the cost of discipleship.

The many conditions listed in Matt 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-38; and Luke 9:23-27 (cf. also Luke 14:25-33) are considered conditions for salvation by Lordship Salvation teachers.²⁶ In the next article of this series, we will show how each of the specific conditions cannot refer to salvation. Here we make only some general observations in relation to Peter. First, the conditions are spoken to him *as a believer*. As shown, his faith is affirmed by the Scripture (John 2:11), and he has received the approbation of Jesus for his confession of faith (Matt 16:17-19). Peter has been following Jesus since the two seaside calls and is included in the "disciples" whom Jesus addresses (Matt 16:21, 24; Mark 8:33-34). What sense does it make to have Jesus telling Peter and the disciples—men who were *already* believers—how to be saved?

Second, the language Jesus uses to speak of the ultimate goal of the conditions is language not used of salvation. We have already seen that in the progression of Peter's relationship to Christ, the call to "follow"

²⁶E.g., Boice, *Discipleship*, 35-44, 117; Kenneth L. Gentry, "The Great Option: A Study of the Lordship Controversy," *Baptist Reformation Review* 5 (Spring 1976), 73-75; John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 253; MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 196-202; J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 72-73; John R. W. Stott, "Must Christ Be Lord to Be Savior?—Yes," *Eternity* 10 (September 1959), 18.

is a call to discipleship, not salvation.²⁷ In giving the conditions of discipleship, Jesus again uses the term "Follow Me" (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). Jesus also says that anyone who does not meet His conditions "cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26-33). Clearly the issue is *discipleship and following*, not *faith and salvation*. Another important term used in these passages is "come *after* Me" (*erchomai plus opisō*) found in all three Synoptic Gospels for those who would meet the conditions of discipleship (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27). This term is significant because it is seen here as essentially equivalent to "follow" and the idea of discipleship. Perhaps more significant is that it is *different* from the language Jesus uses to invite people *to* salvation, which is "come *to* Me" (*erchomai plus pros*).²⁸

Jesus was not telling Peter how to be saved, but what it means to be a disciple in the fullest sense. Peter was already a disciple, but every disciple is challenged to a fuller commitment in his walk with the Lord. If the challenge is rejected, the believer has, in effect, ceased following. For Peter, who does not fully comprehend Jesus' obedience to the Father, it is time to challenge his incomplete comprehension of discipleship with specific conditions. Obedient disciples can expect Jesus to challenge them with a call to the deepest sacrificial commitment.

E. Following in Failure

The next stage of Peter's discipleship finds him faltering in following the Lord. In the upper room on the night of the final Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus told Peter, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward" (John 13:36). Peter, who still trusted in his own strength to enable him to follow Christ, objected to the pronouncement (13:35). Jesus, of course, was predicting Peter's infamous three-fold denial during His arrest (13:38). The "now . . . afterward" contrast shows this to be a temporary interruption due to impending and difficult circumstances.

The fulfillment of our Lord's prediction is in John 18:15-27. In this account, there is positive identification of Peter as still a disciple. The one accompanying Peter to the courtyard of the High Priest, usually assumed to be the disciple John,²⁹ is called "another disciple" (18:15) or

²⁷ See also the study of this term in my first article, "Coming to Terms with Discipleship," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 5 (Spring 1992), 39-41.

²⁸ Cf. John 5:40; 6:35, 37, 44-45, 65; 7:37.

²⁹ See the discussions in Carson, *John*, 472-73, and Morris, *John*, 752-53.

“the other disciple” (18:16),³⁰ thus identifying Peter as a disciple to the reader. Not only that, but it is said that Peter “followed Jesus” (18:15). What we have, then, is a picture of a disciple under great pressure in his progress of following the Lord.

The denial itself also makes Peter’s discipleship the issue. The servant girl asks him, “You are not also one of this Man’s *disciples*, are you?” Peter denied he was a disciple (18:17). Meanwhile, the reader is told that the high priest was asking Jesus “about His *disciples*” (18:19). Then Peter is asked again by the servants and officers, “You are not also one of His *disciples*, are you?” Peter denied it again (18:25). While Peter is denying the fact that he is a disciple of Jesus, the reader is shown that, to a certain degree, Peter really is following. After all, he did follow Christ thus far, in contrast to most of the other disciples. It is in this context that he failed Christ and came face to face with his own weakness.

Are we to take this interruption in Peter’s following as an interruption in his salvation? There is no biblical support for such a view. The most reasonable interpretation posits a progression in Peter’s following. Though Peter ceases to follow for a short time, he does not really cease to be a disciple. Jesus’ promise to Peter remains: “You shall follow Me afterward” (13:36). It was not his discipleship that failed, but his *courage*. The disciple who is progressing may falter during tests of his faith. Jesus allows His followers to fail in order to show them their weaknesses and so that “afterward” they will trust in *His* power instead of their own.

F. Following in Service

The last stage in the progression of Peter’s discipleship occurs after the resurrection when Jesus appears to Peter and six other “disciples” in Galilee (John 21:1-2). Peter had returned to his familiar activity of fishing. It is certainly no coincidence that Peter’s activity of fishing forms the backdrop for a further challenge to discipleship. In contrast to Luke 5, however, Peter does not object to the Lord’s command to let down the net on the right side of the boat (21:6), demonstrating that he has learned the lesson of obedience.

Jesus’ calls to “Follow Me” (21:19, 22) come both after the three-fold commissioning of Peter to a shepherding ministry and after a description of how Peter would die (21:18). The dialogue shows that Peter is now restored in his relationship with the Lord. Now that Peter is resigned

³⁰The Majority Text and the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies Text support the reading “the other” (*ho allos*) in v 15 as well as v 16, but with no consequence to our point.

to God's will to the fullest degree and has forsaken self-reliance, Jesus is free to tell Peter how he will die. There is no confident denial of the revelation here as earlier when Christ spoke of His own death. Peter now understands that discipleship means laying down one's life. When Jesus concludes the revelation and says to Peter, "Follow Me," He is calling him to minister and to die in his service to others. Compared to Christ's earlier calls to follow, Westcott notes,

Now to "follow Christ" required further the perception of His course; the spiritual discernment by which His movements can still be discovered; and yet further the readiness to accept martyrdom as the end.³¹

Surely to Peter the words had more significance than ever. At each stage in the life of a disciple the call to follow has progressively deeper significance.

Jesus called Peter to follow a second time in this interchange (21:22). This second time emphasizes the single-minded devotion necessary to follow Christ in ministry. Peter had expressed concern about the future of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (almost certainly John). Jesus told Peter that John's future should not concern him, but told him, "You follow Me." The rebuke and the emphatic pronoun "You" (*sy*) indicates that Jesus wants each disciple to follow in his own way. That is, the Lord's specific will for each disciple must be followed regardless of what others do.

It should now be obvious that the call to follow *cannot* be the same as a call to salvation. Such a thought is totally foreign to this last segment of the Gospels' record of Peter's life. What we have observed is that Peter was called to follow throughout his life and that all the calls were after he had believed. In John 21 he is called to serve Christ and to follow Christ's specific will for his life even at the certain cost of that life. Jesus calls each of His disciples to follow in a specific and unique ministry.

IV. Conclusion

Disciples are made, not born. We have seen this in the life of Peter. Furthermore, the recurrent calls of Christ to Peter to follow in his life show that there is a sense in which a disciple can always become *more of a disciple*. The call to follow persists throughout the life of a disciple.

³¹ B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 304.

In Peter's life we see a funnel effect. The progressive calls to follow begin with a general direction and commitment, but become more and more specific in what that commitment entails. Each time the disciple is called to follow, new significance is attached. With each call, the disciple is challenged to a deeper commitment and a greater sacrifice.

This supports our understanding of discipleship as a direction or orientation, not a state. It is a committed and progressive following of Jesus Christ as Master. Anywhere on one's journey toward becoming like Christ one can be called a disciple, even in the midst of a temporary failure. It seems reasonable to state that anyone who rejects the challenge to commit himself to Christ ceases to follow and removes himself from the path of discipleship.

To confuse the call to discipleship with the call to salvation is a simplistic and confusing approach to the Scriptures and real-life experience. It is disturbing to take the conclusions of the Lordship position to their inevitable end. If the deeper relationship of discipleship is not distinguished from salvation, then many or most professing evangelicals—including *Lordship Salvationists*—are lost. Hull shows the incongruity of such a view with reality when he speaks of true disciples:

If disciples are born not made, while these characteristics would take time to develop, they would develop 100 percent of the time in the truly regenerate. Therefore, every single Christian would be a healthy, reproducing believer. If people did not reflect the disciple's profile, then they would not be Christians.

If disciples are born and not made, non-Christians dominate the evangelical church. A generous estimate would find no more than 25 percent of evangelicals meeting Christ's standard for a disciple. As stated earlier, only 7 percent have been trained in evangelism, and only 2 percent have introduced another to Christ. By Christ's definition, disciples reproduce themselves through evangelism. If one takes the "disciples are born and not made" theology and joins it to the definition of a disciple given by Jesus and then adds the objective facts concerning today's evangelical church, the results are alarming. At least 75 percent of evangelicals are not Christians, because they just don't measure up to Christ's standards of what it means to be a disciple.³²

Lordship Salvation teaching has imposed a standard for salvation that most professing Christians cannot meet. This *by itself* does not make it wrong. But it does make it dubious in the extreme.

³²Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1988), 55.

The issues of salvation and discipleship must remain distinct if one is to appreciate the wonders of each. The call to salvation through faith alone with no other conditions beautifies the doctrine of grace. The call to discipleship with its hard conditions makes the Christian life more meaningful and purposeful. Not surprisingly then, Lordship Salvation theology is detrimental to the Church. As Hull writes,

The “disciples are born and not made” theology has many harmful effects. Some quarters accept it because they have not stood that theology toe to toe with Jesus’ definitions. When it does stand toe to toe, it creates a gospel of works. It adds to the requirements for salvation. Not only does it require faith in Christ, but commitment to the disciple’s profile is required. Unless you are willing to commit to world evangelism, labor in the harvest field, placing Christ before everything in your life, then in the words of Jesus, “You cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:25-35); therefore you are denied salvation.³³

Disciples are made, not born. When we understand this, our Gospel remains truly *of grace*. Then as those saved by grace, we are motivated to cooperate with God and commit and submit ourselves to His purpose of conforming us to His Son, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

³³ Ibid.

A Voice from the Past:

SANCTIFICATION: WHAT IS IT?*

C. H. MACKINTOSH¹

To minister peace and comfort to those who, though truly converted, have not laid hold of a full Christ, and who, as a consequence, are not enjoying the liberty of the Gospel, is the object we have in view in considering the important and deeply-interesting subject of sanctification. We believe that very many of those whose spiritual welfare we desire to promote suffer materially from defective or erroneous ideas on this vital question. Indeed, in some cases, the doctrine of sanctification is so entirely misapprehended as to interfere with the faith of the believer's perfect justification and acceptance before God.

For example, we have frequently heard persons speak of sanctification as a progressive work, in virtue of which our old nature is to be made gradually better; and, moreover, that until this process has reached its climax, until fallen and corrupt humanity has become completely sanctified, we are not fit for heaven.

* This article is taken from *Miscellaneous Writings of C. H. Mackintosh*, 1:3-22. The six volumes are now published in one large volume by Moody Press of Chicago jointly with Loizeaux Brothers of Neptune, NJ, under the title, *A Mackintosh Treasury*. Ed.

