

Journal of the  
**GRACE**  
Evangelical Society

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"Faith Alone In Christ Alone"



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

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\* Dr. Bing will be ceasing his editorial work on the Journal (but not the GES National Board); Mr. Duffy will be going to Netherlands as a missionary; and Mrs. Gillespie (at 91!) will be retiring. We are deeply grateful for their loyal and talented contribution to our Journal.

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# THE HIGH COST OF SALVATION BY FAITH-WORKS:

A Critique of John F. MacArthur, Jr.'s  
*Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles*<sup>1</sup>

**ROBERT N. WILKIN**

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*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*  
Roanoke, Texas

## I. Introduction

It is with a deep sense of sadness that I write this review. Reading this book and listening to it on tape have left me feeling this way.

The theology of John MacArthur is anything but uplifting. He has lost touch with the grace of God.

## II. Strengths of the Book

While this book is hardly my favorite read of the year, it does have a number of positive points.

First, the tone is less vituperative than that in *The Gospel According to Jesus*.

Second, MacArthur graciously acknowledges that he used a ghost writer, Phil Johnson, who “carefully, skillfully pulls my voice out of the air and transforms it into ink” (p. 8).

Third, the title, *Faith Works*, is clever and memorable.

Fourth, the companion audio tape (read by MacArthur) is a nice complement to the written form.

Fifth, the Scripture and subject indices are helpful.

Sixth, the inclusion of a chapter devoted to assurance of salvation (chap 10, pp. 157-73) provides the reader with a candid admission by MacArthur that Puritan theology on this issue was flawed and often damaging (see, e.g., p. 161). It is also revealing to see how MacArthur attempts (unconvincingly) to explain how *his* view corrects what he considers an unbiblical error. Far and away that chapter was the best one in the book in terms of readability, organization, and practicality.

<sup>1</sup>John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 272 pp.

Seventh, the chapter on the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, chap 11 (pp. 175-92), provides several other excellent insights into Lordship Salvation theology. There MacArthur explains why he feels the expression *eternal security* can be misleading and why he feels it is better to speak of *the perseverance of the saints* (pp. 180-82). He also admits that quantification is impossible (and thereby *de facto* admits that 100% certainty of salvation is impossible).

Finally, this book will, I believe, result in many people coming over to the Free Grace position. Many people who read what MacArthur writes in this book will be horrified. This book will drive people who doubt their salvation to seek out the truth on assurance and the Gospel.

Where will they turn? MacArthur has made it easy for them to find the truth. He repeatedly cites the writings of Zane Hodges and Charles Ryrie. In fact, he even mentions the Grace Evangelical Society newsletter and journal (cf. pp. 46, 94, 158, 163, 201). He gives us backhanded praise when he says that our newsletter is “the leading no-lordship fraternity’s monthly [actually every other month] newsletter” (p. 46)!

### III. Weaknesses of the Book

#### A. Methodological Weaknesses

##### 1. Style and Structure

This book is not well written. Except for two or three chapters (chaps 10 and 11 and possibly 7), the reading is very tedious.

The structure is so flawed that if this were a house it wouldn’t stand up under a drop of rain or a hint of wind. There appears to be no rhyme or reason why the chapters given were included or how they were ordered. There are two chapters explaining what saving faith is (chaps 3 and 9) and two discussing the supposed inevitability of good works in the lives of believers (chaps 7 and 8). The final chapter could well be titled “Potpourri,” for it includes a mix of unrelated material (evidently drawn from sermons).

The book either underemphasizes or fails to include many passages and topics which would have been logical and helpful. Why no discussion of Gal 3:6-14, Heb 10:1-18, or 1 John 5:9-13? Are not those passages some of the clearest passages on the Gospel in the epistles?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> MacArthur instead gives extended treatment to Rom 4:1-5 (pp. 99-103); 6:1-20 (pp. 110-21); Eph 2:1-10 (pp. 63-70); Heb 11:1 ff. (pp. 39-52); Jas 1:21-2:14 (pp. 142-55); and 1 Pet 1:3-9 (pp. 182-90). While Rom 4:1-5 and Eph 2:1-10 surely are key passages on the Gospel in the Epistles, the others are not. None of those even deals with the Gospel. MacArthur has once again turned the analogy of faith upside down.

Since MacArthur believes that commitment of one's life to Christ is a condition of eternal salvation (cf. pp. 204-205, 210), he should have included a chapter in order to prove this. But he does not.

The author also seems to believe that confessing one's faith in Christ is a condition of eternal life (cf. pp. 25, 206). Thus a chapter or at least an extended discussion on this supposed condition is essential. Yet neither is included.

According to MacArthur, eternal salvation requires counting the cost and paying the price (pp. 204-205). If so, surely more than two pages could be written on this subject. And surely MacArthur could find a passage *in the Epistles* which teaches this. Instead he refers the reader to two passages on discipleship *from the Gospels* (Luke 14:26-33; Matt 10:34-38)!

If regeneration logically *precedes* faith, as MacArthur suggests in passing comments (cf. pp. 61, 67), then why not a chapter or extended discussion proving this?

If Rom 8:16 is an essential verse on assurance (pp. 164, 171), why isn't a detailed exegesis of it given?

If the exegesis of Hodges, Ryrie, Chafer, myself, and other Free Grace writers is flawed, as MacArthur repeatedly suggests (see subject index), does this not necessitate that he interact with our exegesis rather than simply stating (and often misstating) our views?

Why include an appendix on dispensationalism (pp. 219-33) and then fail even to mention the hottest issue in that theological system—so-called “Progressive” Dispensationalism?—especially since it has direct bearing on the Gospel debate.

## 2. Many Claimed, One or None Cited

Time and time again MacArthur asserts that *some, many, or all*<sup>3</sup> Free Grace advocates hold to a certain position, but then he cites only one (and in many cases none!) who actually holds this position. See, for example, pp. 26, 27, 28, 29, 38, 49, 50, 76, 77, etc.

<sup>3</sup>N.B. MacArthur often makes sweeping claims with little or no support. The following are two examples: On pp. 26-28 he states nine points which he claims are taught by “those who express the no-lordship position.” However, concerning each of the nine points he cites only Charles Ryrie (and only from one of his works). Similarly, on p. 33 MacArthur says, “Advocates of the no-lordship position frequently suggest that preaching repentance adds something to the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone.” Yet he fails to cite even one person who says this.

It is improper to make sweeping statements about what those you oppose believe and then not back them up with sufficient evidence. The minimum evidence would be to cite pages in works by several different authors. Yet MacArthur rarely cites more than one person—and often he cites no one!

### 3. The Pejorative “No-Lordship” Label

In any debate, labels are important. Witness the abortion debate. Depending on who is talking, a person against abortion on demand could be called “pro-life” or “anti-choice.”

While it does not surprise me to see hardened people using misleading and pejorative labels like “anti-choice,” I don’t expect such “loaded” terminology from one who claims to be a minister of the Gospel of Grace. Rather, I would expect such a one to refer to his opponents in an accurate and irenic manner. MacArthur does not.

We call our position the Free Grace position. We call their position just what they call it: Lordship Salvation. Certainly there is nothing derogatory in either of these designations.

MacArthur selects a cumbersome, misleading, and pejorative label for us. He has coined a host of designations, all of which include the words *no-lordship*. He speaks of “no-lordship doctrine” (pp. 39, 50, 97, 123, 173, 198, 202), “no-lordship theology” (pp. 50, 56, 91, 96, 106, 107, 124, 173, 188), “no-lordship teaching” (pp. 37, 108, 163), “the no-lordship gospel” (pp. 25, 26), “the no-lordship position” (pp. 33, 155n), “no-lordship advocates” (pp. 32, 69), “no-lordship people” (p. 140), and “no-lordship apologists” (p. 140).

Is such a label accurate? Do we really believe in “no-lordship”? Of course not. Nor does MacArthur attempt to show even one Free Grace writer who denies the lordship of Christ.

Is the label simple? Hardly!

Is it irenic? It is about as irenic as calling those who oppose abortion “anti-choice.”

Is it helpful? I doubt MacArthur gained any points with people on his side by this ploy. He certainly lost points with anyone sympathetic to our side and most likely with many who are unclear on the issue.

I doubt if he would like it if we called his view *no-grace theology*.

The fact that he chose to adopt a derogatory designation for us makes me question his sense of fair play.



#### 4. Misstating Other's Views

When stating what others believe, it is best to quote them to prove you are treating their views fairly. In this book MacArthur often states the views of Zane Hodges and Charles Ryrie without quoting them. He merely cites pages from their recent books *Absolutely Free!: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation*<sup>4</sup> and *So Great Salvation*.<sup>5</sup>

The difficulty with this practice is that the reader cannot be confident that the views of Hodges and Ryrie have been fairly represented without looking up page after page in the books cited.

As it turns out, MacArthur's representations are not always accurate. Sometimes they are downright misleading. Here are two examples:

*Example #1.* On p. 29 MacArthur says that Hodges believes that "it is dangerous and destructive to question the salvation of professing Christians (AF 18-19, 91-99)." Yet that is not a fair representation.

Note these words by Hodges—words found on one of the pages cited by MacArthur:

To be sure, there is much reason to think that there are multitudes of people in churches today who have never really been saved. But this is due to their failure to understand the gospel offer, or to accept it.<sup>6</sup>

Hodges admits that there are *many* who profess to be Christians who are not. He does *not* say that it is destructive to question the salvation of professing believers for *any reason*. Clearly, the quotation just given shows that he believes it is proper to question the salvation of those who are not clear on the Gospel message.

Rather, Hodges said that it was destructive to question the salvation of someone *on the basis of his or her works!* He wrote:

But lordship thought is not satisfied simply to insist that some conversion experiences are not valid. Nearly everyone would agree to that. Instead, lordship doctrine even goes so far as to disallow an individual's claim to personal trust in Christ *on the grounds that their life is so unworthy that the claim could not be true.*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free!: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1989), 238 pp.

<sup>5</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe In Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 166 pp.

<sup>6</sup>*Absolutely Free!*, 19.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

*Example #2.* On p. 29 MacArthur also said that Hodges believes that “it is possible to experience a moment of faith that guarantees heaven for eternity (AF 107), then to turn away permanently *and live a life that is utterly barren of any spiritual fruit* (AF 118-19, italics supplied).” The material MacArthur chose to italicize is a significant misrepresentation. Nowhere does Hodges speak of “a life that is utterly barren of any spiritual fruit.”

In a recent GES newsletter article Zane Hodges stated his opinion on the issue of whether a believer could ever live an entire life without producing any spiritual fruit:

The idea that one may believe in Him and live for years totally unaffected by the amazing miracle of regeneration, or by the instruction and/or discipline of God his heavenly Father, is a fantastic notion—even bizarre. *We reject it categorically.*<sup>8</sup>

Note that Hodges directly denies what MacArthur said he believes!

#### 5. Contradicting Himself

In several places MacArthur contradicts himself.

One glaring example is when he claims, “No advocate of lordship salvation I am aware of teaches ‘that every Christian will live a basically successful life until the end’” (p. 179).

MacArthur need look no further than the mirror. In *Faith Works* he taught that very thing a number of times:

Any doctrine of eternal security that leaves out perseverance distorts the doctrine of salvation itself. Heaven without holiness ignores the whole purpose for which God chose and redeemed us.<sup>9</sup>

We remain steadfast.<sup>10</sup>

Peter is saying categorically that the essence of what it means to be a Christian is to love Jesus Christ. In fact, there may be no better way to describe the essential expression of the new nature than to say it is *continual love for Christ*.<sup>11</sup>

See also pp. 109-121, 123-38, 139-55, 157-73, 175-92.

Another example of self-contradiction is when he speaks of assurance as “settled confidence” (p. 157) and yet goes on to give so many

<sup>8</sup> *The GES News* (Mar-Apr 1993): 1, italics in original.

<sup>9</sup> *Faith Works*, 182.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 188, italics original.

subjective tests of assurance that he renders settled confidence absolutely impossible.<sup>12</sup>

A similar example on assurance occurs after he suggests that some degree of assurance is possible if you can “see Christ’s glory reflected in you—even dimly” (p. 165), and then goes on to give tests of assurance which make assurance impossible. He followed the remarks just cited with sections having the following headings: “True believers walk in the light” (p. 166), “True believers confess their sins” (p. 167), “True believers keep His commandments” (p. 168), “True believers love the brethren” (p. 169), “True believers affirm sound doctrine” (p. 169), and “True believers follow after holiness” (p. 170).<sup>13</sup>

Examples of MacArthur contradicting himself could be multiplied.<sup>14</sup> It seems that deep within he recognizes that what he is saying is biblically and practically flawed and so he unknowingly contradicts himself.

## B. Theological Weaknesses

### 1. Unbelievers Are Cadavers?

MacArthur claims that unbelievers are “incapable of any spiritual activity” (p. 67) and are “no more able to respond to God than a cadaver” (p. 64). Indeed, after the latter reference he went on to give a very distasteful illustration of a baby that died, and to compare unbelievers to the dead baby which was unable to respond to her mother’s weeping, shouting, and touching.

Are unbelievers really like that? Ephesians 2:1 does speak of unbelievers as being “dead” in their trespasses and sins. Yet that in no way means that they are “incapable of any spiritual activity” and are “no more able to respond to God than a cadaver.”

Interestingly, MacArthur later contradicts himself on this point, though he doesn’t seem to realize it.

In attempting to explain why Peter did not call Cornelius to repentance, MacArthur says, “it is evident that Cornelius *was* repentant” (p. 84, italics in original). Clearly he means that Cornelius “*was already*

<sup>12</sup>See pp. 13-15 below where I discuss his view of assurance.

<sup>13</sup>There is one final section entitled, “True believers have the Holy Spirit” (p. 171). The title is misleading. How does one know he has the Holy Spirit? According to MacArthur “the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) [is] the proof that He resides within” (p. 172). As former President Reagan used to say, “There he goes again!”

<sup>14</sup>I point out several more examples later in this article.

repentant” prior to Peter’s message. Yet Cornelius was an unbeliever at that time! He didn’t become regenerate until he heard Peter’s message (cf. Acts 10:44).

Cornelius is a biblical example which clearly shows that unbelievers indeed are capable of responding to God. Consider the message the unbeliever Cornelius received from God via an angel:

“Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you” (Acts 10:31-32).<sup>15</sup>

Did God actually speak to an unregenerate person? Yes! Did the unsaved person understand what God said? Absolutely! In fact, God also indicates that He had been hearing the prayers and appreciating the almsgiving of Cornelius, an unbeliever (10:31).

Note also Acts 10:34b-35:

In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Peter was talking about unbelievers like Cornelius! Unbelievers can and sometimes do fear God and even work righteousness. Of course, such righteous deeds (cf. 10:31 re almsgiving) are incapable of meriting favor with God: “All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isa 64:6). Yet unbelievers can and do seek God, as Cornelius obviously did.

## 2. Repentant Faith?

MacArthur repeats in this book a claim he made in *The Gospel According to Jesus*: that saving faith includes repentance (which he defines as turning from one’s sins to Christ<sup>16</sup>). Indeed he actually coins the expression “repentant faith” (p. 203).

Concerning repentance, he speaks of the need for “unconditional surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ” (p. 83), for “a radical, 180-degree

<sup>15</sup> Peter adds in Acts 11:14 that the angel also told Cornelius that Peter would tell him “words by which you and all your household will be saved.”

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, p. 74: “If we fail to call people to turn from their sins, we are not communicating the same Gospel the apostles proclaimed.” And p. 77: “Repentance in the context of the new birth means turning from sin to the Savior” and “repentance turns from sin to Christ.”

turning from sin" (p. 83), and for "[counting] the cost of being a Christian" (p. 84).

Interestingly, others who hold to Lordship Salvation have begun to criticize MacArthur on this point. Michael Horton, an outspoken advocate of Lordship Salvation, writes:

MacArthur adds W. E. Vine's definition of faith as including even "conduct inspired by such surrender" (173-74). If we are justified by faith and if faith is surrender, obedience, and conduct inspired by such surrender, then we are justified by works. The logic seems unavoidable:

We are justified by faith alone.

Faith is surrender, obedience, and conduct inspired by such surrender.

Therefore, we are justified by surrender, obedience, and conduct inspired by such obedience.<sup>17</sup>

Horton was commenting on MacArthur's views as expressed in *The Gospel According to Jesus*. He indicated that these concerns had been brought to MacArthur's attention and that he understood that MacArthur would correct himself.<sup>18</sup> Yet not only was there no admission of error, MacArthur again repeats the same claim.

Horton went so far as to charge MacArthur with teaching an essentially Roman Catholic view of justification:

MacArthur, it seems, is so disturbed by the antinomianism of his opponents that, in order to make what he calls easy-believism more untenable, he insists that the believer is justified by knowledge, assent, and *obedience* (or, at least, "the determination of the will to obey truth"), rather than by knowledge, assent, and trust. Granted, the formulation is different from official Roman Catholic teaching, but it merely moves the element of works into the definition of faith itself. This leaves the impression that, if a believer is repeating the same sin, he or she must not be justified yet, since "repentance is a critical element of genuine faith" (p. 172) and "faith is not complete unless it is obedient" (p. 173).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Michael Horton, *Christ the Lord* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 44.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 43. Of course, p. 43 precedes p. 44, from which the above criticism was quoted. However, on p. 43 Horton was talking about MacArthur correcting his views on the same subject: moral change as a requirement for justification.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

And a few pages later he adds,

Not only does MacArthur seem here to repeat the Roman Catholic confusion of justification and sanctification; he actually makes the forensic declaration depend on a real moral change in the person's behavior. First, the robe is "the reality of a changed life" not the declaration of a changed status, as the Reformers would have understood it. Second, "the son cannot receive all the blessedness of the father's table until he is robed in the right robe. And so there must be more than a declaration involved." In other words, God cannot declare one righteous before there is moral change. The legal declaration depends on moral transformation in MacArthur's statements here, just as surely as in Trent's.<sup>20</sup>

When one defines repentance as unconditional surrender and turning from sin, to speak of "repentant faith" and to say that faith includes repentance is to teach salvation by works.

### 3. Baptism and Salvation?

While MacArthur does not believe that baptism is a condition of justification, he does appear to believe that all "true" Christians will be baptized. Concerning the view of the NT authors he writes, "Only those who were baptized were considered Christians. That is why the Ethiopian eunuch was so eager to be baptized (Acts 8:36-39)" (p. 208).

This is an astonishing claim. Yet the only proof he offers that the NT writers considered only baptized individuals as Christians is the case of the Ethiopian eunuch.

That the eunuch wanted to be baptized so that he might prove to Philip (and ultimately Luke) that he was really saved is impossible to establish from the text. In fact, the text suggests the opposite.<sup>21</sup> Philip baptized the eunuch because he was *already convinced* that the man believed the Gospel.

One wonders what MacArthur does with Acts 10:44-48. Clearly Cornelius was known by Peter (and Luke) to be a believer before he was baptized. To suggest that Peter wouldn't consider him a Christian until he was baptized is ridiculous.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 42-43. Horton goes on to say, "To his credit, however, MacArthur seems to flatly contradict these very comments elsewhere, namely, in *The Gospel According to Jesus* (cf. 187)." However, MacArthur's occasional disclaimers do not eliminate his repeated refrains—as even Horton acknowledges in the chapter cited.

<sup>21</sup> N.B. Verse 37 is not included in either the oldest or in the vast majority of manuscripts and for that reason should not be considered part of the text.

MacArthur is close to teaching baptismal regeneration. There is a fine line—some might even say no line!<sup>22</sup>—between saying that all who are believers will necessarily be baptized and saying that baptism is a condition for eternal salvation.

#### 4. The Word Insufficient for Assurance?

MacArthur asks, “Should Christians seek assurance through clinging only to the *objective* promises of Scripture, or through *subjective* self-examination?” (p. 162, italics original). He then answers in this way:

If we opt for the objective promises only, those who profess faith in Christ while denying Him by their deeds (cf. Titus 1:16) can claim an assurance they have no entitlement to. But if we say assurance is available only through subjective self-examination we render full assurance practically impossible and make assurance a wholly mystical affair.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly thereafter (p. 163) he quotes an article by me in *The GES News* in which I argued that the promises of God are sufficient for assurance.<sup>24</sup> He responds by saying, “That extreme [position] cannot be supported practically or biblically” and “the no-Lordship approach to assurance is *too objective*” (p. 164, italics original).

MacArthur’s position is fascinating. Neither the objective promises of God nor the subjective works which believers do are sufficient, by themselves, for assurance. However, when “the objective and subjective grounds for our assurance are applied to us by the Holy Spirit” (p. 164), the result is what MacArthur calls “well-grounded assurance” (p. 164) or “full assurance” (pp. 157, 160, 162, 166).

He never explains what “full assurance” is. He seems to imply, however, that it might approach 100% certainty. He speaks of degrees of assurance (p. 158; “The greater our sense of assurance, the more we can savor that glory in this earthly life”) and even of “firm *and settled* confidence” (p. 157, italics added).

However, how could a person ever *settle* the issue of assurance if self-examination of his works plays *any* role in assurance?

Even if we were to grant that 100% certainty could be obtained by a combination of objective promises and subjective works, that would

<sup>22</sup> Logan, for example, argued in *The Westminster Journal of Theology* (46 [1984]: 26-52) that what *must* be done actually *is* a condition.

<sup>23</sup> *Faith Works*, 162.

<sup>24</sup> Robert N. Wilkin, “Putting the Gospel Debate in Sharper Focus,” *The GES News* (May 1991): 1.

mean that one would never again need to look to his works once he settled the issue. He would forever thereafter know he was a “genuine” believer and hence the objective promises would then be all he needed.

However, MacArthur feels that self-examination is to take place over and over again. One is never to cease self-examination for the purpose of gaining assurance until he dies: “We are commanded to examine ourselves regularly—at least as often as we participate in the Lord’s Supper” (p. 162)!

Ultimately MacArthur’s position on assurance is only cosmetically different from that of the Puritans of whom he himself wrote:

Most of the Puritans taught that believers could not expect assurance until long after conversion, and only after a life of extended faithfulness. They tended to make assurance dependent on the believer’s ability to live at an almost unattainable level of personal holiness. I have profited greatly from reading their works, but I often wonder how many of them were able to live up to their own standards.

As we might expect, the Puritans’ demanding preaching led to a widespread *lack* of assurance among their flocks. Christians became obsessed with whether they were truly elect, and many lapsed into morbid introspection and utter despair. That explains why so much of the Puritan literature is written for people struggling with the question of assurance.<sup>25</sup>

Even some who agree with MacArthur on Lordship Salvation and on the need to look to one’s works for assurance find his articulation of how one gains assurance to be dangerously flawed. Commenting on MacArthur’s explanation of assurance in *The Gospel According to Jesus*,<sup>26</sup> Horton writes:

While MacArthur may not intend for readers to come away from his remarks prepared to conclude that they are not Christians because they find themselves committing the same sins repeatedly, I do not think this is an unwarranted conclusion based on his comments.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Faith Works*, 161, italics original.

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly enough, in *Faith Works* (p. 158n) MacArthur chides me for suggesting in a review that one of the major issues in *The Gospel According to Jesus* was assurance. He writes, “Assurance certainly was *not* a major issue” (p. 158n). Yet even other Lordship Salvationists recognize that assurance was indeed a major issue raised in *The Gospel According to Jesus!*

<sup>27</sup> Horton, *Christ the Lord*, 50.



Shortly thereafter he adds:

MacArthur, as we have seen, not only takes the focus for our assurance off of the finished work of Christ, but even raises questions about the focus for faith itself. Is faith resting in Christ's life and death or in ours? We must be careful not to react to the antinomian threat by driving the sheep back to themselves, away from Christ.<sup>28</sup>

#### 5. Trust Includes Surrender?

MacArthur claims that trusting the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life "necessarily involves some degree of love, allegiance, and surrender to His authority" (p. 50).