¹ Charles Henry Mackintosh (1820-1896), whose initials, "C.H.M.," are known worldwide, was born in County Wicklow, Ireland, and converted at the age of 18. He received peace and assurance through John Nelson Darby's "Operations of the Spirit," especially the words, "It is Christ's work *for us*, that gives peace." Mackintosh ran a successful school, but gave it up when he feared it was becoming too central in his life. He wrote six devotional volumes of *Notes on the Pentateuch* (still in print by Moody and Loizeaux in one large volume). His style is remarkably clear for his period (Victorian era), and his tone is warmly evangelical, gracious (in both senses), and attractive. He preached widely in Dublin and was active in the great revival that swept Ireland in 1859-60. Letters appreciative of C.H.M.'s writings poured in from all over the world. As a strong advocate of Free Grace in the Brethren assemblies, Mackintosh was harshly censured by southern (U.S.) Presbyterian theologian Robert Dabney (see *Discussions by Robert L. Dabney*, ed., by C. R. Vaughn [Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1890], 1:173-83). Ed.

Now, so far as this view of the question is concerned, we have only to say that both Scripture and the truthful experience of all believers are entirely against it. The Word of God never once teaches us that the Holy Spirit has for His object the improvement, either gradual or otherwise, of our old nature—that nature which we inherit, by natural birth, from fallen Adam. The inspired apostle expressly declares that, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14).² This one passage is clear and conclusive on the point. If “the natural man” can neither “receive” nor “know” “the things of the Spirit of God,” then how can that “natural man” be sanctified by the Holy Ghost? Is it not plain that to speak of “sanctification of our nature” is opposed to the direct teaching of 1 Cor 2:14? Other passages might be adduced to prove that the design of the Spirit’s operations is not to improve or sanctify the flesh, but there is no need to multiply quotations. An utterly ruined thing can never be sanctified. Do what you will with it, it is ruined; and, most assuredly, the Holy Ghost did not come down to sanctify a ruin, but to lead the ruined one to Jesus. So far from any attempt to sanctify the flesh, we read that “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other” (Gal 5:17). Could the Holy Ghost be represented as carrying on a warfare with that which He is gradually improving and sanctifying? Would not the conflict cease so soon as the process of improvement had reached its climax? But does the believer’s conflict ever cease so long as he is in the body?

This leads us to the second objection, to the erroneous theory of the progressive sanctification of our nature, namely, The objection drawn from the truthful experience of all believers. Is the reader a true believer? If so, has he found any improvement in his old nature? Is it a single whit better now than it was when he first started on his Christian course? He may, and should through grace, be able to subdue it more thoroughly; but it is nothing better. If it be not mortified, it is just as ready to spring up and show itself in all its vileness as ever. “The flesh” in a believer is in no wise better than “the flesh” in an unbeliever. And if the Christian does not bear in mind that *self* must be judged, he will soon learn by bitter experience that his old nature is as bad as ever; and, moreover, that it will be the very same to the end.

It is difficult to conceive how anyone who is led to expect a gradual

²The only editorial changes made from the American edition of this article are the updating of the references (e.g., from 1 Cor. ii.14 to 1 Cor 2:14) and a few minor modernizations of punctuation and capitalization.

improvement of his nature, can enjoy an hour's peace, inasmuch as he cannot but see, if he only looks at himself in the light of God's Holy Word, his old self—the flesh—is the very same as when he walked in the moral darkness of his unconverted state. His own condition and character are, indeed, greatly changed by the possession of a new, yea, a "divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, to give effect to its desires; but the moment the old nature is at work, he finds it as opposed to God as ever. We doubt not but that very much of the gloom and despondency, of which so many complain, may be justly traced to their misapprehension of this important point of sanctification. They are looking for what they can never find. They are seeking for a ground of peace in a sanctified nature instead of in a perfect sacrifice—in a progressive work of holiness instead of in a finished work of atonement. They deem it presumptuous to believe that their sins are forgiven until their evil nature is completely sanctified; and, seeing that this end is not reached, they have no settled assurance of pardon, and are therefore miserable. In a word, they are seeking for a "foundation" totally different from that which Jehovah says He has laid, and, therefore, they have no certainty whatever. The only thing that ever seems to give them a ray of comfort is some *apparently* successful effort in the struggle for personal sanctity. If they have had a good day—if they are favored with a season of comfortable communion—if they happen to enjoy a peaceful, devotional frame, they are ready to cry out, "Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; I shall never be moved" (Psalm 30).

But, ah! These things furnish a sorry foundation for the soul's peace. They are not Christ; and until we see that our standing before God is *in Christ*, there cannot be settled peace. The soul that has really got hold of Christ is desirous indeed of holiness; but if intelligent of what Christ is to him, he has done with all thoughts about sanctified nature. He has found his all in Christ, and the paramount desire of his heart is to grow into His likeness. This is true, *practical* sanctification.

It frequently happens that persons, in speaking of sanctification, mean a right thing, although they do not express themselves according to the teaching of Holy Scripture. There are many also, who see one side of the truth as to sanctification, but not the other; and, although we should be sorry to make any one an offender for a word, yet it is always most desirable, in speaking of any point of truth, and especially of so vital a point as that of sanctification, to speak according to the divine integrity of the Word. We shall, therefore, proceed to quote for our readers a few of the leading passages from the New Testament in which this doctrine

is unfolded. These passages will teach us two things, namely, what sanctification is, and how it is effected.

The first passage to which we would call attention is 1 Cor 1:30: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and *sanctification*, and redemption." Here we learn that Christ "is made unto us" all these things. God has given us, in Christ, a precious casket, and when we open that casket with the key of faith, the first gem that glitters in our view, in this wisdom of God, is "righteousness"; then, "sanctification"; and lastly, "redemption." We have them all *in Christ*. As we get one so we get all. And how do we get one and all? By faith. But why does the apostle name redemption last? Because it takes in the final deliverance of the body of the believer from under the power of mortality, when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall either raise it from the tomb, or change it, in the twinkling of an eye. Will this act be progressive? Clearly not; it will be done "in the twinkling of an eye." The body is in one state now, and "in a moment" it will be in another. In the brief point of time expressed by the rapid movement of the eyelash, will the body pass from corruption to incorruption; from dishonor to glory; from weakness to power. What a change! It will be immediate, complete, eternal.

But what are we to learn from the fact that "sanctification" is placed in the group with "redemption"? We learn that what redemption *will be* to the body, that sanctification *is* now to the soul. In a word, sanctification, in the sense in which it is here used, is immediate, and complete, a divine work. The one is no more progressive than the other. The one is as immediate as the other. The one is as complete and as independent of man as the other. No doubt, when the body shall have undergone the glorious change, there will be heights of glory to be trodden, depths of glory to be penetrated, wide fields of glory to be explored. All these things shall occupy us throughout eternity. But, then, the work which is to fit us for such scenes will be done in a moment. So also is it, in reference to sanctification. The *practical* results of it will be continually developing themselves; but the thing itself, as spoken of in this passage, is done in a moment.

What an immense relief it would be to thousands of earnest, anxious, struggling souls to get a proper hold of Christ as their sanctification! How many are vainly endeavoring to work out a sanctification for themselves! They have come to Christ for righteousness after many fruitless efforts to get a righteousness of their own; but they are seeking after sanctification in a different way altogether. They have gotten

“righteousness without works,” but they imagine they must get sanctification *with* works. They have gotten righteousness by faith, but they imagine they must get sanctification by effort. They do not see that we get sanctification in precisely the same way as we get righteousness, inasmuch as Christ “is made unto us” the one as well as the other. Do we get Christ by effort? No; by faith. It is “to him that worketh *not*” (Rom 4:5). This applies to all that we get in Christ. We have no warrant whatever to single out from 1 Cor 1:30 the matter of “sanctification” and place it upon a different footing from all the other blessings which it enfolds. We have neither wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, nor redemption in ourselves; nor can we procure them by aught that we can do; but God has made Christ to be unto us all these things. In giving us Christ, He gave us all that is in Christ. The fullness of Christ is ours, and Christ is the fullness of God.

Again, in Acts 26:18, the converted Gentiles are spoken of as “receiving forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which *are* sanctified by faith.” Here, faith is the instrument by which we are said to be sanctified, because it connects us with Christ. The very moment the sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ he becomes linked to Him. He is made one with Him, complete in Him, accepted in Him. This is true sanctification and justification. It is not a process. It is not a gradual work. It is not progressive. The Word is very explicit. It says, “them which *are* sanctified by *faith* which is in me.” It does not say, “which *shall be* sanctified,” or, “which are being sanctified.” If such were the doctrine it would have been so stated.

No doubt, the believer grows in the knowledge of this sanctification, in his sense of its power and value, its practical influence and results, the experience and enjoyment of it. As “the truth” pours its divine light upon his soul, he enters into a more profound apprehension of what is involved in being “set apart” for Christ, in the midst of this evil world. All this is blessedly true; but the more its truth is seen, the more clearly we shall understand that sanctification is not merely a progressive work, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, but that it is one result of our being linked to Christ, by faith whereby we become partakers of all that He is. This is an immediate, a complete, and an eternal work. “Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it” (Eccl 3:14). Whether He justifies or sanctifies, “it shall be forever.” The stamp of eternity is fixed upon every work of God’s hand: “nothing can be put to it,” and, blessed be His name, “nothing can be taken from it.”

There are passages which present the subject in another aspect,—the *practical result* in the believer of his sanctification in Christ, and which may require fuller consideration hereafter. In 1 Thess 5:23, the apostle prays for the saints whom he addresses: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, the Word is applied to a sanctification admitting of degrees. The Thessalonians had, along with all believers, a perfect sanctification in Christ; but as to the practical enjoyment and display of this, it was only accomplished in part, and the apostle prays that they may be wholly sanctified.

In this passage, it is worthy of notice, that nothing is said of “the flesh.” Our fallen, corrupt nature is always treated as a hopelessly ruined thing. It has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. It has been measured by a divine rule and found short. It has been tried by a perfect plummet and proved crooked. God has set it aside. Its “end has come before him.” He has condemned it and put it to death (Rom 8:3). Our old man is crucified, dead, and buried (Rom 6:8). Are we, then, to imagine for a moment, that God the Holy Ghost came down from heaven for the purpose of exhuming a condemned, crucified, and buried thing, so that He might sanctify it? The idea has only to be named, to be abandoned forever by every one who bows to the authority of Scripture. The more closely we study the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and the entire New Testament, the more closely we shall see that the flesh is wholly unmendable. It is absolutely good for nothing. The Spirit does not *sanctify* it, but He enables the believer to *mortify* it. We are told to “*put off* the old man.” This precept would never have been delivered to us if the object of the Holy Ghost were the sanctification of that “old man.”

We trust that no one will accuse us of entertaining a desire to lower the standard of personal holiness, or to weaken the soul’s earnest aspirations after a growth in that purity for which every true believer must ardently long. God forbid! If there is one thing above another which we desire to promote in ourselves and others, it is a full personal purity—a godly practical sanctity—a wholehearted separation to God—from all evil,—in every shape and form. For this we long, for this we pray, in this we desire to grow daily.

But then we are fully convinced that a superstructure of true, practical holiness can never be erected on a legal basis; and hence it is that we press 1 Cor 1:30, upon the attention of our readers. It is to be feared that many

who have, in some measure, abandoned the legal ground, in the matter of "righteousness," are yet lingering thereon for "sanctification." We believe this to be the mistake of thousands, and we are most anxious to see it corrected. The passage before us would, if simply received into the heart by faith, entirely correct this serious mistake.