No wonder MacArthur can't offer anyone 100% certainty of salvation! If "some degree" of love, allegiance, and surrender is required in order to believe in Christ, *how much is enough?* How would one ever know if he had yet loved or yielded sufficiently?

MacArthur recognizes that his words open him to the charge of making works a condition of eternal life. He attempts to blunt that charge by saying that works are the inevitable result of faith, not a part of it (p. 50).

His defense is flawed, however. Note that he said that trust "necessarily involves some degree of love, allegiance, and surrender to His authority." Works are not only externally observable acts. Works are also inner attitudes such as love, allegiance, and surrender. Compare Gal 5:19-23 for examples of attitudes which represent negative works (e.g., jealousies, envy) and positive works (e.g., patience, kindness).

#### 6. Saving Faith Is a Unique Kind of Faith?

MacArthur illustrates what he calls "natural faith" or "everyday faith" in this way:

We drink water out of a faucet, believing it is safe. We drive our automobiles in freeway traffic, trusting that the brakes will work. We submit to the surgeon's knife and the dentist's drill by faith. When we drop film off at the drugstore, we trust that the prints will be ready at the promised time (cf. *SGS* 118). We believe in the basic integrity of our governmental leaders . . .<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> *Faith Works*, 42.

He then gives two reasons why he believes saving faith is a different *kind* of faith than that.

His first argument is as follows:

To begin with, natural faith rests on an object that is not necessarily reliable. The water *might* actually be tainted. The brakes *could* fail. Surgeons *do* make mistakes. The drugstore *may not* deliver your prints on time. The president *probably will* default on some of his campaign promises. But when we believe unto eternal life, we trust something more real and Someone more trustworthy than anything or anyone we could ever comprehend with the natural senses. Our senses may lie; God cannot (Titus 1:2). People fail; God does not (Num. 23:19). Circumstances change; God never does (Mal. 3:6). So the faith described in Hebrews 11 is focused on an infinitely more dependable *object* than any of the day-to-day varieties of faith.<sup>30</sup>

This argument is patently porous. Free Grace proponents argue that what makes saving faith saving is the *Object* of the faith, not the faith itself.<sup>31</sup> Thus the fact that certain objects of faith may be untrustworthy fails to prove that saving faith is a unique kind of faith. In fact, MacArthur's argument actually supports the Free Grace view that what makes saving faith saving is the object, not the faith.

His illustration points up the need to find a completely dependable object of faith when it comes to the issue of our eternal destiny. We have such an Object: the Lord Jesus Christ. Since we *have* such an Object, "natural faith" or "everyday faith" would be sufficient according to MacArthur's own illustration!

However, what of MacArthur's second proof? He goes on to say,

Also, the *nature* of faith is different in the spiritual realm. Natural faith relies on the physical senses. We tend to believe only what we or others can see, hear, taste, and feel. When we trust the water, our brakes, the surgeon, the drugstore, or the president, we do so because our senses and human experience tell us these things are generally worthy of our confidence. Hebrews 11:1 faith, on the other hand, is a *supernatural* conviction—a solid, unshakable assurance that is contrary to human nature. It includes a capacity to lay hold of spiritual reality imperceptible to the natural man: "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 25-33; Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, 118-21.

he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor. 2:14).<sup>32</sup>

Is he right that faith in Jesus Christ does not involve our senses? If that were the case, people could and would be saved without *hearing* the Gospel! Yet in Rom 10:14 Paul asks “And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” In v 17 of Romans 10 Paul concludes, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

I will always remember the humorous illustration I heard Dr. Adrian Rogers give in a seminary chapel message. He said, “If the hyper-Calvinistic view [of saving faith and salvation] were true, then the preacher would just whistle the tune to “Just As I Am” and the elect would recognize the tune and come forward.”<sup>33</sup>

What about the passage to which MacArthur refers, 1 Cor 2:14?

Whatever it means, notice that it says nothing about two kinds of faith. The issue in the passage is that apart from divine enablement unbelievers do not *perceive spiritual truth accurately*, not that unbelievers lack a special kind of faith.

MacArthur would have us believe that 1 Cor 2:14 teaches that a natural man can be convinced of the truth of the Gospel and yet not be saved because his faith is mere natural faith. Yet 1 Cor 2:14 teaches just the opposite!

The passage says that the natural man *does not* receive the things of the Spirit of God! To receive spiritual truth is to be convinced that it is true (“they are spiritually *discerned*”). No unbeliever is convinced that the Gospel is true! Not one!

How, then, does any unbeliever ever believe the Gospel? He does so because God draws all (John 12:32; 16:9-11), and if he responds by seeking God as Cornelius did,<sup>34</sup> God then shines the light upon him (2 Cor 4:4). Natural men can indeed perceive the Gospel rightly; but only if and when the Holy Spirit enlightens them.

### C. Exegetical Weaknesses

Exegesis is the science and art of “drawing out” the author’s intended

<sup>32</sup> *Faith Works*, 42.

<sup>33</sup> Before MacArthur berates Dr. Rogers or me for that illustration, neither Dr. Rogers nor I literally believes that one must come forward to be saved. He was using that language because it illustrated the foolishness of the view that people don’t need to hear the Gospel to be saved.

<sup>34</sup> See the discussion above on pp. 9-10, “Unbelievers Are Cadavers?”

meaning. To do this we must make careful observations and ask key questions of the text.

### 1. Failure to Prove His Exegesis

In this book MacArthur rarely tells us *why* his interpretations are correct. At best he mentions a word, phrase, or sentence from Scripture without explanation and assumes that that settles the discussion. At worst he merely states his interpretation as though it were obvious. Three examples of this follow (the bracketed material after each quote represents my comments on his arguments):

True Christians love Christ. His love for us, producing our love for Him (1 John 4:19), is one of the guarantees that we will persevere to the end (Rom. 8:33-39). Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me" (v. 21). Conversely, "He who does not love Me does not keep My words" (v. 24).<sup>35</sup>

[These verses do not support his point. Rather, they directly contradict it!<sup>36</sup>]

God's own holiness thus *requires* that we persevere. "God's grace insures our persevering—but this does not make it any less *our* persevering."<sup>37</sup> We cannot acquire "the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" unless we "press on toward the goal" (Phil. 3:14). But as we "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), we find that "it is God who is at work in [us], both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (v. 23).<sup>38</sup>

[This is a false deduction. The verses cited call for, but do not guarantee, perseverance.<sup>39</sup>]

<sup>35</sup> *Faith Works*, 188.

<sup>36</sup> John 14:15, 21, 24 and 1 John 4:19 all say that Christ's love for us motivates us to love and obey Him. Of course it does! Powerfully! However, if a believer loses sight of Christ's love for him (by ceasing to read God's Word and hear it preached, by failure to fellowship with other Christians and partake of the Lord's Supper, etc.), then his love for Christ will diminish or even fail. Romans 8:33-39 guarantees eternal security, not that all believers will live godly lives.

<sup>37</sup> Here MacArthur has a footnote number. The actual footnote reads: "Horne, *Salvation*, 95."

<sup>38</sup> *Faith Works*, 182, italics original.

<sup>39</sup> For further discussion of Phil 2:12 and 3:14 see Wilkin, *The GES News* (May-June, 1993): 2-3, and (Aug 1991): 2-3, respectively.

Those who argue for a subjective approach will point out that Scripture clearly calls for self-examination. We are commanded to examine ourselves regularly—at least as often as we participate in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28). Paul also issued this challenge to the church at Corinth: "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Cor. 13:5) Clearly Paul was dealing here with the matter of assurance. The Corinthians were to test themselves *to see if they were "in the faith."*<sup>40</sup>

[That self-examination is commanded by Scripture is irrefutable. However, neither 1 Cor 11:28 nor 2 Cor 13:5 deals with assurance of salvation.<sup>41</sup>]

## 2. Mistaking Agreement for Proof

Any theological student who has ever written an exegetical paper knows that citing someone else who holds your interpretation is not *proof* of your view! Yet MacArthur often acts as though such agreement was proof.

A good example of this appears in the second citation just given (under section 1: "Failure to Prove His Exegesis").

MacArthur first states his thesis: "God's own holiness thus *requires* that we persevere." He then gives three sentences which he evidently puts forth in order to prove his point.

The first supporting sentence reads: "God's grace insures our persevering—but this does not make it any less *our* persevering." This is followed by two sentences in which he cites parts of three verses from Philipians.

<sup>40</sup> *Faith Works*, 162, italics original. Note the word *clearly* in the next to last sentence. Why is this clear? We are not told!

<sup>41</sup> Concerning 2 Cor 13:5 see the article by Brookes in our "Voice from the Past" section in this issue (pp. 53-55); see also Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 2nd ed., 1992), 107-14; and Wilkin, *The GES News*, (Oct 1989): 2.

The idea that the examination of 1 Cor 11:28 concerns assurance is totally without warrant. Paul had already repeatedly affirmed that his readers were saved (cf. 1:2; 3:1-3; 6:19-20). He does so in the immediate context as well (cf. vv 30-34). The term used for *sleep* in v 30 is only used in the NT figuratively of death, as here, when it refers to Christians. Believers are to examine themselves to see if they have a proper attitude toward Christ and His Supper (as opposed to those Christians in Corinth who came to the Lord's Supper to gorge themselves on food and to get drunk on wine!).

An untaught believer could *easily* misunderstand the source of the first quote and think it came from Scripture. Of course, MacArthur does indicate in a footnote that the quotation is from Horne's book *Salvation*, and it is practically inconceivable that he intended to mislead the reader in this way. However, studies show that over 90% of all readers do not consult footnotes at all. Failure to identify the source of the quotation in the text is a highly unfortunate occurrence in itself.

For the person who recognizes that this is not Scripture and who takes the time to see that it is quoted from Horne, the logical question is *so what?* Horne's statement proves nothing. The reader isn't even given enough material from Horne to see what proof *he* gives for the statement (or even what he means by it!). All we have is another dogmatic statement!

Many other examples could be given.<sup>42</sup> The point is, agreement does not prove one's interpretation. It is interesting that often when MacArthur cites those who agree with him they too make dogmatic statements which are unsubstantiated by any proof.

### 3. Failure to Refute Interpretations He Rejects

In addition, MacArthur fails to show why other interpretations are incorrect. He should have stated and then destroyed the proofs given for other interpretations.

Instead, MacArthur routinely fails to mention the proofs cited by his opponents. He merely states a view and then rejects it by a wave of his hand.

In the following material MacArthur rejects a view I expressed on saving faith. Notice that he fails to cite any of the arguments I gave for my position. Also note the pejorative language in the first sentence:

How far will no-lordship apologists go in divesting the gospel of its essential content? A recent article in the leading no-lordship fraternity's monthly newsletter suggested that "a person can place his or her trust in Jesus Christ and Him alone without understanding precisely *how* He takes away sins." Therefore, the article stated, "it is possible to believe savingly in Christ without understanding the reality of His resurrection." The man who wrote the piece maintains that neither Christ's death nor His resurrection are essential to the evangelistic message. It is enough, he says, "to present only the core truth of the gospel: namely, that whoever believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life."

<sup>42</sup> Cf. 51, 111, 148, 150, 151, 152, 154, 189, 205.

Evidently he believes people can be saved who have never even heard that Christ died for their sins.<sup>43</sup>

In the article I pointed out that Peter was already a believer (in light of John 2:11) when he rebuked Jesus for predicting that He would go to Jerusalem and be killed (Matt 16:21-23). Clearly Peter neither understood nor believed that Jesus was going to die on the Cross for him. Yet he was a believer.

MacArthur does not refute this. He gives no explanation of why my reasoning is flawed. He doesn't even mention my reasoning, so, of course, he is free to avoid the problem of answering it.

I went on in the article to discuss the resurrection. It is also clear that the 11 disciples did not believe in Jesus' resurrection until after He arose and appeared to them; yet they were already saved.

Possibly my arguments *were* weak. I don't think they were. However, if someone is going to criticize a view, it is incumbent upon him to state and refute the argumentation in favor of it.

Numerous other examples could be given, but space restrictions prohibit this. However, even a casual reading of *Faith Works* shows that MacArthur is not interested in *interacting* with Free Grace views. In order to interact he would have to tell his readers *why* we believe what we do. To do that he would have to refute our arguments. (Whether he can't or just didn't get around to it, we do not know. However, it is easy to see that he did *not* refute our arguments.)

#### 4. Citing Verses out of Context

On several occasions MacArthur cites a verse or two, ending before the sentence concludes. This is, of course, acceptable practice, as long as one does not leave out something essential to the flow of thought. However, at times MacArthur leaves off material essential to the argument. Interestingly, it is also material which contradicts what he was trying to say.

For example, on pp. 120-21 he cites Col 1:21-22 in an attempt to show that believers are slaves to righteousness in their experience. The verses cited read: "Although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." However, Paul's sentence doesn't end where

<sup>43</sup> *Faith Works*, 46. MacArthur's quotes are from my article entitled "Tough Questions About Saving Faith," *The GES News* (June 1990): 1, 4.

MacArthur does. It continues: “if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Verse 23 doesn't fit well with what MacArthur was saying, so he left it off. Actually v 23 disproves the point that he was making—that believers are slaves to righteousness in their experience. Believers will only be presented at the Judgment Seat of Christ as being holy, blameless, and beyond reproach if, in this life, they have continued in the faith.<sup>44</sup>

Another example is found on p. 58. There MacArthur claims that “grace is not a dormant or abstract quality, but a dynamic, active, working principle.” One of the verses he cites to “prove” this (again verses are given without any explanation) is 2 Pet 3:18. Verse 18 is the second half of Peter's sentence. Actually, when read in context v. 18 *disproves* MacArthur's contention that all believers grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Second Peter 3:17-18 reads:

You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Christians may “fall from [their] own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.” The antidote is to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.”

It is interesting that MacArthur unintentionally undercut his own argument when he said that Peter told believers in v 18 what they “should” do: “Peter said we *should* ‘grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’ (2 Pet. 3:18)” (p. 58, italics added).

#### IV. Conclusion

In *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles*, MacArthur has distorted the teachings of Holy Scripture on a number of vital doctrines. The results of this distortion are:

- (1) He exhorts people to look within themselves for assurance of

<sup>44</sup>See Robert N. Wilkin, “Is Continuing in the Faith a Condition of Eternal Life (Colossians 1:21-23),” *The GES News* (Mar 1991): 2.



salvation, rather than to the only reliable source, the promises of God.

(2) He turns the free gift of eternal life into something which must be purchased by sinners.

(3) Saving faith is transformed by MacArthur from conviction that what Jesus promises in the Gospel is true (i.e., that He gives eternal life to every believer) into a combination of trust in God's promises, turning from sins, commitment, surrender, and obedience.

(4) The doctrine of eternal security is denigrated by MacArthur as being a mere appendage to the supposed doctrine of perseverance.

(5) No mention is made by MacArthur of the powerful motivations of love and gratitude, chastisement, temporal blessings, eternal rewards, and the Judgment Seat of Christ.

(6) Fear of hell, which God intends to be a thing of the past for the believer, is put forth by MacArthur as a major motivation for Christians to obey God.

(7) Regeneration, according to MacArthur, logically occurs before faith—meaning that at least in theory there is such a thing as a regenerate unbeliever.

(8) MacArthur's view of justification is essentially that of Rome: God justifies the godly, not the ungodly.

(9) He turns the analogy of faith on its head by bypassing clear passages on the Gospel and on assurance in favor of unclear passages which he can more easily manipulate to develop his conclusions.

(10) His views of both justification and sanctification are legalistic and mechanical, lacking a grasp of the personal dynamic of looking to the Lord Jesus Christ as one's Savior, Lord, and Friend.

Recently I had lunch with a colleague in GES and as we ate I brought up the subject of progressive sanctification.

I asked this colleague if he felt there was any special key to living the Christian life. He responded as follows:

There are no formulas given in Scripture. And, while there are rules, the Christian life is not essentially the observance of the commandments. Rather, the key to the Christian life, if we can call it that, is the contemplation of Christ. Our walk with Christ is a personal relationship. It is vital that we focus on Christ, not on the rules. Otherwise we reduce Christianity to a mechanical, legalistic obsession.

It struck me as I reflected on MacArthur's *Faith Works* that this is exactly what it is missing.

*Faith Works* reads more like an instruction manual for a VCR than a letter extolling the virtues of one's dear friend.

Faith *does* indeed work for the one who grasps the grace of God. It appropriates for the sinner the free gift of eternal life. It results in a new inner self which is totally holy and righteous.

However, faith does *not* work for the one who loses sight of God's grace. *One is not believing the Gospel* if he is trusting in his own acts of turning from sins, surrender, commitment, and obedience. Either one trusts in Christ plus nothing or he is not trusting in Christ *alone!*

MacArthur has admitted on occasion that he once believed the Gospel of Free Grace salvation. My prayer for him is that he would return to the grace of God so that he could indeed currently have faith in the true, biblical Gospel which really works.

While faith does work, the book *Faith Works* does not.

# THE NEW PURITANISM

## Part 2:

### MICHAEL S. HORTON: HOLY WAR WITH UNHOLY WEAPONS

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#### [Introduction to the Series

Over the last year or so a growing number of books and articles has appeared which have targeted the Free Grace movement for critique and rebuttal. These publications mention the Grace Evangelical Society and its literature. This is a positive development. GES definitely wishes to have its views seriously discussed in the marketplace of ideas.

It might be possible to describe these writings as presenting what is known as “Lordship Salvation.” But this designation, though widely used, does not indicate the true historical antecedents of the movement in its present form. The term could be used with equal ease to describe many who are Arminian in theology. Yet the major “lordship” writers of today are not Arminian, however much they tend toward conclusions similar to those of Arminians (e.g., on assurance). Instead, these writers describe themselves as Calvinists. But John Calvin himself, were he alive today, would probably disown them because they more closely resemble the scholastic theology that *resisted* the Reformation than Calvin’s own theology.<sup>1</sup>

In deference, therefore, to the many Calvinists who hold a biblical theology of grace (e.g., R. T. Kendall, M. Charles Bell, Charles C. Ryrie), we refuse to describe the writers we are talking about as Calvinists. Instead, it would be better to identify them with the theology that became predominant in Puritan thought and which was, in significant

<sup>1</sup> For just one of the points on which this seems true, see Paul Holloway, “A Return to Rome: Lordship Salvation’s Doctrine of Faith,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 4 (Autumn 1991): 13-21.

respects, a rejection of certain basic concepts of Reformation theology. Hence my series title is "The New (i.e., contemporary) Puritanism."

In this series we will consider some of the more significant recent literature produced from this particular theological perspective. In the process we will seek to determine how fairly, and how effectively, these writers have confronted the Free Grace movement.]

## I. Introduction

Michael S. Horton is the president of an organization known as Christians United for Reformation (CURE), with headquarters in Anaheim, California. As its journalistic arm, CURE publishes a magazine called *modernReformation* [sic], which promotes CURE's point of view. On the masthead of this magazine CURE is identified as "a non-profit educational foundation committed to communicating the insights of the 16th century Reformation to the 20th century Church."

The book under review here is a symposium volume entitled, *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992; 240 pp.) and is edited by Horton. He also contributed a preface, an introduction, and two out of the eight articles the book contains. Four other contributors (W. Robert Godfrey, Rick Ritchie, Kim Riddlebarger, and Rod Rosenblatt) are listed as "Writers" on the masthead of *modernReformation*. The two remaining contributors are Paul Schaefer, a freelance writer, and Robert Strimple, a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in California (as also is Godfrey, mentioned above).

Clearly there is no reason to quarrel with the designation "A CURE Book" which appears on the title page.

Michael S. Horton's name has achieved considerable visibility in recent years through a number of books, including *The Agony of Deceit* (which he edited) and *Made in America* (which he wrote). But it is probable that many to whom his *name* is known could not pinpoint his *theology* beyond saying that it was evangelical. However, as one reviewer of *Made in America* has noted:

Horton's major concern is not with the country in general, but how quickly American evangelicals in particular abandoned *the Puritan ideal*, particularly its *Calvinistic theology* and world view, and accomodated themselves to whatever the culture dictated [italics added].<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Robert W. Patterson, "Did the Reformation Take a Wrong Turn in America?" *Christianity Today* 35 (14, November 25, 1991): 30-32.

Later, the same reviewer notes that “those who do not share Horton’s love for *the five Points of Calvinism* may find his constant harping on Arminianism excessive” [italics added].<sup>3</sup> An awareness of the theology behind *Christ the Lord* is essential if we are to correctly evaluate this book.

## II. Let the Reader Beware

In the last analysis, *Christ the Lord* is a vigorous attack on Free Grace theology from a slightly disguised Dortian (five-point Calvinist) perspective.

The reader should understand that five-point Calvinism generally denies the validity of all free will in human beings and embraces a harsh doctrine of reprobation along with a rigid view of divine election. To put it plainly, those who are lost were unconditionally assigned to hell by divine decree in eternity past. Since they have no free will, there is nothing they can possibly do about their eternal reprobation.

But equally, the elect can do nothing either, not even believe. This leads to the doctrine that our faith does not appropriate God’s gift of life, but rather faith *results from* God’s sovereign regeneration of the elect person. To the five-point Calvinist, regeneration logically *precedes* faith, despite all of the Scriptures that condition eternal life and/or justification on faith.

It follows, as well, that Christ did not pay the penalty for the sins of the non-elect, but only for those of the elect. This too flies in the face of Scripture (2 Cor 5:19; 1 Tim 2:3-6; 1 John 2:2).

None of these ideas has any right to be called normative Protestant theology. None has ever been held by a wide cross-section of Christendom. Most importantly, none of them is biblical. In the opinion of this reviewer *all* of them lie outside the proper parameters of Christian orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the contributors to this book do not lay explicit claim to this set of doctrines. To do so would have “turned off” a large majority of Christian readers. Instead, they feel more comfortable hurling at their opponents such epithets as “Arminian” and “antinomian.” But by concealing the full scope of their own theology—and by laying claim

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>4</sup> One can obtain an instructive exposure to five-point Calvinism in the volume by John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991).

to orthodoxy—they actually construct a fantasy-world. They create the deceptive illusion that the Free Grace movement is an enemy to historic orthodoxy.

But in fact, the Free Grace movement is *not* an enemy to orthodoxy. On the other hand, most (but not all) Free Grace people are indeed opposed to the “Christian fatalism” of 5-point Calvinism.

The writers of this volume are sometimes so intense that one feels they regard their assault on Free Grace theology as a kind of “holy war.” But if this is their view of it, their weapons are decidedly *unholy*. Let us examine some of these “weapons,” which the writers freely deploy. Limits of space require our focus to be mainly on Horton, the leading offender here.

### III. Unholy Weapons

Very few books that I have read deal so heavily in caricature and misrepresentation. It was hard for me even to *recognize* myself after encountering so many false strokes on this volume’s portrait of me. We will look at some of these “false strokes” as we survey the “unholy weapons” deployed in this volume.

#### A. False Statements

##### 1. The Issue of Saving Faith

Under his discussion of “Is Faith a Gift?” (Introduction, p. 16), Horton refers to my approving citation of Dr. Robert Preus in *Absolutely Free!* (Note 5, pp. 227-28).<sup>5</sup> Horton describes Preus as “perhaps the leading conservative Lutheran scholar in our generation” (p. 16), and quotes the section (which I also quoted) where Preus states:

The Arminians too opposed the Lutheran doctrine by making faith (which they granted was trust) a work (*actus*) of man. Like the Romanists they had a synergistic notion of how man came to faith . . . Their deviations from the evangelical model are in force today, although in somewhat less gross form. We have all encountered them.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, and Dallas: Redención Viva, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Preuss, “Perennial Problems in the Doctrine of Justification,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 (July 1981): 172.