All intelligent Christians are agreed as to the fundamental truth of "Righteousness without works." All freely and fully admit that we cannot, by any efforts of our own, work-out a righteousness for ourselves before God. But it is not just so clearly seen that righteousness and sanctification are put upon precisely the same ground in the Word of God. We can no more work out a sanctification than we can work out a righteousness. We may try it, but we shall, sooner or later, find out that it is utterly vain. We may vow and resolve; we may labor and struggle; we may cherish the fond hope of doing better tomorrow than we have done today; but, in the end, we must be constrained to see, and feel, and own, that as regards the matter of sanctification, we are as completely "without strength" as we have already proved ourselves to be in the matter of righteousness.

And, oh! What sweet relief to the suffering one who has been seeking for satisfaction or rest in his own holiness to find, after years of unsuccessful struggle, that the very thing he longs for is treasured up in Christ for him—his own this moment, even a complete sanctification to be enjoyed *by faith!* Such a one may have been battling with his habits, his lusts, his tempers, his passions; he has been making the most laborious efforts to subdue his flesh and grow in inward holiness. But alas, he has failed! He finds, to his deep sorrow, that *he* is not holy, and he reads that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). Not, observe, without a certain measure, or attainment in holiness, but without the thing itself; which every Christian has, from the moment he believes, whether he knows it or not. Perfect sanctification is as fully included in the word "salvation" as is "righteousness," or "redemption." He did not get Christ by effort, but by faith; and when he laid hold on Christ he received all that is in Christ. Hence, it is by abiding in Christ he finds power for the subjugation of his lusts, passions, tempers, habits, circumstances, and influences. He must look to Jesus for all.

All this is simple to faith. The believer's standing is in Christ, and if in Christ for one thing, he is in Christ for all. I am not in Christ for righteousness, and out of Christ for sanctification. If I am a debtor to Christ for righteousness, I am equally a debtor to Him for sanctification. I am not a debtor to legalism for either the one or the other. I get both

by grace, through faith, and all in Christ. Yes, all—all in Christ. The moment the sinner comes to Christ, and believes on Him, he is taken completely off the old ground of nature; he loses his old legal standing and all its belongings, and is looked at as in Christ. He is no longer “in the flesh” but “in the Spirit” (Rom 8:9). God only sees him in Christ, and as Christ. He becomes one with Christ forever. “As he is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4). Such is the absolute standing, the settled and eternal position, of the very feeblest babe in the family of God. There is but one standing for every child of God, every member of Christ. Their knowledge, experience, power, gift, and intelligence, may vary; but their standing is one. Whatever of righteousness or sanctification they possess, they owe it all to their being in Christ; consequently, if they have not gotten a perfect sanctification, neither have they gotten a perfect righteousness. But 1 Cor 1:30 distinctly teaches that Christ “*is made*” both the one and the other to all believers. It does not say that we have righteousness and “*a measure* of sanctification.” We have just as much scriptural authority for putting the word “measure” before righteousness as before sanctification. The Spirit of God does not put it before either. Both are perfect, and we have both in Christ. God never does anything by halves. There is no such thing as a half justification. Neither is there such a thing as a half sanctification. The idea of a member of the family of God, or of the body of Christ, wholly justified, but only half sanctified, is at once opposed to Scripture, and revolting to all sensibilities of the divine nature.

It is not improbable that very much of the misapprehension which prevails in reference to sanctification is traceable to the habit of confounding two things which differ very materially, namely our *standing* and our *walk*, or position and condition. The believer’s standing is perfect because it is the gift of God in Christ. His walk, alas, may be very imperfect, fluctuating, and marked with personal infirmity. Whilst his position is absolute and unalterable, his practical condition may exhibit manifold imperfections, inasmuch as he is still in the body and surrounded by various hostile influences which affect his moral condition from day to day. If, then, his standing be measured by his walk, his position by his condition, what he is in God’s view by what he is in man’s, the result must be false. If I reason from what I am in myself, instead of from what I am in Christ, I must, of necessity, arrive at a wrong conclusion.

We should look carefully to this. We are very much disposed to reason upward from ourselves to God, instead of downward from God to us.

We should bear in mind that

“Far as heaven’s resplendent orbs
Beyond earth’s spot extend,
As far My thoughts, as far My ways,
Your ways and thoughts transcend.”

God looks on His people, and acts toward them, too, according to their standing in Christ. He has given them this standing. He has made them what they are. They are His workmanship. Hence, therefore, to speak of them as half justified would be a dishonor cast upon God; and to speak of them as half sanctified would be just the same.

This train of thought conducts us to another weighty proof drawn from the authoritative and conclusive page of inspiration, namely, 1 Cor 6:11. In the verses preceding, the apostle draws a fearful picture of fallen humanity, and he plainly tells the Corinthian saints that they had been just like that. “Such were some of you.” This is plain dealing. There are no flattering words—no daubing with untempered mortar—no keeping back the full truth as to nature’s total and irretrievable ruin. “Such were some of you: but *ye are* washed, but *ye are* sanctified, but *ye are* justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

What a striking contrast between the two sides of the apostle’s “*but*”! On the one side, we have all the moral degradation of man’s condition; and, on the other side, we have all the absolute perfectness of the believer’s standing before God. This, truly, is a marvelous contrast; and be it remembered that the soul passes in a moment, from one side to the other of this “*but*.” “Such *were* some of you: but *ye are*” now something quite different. The moment they received Paul’s Gospel, they were “washed, sanctified, and justified.” They were fit for heaven; and, had they not been so, it would have been a slur upon the divine workmanship.

“‘Clean every whit,’ thou saidst it, Lord;
Shall one suspicion lurk?
Thine, surely, is a faithful word,
And Thine a *finished work*.”

This is divinely true. The most inexperienced believer is “clean every whit,” not as a matter of attainment, but as the necessary result of being in Christ. He will, no doubt, grow in the knowledge and experience of what sanctification really is. He will enter into its practical power; its moral effects upon his habits, thoughts, feelings, affections, and

associations: in a word, he will understand and exhibit the mighty influence of divine sanctification upon his entire course, conduct, and character. But, then, he was as completely sanctified, in God's view, the moment he became linked to Christ by faith, as he will be when he comes to bask in the sunlight of the divine presence, and reflect back the concentrated beams of glory emanating from the throne of God and of the Lamb. He is in Christ now; and he will be in Christ then. His sphere and his circumstances will differ. His feet shall stand upon the golden pavement of the upper sanctuary, instead of standing upon the arid sand of the desert. He will be in a body of glory, instead of a body of humiliation; but as to his standing, his acceptance, his completeness, his justification, and sanctification, all was settled the moment he believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God—as settled as ever it will be, because as settled as God could make it. All this seems to flow as a necessary and unanswerable inference from 1 Cor 6:11.

It is of the utmost importance to apprehend, with clearness, the distinction between a truth and the practical application and result of a truth. This distinction is ever maintained in the Word of God. "*Ye are sanctified.*" Here is the absolute truth as to the believer, as viewed in Christ. The practical application of it, and its results in the believer, we find in such passages as these. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph 5:25-26). And "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thess 5:23).

But how is this application made, and this result reached? By the Holy Ghost, through the written Word. Hence we read, "Sanctify them through thy truth" (John 17). And again, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess 2:13). So also, in Peter, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Pet 1:2). The Holy Ghost carries on the believer's practical sanctification on the ground of Christ's accomplished work; and the mode in which He does so is by applying to the heart and conscience the truth as it is in Jesus. He unfolds the truth as to our perfect standing before God in Christ, and, by energizing the new man in us, He enables us to put away everything incompatible with that perfect standing. A man who is "washed, sanctified, and justified," ought not to indulge in any unhallowed temper, lust, or passion. He is separated to God and should "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." It is his holy and happy privilege to breathe after the very loftiest heights of

personal sanctity. His heart and his habits should be brought and held under the power of that grand truth that he is perfectly “washed, sanctified, and justified.”

This is true practical sanctification. It is not any attempt at the improvement of our old nature. It is not a vain effort to reconstruct an irretrievable ruin. No; it is simply the Holy Ghost, by the powerful application of “the truth,” enabling the new man to live, and move, and have his being in that sphere to which he belongs. Here there will undoubtedly be progress. There will be growth in the moral power of this precious truth—growth in spiritual ability to subdue and keep under all that pertains to nature—a growing power of separation from the evil around us—a growing meetness for that heaven to which we belong, and toward which we are journeying—a growing capacity for the enjoyment of its holy exercises. All this there will be, through the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost, who uses the Word of God to unfold to our souls the truth as to our standing in Christ, and as to the walk which *comports with* such standing. But let it be clearly understood that the work of the Holy Ghost in practical sanctification, day by day, is founded upon the fact that believers “*are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once*” (Heb 10:10). The object of the Holy Ghost is to lead us into the knowledge, the experience, and the practical exhibition of that which was true of us in Christ the very moment we believed. As regards this, there is progress; but our standing in Christ is eternally complete.

“Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17). And again, “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thess 5:23). In these passages, we have the grand practical side of this question. Here we see sanctification presented, not merely as something absolutely and eternally true of us in Christ, but also as wrought out in us, daily and hourly, by the Holy Ghost through the Word. Looked at from this point of view, sanctification is obviously a progressive thing. I should be more advanced in personal holiness next year than I was in this. I should, through grace, be advancing, day by day, in practical holiness. But what, let me ask, is this? What, but the working out in me of that which was true of me in Christ, the very moment I believed? The basis on which the Holy Ghost carries on the *subjective* work in the believer is the *objective* truth of his eternal completeness in Christ.

Again, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Here is holiness presented as a thing to be “followed after”—to be attained by earnest pursuit—a thing which every true believer will long to cultivate.

May the Lord lead us into the power of these things. May they not dwell as doctrines and dogmas in the region of our intellect, but enter into and abide in the heart, as sacred and powerfully influential realities! May we know the sanctifying power of the truth (John 17:17); the sanctifying power of faith (Acts 26:18); the sanctifying power of the name of Jesus (1 Cor 1:30; 6:11); the sanctifying of the Holy Ghost (1 Pet 1:2); the sanctifying grace of the Father (Jude 1).

And, now, unto the Father and unto the Son and unto the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, world without end. Amen.

Grace in the Arts:

TOWARD SINGING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING

A Discussion of the Gospel Hymn—Part 2

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VI. Doctrinal Considerations

The doctrines and theological concepts expressed in hymns should be of concern to those desirous of maintaining a high standard of scriptural soundness in public worship.

The basic beliefs of most Christians have been formulated more by the hymns they sing than by the preaching they hear . . . Certainly one's disposition toward, or away from, right belief is subtly but indelibly influenced by the hymns one repeatedly sings. And when talking about faith, average churchgoers can quote more stanzas of hymns than they can verses of Scripture. This fact, far from lessening the importance of preaching and Bible teaching, is simply a testimony to the importance of the hymnal as a practical textbook in doctrine. Moreover, it focuses attention on the critical requirement that the content of the hymns taught to young and old . . . accurately reflect theological and biblical truth.¹

In an interview conducted in the spring of 1979, the late Dr. Richard Seume, at that time the Chaplain of Dallas Theological Seminary, stated, "Music is important, not incidental. It is no exaggeration to say that songs have taught more theology to new converts than textbooks."²

A thorough discussion of theological concepts as presented in gospel hymns could provide material for a complete article in itself, or even a

¹ Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 59.

² Tracy L. Bergquist and Mark E. Wilson, *Songleader's Supplement: A Doctrinal and Historical Guide to Selected Hymns* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980), 22.

book! The discussion here will be limited to a brief consideration of two issues: (1) Is the subjectivity which we have noted in the gospel hymn a scripturally acceptable approach to songs for public worship? and (2) What strengths and weaknesses exist in specific gospel hymns regarding the plan of salvation and the doctrine of grace?