What follows in Horton is an astounding and reckless charge. He writes:

Indeed, we have all encountered them, not least in Zane Hodges's *Absolutely Free!* That Hodges can approvingly cite these remarks while *laboring throughout the book* [italics added] to establish that very Roman Catholic and Arminian view of saving faith as a human act and the product of a synergistic (i.e., cooperative) response of free will to divine grace demonstrates the author's confusion either as to what the Reformers taught or as to his own position [p. 16].

This is totally "off the wall," to use a colloquial expression. We should note that, in saying that I labor "*throughout the book*" to prove what he charges me with, Horton does not cite so much as one single page-reference! Since I do *not* hold or teach what Horton says I do, Horton's statement is flatly false.

What is equally bad is the question of whether or not Horton has even read with care the very footnote in my book from which he himself was quoting! In that note I speak approvingly of Preus's insistence on the traditional Lutheran understanding of faith as "pure receptivity." I also refer to Preus's citation of Luther's own great statement: "Faith holds out the hand and the sack and just lets the good be done to it. For God is the giver . . . , we are the receivers who receive the gift through faith that does nothing."<sup>7</sup> This is my view of faith, too.

I do not contradict this position anywhere in *Absolutely Free!* Horton's claim that I do is without foundation. Faith is *not* an "*actus*" in either the Roman Catholic or Arminian sense. It is "pure receptivity" to the offer of the Gospel. Faith is a *persuasion* of the heart, not an "*act*" of the human will.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. The Second or Third Point of Calvinism?

After the discussion above, we are hardly surprised to read another accusation by Horton:

<sup>7</sup> Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 227.

<sup>8</sup> One might note here Kendall's crisp summation of Calvin's view of saving faith: "What stands out in these descriptions is the given, intellectual, passive, and assuring nature of faith. What is absent is a need for gathering faith, voluntarism, *faith as man's act*, and faith that must await experimental knowledge to verify its presence." R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 19 (italics added). I, of course, concur with such a view of saving faith.

Denying *the doctrine of unconditional election* (“this tragic error,” Hodges calls it) and the effectiveness of God’s grace in granting faith, the author adds . . . [p. 17; italics added].

This is also an untrue statement. I say nothing in *Absolutely Free!* about the doctrine of *unconditional election* (the so-called second point of Calvinism). As a matter of fact, I hold to that doctrine, though probably not in a form to which Horton would give his approval.

In my text the words “this tragic error” refer to the *third* point of Calvinism, namely, to the doctrine of *limited atonement*. This doctrine is often denied by those Calvinists who hold to the other four points of Calvinism (including unconditional election). With apologies to the reader, I must quote myself here in order to make my point. I wrote:

Frequently (though not always) lordship salvation is combined with a harsh system of thought that *denies the reality of God’s love for every single human being*. According to this kind of theology, God dooms most men to eternal damnation long before they are born and *really gives His Son to die only for the elect*.

For such thinkers, the declaration that “God so loved the world” (John 3:16) must be tortured into meaning something less than His universal love for mankind. It does not lie within the scope of this book to deal with *this tragic error*” (italics added).<sup>9</sup>

No doubt this section of my book greatly displeased Horton, who evidently holds to “limited atonement.” But why could he not accurately designate the doctrine I was criticizing? Is this carelessness? Or is it an unwillingness to allow his belief in “limited atonement” to be plainly declared. After all, most Christians throughout church history have rejected this doctrine. Furthermore, a powerful case has been made that *Calvin himself did not hold it!*<sup>10</sup> Is Horton afraid that “open confession” will undermine his case to the general Christian public?

<sup>9</sup> Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 85-86.

<sup>10</sup> For effective discussions of this issue, leading to the conclusion that Calvin held to *unlimited* atonement, the reader should refer to Kendall’s book (cited in footnote 7); to M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985); and to A. N. S. Lane, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Assurance,” *Vox Evangelica* 11 (1979): 32-54.



### 3. Revelation 3:20

Or, we might take the following unwarranted statement by Horton:

Hodges also returns to the faulty, if popular, exegesis of Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” It is clear from the context that Jesus is addressing “the church of the Laodiceans,” not the unbelieving world, as Hodges and others interpret it [pp. 17-18].

How could Horton possibly have come up with this? Certainly not by a careful reading of my book! In fact I say clearly of Rev 3:20 that:

It would be wrong to take this famous statement as a simple gospel invitation, though that has often been done. Here our Lord is addressing a Christian church and, clearly, anyone in the church is invited to respond.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, on p. 150 of my book, I refer to Rev 3:20 in connection with *Christian* repentance! Horton’s statement about my view is *totally* false.

### 4. Conclusion

The observant reader will have noticed that the three false statements I have cited occur on pp. 16, 17 and 17-18. This is falsification at a very rapid clip! Obviously I would soon use up all the space in this article if I tried to enumerate each and every false assertion this volume makes about my views.

Suffice it to say, Horton and his fellow authors are so unreliable in stating these views, that none of their statements about me should be taken at face value unless carefully verified by the reader from my actual writings!

### B. Distortions

As we have said, the writers in *Christ the Lord* frequently just misstate my views; on the other hand, they often distort them. Once again we will focus on Horton.

#### 1. The Charge of Denying God’s Sovereignty

On p. 21 (still in his Introduction!), Horton rejects my view about the statement in Eph 2:10 that Christians are “created . . . for good works,

<sup>11</sup> Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 129.

which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” In *Absolutely Free!* (p. 73), I stated that one cannot find in this text “any kind of guarantee that the stated purpose will be fulfilled.”

Horton replies: “So, once again, the author follows his logic to its sad conclusion: God is not sovereign; he does not achieve his gracious purposes . . .” (p. 21).

Has Horton never heard the formulation to which even many Calvinists hold, namely that, “What God desires, He does not always decree”? God may deeply desire certain goals which, in His wisdom, He has not chosen to attain. Horton’s charge that my theology results in the conclusion that God is not sovereign, is logically absurd.

Horton’s position is also linguistically untenable. The Greek word *hina* (= “that” in Eph 2:10) tells us nothing about the final results and only describes the intended *purpose* God has for us as people “created in Christ Jesus.” Whether or not this purpose will be fulfilled in each and every case is a conclusion that cannot be supported from this text.

But in Horton’s theology one is required to hold to its fulfillment by *all* of the elect. From Horton’s perspective, the reason for this is indicated by the words that immediately follow the quotation cited above: [The result of Hodges’s view is that] “the effectiveness of the grace he [God] offers depends entirely on what we decide by an act of the will” (p. 21).

This, too, is a distortion. I do not state, nor do I believe, that obedience to God’s will “depends *entirely*” on what *we* decide. God works on the human will to move us (not coerce us!) to a decision to obey, and His enablement is necessary as we seek to carry out this decision (see Phil 2:13). At the same time, the Christian *may* resist God’s work in his heart.

But leaving this point aside, the real key to Horton’s comments is his complete refusal to allow any role to man’s will either in salvation or in sanctification. Horton appears to think that any allowance for the activity of the human will deprives God of His sovereignty. But this is false.

The relationship between divine control and human freedom has long been a controversial theological issue. The reader may be interested in a recent and highly competent treatment of this difficult subject. He will find it in an article by David Basinger entitled, “Divine Control and Human Freedom: Is Middle Knowledge the Answer?” in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (1, March 1993): 55-64. The complexity of the issue can easily be seen from Basinger’s discussion. Horton’s perspective evidently requires what Basinger calls “theological determinism.” In my view, the approach designated “middle knowledge”

is superior to other views. In “middle knowledge” full account is taken of God’s omniscience so that room is left for the biblical concept of human responsibility as well as of divine sovereignty. A discussion of the whole question cannot be taken up here.<sup>12</sup>

Suffice it to say, Horton apparently charges me with theological indeterminism of an Arminian type, which is not at all a fair or correct assessment of my position.

## 2. The Charge of Antinomianism

Naturally, Horton also charges me (and others) with antinomianism. This is pretty standard fare for my critics in the New Puritan camp. I was certainly not surprised to find it in this book too.

What did surprise me was Horton’s apparent lack of accuracy in discussing the so-called “antinomian controversy” in seventeenth-century New England. In a section entitled “The Antinomian Controversy” (found on pp. 142-47 of Horton’s chapter called “Christ Crucified between Two Thieves”), Horton depicts that controversy in a way that is, historically, almost unrecognizable.

The best resource for students of this controversy is the volume edited by David Hall and entitled, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*.<sup>13</sup> Here all the essential original documents have been collected and printed in full. The first edition was published in 1968 (Horton apparently errs in citing it as 1989 on p. 228), while a second edition appeared in 1990. I have read the documents in their entirety. But has Horton? I seriously doubt it, even though he cites the book four times. On inspection, his citations from the first edition are from p. 15 (twice), p. 19, and p. 53. But this is a book of well over 400 pages!<sup>14</sup>

Strikingly, Horton critiques the New England Puritans who *opposed*(!) antinomianism because they “appeared to be following a

<sup>12</sup> It must be said that Basinger does not himself hold to the “middle knowledge” position. His critique of this position, however, does not seem to me to do full justice to the tremendous scope of God’s foreknowledge, which includes knowing all things that could be conceived of as occurring, in all of their conceivable permutations—and knowing all this with full immediacy. Such a God can instantaneously take account of an infinite number of possible scenarios and could ordain precisely that scenario in which His will is completely worked out within a cosmos containing actual free will. For Basinger’s evaluation, see the article cited in the text above, 61-64.

<sup>13</sup> David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> In the second edition, to be exact, xxi + 453 pages.

system more akin to the medieval penitential system, with assurance of God's favor being granted through successive stages of contrition, purgation, illumination, and finally union" (pp. 144-45). And who is Horton's "hero" in this controversy? Astoundingly, it is John Cotton, the leading clergyman on the *antinomian* side! Of Cotton he writes:

For whatever reasons, John Cotton had become more aligned with the thinking of the Reformers (and, I think, the New Testament) after his move to Boston [p. 144].

Cotton argued, quite traditionally, that we do not attain union through a series of stages; rather we are united to Christ immediately by the Holy Spirit through faith. His opponents, however, like many of their English contemporaries, followed a line closer to the medieval scheme [pp. 144-45].

All of this is to be taken *cum grano salis* because it throws a false slant on the controversy. As Hall has reaffirmed in the preface to his new edition, "I argued in 1968, and would argue again, that assurance of salvation was the central issue in the controversy."<sup>15</sup> The argument among the Puritans revolved around whether assurance of salvation could be immediately given by the Spirit at conversion, or whether assurance must wait on one's sanctification—i.e., on a manifestation of *obedience to the law*. Those who *opposed* making obedience to the law a necessary condition of assurance were the "antinomians" (= those against law). As I have noted, Cotton was the leader of the "antinomians"<sup>16</sup>

But if Cotton, the "antinomian," is Horton's hero in the controversy, who is his villain? This dubious distinction falls on Anne Hutchinson, whom Horton acknowledges to have been "one of his [Cotton's] devoted parishioners" (p. 144). Of Hutchinson Horton writes:

Now it must be said that Anne Hutchinson, in addition to being a strange person, was certainly an antinomian. Very often, charges of antinomianism are not seaworthy, but Anne clearly denied the necessary connection between faith and repentance, justification and

<sup>15</sup> Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, xiv.

<sup>16</sup> Cotton was charged with antinomianism, for example, by Robert Baillie, who was a minister in the Church of Scotland as well as a delegate to the Westminster Assembly (which drew up the Westminster Confession). Cotton's defense of himself against this charge is set forth in Hall's volume. See Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, 396-437.

sanctification, and relegated the latter to “works-righteousness.” Every command, every requirement in Scripture, was viewed as a form of legalism [p. 144].

Where is the documentation for these claims? Horton offers none. Apparently he wishes to distance Hutchinson from Cotton, but in so doing he distorts history.

Much more accurate, it seems to me, are the publisher’s comments on the back cover of the paperback edition:

This new edition of the 1968 volume, published for the first time in paper, includes an expanded bibliography and a new preface, treating in more detail the primary figures of Anne Hutchinson and her chief clerical supporter, John Cotton. Among the documents gathered here are transcripts of Anne Hutchinson’s trial, several of Cotton’s writings defending the Antinomian position, and John Winthrop’s account of the controversy. Hall’s increased focus on Hutchinson reveals the harshness and the excesses with which the New England ministry tried to discredit her and reaffirms her place of prime importance in the history of American women.

This does not sound at all like Horton’s description of things!

What is crucial here is the account, or transcript, of Mrs. Hutchinson’s examination by the General Court at Newtown in November of 1637.<sup>17</sup> This account was first found in an appendix to an historical work published in Boston in 1767.<sup>18</sup> It sheds significant light on Mrs. Hutchinson and is included in Hall’s volume on pp. 312-48.

It is plain from the transcript that Mrs. Hutchinson was routing her accusers with her responses until she admitted that she had received divine revelations. As Hall has noted,

Her trial by the Court was nearly a disaster, for Mrs. Hutchinson made the various charges brought against her seem ridiculous. Not until she spoke of receiving revelations from God did the Court find an issue on which she could be banished. With her proscription the Controversy drew to a close.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Given in Hall’s chapter, “The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court at Newtown,” 311-48.

<sup>18</sup> Specifically, according to Hall, p. 311, “the second volume of Thomas Hutchinson’s *History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay* (Boston, 1767).” Hall calls Hutchinson “a notable historian and political figure in pre-revolutionary Massachusetts.”

<sup>19</sup> Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, 10.

So in reality, Mrs. Hutchinson was not banished for her so-called antinomian views, but for what amounted to her “charismatic” tendencies!

The reader may be interested in a brief extract from the exchange between Anne Hutchinson and her accusers at this hearing. In this segment, the Deputy Governor charges her with disparaging all the ministers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony by saying “that they have preached a covenant of works, and only Mr. Cotton a covenant of grace.”<sup>20</sup>

The transcript proceeds as follows:

*Mrs. H.* I pray Sir prove it that I said they preached nothing but a covenant of works.

*Dep. Gov.* Nothing but a covenant of works, why a Jesuit may preach truth sometimes.

*Mrs. H.* Did I ever say they preached a covenant of works, then?

*Dep. Gov.* If they do not preach a covenant of grace clearly, then they preach a covenant of works.

*Mrs. H.* No Sir, one may preach a covenant of grace more clearly than another, so I said.

*D. Gov.* We are not upon that now but upon position.

*Mrs. H.* Prove this then Sir that you say I said.

*D. Gov.* When they do preach a covenant of works do they preach truth?

*Mrs. H.* Yes Sir, but when they preach a covenant of works for salvation, this is not truth.

*D. Gov.* I do but ask you this, when the ministers do preach a covenant of works do they preach a way of salvation?

*Mrs. H.* I did not come hither to answer questions of that sort.

*D. Gov.* Because you will deny the thing.

*Mrs. H.* Ey, but that is to be proved first.

*D. Gov.* I will make it plain that you did say that the ministers did preach a covenant of works.

*Mrs. H.* I deny that.

*D. Gov.* And that you said they were not able ministers of the new testament, but Mr. Cotton only.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

*Mrs. H.* If I ever said that I proved it by God's word.

*Court.* Very well, very well.

*Mrs. H.* If one shall come to me in private, and desire me seriously to tell them what I thought of such an one. [sic] I must either speak false or true in my answer.<sup>21</sup>

Here it is plain, as it is throughout the entire transcript of the proceedings, that the Court was having considerable difficulty in nailing down any significant charge against Mrs. Hutchinson. Moreover, John Cotton stood with Mrs. Hutchinson in her defense virtually to the end of the hearing. A segment near the end of the examination is illuminating:

*Mr. Peters.* I was much grieved that she should say our ministry was legal. Upon which we had a meeting as you know and this was the same she told us that there was a broad difference between Mr. Cotton and us. Now if Mr. Cotton do hold forth things more clearly than we, it was our grief we did not hold it so clearly as he did, and upon those grounds that you have heard.

*Mr. Coddington.* What was wrong was that to say that you were not able ministers of the new testament or that you were like the apostles—methinks the comparison is very good.

*Gov.* Well, you remember that she said but now that she should be delivered from this calamity.

*Mr. Cotton.* I remember she said that she should be delivered by God's providence, whether now or at another time she knew not.

*Mr. Peters.* I profess I thought Mr. Cotton would never have took her part.<sup>22</sup>

It should be clear enough from these segments of Hutchinson's trial before the General Court that something quite different was taking place than what Horton describes. The issues were fundamentally her charges of legalism against the Puritan ministers and her claims to direct revelation. Mrs. Hutchinson was not banished from the colony for antinomianism in any widely accepted sense of that word, such as "lawlessness" or "libertinism." As much as anything she was banished (as we said earlier) for her "charismatic" tendencies. Pastor Cotton did not desert her.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-19.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

Ironically, Hutchinson was later tried by Cotton's own church in Boston, with Cotton participating.<sup>23</sup> But this was on an array of new charges, many of which were unrelated to the original controversy. Although she was convicted and excommunicated by Cotton's church, Hutchinson professed to have held none of the censured convictions prior to her imprisonment, which followed her trial at Newtown. Cotton acknowledged his own previous unawareness that she held these views.<sup>24</sup> But at this point the larger antinomian controversy was over.

In conclusion, it must be said that Horton's discussion of this historic controversy is so distorted and flawed, that one wonders how he could manage to be so far off target. It is therefore almost grotesque for Horton to write:

Like Anne Hutchinson, the Dallas position is clearly what its critics insist it is: nothing short of the antinomian heresy. The gospel is distorted in bizarre ways by Hodges, Ryrie, Cocoris and the like [p. 146].

With words like these, Michael Horton descends to new depths of irresponsibility.

[The review of Horton will continue in the next issue]

<sup>23</sup> For the account of this trial, see Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, 349-95.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 372.



# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF LORDSHIP SALVATION

FRANK B. MINIRTH \*

## I. Introduction

The relationship between faith and works has been an issue of debate for many years. It centers around the nature of saving faith: Does it entail a response of the human will to the lordship of Christ?

Evangelicals maintain that justification is by grace through faith alone and that works are best understood as the *fruit* of faith. This faith is the one biblical foundation for assurance of salvation. When one becomes a Christian, he consciously believes in Christ. He does not need, nor is he required, to will a commitment to obedience, though he may do so.

Lordship Salvation advocates have extended saving faith to include a commitment to the lordship of Christ which entails obedience. This makes assurance *conditional* and the best anyone can hope for is to have enough good works to be *somewhat* confident of salvation. They believe that faith is *necessary* for assurance of salvation, but not *sufficient*. They also believe that confession, baptism, restitution, commitment, good works, surrender to Christ's lordship, or some other requirement is necessary for salvation.

## II. The Clarity of the Gospel Message

Salvation is God's free grace-gift to each believer: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8-9).<sup>1</sup> Jesus already has paid for it in full. The only requirement for receiving forgiveness and eternal life is to believe in Christ. This is clearly based on Scripture, not on personal experience.

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations in this article are taken from the Holy Bible, King James Version.

In about 115 NT passages, the salvation of a sinner is declared to depend only upon *believing*, and in about 35 passages to depend on *faith*, which is a synonym for believing.<sup>2</sup>

*Any addition to believing is anathema to God.* The divine message is not “believe and pray,” “believe and confess sin,” “believe and be baptized,” “believe and repent,” or “believe and make restitution.” These added requirements have appropriate meanings in the Scriptures, but if they were essential to *salvation* they would never be omitted from any passage where the way to be saved is stated. (E.g., see Gal 3:22; John 1:12; 3:15-16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; Acts 16:31; Rom 1:16; 3:22-23; 4:24-25; 6:23).

Salvation is unconditional, meaning it cannot be earned by merit or denied because of demerit. And the moment one believes, this gift includes redemption, reconciliation, forgiveness, regeneration, justification, perfection, and glorification. This work of God is so perfect that it lasts forever (John 5:24; 10:28-29; Rom 8:1).

Christ offered assurance of this when He said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Later He said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).<sup>3</sup>

Where there is a lack of assurance there is usually an impression that so long as one’s daily life is imperfect, it is unreasonable to do any more than *hope* for God’s mercy. No conviction of assurance can grow where the mind is still wondering whether it has really believed in a saving way.

God saves us in spite of our unworthiness and sins and keeps us saved for all eternity, because of the Cross. His divine provision calls for no payments to be made on the “installment plan.” Believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22).

### III. Grace Versus Works and Law

Under grace, the children of God are delivered from the burden of a covenant of works. They are free to live in the power of the indwelling Spirit, and are accepted in Christ (Eph 1:6). This is in contrast to works

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1953, by Dallas Theological Seminary), 157.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Minirth, M.D., et al., *The Workaholic and His Family* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 87.

(Rom 11:6). Theologically, the word *works* refers to acts of obedience, which take willpower and labor (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

Grace is also in contrast to law (Gal 5:4; John 1:17). A law implies a regulation that should be kept. I have heard Christian workers say, "I like to tell someone about the Christian life before he becomes a Christian, so he will know what to expect." Their aim is to obtain from the person a resolution to live the Christian life. The law formula is, "If you will do good, I will bless you."<sup>4</sup> *Conduct* secures favor with God instead of securing favor with God through *Christ*.

Note the following contrasts:

GRACE	versus	LAW <sup>5</sup>
—Salvation is a gift (Eph 2:8-9; John 10:28; Rom 6:23)		—Salvation requires a payment by the individual
—Demerit cannot result in salvation's being denied (Rom 5:8)		—Demerit can result in denial of salvation
—Personal merit cannot result in salvation (Gal 5:6; 3:22)		—Personal merit can result in salvation
—Grace-plus-nothing (Gal 4:9)		—Grace plus merit
—Starts with what Christ has done (Heb 7:16)		—Starts with what the individual must do
—Only believe (in Gospels over 115 times)		—Believe plus . . .
—Receive, and then do . . .		—Do to receive
—Contrasted to debt (Rom 4:4, 10), works (Rom 11:6), law (Gal 5:14)		—Consistent with debt, works, and law

One of my psychiatric patients had been exposed to the grace-plus-merit system, and combined with her own obsessive-compulsive personality, she succumbed to disabling guilt, frustration, and disillusionment.

<sup>4</sup> Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 149.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Minirth, M.D., *Christian Psychiatry* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1977), 51.

She stated, "I'm going to hell. I just know it. I haven't done enough right."

I asked her to picture Christ on the Cross, to picture each of her sins driving a spike into His hand, and finally to visualize carrying all of her guilt up to the Cross and giving it to Christ. She had an anguished demeanor.

I shared John 6:37 and Eph 2:8-9, and explained that what we do and don't do in the Christian life is not based on a "brownie-point" system, but on faith in Christ as our Savior. Soon a serene, peaceful look came over her face. I had introduced her to grace.

#### IV. Fallacies of Lordship Theology

The significant fallacies of Lordship Salvation include the following:

1. People are being asked to earn God's love and acceptance by resolutions leading to consistent good works. *People cannot accomplish this; nor is it necessary.* No believer glorifies God in all that he or she does all of the time (1 Cor 3:11-15).

Salvation is *a work of God for man, rather than a work of man for God.*<sup>6</sup> Good works grow out of a saved life, but do not precede salvation or form any basis for it.<sup>7</sup>

2. People are often asked to make Christ the Lord of their life. This implies that acknowledging Christ's lordship is a human work. But *it is not man who makes Christ Lord; that's who He already is.*<sup>8</sup> He is our Lord, Creator, Savior, and Friend.

By believing in Him, He already lives in us in the Person of the Holy Spirit, whose purpose it is to glorify Christ (2 Cor 5:17; John 15:5). As children of God, believers can enjoy a day-to-day witness of the Holy Spirit and an experience of inward transformation. Our own human resources and merits are in no way related to this experience of divine grace.