It is currently fashionable in some Christian circles to be critical of a subjective point of view in sacred song. The idea is that such a viewpoint promotes self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness. Such criticism may be a reaction to some of the *extremely* subjective, self-centered, and theologically empty religious songs which have become quite popular in the last several decades. (Many of these songs are chiefly the domain of those who perform religious music before audiences. Few such songs, with the exception of a few choruses, seem to have found a place in standard hymnals and song books for congregational singing.) It is an unfortunate likelihood that the subjectivity which gained such wide acceptance in the last century by means of the gospel hymn has occasionally degenerated in this century into the “feel good” religious song which seems to say little other than that God exists mainly to encourage us to have warm, fuzzy feelings about ourselves, each other, and, as an afterthought, Him. These often leave the impression that spiritual truth should be determined solely on the basis of our personal experience. This, of course, is subjectivity in the extreme and is totally unworthy of the Creator of the universe who shed His blood for our redemption.

Does this mean, however, that songs for public worship should completely avoid subjectivity? Should there be no expression of *man's* concerns in spiritual matters other than to worship God objectively? Perhaps the safest way to address the issue is to consider a collection of songs for public worship of which we *know* the Lord approves—the Book of Psalms. We need look no further than Psalm 1:1 to find an expression of how *man* is affected by his relationship with God:

Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful . . .

Consider also Psalm 6 in its entirety:

O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger,
Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure.
Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak;
O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled.

My soul also is greatly troubled;
 But You, O LORD—how long?
 Return, O LORD, deliver me!
 Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!
 For in death there is no remembrance of You;
 In the grave who will give You thanks?

I am weary with my groaning;
 All night I make my bed swim;
 I drench my couch with my tears.
 My eye wastes away because of grief;
 It grows old because of all my enemies.
 Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity;
 For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.
 The LORD has heard my supplication;
 The LORD will receive my prayer.
 Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled;
 Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly.

This Psalm is nothing if not subjective—but it also glorifies God.

The beloved Psalm 23 is highly subjective and centers on praising God by making mention of what He does for the psalmist on a personal level.

A brief scanning of the Book of Psalms reveals that, in fact, a large number of the psalms are quite subjective in approach, and that there is no reticence in mentioning what God has done personally for the psalmist. We can, therefore, conclude that subjectivity—even a high degree of it—in songs of public worship can be acceptable and pleasing to the Lord.

It should be noted, however, that many of the Psalms are quite *objective* in their approach. When the Psalms are considered as a whole, there is a balance between the objective and the subjective. The subjectivity in gospel hymns could become a problem if such hymns comprised almost the entire “menu” of songs used by a congregation in its worship from week to week. “A healthy subjectivism is necessary to a wholehearted involvement of one’s total person in dialogue with God. But subjectivity must be disciplined lest it lead to unwholesome self-centeredness.”³ (Worthy of mention is the fact that most of the gospel hymns which are doctrinally sound and “meaty,” a few examples of which will be cited later, are also among the least subjective of the genre.)

³ Eskew and McElrath, *Sing*, 65.

It is unfortunately true that the subjective approach has produced an occasional gospel hymn which may present a misleading or downright unscriptural view of salvation. In discussing some specific examples, no ungraciousness is intended toward the authors. It is quite possible that the lyricists of at least some of these hymns may have understood and believed the scriptural doctrine of salvation. Furthermore, the average nineteenth-century congregation singing these lyrics may not have been misled by portions which seem less than crystal clear doctrinally. Possibly a body of scriptural knowledge shared by a large part of the general population compensated for an occasional lack of clarity on the part of a songwriter. Whether or not this was true in the late 1800's, it would seldom, if ever, be true today.

Anyone who would write hymn lyrics proclaiming the message of salvation faces the potential problem of including sufficient information to establish an unambiguous message while simultaneously handling meter, rhyme, and poetic imagery—a tall order for even the best of writers! If sufficient doctrinal information is not included in the lyrics, the singer or listener may be left with, at best, a question, and at worst, a misconception about salvation. Consider the lyrics of “Ye Must Be Born Again”:

A ruler once came to Jesus by night
To ask Him the way of salvation and light;
The Master made answer in words true and plain,
“Ye must be born again.”

Ye children of men, attend to the word
So solemnly uttered by Jesus the Lord;
And let not this message to you be in vain,
“Ye must be born again.”

O ye who would enter that glorious rest,
And sing with the ransomed the song of the blest;
The life everlasting if ye would obtain,
“Ye must be born again.”

Refrain:

Ye must be born again,
Ye must be born again,
I verily, verily say unto thee,
Ye must be born again.

There is certainly nothing unscriptural in this hymn. Unfortunately, it lacks any explanation of *how* one is “born again” or *what* that terminology means. If all members of a congregation singing this song shared a body of knowledge within which each correctly understood the meaning of being born again, or if the terminology had just been, or was just about to be, explained by a teacher or preacher, this song could be edifying. Otherwise, it could frustrate or confuse.

“Have You Any Room for Jesus” demonstrates an extended use of the idea embodied in the admonition to “ask Jesus into your heart,” or to “let Jesus come into your heart,” used by some in issuing an invitation to salvation.

Have you any room for Jesus,
 He who bore your load of sin?
 As He knocks and asks admission,
 Sinner, will you let Him in?

Room for pleasure, room for business,
 But for Christ the Crucified,
 Not a place that He can enter,
 In the heart for which He died?

Have you any room for Jesus,
 As in grace He calls again?
 O, today is time accepted,
 Tomorrow you may call in vain.

Room and time now give to Jesus,
 Soon will pass God’s day of grace;
 Soon thy heart left cold and silent,
 And thy Saviour’s pleading cease.

Refrain:

Room for Jesus, King of glory!
 Hasten now, His word obey;
 Swing the heart’s door widely open,
 Bid Him enter while you may.

The idea of “asking” or “letting Jesus into your heart” is never used in the Bible to explain salvation, and is certainly never made a condition of salvation. Many who use this phrase (including, perhaps, this hymn’s author) assume that the hearer will *understand* it to mean believing and trusting completely in Christ as the only payment for sin. However, the

phrase itself does not *say* that, and could imply a Lordship Salvation message.

A Lordship Salvation message is not merely implied, but *virtually stated* in “What Will You Do with Jesus?”

Jesus is standing in Pilate’s hall—
Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all:
Hearken! What meaneth the sudden call?
What will you do with Jesus?

Jesus is standing on trial still,
You can be false to Him if you will,
You can be faithful through good or ill:
What will you do with Jesus?

Will you, like Peter, your Lord deny?
Or will you scorn from His foes to fly?
Daring for Jesus to live or die?
What will you do with Jesus?

“Jesus, I give Thee my heart today!
Jesus, I’ll follow Thee all the way,
Gladly obeying Thee!” will you say:
“This will I do with Jesus!”

Refrain:
What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be;
Someday your heart will be asking,
“What will He do with me?”

The way of salvation as presented in this hymn includes *being faithful* (v 2), *choosing Him* (v 3), *daring to live or die for Him* (v 4), *giving Him one’s heart*, *following Him and obeying Him* (v 5). “Choosing Him” is the closest hint one receives of believing in Christ as the condition of salvation. The hymn could be taken as a challenge to Christian discipleship on the part of those already saved, were it not for the repeating refrain, which seems definitely to refer to the initial point of salvation and the settling of one’s eternal destiny.

Let us close on a positive note by considering a number of gospel hymns which are especially “meaty” scripturally, and which present a very clear salvation message.

“I Know Whom I Have Believed,” by Daniel D. Whittle, uses the words of 2 Tim 1:12 as its repeating refrain.

I know not why God’s wondrous grace
To me He hath made known,
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love
Redeemed me for His own.

I know not how this saving faith
To me He did impart,
Nor how believing in His Word
Wrought peace within my heart.

I know not how the Spirit moves,
Convincing men of sin,
Revealing Jesus through the Word,
Creating faith in Him.

I know not when my Lord may come,
At night or noontide fair,
Nor if I’ll walk the vale with Him,
Or “meet Him in the air.”

Refrain:

But I know whom I have believed
And am persuaded that He is able
To keep that which I’ve committed
Unto Him against that day.

“It Is Finished,” by James Proctor, makes a strong case for salvation’s being “not of works.”

Nothing, either great or small—
Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.

When He, from His lofty throne,
Stooped to do and die,
Everything was fully done:
Hearken to His cry!

Weary, working, burdened one,
Wherefore toil you so?
Cease your doing; all was done,
Long, long ago.

Till to Jesus' work you cling
By a simple faith,
"Doing" is a deadly thing—
"Doing" ends in death.

Cast your deadly "doing" down,
Down at Jesus' feet;
Stand in Him, in Him alone
Gloriously complete.

Refrain:

"It is finished!" yes, indeed,
Finished every jot;
Sinner, this is all you need,
Tell me, is it not?

Were Philip P. Bliss alive today, surely he would have been a charter member of the Grace Evangelical Society, for his hymns are consistently sound doctrinally, and are outstandingly clear on the issue of Christ's work on the Cross. An example is found in "Hallelujah, What a Saviour" (a gospel hymn with a one-line repeating refrain).

"Man of Sorrows," what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Guilty, vile and helpless we;
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
"Full atonement" can it be?
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Lifted up was He to die,
“It is finished,” was His cry;
Now in heaven exalted high;
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we’ll sing:
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

VII. Conclusion

The gospel hymn decidedly deserves a place in the meetings of congregations which desire to preserve and maintain biblical truth. Because of the genre’s tendency toward subjectivity, however, care and consideration should be given to choosing gospel hymns which are doctrinally sound, and to avoiding those which directly or by implication present an unscriptural theological view. Finally, churches which tend to use gospel hymns almost exclusively should, perhaps, consider adding some more objectively-oriented hymns to their repertoires.

Let us strive to glorify our Lord by singing both “with the spirit and with the understanding” in our corporate worship.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man. By Joseph C. Dillow. Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992. 649 pp. Cloth, \$24.95; paper, \$19.95.

This outstanding presentation and defense of the Free Grace position covers nearly every passage and subject in the Gospel debate. Each chapter is almost a book in itself. Here are the titles of the various chapters:

Chap 1: Introduction; Chap 2: Interpretation and Perseverance; Chap 3: The Inheritance: Old Testament; Chap 4: The Inheritance: New Testament; Chap 5: The Inheritance-Rest of Hebrews; Chap 6: So Great A Salvation; Chap 7: Inheriting Eternal Life; Chap 8: Justification and Sanctification 1; Chap 9: Justification and Sanctification 2; Chap 10: The Possibility of Failure; Chap 11: From Calvin to Westminster; Chap 12: Faith and Assurance; Chap 13: Self-Examination and Assurance; Chap 14: The Carnal Christian; Chap 15: Apostasy and Divine Discipline; Chap 16: Life in the Spirit; Chap 17: Conditional Security: The Gospels; Chap 18: Conditional Security: The Letters of Paul; Chap 19: Conditional Security: Hebrews 6; Chap 20: Hebrews, Peter, and Revelation; Chap 21: Eternal Security; Chap 22: Tragedy or Triumph?; Chap 23: Negative Judgment and the Believer; Chap 24: The Final Significance of Man; and Chap 25: The Partakers.

Here are some of the many strengths of Dr. Dillow's *magnum opus*:

First, the book strongly and repeatedly defends absolute 100% assurance of salvation. Dillow cogently argues that assurance is of the essence of saving faith.

Second, the author's presentation of the doctrine of eternal rewards is thorough, highly motivating, and biblically accurate.

Third, in terms of the Gospel, "absolutely free" is the watchword of this book. Dillow repeatedly shows why this view of the Gospel is the only one which is supported by Scripture.

Fourth, love for God's Word permeates this book. Anyone reading it will see the high view the author has towards it. Clearly Dillow considers careful Bible study essential to any believer's growth.

Fifth, the distinction between justification and progressive

sanctification is drawn sharply and clearly; there is no fuzziness in the line.

Sixth, what a resource this book is for the pastor, elder, deacon, Sunday School teacher, Bible college or seminary professor! The Scripture index allows the reader to turn quickly to the discussion of a specific passage. So, too, the topical index permits immediate access to a host of subjects. These indexes are invaluable for preparing lectures, sermons, and lessons. And, of course, they are wonderful for personal Bible study and for answering questions which others pose.

As excellent as this book is, there are several areas which may cause readers difficulty.

First, the book's length is intimidating. With small print and over 600 pages, some readers may be frightened off. This, however, would be a mistake. I suggest that the reader view the book as a series of small books. With an average length of only 26 pages, the chapters themselves are not at all intimidating.

Second, as might be expected in a book dealing with many problem issues and texts, some of the writing is a bit hard to follow. The reader may find himself or herself needing to re-read certain sections to get the author's point. Nevertheless, as with any mining operation in a good location, the prospector who is patient will find a lode of ore.

Third, being an original exegete who does not depend on the commentary tradition, Dillow sometimes comes up with novel interpretations that some will find questionable. For example, he suggests that 2 Pet 1:10 is teaching that believers are to *work out* their election and calling. In this reviewer's opinion, however, he fails to prove that this is the correct interpretation. A more reasonable interpretation seems to be that of Hodges in *Absolutely Free!* and *The Gospel Under Siege*. Hodges suggests that this verse means that we should *validate* our election and calling before others. We know that we are saved by the promises of God's Word. However, we *demonstrate* to others that we are saved by our *actions*.

Fourth, the author fails to lay out the various interpretive options on problem texts. It would be helpful to have different Free Grace interpretations set forth, rather than just the option which Dillow adopts. (Of course, with the book already so long, this would have been impractical. I would suggest that future editions split the book into three or four volumes and incorporate alternative Free Grace interpretations.)

I highly recommend this book. It is must reading for every person who has an interest in the Gospel, assurance, and discipleship—and that

should be all of us. Even Lordship Salvation advocates should want this book for its sheer amount of information.

Robert N. Wilkin

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Roanoke, TX

Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus. By Michael J. Wilkins. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992. 400 pp. Paper, \$14.95.

Wilkins, Associate Professor of NT Language and Literature at the Talbot School of Theology (Biola University), has written a substantial book on discipleship. It is refreshing to find such a biblical approach in a sea of popularly written practical books which never clearly establish the *meaning* of a disciple. That Wilkins has approached the subject biblically and has tried to define the exact meaning of *disciple* and *discipleship* is highly commendable, though I disagree with his final understanding.

The book has many strengths. It is thorough, tracing the concept of discipleship from the OT to the church fathers. It is biblical, analytical, and scholarly, yet easy to read and integrated with personal illustrations. Wilkins did his master's and doctoral theses on this subject. I would venture to say that he has established himself as a premier authority on the biblical understanding of discipleship. Especially helpful are his background studies on the concept of discipleship in NT times, his comprehensive bibliography, and his development of Peter as a representative disciple for all believers. Wilkins is not writing polemically, but instructively. The reader will enjoy his friendly, personable style.

Unfortunately, Wilkins's work is fundamentally marred because he confuses *discipleship* with *salvation*. To him, every Christian is a disciple who is following Christ. He never adequately addresses what we find in real life and in the Bible—the reality of those who are Christians and who do not continue to follow Christ. Nor does he adequately address biblical examples of those who are already Christians whom Christ continually calls to follow (such as Peter).

Early in the book Wilkins criticizes the “non-Lordship salvation”

(Free Grace) view of discipleship (citing Zane Hodges) because it separates the issues of entrance into salvation and entrance into discipleship. He then criticizes the Lordship Salvation position because it takes Jesus' conditions of discipleship (e.g., "hating" one's family, counting the cost, etc.) and makes them conditions of salvation in a way that is confusing, because the conditions *are not explained carefully* and could *imply* a works salvation (p. 45). Later, Wilkins takes these same conditions and softens them, but the result is that his position is essentially the same as Lordship Salvation teachers (what someone has called "a soft Lordship position"). For example, "count the cost" means "to recognize that one entered into the life of discipleship through detachment from competing allegiances and through giving personal allegiance to Jesus as Master" (p. 211). His view of discipleship is seen in these words: "Luke reveals to us that self-denial, taking up the cross, and following Jesus not only characterize entrance into the Way but also characterize life on the Way" (p. 218).

Though he shows sensitivity to the fact that commitments such as these could encroach upon the doctrine of salvation by grace, he never resolves the conflict except to recategorize these conditions as "faith conditions" not "work conditions" (p. 183). But he misses the point that whatever they are *called*, the real issue is that they *merit* salvation, and therefore necessarily exclude grace (Rom 4:4-5).

This is an unfortunate flaw in an otherwise excellent study. However, the book is well worth owning, because it provides much other helpful information. The reader will enjoy a comprehensive biblical study. It is must reading for those interested in the biblical concept of discipleship.

Charles C. Bing

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Pastor, Burleson Bible Church

Burleson, TX

The Power of Vision. By George Barna. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992. 184 pp. Cloth, \$14.99; *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century.* By Aubrey Malphurs. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992. 256 pp. Paper, \$11.95.

Two books have appeared this year which will be a source of great

help to pastors or to anyone who leads a Christian organization. Both books address the important issue of developing a vision for one's church or ministry.

Barna is a well-known Christian figure. As head of the Barna Research Group, he has been addressing societal change and the corresponding need for church change in books like *The Frog in the Kettle* and *User Friendly Churches*. His book on vision draws from the data he has collected in his interaction with churches.

Malphurs is Chairman of the Field Education Department at Dallas Theological Seminary, where he also teaches courses on church planting and church growth. His book relies more on in-depth research and personal experience.

These two books are similar in that both convince the reader of the practical necessity of having a vision for the local church. They both will also help the reader to understand exactly what is meant by *vision*, as opposed to purpose and mission. They both discuss developing a vision, overcoming obstacles, and casting the vision for your church.

The reader will benefit from either book. Barna is very motivating on the necessity of vision for an organization, but I found that Malphurs is more helpful in that he takes the time to explain in more detail how a vision can be developed and implemented in one's church. He addresses in greater depth how it should be presented to the church board and the church, how obstacles should be handled, and how it can be actually implemented. In short, Malphurs is much more helpful on the "how to's." He also includes helpful "worksheets" with questions in the back of the book. Considering the difference in price and practical helpfulness, Malphur's book is by far the better investment.

The weakness of Barna's book is the lack of this kind of practical guidance in implementing a vision in an organization. Though Malphurs does this well, in some less important academic sections the reader may feel he overworks the obvious.

I highly recommend these books to pastors and leaders who feel the need for more solid direction in their church or organization. As Barna and Malphurs show, a new vision for ministry can renew the passion of both the leader and the people.

Charles C. Bing

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Pastor, Burleson Bible Church

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A Prophet with Honor. By William Martin. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991. 734 pp. Cloth, \$25.00.

In 1985 Billy Graham asked William Martin to consider writing his life story. Martin is Harvard Divinity School trained and a professor at Rice University, where he teaches sociology of religion. From the outset he makes it clear that he was not writing "an in-house, 'authorized'" biography that was guaranteed to view Graham favorably (p. 13). He was granted access to all records of Graham's life along with unconditional freedom to write a critical biography. In the process of research, Martin was favorably impressed with Graham, and the result is a detailed, positive, yet critical analysis of Graham's life and ministry.

The book is divided into four parts which block Graham's life into four stages. These detail his maturing as a Christian leader in the evangelical movement during the last half of the twentieth century. The *first part* details Billy Graham's Reformed Presbyterian roots in a pious Christian family, his theological education, his brief pastorate, his ministry with Youth for Christ, and his Los Angeles crusade that catapulted the evangelist into national attention in 1948. The *second part* covers Graham's ministry in the 1950's. It was during this time that the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) came into being and established its crusade methodology. The *third part* traces the ministry from 1960 to 1974. This section is primarily centered on Graham's increasing political ties to world leaders. The *last part* covers from 1974 to the present, and details Graham's international involvement as an evangelist, as a political agent (particularly in opening up the Soviet Union to greater religious freedom), and most importantly as a mentor of evangelists in the task of world evangelization through the Amsterdam conferences in 1983 and 1986.

Martin's book is a masterpiece of detail and provides rich insight into the life and ministry of one of the most important (if not *the* most important) religious leaders in the twentieth century. It is must reading for anyone who desires to understand the burgeoning "evangelical movement" in the last half of the twentieth century.

The book is not without significant flaws, however, which hinder its value in helping one to understand the present theological scene. Two weaknesses stand out.

The first weakness is that Martin fails to grapple with the breadth of what is now called "evangelicalism." Graham's well-known split from the "fundamentalists" (such as Carl McIntyre and Bob Jones) is detailed well. The problem is that he seems to place anyone who would disagree

with Graham on doctrinal or practical grounds in the same category. Not all those who find fault with Graham's ministry would want to be identified as "fundamentalists," and the evangelical faith is also represented in more conservative schools of thought than Fuller Seminary (mentioned 11 times in the book).

A second, and greater, failure of the book is that it contains less interaction with Graham's theology than would be expected. There are numerous comments throughout the book about theological issues, and chap 35 at the end is devoted to Graham's theology ("The Bible [Still] Says . . ."). There is little discussion, however, as to the impact of Graham's erasure of the distinctions between the evangelical Protestant faith and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. His "softening attitude toward liberal Protestants and Roman Catholics" (p. 294) is mentioned, but without any interaction with what this has meant for the fiber of evangelicalism.

Regarding Graham's doctrine of salvation there is almost no information. He is presented as a simple "decisionist" throughout the book. Phrases like "giving one's life to Christ" (p. 52), "accepting Christ" (p. 595), and "letting Christ into the heart" (p. 68) are sprinkled liberally throughout the book but are never defined by any substantive explanation of biblical themes like atonement, faith, justification, or security. As a result, it is impossible for the discerning reader to come to grips either with where Graham stands on major theological issues or how to evaluate his ministry as an evangelist in any biblical way.

Despite these failures, Martin does help the reader to understand Billy Graham. Like most who make an enormous impact on a generation, Graham is a complex figure. His integrity and sincerity have led to an unparalleled impact for the "evangelical" faith on the world scene. The results of some of his innovations in evangelistic methods, and of his broad acceptance of non-evangelicals as co-workers in the Gospel, await a future day. There is no doubt, however, that his life has made a difference, and anyone who wants to understand the contemporary theological landscape should seek to know Billy Graham's place in the world scene.

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Shall Never Perish: Eternal Security Examined. By J. F. Strombeck. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications (Reprint), 1991. 207 pp. Paper, \$9.99.

You don't have to be a Bible College or seminary type to enjoy this book, and it will be a help to all your friends who need to know about eternal security. Warren Wiersbe writes in his foreword that he was blessed by reading this and other books by Strombeck as a young believer. This reviewer had the same experience. Born of pioneer Swedish stock in 1881, John Frederick Strombeck went on to be a successful businessman who gave generously to Christian causes and spent his time writing and speaking to everyday Christians on controversial subjects in a sound and scriptural way (*Grace and Truth, So Great Salvation, Disciplined by Grace, and First the Rapture*).