3. Requiring a daily commitment to make Christ the Lord of one's life is *asking unregenerate people to make a promise they can in no way*

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 43.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>8</sup> Sophisticated Lordship theologians often admit this. But on a popular level, "make Christ Lord of your life" is often what is actually said. Ed.

*keep.*<sup>9</sup> This law, as well as those who try to keep it, are doomed to fail because they depend on *the very flesh* from which deliverance is sought (Rom 6:14)! We cannot live to the glory of God by following certain rules on a consistent basis. The will of God is fulfilled *in* the believer, not *by* the believer (Rom 8:4).

No life would ever be good enough to merit anything but condemnation from God if judged on the grounds of moral equity. On the other hand, no sinner has fallen so low, or is so weak, that he cannot find absolute rest and assurance of personal salvation by believing in Christ.<sup>10</sup>

“Leading a Christian life,” therefore, has no saving value; self-improvement is not the purpose for believing in Christ. Even *trying* to live a perfect life would produce hopeless discouragement.

Realizing our standing in Christ, however, should not lead to laxity in our daily lives; this wonderful position is the strongest possible incentive to pure living that we can know. John 6:28-29 says, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said unto them, “This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent.”

4. *All people have something in their life that does not allow them to reach perfection.* They wonder, “How much submission to Christ’s lordship will it take to be assured of salvation? How much is enough?” All of us have failed Him many, many times. We sinned before we became Christians and have continued sinning ever since. God tells us, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

Some people *fear that they do not believe enough.* A man who came to Jesus once said, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!” (Mark 9:24). Jesus’ response demonstrates that it is not the *amount* of faith but the *Object* of faith that matters. The most feeble belief in Christ saves; and the strongest faith in self leaves one lacking. (It is Christ who saves us—belief is the tool we use to receive salvation.)

Others *fear they are not committed enough.* No one has ever been totally committed to anything, nor has anyone totally committed every

<sup>9</sup>Those Lordship Salvation teachers who are also “five-point” Calvinists (and there are many of them) often teach that regeneration *precedes* both faith and any surrender to Christ’s lordship which (in their view) true faith requires. But, again, the author addresses the issue in the way it is usually understood at the popular level. Ed.

<sup>10</sup>Chafer, *Salvation*, 79.

area of his life to Christ. (Titus 3:5 reminds us that salvation is apart from any righteous deeds we do.)

What about *repenting enough*? God never intended for repentance to be a separate work apart from His simple plan of salvation. It occurs simultaneously with belief as one turns away from self to Christ for salvation. Repentance<sup>11</sup> literally means a change of thought or attitude with respect to sin, self, and Christ. The believer realizes he is a hopeless sinner and that Christ can save him.

Many people may also fear they are not *praying enough*. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7; see also Rom 8:26-27). Prayer is only possible through a relationship with God through Christ; this relationship is established by placing faith in Christ. Prayer consists of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, but it is not a requirement for salvation. The key term in Scripture is to *trust* Christ, not to pray.

It is the divine purpose that a Christian’s conduct should be inspired by the fact that he or she is already saved and blessed with all the riches of grace in Christ Jesus, rather than by the hope that *an attempted imitation* of the Christian standard of conduct will result in salvation.<sup>12</sup>

God will reward faithful service, but does not demand it. Our service is an expression of love for Him.

## V. A “Double-Bind” Message

Untold psychological damage is done when an individual feels he is accepted on a conditional basis. This may be expressed in a contradictory message, such as “I love you, but you must . . .” It produces a paradox that makes choice impossible.

It is a “double-bind” message to combine grace with merit. This message asks a person to do two conflicting things. By definition, grace is God’s unmerited favor, a free gift (eternal life—Rom 6:23). This means that one cannot earn grace because this would contradict the definition. Thus, when a minister or priest asks someone to do something for the grace of God, he has just presented the individual with an impossible choice. If the individual chooses grace, he cannot do anything for it. Yet, the minister has told him that he must do something. The person cannot win!

<sup>11</sup> The NT Greek word is *metanoia*, literally “afterthought” or “change of mind.”

<sup>12</sup> Chafer, *Salvation*, 57.

To see the Apostle Paul's words about this "double-bind" message read Rom 4:1-25.

## VI. Why People Impose or Choose Lordship

These demands are not only a denial of the doctrine of grace but are unwarranted, because God has provided no enabling power for unregenerate people to lead a perfect life. I have never met a person who has been totally successful in making Christ the Lord of his or her life. If salvation depended on consistent, personal goodness, there could not be a single saved person in the world, and therefore no grounds for assurance.<sup>13</sup> So why would a person impose lordship on himself or someone else?

1. Some people (even with sincerity) *misinterpret Scripture*, taking verses out of context or missing the overall theme of grace. For example, undue emphasis on public acts such as baptism, confession, prayer, a good life, dedication, vows, and submission to Christ's lordship can make salvation a matter of faith in Christ *plus* a meritorious public act. These functions can get out of balance or confused in their purpose and value.

For example, Scripture instructs us to be baptized as a testimony to, or outward expression of, an inward reality (Acts 19:5; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; and Col 2:12). However, it is not specified in the more than two hundred passages of Scripture that clearly list faith as the condition for salvation.

Confession, too, is clearly the believer's privilege. It does not provide a basis for salvation, but rather displays its reality. Unfortunately, it is difficult to encourage confession in connection with conversion without making it seem to be meritorious.<sup>14</sup>

2. It is a psychological fact that the *human mind is aided by some physical action* which serves to strengthen an impression. But such acts, if urged at all, should not be presented as a *condition* of salvation. When there are required actions, there is a natural, corresponding increase in "backsliding."

3. *There is pride in thinking one is in control.* Man's proud spirit will not accept the fact that he can do nothing to merit God's approval

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *True Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993 revised edition), 19.

(Isa 64:6-7). People apparently often choose lordship thinking for their own glorification and recognition (Gal 6:12-13).

4. Another reason for its appeal may be that it *focuses on an external set of rules and practices*, thereby making it possible for a person to suppress his internal feelings of weakness, worthlessness, and/or failure. It gives a visible standard by which he can be judged and compared to others to build his own self-worth.<sup>15</sup>

5. Because of *backgrounds and religious training*, many Christians become comfortable believing that their performance is a factor in their salvation. This wrong perspective, which involves self-reliance and conditional acceptance, is a precipitating cause for depression. Paul recorded his discouragement in trying to live for God in his own energy in Rom 7:14-24.

## VII. The Negative Impact of Lordship Theology

Lordship theology can have a very negative psychological impact on people's lives. Because of this denial of grace, Christians have been occupied with futile attempts at self-keeping to the neglect of true service for God.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the more anxious and depressed patients I have treated are believers who have not yet learned how to personally appropriate God's thought patterns and behavioral principles into their lives. Many have developed negative, self-critical, judgmental beliefs that have resulted in *guilt* and *insecurity*.

Promises for future conduct can set people up for many failures, and the guilt can be overwhelming. Guilt is produced partly by the conviction of the Holy Spirit and partly by one's own conscience.

A Christian's conscience is molded by what parents, teachers, church, and the Bible say is right and wrong, but even those ideas are influenced by individual interpretation. No two consciences are *exactly* alike.

God does not want us to live with guilt. It is Christ's desire to forgive us and to free us. As we accept His forgiveness, we are free to enjoy the blessing of John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Christ wants us to experience the fruit of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal 5:22-23).

<sup>15</sup> Minirth, *The Workaholic and His Family*, 130.

<sup>16</sup> Chafer, *True Evangelism*, 22.



There are a number of common *mental defenses* that can keep Christians from living a joyful, fruitful life through the power of the Holy Spirit. These are: denial, projection, intellectualization, rationalization, repression, compensation, suppression, introjection, passive-aggressive behavior, somatization, idealization, control, substitution, and displacement. These can lead to various consequences.

*Depression.* Unfortunately, depression often goes unrecognized, undiagnosed, and untreated. All people, including Christians, at times feel sad or blue; this is a normal human emotion. But it becomes an illness when symptoms persist and the ability to function is impaired. Trying to earn God's acceptance by being perfectly obedient is a no-win, depressing commitment.

*Pride* is the downfall of many people. Christians can be proud of the many acts of goodness they perform, but they are never perfect and pure. Also, many confuse the sin of pride with the godly attribute of loving themselves in a *healthy* way. However, pride and self-worth are really opposites. Some "better than thou" attitudes are cover-ups for feelings of inadequacy.

*Anger* is also a common effect. It can start with bitterness and turn into depression. The most psychologically damaging aspect is anger turned inward; and anger against God is spiritually damaging.

*Personality disorders* can also result from "double-bind" messages and conditional love.

Of all personality types the *obsessive-compulsives* are the most susceptible to lordship theology. Lordship doctrine drives them to seek perfection (which is impossible in this life), driving them down the road to bondage. These individuals are overconscientious, overdutiful, and perfectionistic, always striving for 99%. Lordship teaching drives them to strive for 99.9%, making them even *more* obsessive and scrupulous regarding their values (far beyond the demands of faith and culture). Because they expect too much out of themselves, they frequently become angry with themselves, which results in depression.

Studies have shown that *the majority of religious leaders lean toward compulsive personality traits*. They have tendencies to become legalistic and absorbed in disputes over right and wrong. Their conscience is *stricter than God's guidelines* in the Bible. They fail to distinguish between true and false guilt. They may struggle with a fear of having committed the unpardonable sin or they may fear that they haven't really trusted Christ as their Savior. They need to be reminded of the grace and mercy of God.

Perfectionistic Christians may feel overwhelmed with anger toward God (for supposedly expecting so much of them) and toward themselves (for not being perfect). They may become depressed because they forget that we are called to rest in Christ rather than to be caught up in a never-ending round of activity.

*Paranoid personalities* are also susceptible. These individuals are overly suspicious, hypersensitive, and distrustful. Since control is a major issue with them (their insecurities drive them to try to dominate others), they sometimes believe they are subject to all kinds of tests. Psalm 31 can offer them great comfort.

Christians with *passive-aggressive* personalities are likely to be half-hearted believers who irresponsibly “wait on the Lord” while criticizing others as being “less spiritual.” They may brag about being great “prayer warriors” or depend on others for support.

Those with *histrionic* traits tend to emphasize emotional experiences rather than God’s Word. They typically have spiritual ups and downs, and may become religiously grandiose and claim special powers and gifts.

In the worst cases, Christians can become *neurotic* or even *psychotic* if they feel that receiving or keeping salvation is conditional. Psychiatric diagnoses could include:

*Psychoses*—schizophrenia, brief reactive psychosis, atypical psychosis, schizoaffective disorder, etc.

*Neuroses*—anxiety neurosis, phobias, obsessive-compulsive neurosis, somatoform disorder, psychogenic-pain disorder, etc.

*Personality disorders*—paranoia, obsessive-compulsions, socio-pathology, narcissism, avoidance, cyclothymia, dysthymia, etc.

*Substance abuse*—alcohol, tobacco, drugs, etc.

*Affective disorders*—manic-depression, major depression

*Adjustment disorders*—secondary depression or anxiety related to current-day stresses

*Others*—conduct disorders, anxiety disorders, identity disorders, eating disorders, moral or religious scrupulosity, etc.

## VIII. Far-Reaching Emotional Problems

Understanding why Christians have problems with their feelings, thoughts, and behavior requires dealing with all aspects of man—spiritual, psychological, and physical, and realizing that they all affect

one another. A good example of the interrelations between these parts of man and the related emotional stress was described by Paul in Rom 7:18-25 and 8:1-2.

If Christians have a new life and power within them at the time of conversion, why then do they continue to have mental and emotional problems? Some may think they won't continue to have these problems if they just live their lives as God wants them to and by avoiding doing the things that cause them painful guilt, anxiety, and stress.

But it doesn't work that way. One reason is that the mind is a part of the *soul*, not a part of the spirit. The soul does not become new or have any change at the time of conversion; the spirit does.

If Christian counselors are to be effective, they must not only help their clients find balanced psychological health and freedom, but also help them realize that only the Lord Jesus can give and maintain real freedom and peace of mind.