Dedicated to Lewis Sperry Chafer, another well-known "grace" leader, this book starts with our Lord's words in John 10:27-29 and then develops four parts on related topics: "Eternal Security and Some Doctrines of the Grace of God," "Eternal Security and Godly Living," "Arguments Against Eternal Security Answered," "Evils of Arminianism," and a conclusion.

This is not a tightly spun theological work quoting manmade creeds as authoritative (whether Roman, Reformed, Lutheran, or Anglican). Essentially Strombeck writes *biblical* theology for the masses, and how they (and we all) need it! Denominationally, he belonged to the Scandinavian-rooted Evangelical Free Church.

Since *Shall Never Perish* is so very full of Scripture quotations, perhaps an updating of the KJV and RV to a more modern text would have helped. In reviewing this book, *The Witness* wrote: "We doubt very much if a finer treatise on the assurance of salvation and the eternal security of the believer in Christ has ever been published, or can be written. . . . If anyone can remain a 'doubting Thomas' after perusal of this classic work on eternal security, he must be past conviction on the subject."

Strong praise for a strong (but not angry or unkind) book.

Kregel deserves our thanks for reprinting this and other Strombeck classics. "Gracers" especially, if one dares to use that slang term, should get them all.

Arthur L. Farstad
Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, TX

The Coming Economic Earthquake. By Larry Burkett. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991. 230 pp. Paper, \$15.26.

What would you do if the U.S. Government declared bankruptcy because the interest on the budget deficit equaled the Gross National Product and our country could no longer pay its bills? What if the Stock Market crashed and all U.S. banks failed, wiping out all your personal assets? If this tragic scenario unfolded, would your family survive the economic catastrophe and its aftermath? Would your children have a financial future?

By changing the little word “if” to “when” in the above paragraph, Christian economist, Larry Burkett, answers these and other questions directly and clearly in his new book, *The Coming Economic Earthquake*. Burkett is perhaps best known for his daily broadcasts on economic principles heard on hundreds of Christian radio stations throughout the United States and other countries.

Burkett’s major premise is that the United States is headed for a terrible day of reckoning because of uncontrolled government spending and irrational borrowing. His real purpose in writing is to inform and warn Christians to be prepared before it happens.

This book is sensational without being sensationalistic. Written for a popular audience, the book brings a potentially technical and difficult subject within reach of most adults. Although one could wish for more documentation and a subject index, there are helpful appendixes and addresses to write to for more information.

Whether or not one agrees with Burkett’s conclusions, it is difficult to disagree with the warning signs he identifies in the U.S. economy. Many secular economists are making the same predictions. Even if the “earthquake” of the title never comes, the author’s financial advice to Christian individuals and families is helpful and healthy preventive medicine in the best of times.

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Stress Fractures. Biblical Splints for Everyday Pressures. By Charles R. Swindoll. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1990. 273 pp. Paper, \$10.99.

In the introduction to *Stress Fractures*, Swindoll states that “this book has some answers [to stress fractures] that *cannot* fail to bring you relief” (p. 12). He draws an analogy between physical stress fractures (the gradual breaking of a bone due to stress) and psychological stress fractures. But he does not discuss in detail what exactly is meant by “stress fractures.” The question goes largely unanswered.

In the first several chapters Swindoll gives some helpful biblical illustrations of stress situations and how they were remedied. Moses’ implementation of his father-in-law Jethro’s advice to delegate his work load was to the point. So was the incident of Mary and Martha serving Jesus.

After the first few chapters I fully expected the author to delve into the more serious consequences of physical/emotional/psychological stress in modern society (drugs, rock, suicide, heart disease, deep emotional injuries, criminal offenses, etc.). Instead, the second part of the book, *Spiritual Therapy*, is a collection of chapters giving spiritual instruction on salvation by grace, eternal security, and finding God’s will. These subjects, though perhaps *indirectly* related to stress, are really not a discussion of “stress fractures.”

In the chapter entitled “Destiny,” for example, Swindoll discusses heaven and hell and God’s provision of salvation from hell through Jesus Christ. It’s a very well-written chapter but it addresses a different readership—unbelievers. Prior to this chapter the author was apparently addressing Christians. So, who are the intended readers—believers under stress or unbelievers under God’s wrath? Also, the repeated discussions on eternal security would imply that lack of confidence in this doctrine was the chief cause of stress-induced breakdowns. (This could actually be the case in stress breakdowns related to one’s faith.)

The chapter on “Demonism,” although of a spiritual nature, does bring out how Christians can be hindered or hurt by demonic activity, no doubt resulting in tremendous “stress fractures” of various types. Here the spiritual and emotional/physical realms definitely intersect.

Perhaps Swindoll was trying to give the solutions for *emotional* stress problems indirectly by dealing with solutions to the *spiritual* problems. If the book had more details on practical therapy for various forms of

psychological fractures due to physical/emotional/psychological, and interpersonal stress, it would better suit the title. By the same token, the second half would fit well in a book on doctrine and growth.

Swindoll's writing is easy to read, is backed up by massive use of Scripture, and is doctrinally sound. The individual chapters are well written and organized, and contain much valuable and useful information. In fact, much of the doctrinal material falls right in line with grace teaching.

Mark J. Farstad

Production Staff

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

No Other Gospel! Christianity among The World's Religions. By Carl E. Braaten. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992. 146 pp. Paper, \$10.95.

No Other Gospel is a theological response to religious pluralism. Braaten is intimately acquainted with pluralist, liberal, neo-orthodox, and orthodox views of Christ. Through a series of papers that were later put together for this book, Braaten deals with various issues relevant to the place of Christianity among the world's religions. Braaten makes it clear that he believes that salvation is obtained in Christ alone through faith alone.

The pluralist camp, led by John Hick and Paul Knitter, feels that religion should be God-centered as opposed to Christ-centered. According to this model all religions revolve around God on an equal footing. This is accomplished by omitting all that is unique to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ ends up being just a man, different from us only in degree, not in essence.

Braaten suggests that Christians respond to these religions with a view toward dialogue and looking within these religions themselves for ways in which we can better share Christ with them.

Although this book is theological in its purpose, it would have been helpful if the author had included a chapter on apologetics. The case for an objective knowledge of history, the historicity of the Gospels, and the resurrection of Christ includes strong evidence against non-orthodox

views of Christianity. This book is a very helpful study of world religions and Christianity; it should be read by anyone considering this issue.

R. Michael Duffy

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

The Mystery of the Cross. By Alister E. McGrath. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990. 190 pp. Paper, \$8.99.

This book's purpose is to stimulate, or even irritate, the readers "to reflect further on the enigma of the cross" (p. 188). McGrath fulfills his purpose by providing a well-written, challenging, and thought-provoking consideration of the Cross of Christ. But his presentation is not merely an academic exercise. Instead, it reveals McGrath's central thesis: that the Cross embraces "every aspect of our existence as Christians," and this book is meant "to bring out the importance of the cross for the whole of existence, the life and doctrine of the Christian church" (p. 187).

The Cross is presented as a mystery—"To be a 'theologian of the cross' is to recognise the resistance of the cross to interpretation, and to concede that we will never plumb the full depth of its meaning" (p. 79). The Cross is also the basis of Christianity. It is the Cross, claims McGrath, that presents us with a true picture of God, though in an opaque fashion. If we want to understand God, we must look at what He did through the Cross, and when we study it, we realize that it presents the power of God in and through weakness and provides total relevance for the life of every believer.

There is an excellent discussion on theodicy—the relationship of God to pain, suffering, and evil. The author meets, headlong, the question, "How can I believe in God in a world of pain and suffering?" And in the context of that argument, McGrath provides a superb presentation of God's omnipotence in light of the reality of logical contradictions. ("God is free to do anything, provided logical contradiction doesn't result. Thus the fact that God can't make a three-sided square is not seen as a threat to his omnipotence" [p. 122]). The discussion which ensues deals with the fact that if God *is* omnipotent, He must have the freedom

to set aside His omnipotence. Thus, He “*places limitations upon his course of action*” [p. 123].)

Another strength of this work is that it presents the Cross as highly relevant to believers. We are shown that the Cross demands our faithfulness; that although suffering is part of the Christian life, God is with us in our suffering and pain; and that experience is an unreliable guide for faith and practice. (“Experience declared that God was absent from Calvary, only to have its verdict humiliatingly overturned on the third day” [p. 159].) The Cross also teaches us the importance of humility by showing that God works through the powerless, and by warning us that it was the religiously proud who crucified our Lord Jesus Christ and were rejected by God.

This reviewer, however, does see some weaknesses in this work. First, the author emphasizes ecclesiastical tradition for determining truth, rather than resting solely on Scripture. Ultimately, the trustworthiness of the tradition of men must be gauged by the Word of God.

Second, the author holds to presuppositional apologetics—the view that certain tenets (such as the existence of God and the reliability and authority of the Bible as God’s inerrant Word) cannot really be demonstrated by reason, and must simply be accepted as true (p. 54). His approach is to start with the assumption that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ *did take place*, and that the only way Christianity might be shown to be wrong is by demonstrating that those events never actually occurred (p. 55). One problem with this view is that it becomes very difficult to convince someone with an unbiblical view of God and life that his view is incorrect. McGrath seems to answer this by writing that our work is not to persuade men, but to point them to the Cross of Christ (see p. 135). A second problem with this view is that it leads to a mystical notion of faith, for in this view “faith comes before understanding” (p. 48). Faith is seen more as a risk (p. 54) than the assurance that something is true. This could lead people to accept as true whatever they want—even if it could not be substantiated.

Third, in a book on the Cross, one would expect to find teaching on how man is to respond to it. And though this reviewer was not disappointed in finding that the author believes that the proper response is faith and faith alone, the reviewer *is* disappointed that no clear definition appears of what faith is.

Finally, the author appears to muddy the waters in his discussion of reason in relationship to the Cross. In mentioning that the Cross appears, on the surface, to be contradictory to God’s nature, McGrath basically informs the readers that any *apparent* contradiction is simply due to our

human inability to understand the fullness of truth. That is fine, but he provides no help in determining the difference between an *apparent* contradiction and a *real* contradiction when he rejects the notion that the beliefs of Christianity can be defended rationally, and then quotes Augustine as claiming, "If you can understand it, it's not God." This puts the author in a potentially awkward position when he encounters a *real* contradiction, such as when an individual propagates the belief that Christians are eternally secure, but they can lose eternal life. (This reviewer has actually encountered people who believe that very contradiction.) How does he handle that? Does he simply say that this is a mystery which we cannot understand?

Even with its weaknesses, I found McGrath's book to be very helpful reading. His discussion on theodicy and God's omnipotence are, alone, worth the price of the book. And his treatment of the relevance of the Cross for believers is excellent. For those who wish to be encouraged and challenged in a deeper way by the Cross of Christ, obtain this book and enjoy!

John Claeys

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Warfare Prayer: How To Seek God's Power and Protection in the Battle To Build His Kingdom. By C. Peter Wagner. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992. Cloth, \$14.99.

The title of this book reveals its central thesis—the way to effectively build God's kingdom is through "warfare prayer." According to Wagner, warfare prayer involves taking the offensive, in prayer, against the demonic principalities and powers which are at war with God's kingdom. Supposedly, this is best effected by identifying—through prayer—the spirits which have territorial jurisdiction where spiritual problems are most evident. And then, these demons are to be cast out (of territories, buildings, objects, etc.) through "warfare prayer."

The emphasis given to prayer and holiness is commendable. Also laudable is the author's exhortation that we must take seriously the fact that we are involved in spiritual warfare and, because evangelism treads

on the enemy's turf, it must be accompanied by fervent prayer in order to produce great results.

But let the reader beware: the argument of this book is not built on sound exegesis. In fact, much of the basis of "strategic level spiritual warfare" (which includes "power encounters" with demons) is based on supposed pragmatism—what Wagner sees as that which *works*. Though he cites some Scripture references and biblical illustrations, many of these either have no contextual relationship to the subject at hand or are clearly wrong interpretations of those references. This means that the book is primarily based on experience; to validate that experience, more experience is cited. This is a dangerous way to formulate theology!

But the occasional misuse of Scripture and the emphasis on experience are not enough for the author in attempting to prove his position, so he also incorporates the use of false syllogisms into his argument. For example, he establishes that territorial spirits do exist (citing Daniel 10) and that demons are behind idol worship. From there he makes an unfounded leap to claim that demons inhabit houses and objects, and wreak havoc on individuals who happen to be in the vicinity of those habitations. Unfortunately, this kind of argumentation is all too common in this work.

There are other areas in this book that cause concern; these emanate from the author's approach. There are even parts of the book which teeter on the ridiculous. Suffice it to say that although this work has a laudable emphasis on prayer, there are many other works on prayer which are much more theologically accurate and more highly recommended by this reviewer.

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No Holiness, No Heaven! Antinomianism Today. By Richard Alderson. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986. 108 pp. Paper, \$6.58.

Richard Alderson, a British professor of English as a foreign language, has written an insightful, albeit highly erroneous, discussion of the Gospel in this fascinating little book.

The author understands the Free Grace position reasonably well. In spite of this, he rejects it as unbiblical and antinomian.

To be sure, *some* who hold to the Free Grace position are antinomian. However, not all are. Alderson, in part, acknowledges this when he suggests that some are “practicing” antinomians and others are “doctrinal” or “theoretical” antinomians (p. 13). The former live immoral lives; the latter live exemplary lives.

According to Alderson there are three ways in which we may know that we have eternal life: (1) the promises in the Word of God (pp. 60-61), (2) the tests of life (pp. 61-64), and (3) the inner witness of the Holy Spirit (pp. 64-65). In places he seems to suggest that any of these can give assurance (see pp. 60-65). In other places, however, he makes it very clear that ongoing good works (done with the right motives) are essential to true assurance (cf. pp. 47-59, 66-68, 82-86).

Of course, if this is true, assurance is impossible. The author has an answer to this seeming difficulty. He writes, “In the words of C.H. Spurgeon, ‘Better a brief warfare and eternal rest than false peace and everlasting torment.’” (p. 86). How sad! Better a third option: true peace and eternal rest!

The discussion of the role of the believer in progressive sanctification is very helpful. Alderson points out the need for effort *and* dependence (pp. 72, 76). He rightly rejects the totally passive approach to growth as being unbiblical.

I highly recommend this book because it inadvertently points up the weaknesses in the Lordship Salvation position even as it seeks to defend it.

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The Man in The Mirror: Solving The Twenty-Four Problems Men Face.
By Patrick M. Morley. Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1989. 307 pages. Cloth, \$16.99.

This book makes the point that Christian men today need to follow Christ instead of materialism and the world. Unfortunately, it is limited

by shallow biblical exposition and by Lordship Salvation teaching (e.g., see pp. 35, 55). In spite of these weaknesses, if read critically, this book can be valuable for Christian men today.

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Theological Anthropology. Sources of Early Christian Thought. By J. Patout Burns. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981. 130 pp. Paper, \$9.95.

The more fully we understand human sinfulness, the more profound must be our understanding of God's grace. Grace is God's solution to our problem of sin. Likewise, a trivializing of sin leads to a trivializing of grace. This important principle is well illustrated in J. Patout Burns's recent anthology of early patristic texts, *Theological Anthropology*.

Theological Anthropology is the third volume in a series of anthologies on early Christian thought published by Fortress Press (other volumes in this series include *The Trinitarian Controversy*, *The Christological Controversy*, and *Early Christian Spirituality*). In keeping with the series format, it begins with a short historical introduction (Burns's introduction is particularly helpful) followed by approximately 100 pages of excerpts from early theologians. These are newly translated by Burns himself (except for Gregory of Nyssa's *Sermon on the Sixth Beatitude*, which is translated by Joseph W. Trigg).

Burns focuses his attention on four important Christian thinkers: Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, Pelagius, and Augustine. What will be most valuable to the readers of *JOTGES* is the way in which these four theologians model the relationship between sin and grace.

Irenaeus explains man's entanglement in sin in developmental terms. Man was created in a state of immaturity. A steady growth into godliness was to follow. Sin, however, stalled that process. Christ enters human history as God's grace for a new beginning. In the grand scheme of things sin is reduced to a powerful object lesson. Having learned from our mistakes, by grace we get a clean slate and the ability to start anew.

A Platonist, Gregory of Nyssa focuses on the divine image in man. Sin is conceived as the sullyng of this otherwise intact image. In his

Sermon on the Sixth Beatitude, Gregory describes sin as “the mold of evil” that is “caked over your heart.” He urges that it be “rubbed off.” For Gregory, God’s grace need be nothing more than the superior moral instructions of the Sermon on the Mount which, unlike the old Law of Moses, address the inner life and thus call attention to the real problem.

Practically, there is little difference between Gregory of Nyssa and Pelagius. Pelagius, however, was not a philosopher but a popular moralist. He functioned as a spiritual guide to those who shared his ascetic temperament and who wanted to escape the corruptions of this world pursuing personal holiness. For Pelagius, sins are simply bad habits. We are born into a sinful culture and we are raised by sinful parents. We learn to sin from our youth. To reverse this we need only to realize the power of free choice that God has graciously given to each of us. Grace is the power of human nature to reverse the effects of human custom. Not surprisingly, Pelagius’s *Letter to Demetrias* (a young virgin he talked into permanent celibacy) reads like a modern self-help pamphlet. He even goes so far as to argue that holiness begins with a proper self-image!

Augustine is by far the most pessimistic in his view of man. Sin is not a hiccup in our otherwise natural development, nor is it a layer of mold coating our inner person, nor is it merely an acquired habit. Sin is a corruption penetrating to the innermost depths of our being. For Augustine we have each become a “lump of sin.” Accordingly, God must decisively intervene in our behalf. Grace is therefore nothing less than God’s *sovereign initiative*. It must be operating in the life of the believer from the very beginning, and it must remain active to the very end.

Theological Anthropology offers its careful reader a valuable introduction to the essential Christian concepts of sin and grace. It also stands as a warning to those who today are toying with a shallow view of sin: *A shallow view of grace is soon to follow.*

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Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640. By Nicholas Tyacke. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990 [reprinted, 1991]. xxi + 303 pp. Paper, \$26.00.

Readers who enjoy church history will find this book truly absorbing. Tyacke's study forms part of the *Oxford Historical Monographs* series and was first published in cloth in 1987. A foreword to the paperback edition (issued in 1990) allows the author to interact with the various responses to his views that had appeared since the book's original publication.

Essentially the book traces the theological (and political) struggles between Calvinist and Arminian leaders within the Church of England over a span of fifty years. Tyacke shows that while Calvinism was the dominant religious perspective at the end of Elizabeth's reign and during that of King James I, under Charles I the Calvinists fell from political power. Following the dissolution of Parliament in 1629 by Charles I, a decade followed in which the Arminians were favored by the king and held power. In 1633 one of their own number, William Laud, actually became Archbishop of Canterbury. After 1640 Arminian dominance was decisively terminated by events that climaxed in the English Civil War, which brought the Puritans to power.

The GES reader will be especially interested in the numerous quotations from Calvinists and Arminians which deal directly with soteriology. From these fascinating "snippets" of theological debate, one can make a number of observations. (1) Calvinists had already given up the concept of universal atonement (as held by Calvin) in favor of the view that Christ died effectively only for the elect. (The Synod of Dort occurred during this period, i.e., in 1618-1619.) The Arminians maintained universal atonement. (2) The doctrine of salvation by faith suffered distortion on both sides. Arminians maintained the view that faith alone, apart from works, was not enough to guarantee final salvation. For Calvinists faith had become, not so much confidence in Christ, but confidence in one's own election. (3) Arminians denied the possibility of firm assurance of final salvation, while the Calvinists maintained it. So far as this volume's quotations are concerned, one does not yet see the weakening of assurance which today is intrinsic to 5-point Calvinism. But the seeds were clearly already planted. Since faith, for the 17th century Calvinist, had become confidence in one's election, it was inevitable that any search for "evidences" of one's election (i.e., "works") would undermine assurance even within Calvinism.

One hopes that the debates engaged in at the top levels of the Church of England between 1590 and 1640 are not a fully adequate cross section of English religious beliefs in that era. To the extent that they are, they bear testimony to widespread blindness to the biblical doctrine of grace during this memorable period of British history.

Zane C. Hodges

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

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PERIODICAL REVIEWS

“A Review of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Part 1,” John A. Witmer, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 149:594, April-June 1992, pp. 131-45, “A Review of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Part 2,” John A. Witmer, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 149:595, July-September 1992, pp. 259-76, and “Who Is Wrong? A Review of John Gerstner’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*,” Richard L. Mayhue, *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 3:1, Spring 1992, pp. 73-94.

These three articles review in depth John Gerstner’s attack on dispensationalism in his *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. The first two articles are by John A. Witmer, Archivist and Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Emeritus, Dallas Theological Seminary. The third article is by Richard Mayhue, Vice-President and Dean, and Professor of Pastoral Ministries, at The Master’s Seminary. Both men write from a dispensational point of view and respond to the arguments and criticisms of Gerstner.

Mayhue’s review begins with a preface which ends with this statement: “The work is of such a misleading nature that a retraction of some kind seems to be in order” (p. 73). Mayhue then summarizes the credentials of Gerstner and his previous work which would seem to qualify him as an able critic of dispensationalism and then gives a brief synopsis of the book.

Mayhue’s purpose is twofold. First, he wishes to demonstrate that Dr. Gerstner “falls well short of what he repeatedly claims to have accomplished,” i.e., to have decisively refuted dispensationalism (p. 80). Second, Mayhue hopes to stimulate dispensationalists to “speak up” and clarify themselves on significant issues of disagreement from past dispensational thinking and in current issues, such as the Lordship debate (p. 80).

He lists ten major *assumptions* in Gerstner’s work which he feels are in error and seriously undermine his arguments (pp. 80-84). Among these: that Gerstner assumes his brand of Calvinism is the only brand and that Gerstner seems to rely more on the Synod of Dort than Scripture to authenticate his view of truth. Of particular note, Mayhue points out that Gerstner assumes that dispensationalism presupposes a certain soteriology and fails to appreciate the distinctions between, for

example, fellow dispensationalists, John MacArthur and Zane Hodges, in the area of soteriology. This misunderstanding seems due to Gerstner's view that Calvinism (his style of it) is the antithesis of dispensationalism, "thus making one's soteriology determine whether he is a dispensationalist or not" (p. 89).

Mayhue then discusses nine major *weaknesses* in Gerstner's book (pp. 84-87), which include: his failure to interact with dispensational writings since 1980, numerous inaccuracies in historical and factual details, and dwelling on soteriology as the determining factor of dispensationalism rather than on eschatology. Then he discusses ten *theological inaccuracies* in the book (pp. 90-93).

Overall, Mayhue concludes that Gerstner has failed to represent accurately the dispensationalism of today and also has failed to deliver the stunning refutation to which he makes claim. Thus, he awaits the "profound apology" promised by R. C. Sproul in the preface if Gerstner failed to deliver as promised (p. 94).

Dr. Witmer's first article deals with Gerstner's attitude, approach, problems, accusations, questionable judgments, charges, exaggerations, misinterpretations, and his stance. The first article provides an overview of the tone and deficiencies of the book, while the second provides more of a theological refutation on the major points.

Gerstner's attitude is described as "antagonistic" and his tone as "angry, bitter, caustic, derogatory, inflammatory," and "judgmental" (p. 132). His approach is that of a debater who seeks to win a decision rather than one who seeks to understand and interact with dispensationalists. Witmer points out a number of factual errors regarding names, dates, and associations (pp. 132-35), as well as misrepresentations, such as misquoting Ryrie's definition of election in *The Ryrie Study Bible* (p. 135). Witmer documents unsubstantiated charges made against dispensationalists (pp. 136-38) and Gerstner's failure to quote accurately from sources (pp. 138-39). Of particular note to GES readers is Witmer's discussion of Gerstner's charges of antinomianism and his rejection of the notion of carnality among believers (pp. 140-41).

This first article argues effectively that Gerstner has either misunderstood or, worse yet, misinterpreted dispensationalism and has attacked a caricature of the movement.

Witmer's second article gives an excellent and succinct defense of dispensational distinctives and, in so doing, begins to answer Mayhue's call for a clear defining of current dispensational distinctives. Witmer

addresses the distinctive natures of Israel and the Church (pp. 261-66), the Christian's relationship to the OT Law (pp. 266-69), Christ's offer of the Kingdom to the Jews of His day (pp. 269-70), the nature of the atonement (pp. 270-71), premillennialism and dispensationalism (pp. 271-73), salvation through the ages (pp. 273-74), and "easy-believism" and Lordship Salvation (pp. 274-76).

The last section will be of special interest to GES readers because Witmer defends simple faith as the only requirement for eternal life, arguing against Gerstner's reading of works into faith. Witmer points to the confusion created by failing to distinguish the gift of eternal life and the commitment of life in Christian discipleship (p. 275).

All three articles are recommended, but especially Witmer's second. It contains a fine summary defense of "dispensationalism today." The combination of these articles also demonstrates that, contrary to Gerstner's assertion, one's soteriology does *not* determine if one is a dispensationalist. Mayhue and Witmer are at opposite ends of the Lordship debate on soteriology, yet make complementary defenses of dispensational theology as a whole.

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"Degrees of Reward in the Kingdom of Heaven?," Craig L. Blomberg, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35, June 1992, pp. 159-72.

The first sentence of this article is intriguing: "The lordship-salvation debate rages on." Why start an article about rewards in this way? Because Blomberg believes that in an effort to maintain justification by faith alone, many are wrongly, in his opinion, promoting eternal rewards by works. Here is how he puts the view which he is arguing against: "Believers may enter into God's family entirely apart from their own good works, but the degree to which they will enjoy heaven is said exclusively to depend on how they live out their Christian life—to what extent they obey God's commandments and mature in the faith. In short, though few would put it so baldly, one is left with justification by faith and sanctification by works." The author goes on to say that he has "grown progressively more uncomfortable with any formulation that

differentiates among believers as regards our eternal rewards” (p. 159). His reasons for this discomfort, aside from the fact that he feels the teaching is unbiblical, are that “it can have highly damaging consequences for the motivation and psychology of living the Christian life” (p. 160) and it “may lead professing believers to think they are saved when in fact they are not” (p. 172).

To prove that there will *not* be degrees of rewards, Blomberg selects the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16). Since the first and last groups of workers in the parable received exactly the same reward, even though the former worked all day, while the latter worked only an hour, Blomberg concludes that this proves that there will be no disparity in rewards in eternity (pp. 160-62).

Blomberg fails to mention other parables where *differing rewards* are given (e.g., Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27). He also doesn't point out that the parable of the laborers concerns the relationship between *length of service* and rewards, not between degree of faithfulness and rewards. (A person who faithfully serves Christ for one year before the rapture or death may be equally rewarded with one who faithfully serves Christ for fifty years.)

The author then goes on to give cursory treatment to a few passages often thought to be teaching degrees of rewards. He dismisses them all by saying that they “are not at all talking about degrees of reward in heaven but simply about eternal life” (p. 163).

This view leads to some curious conclusions. For one thing, according to Blomberg, the Apostle Paul was unsure that he was saved (!) and he was motivated to persevere in the faith that he might gain eternal life! He writes: “A too simplistic understanding of ‘eternal security’ has probably led many Christians to doubt that Paul could have seriously considered not ‘making it to heaven’” (p. 163).

Logically, this would mean that *no Christian* can be sure of his or her salvation!

It also means that fear of hell should be an important motivation for perseverance. If this is so, why doesn't it produce works-salvation thinking? Blomberg does not say, although he denies it merely by asserting: “This is in no way to argue for works-righteousness” (p. 172).

Blomberg suggests that at the Judgment Seat of Christ believers “must give an accounting to the Lord for every deed performed” in order “to declare them acquitted . . .” (p. 167). Yet the Lord Jesus specifically said that believers will *never* come into judgment to determine their eternal destiny (John 5:24)! He said that believers are acquitted at the very moment they believe (John 3:18; 5:24; 6:47).

Buried in a footnote on p. 171, Blomberg notes, "The view that rewards differentiate us during the millennium but not thereafter does not trouble me, since it accomplishes the same purpose for which I am arguing. Even a thousand years is an undefinably small fraction of infinity and will pale into insignificance after it passes. *But I find no textual warrant for this view*" (italics supplied).

That there is *no* textual warrant for the millennium-only view of rewards is probably overstating the case. However, I find I agree with Blomberg on this point. Many of the passages dealing with rewards have within their contexts strong suggestions that the rewards are eternal (cf. Matt 6:19-21; 1 Cor 3:10-15; 9:24-27; 2 Cor 5:10; Gal 6:7-9; Rev 2-3).

I find very curious Blomberg's suggestion that we give people false assurance whenever we stress assurance apart from perseverance. It seems to me that it is *his* view which destroys true assurance. His view points people within rather than without themselves. Only by looking to Christ can anyone have assurance. And no one who does has false assurance, since eternal security is based on His faithfulness, not ours (2 Tim 2:13)!

This article is must reading. It shows how important it is to distinguish between eternal rewards and eternal salvation. Failure to do so garbles the Gospel, annihilates assurance, and muddles motivation. Such thinking doesn't have a leg to stand on.

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"The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective, Part 1: The Judgment Seat of Christ and Unconfessed Sins," Samuel L. Hoyt, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January-March 1980, pp. 32-39.

In Part 1 of this two-part series on the Judgment Seat (*bēma*) of Christ, Hoyt seeks to answer the question of whether a believer's unconfessed sins will be *punished* at the Judgment Seat. He seeks to present a mediating position between what he considers to be two extremes: (1) That believers receive punishment for unconfessed sin at the Judgment Seat, or (2) That believers receive rewards and experience no remorse.

The author presents the perspective that while the *seriousness* of the Judgment Seat should be maintained, *commendation* should be emphasized. The Judgment Seat of Christ primarily deals with an evaluation of our service and its rewards.

Hoyt gives a number of reasons why believers will not be punished for unconfessed sin at the Judgment Seat.

The main reason is that *all sin* has been forgiven in Christ (Eph 1:7; Col 2:14-15). Believers will not come into judgment (John 3:18; 5:24; 6:37; Rom 5:1; 8:1).

The historical event that 1 Cor 9:24-27 would bring to mind is the Isthmian games. The judge there would make sure that the rules were enforced and would reward the winners. They did not whip the losers.

Hoyt also utilizes the consequences of unconfessed sin as an evidence, since it appears that they relate only to *this life*. Unconfessed sin results in a barrier between God and the Christian as far as fellowship is concerned. It has eternal consequences only in that being out of fellowship with God reduces one's opportunities for reward. Hoyt refutes the idea that unconfessed sins are specifically dealt with at the Judgment Seat.

The only weakness I saw was in Hoyt's treatment of Matt 25:14-30, where he takes the wicked servant as an unbeliever. This, however, does not fit the context. The wicked servant is given a task just as the two good servants. It seems best to understand the wicked servant as a believer who does not experience the joy that obedient believers do at the Judgment Seat. There is no *literal* money to be laid at the feet of the judge. The "darkness" outside is the reverse of the joy inside. The unfaithful servant is not sent to hell to be punished, but he does not experience the joy that would have come from being rewarded.

Hoyt does a good job demonstrating that the emphasis of the Judgment Seat is on rewards, not on punishment for sin.

"The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective, Part 2: The Negative Aspects of the Christian's Judgment," Samuel L. Hoyt, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June 1980, pp. 125-32.

In Part 2 of his series on the Judgment Seat, Hoyt deals with its negative aspects. If the judgment at Christ's *bēma* is not to punish sins, then how do we understand the *negative* consequences awaiting those who are not faithful?

The author addresses various passages on the issue of suffering loss at

the Judgment Seat (1 Cor 3:15; 9:24-27; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 John 8). He understands all these passages as loss in the sense of not receiving what they could have had if they had been faithful. The loss will be seen in having fewer works worthy of merit, thus fewer rewards. He then goes on to explain the experience of shame at the Judgment Seat for those who are unfaithful. First John 2:28 deals with this. Hoyt sees that the shame is real when one views his sin as *God* sees it. However, all believers will experience some shame, since not all actions can be rewarded. This shame will not last forever, however, since all believers, no matter how faithful, will experience some regret for missed opportunities and active sin. Second Corinthians 5:9-10 says that everyone will "receive the things done in the body," so believers will be rewarded for the good they did perform. Being with the Lord for eternity will produce happiness, even if one has not fared well at the Judgment Seat.

These articles are very balanced and well written. I would recommend them for anyone who desires to know more about the Judgment Seat of Christ.

R. Michael Duffy

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

A HYMN OF GRACE

FRANCES A. MOSHER

Pianist, Christ Congregation
Dallas, Texas

GRACE GREATER THAN OUR SIN

Julia H. Johnston

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss;
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
Points to the Refuge, the mighty Cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide,
What can avail to wash it away?
Look! there is flowing a crimson tide;
Whiter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe;
You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?

Refrain:

Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin.

Each stanza of this hymn highlights a sparkling facet of the doctrine of grace. Stanza one points out that God's grace exceeds man's sin and guilt, a teaching of Rom 5:20b: "But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."

The second stanza proclaims that the Cross of Christ is our only refuge from sin and its accompanying despair. This echoes Col 1:20, which states that by Him (Christ) peace has been made, "by the blood of His cross."

The third stanza parallels the teaching of 1 John 1:7b: "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." We cannot cleanse ourselves—remove the stain—of *any* of our sin. But through Christ's blood we can be cleansed of *all* sin.

The last stanza declares that this saving grace is "freely bestowed on all who believe," a teaching in total agreement with numerous Bible passages, including Eph 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

"Grace Greater Than Our Sin" was copyrighted in 1910. The lyrics were written by Julia H. Johnston (1849-1919). The tune was composed by Daniel B. Towner, who was born in 1850 in Rome, Pennsylvania. In addition to serving as musical director at various Methodist churches, Towner served as head of Moody Bible Institute's musical department from 1893 until his death in 1919.¹

¹ Phil Kerr, *Music in Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 181.