Counselors minister to those who are estranged from God and to those who are hindered in their walk with the Lord as a result of wounds to their spirit, soul, or body. They give individualized spiritual and clinical attention to the specific needs of their clients, using four foundational, biblical emphases: *love* (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 2:10-11); *behavior* (Gen 4:7); *awareness* (Ps 139:23-24); and *God's power within* (Zech 4:6b).

Just as Christ dealt with people in different ways, Christian counselors apply many scriptural approaches in their therapy, including:

Advice (Prov 19:20)

Support (Rom 1:11-12)

Encouragement (urge, admonish, help) (1 Thess 2:11; 5:14)

Comfort (2 Cor 1:4)

Education (the NT Epistles)

Corrective emotional experience (being a Christian example)

Support system (the Body of Christ)

Insight (parables of Christ)

Confession (Jas 5:16)

Positive verbal reinforcement (Rom 1:8)

Modeling (Christ with the disciples)

Cognitive approach (Gal 4:9)

Group work ("one another" passages)

Confrontation (1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:15)

Directness (Prov 27:5-6)

Indirectness (2 Sam 12:1-7)  
 Listening (Eccl 3:1, 7)  
 A matter-of-fact manner (Mark 10:14)  
 Gentleness (Mark 10:16)  
 Patience (Matt 18:29; Jas 5:7; Heb 6:15)

Much counsel is directed at the soul of man. However, *the spirit is the innermost part* of a person and is *the most important part* in a Christian's search for peace. Grace can provide this peace.

### IX. A Foundation of Psychiatry

*The unconditional grace of God* is the foundation for His relationship with man, and is also the foundation of Christian psychiatry and of my practice.

I believe we must put more emphasis on grace. It's a concept which easily escapes many people because it is so foreign to society's framework and our individual lifestyles. Throughout the centuries, because of our psychological makeup, it has been easier for people to gravitate to the concept of law.<sup>17</sup>

Martin Luther, after years of striving in vain to be righteous, and after years of psychological pain, discovered the marvelous meaning of grace, thereby finding a solution for the basic guilt common to man. This was the beginning of the great Protestant Reformation.<sup>18</sup>

How the Church views grace has widespread implications. A misconception in one direction can result in depression, while a misconception in another direction can result in a license to sin. These misconceptions not only have widespread spiritual implications, but can also do great psychological harm.

The trend of challenging the unconditional love of Christ, which is God's system of grace, is still alive in the grace-plus-merit system. I hear Christian workers encouraging others to give their lives to Christ. But He does not want one to give—simply to receive. God has already condemned the old sin nature, and made atonement on the Cross.

Lordship theology can cause endless frustration. It can keep Christians from enjoying Christ's deep comfort and His resources for solving problems (John 15:4-7; 1 Pet 5:7).

<sup>17</sup> Minirth, *Christian Psychiatry*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

The power to live the Christian life is given by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit that comes when one believes in Christ. Without this power, all actions are based on willpower (human) which God condemns (John 1:13).

## X. Conclusion: Psychological Benefits of a Biblical Perspective

The theme of the whole Bible is grace, and I urge all believers to “stand in grace” for their mental and spiritual health. Knowing that we are unconditionally loved and assured in our salvation, we can be delivered from the rat-race so many Christians are running today (Eccl 1:14; 4:4; Ps 39:4-5).

The Lord Jesus said: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). It is wise men and women, indeed, who seek the truth about grace. And it is these believers who can *live* by grace (Rom 6:14) so that all the glory will go to God. God has done so much *for* us and desires to do much more *through* us!

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Rom 16:24).



A Voice from the Past:

# SELF-EXAMINATION AS IT RELATES TO ASSURANCE\*

JAMES H. BROOKES<sup>1</sup>

It may be asked whether there are not certain evidences of conversion found in the Scriptures. Undoubtedly there are, but they are not given that we might derive from them the assurance of salvation. It was never intended that we should receive assurance by believing ourselves to be Christians, but by believing that *Christ*<sup>2</sup> is our all-sufficient *Saviour*.

Look at any of the evidences of regeneration mentioned in the Bible, and a moment's reflection will convince you that they were not designed to furnish assurance for which so many sad hearts are longing and striving.

Take, for example, the text, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (1 John 4:7). This cannot give assurance, for there is not a Christian in the world whose love does not fall far below the measure of his desire and his duty.

Take the text, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.) This cannot give assurance, for there is no test to decide who are the brethren, and no standard to determine how fervent our love must be, or how far it must extend in covering the faults of those who claim to be Christians.

Take the text, "He that keepeth *His* commandments dwelleth in *Him*, and *He* in him." (1 John 3:24.) This cannot give assurance; for every true Christian, unless deluded by Satan, will confess that he fails to observe

\* This voice from the nineteenth century is excerpted from Chapter XX of *The Way Made Plain* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), 293-95. Reprint from Philadelphia: American Sunday-school Union, 1871.

<sup>1</sup> James H. Brookes, D. D. (1830-1897) was pastor of Washington Avenue Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO. The Brookes Bible Institute of St. Louis was named in his honor. Dr. Brookes was a prolific writer, having authored more than 200 booklets and tracts. He was the editor of *The Truth*, and was a well-known Bible teacher. One of his very influential students was C. I. Scofield, editor of the popular *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909, 1917, revised as the *New Scofield Reference Bible* 1967). Brookes was also a key leader in the famous prophetic conferences of 1878 and 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Italicized words were written in all capitals in the original. Ed.

them in many particulars; that when he would do good evil is present with him; and that “no mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of *God*; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed.” Whatever purpose, therefore, these evidences may serve, it is a self-righteous and fruitless task to look to them for assurance.

Still, it may be urged that we are commanded to examine ourselves. But not, I reply, to discover whether we are Christians.

In the first passage where this command is given the context plainly shows that the examination refers only to the question whether the disciples of *Christ* were pursuing a course of conduct unbecoming those who came to the *Lord's* table. “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Cor 11:28). The question of personal salvation is not at all involved; but they were exhorted to examine their ways, and put from them, as the dear children of *God*, detected evil; “for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor 11:31).

In the second passage we read, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor 13:5), but here again the context clearly shows that the question under discussion was about the apostle's right to exercise his high office, and not at all about personal salvation. “Since you seek a proof of *Christ* speaking in me,” he says, “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith”: for the fact that they were in the faith was conclusive proof that *Christ* had owned his ministry, and therefore that he was not an imposter in claiming to be an apostle.<sup>3</sup> Self-examination as conducted

<sup>3</sup>Brookes was much influenced towards grace, dispensationalism and other prophetic themes by Anglo-Irish Bible teacher and writer, John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). He allowed Darby to occupy his pulpit when in St. Louis on a number of occasions. Darby taught the same: “But am I not desired to examine myself, whether I am in the faith? No. What then says 2 Cor 13:5: ‘Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith?’ etc. Why, that if they sought a proof of *Christ* speaking in Paul, they were to examine themselves, and by the certainty of their own Christianity, which they did not doubt, be assured of his apostleship. The apostle's argument was of no value whatever, but on the ground of the sanctioned certainty that they were Christians. But I have dwelt longer on this than I had any purpose; but the comfort of souls may justify it. It is connected with man's seeking, from the work of the *Spirit of God* in him, that which is to be looked for only from the work of *Christ*.” Excerpted from “Operations of the Spirit of God,” *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, edited by William Kelly. Reprint, 1972 (Winschoten, Netherlands: H. L. Heijkoop), 3:76.

See the last book review this issue (pp. 85-86) for a review of a newly-translated biography of J. N. Darby.



in the manner and to attain the ends for which it is usually urged is the most painful and profitless exercise that can engage the soul, and I would confidently appeal to the experience of every conscientious and intelligent Christian to testify whether this is not true. If you expect to get assurance in this way, you might as well expect to get health by looking at disease, to get light by looking at darkness, to get life by looking at a corpse.

Self-judgment is quite another thing, and daily should we consider our ways; not to find a ground of assurance, but to confess and forsake all that is evil as judged by the Word of *God*.



Grace in the Arts:

# MARIAN ANDERSON AND THE HERITAGE OF SPIRITUALS

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## I. Introduction

It is reported that even the bellhops that Easter morning in Washington, D.C. prayed, "Lord, please don't let it rain!"

Their prayer—and that of thousands of others—was answered. Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939, dawned grey and cloudy, but it didn't rain. Washington in 1939 was a sleepy Southern town not noted for its racial justice. Why should the bellhops care? A distinguished lady member of the racial group of many of them, a lady who had conquered the capitals of Europe with her magnificent voice, was to sing at the impressive Lincoln Memorial on the Mall. Room for *all* people of every ethnic group.

The story is well known. Marian Anderson *was* to have sung at prestigious Constitution Hall, then the only large auditorium in Washington—until the Daughters of the American Revolution found out that the performer who wanted to rent their Hall was an African American (a race forbidden to perform by a clause in the by-laws of their Hall).

The reaction in the music world and elsewhere was shock:

Leading musicians whom Marian did not know canceled their concerts at Constitution Hall; journalists, government and religious leaders, public and private citizens alike, rose as one. This insult to American democracy was more than they could stand.

"I am ashamed to play at Constitution Hall," said Jasha Heifitz, one of the world's leading violinists.

"One of the most monstrous and stupid things that has happened in America in years," said Heywood Broun, journalist.

Walter Damrosch, composer-conductor; Deems Taylor, critic; Lawrence Tibbett, Metropolitan star and president of the American Guild of Musical Artists; Fiorello La Guardia, Mayor of New York City; and hundreds of others sent the D.A.R. wires of protest. Wired Deems Taylor:

This action subverts the clear meaning of the U.S. Constitution, in particular the Bill of Rights, and places your organization in the camp of those who seek to destroy democracy, justice, and liberty.<sup>1</sup>

The D.A.R.'s decision became a *cause célèbre*. Here are Miss Anderson's own recollections:

I was in San Francisco, I recall, when I passed a newsstand, and my eye caught a headline: MRS. ROOSEVELT TAKES STAND. Under this was another line, in bold print just a bit smaller: RESIGNS FROM D.A.R., etc. I was on my way to the concert hall for my performance and could not stop to buy a paper. I did not get one until after the concert, and I honestly could not conceive that things had gone so far.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly twenty years later, when she described the Easter concert in her autobiography, she had to look up the details. Again, the contralto's own remembrance:

All I knew then as I stepped forward was the overwhelming impact of that vast multitude. There seemed to be people as far as the eye could see. The crowd stretched in a great semicircle from the Lincoln Memorial around the reflecting pool on to the shaft of the Washington Monument. I had a feeling that a great wave of good will poured out from these people, almost engulfing me. And when I stood up to sing our National Anthem I felt for a moment as though I were choking. For a desperate second I thought that the words, well as I know them, would not come.

I sang. I don't know how. There must have been the help of professionalism I had accumulated over the years. Without it I could not have gone through the program. I sang—and again I know because I consulted a newspaper clipping—"America," the aria "O mio Fernando," Schubert's "Ave Maria," and three spirituals—"Gospel Train," "Trampin'," and "My Soul Is Anchored in the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shirlee P. Newman, *Marian Anderson: Lady From Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), 105-106.

<sup>2</sup> Marian Anderson, *My Lord, What a Morning: An Autobiography by Marian Anderson* (New York: The Viking Press, 1956), 185.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

It became a tradition with Miss Anderson to sing all sorts of classical pieces and end with three or four spirituals.<sup>4</sup>

## II. The Genre “Negro Spiritual”

The religious songs commonly called “spirituals” grew out of both West African musical roots and the “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Col 3:16) used in early 19th century mixed-race churches and later in black ones. Choruses were added to the regular Protestant hymns. Some conservative black ministers disapproved, but the new material met such a need that they eventually outstripped the traditional music of European origin.

Booker T. Washington, the famous African American educator, expressed what spirituals really are as follows:

The negro [sic] folksong has for the negro race the same value that the folksong of any other people has for that people. It reminds the race of the “rock whence it was hewn,” it fosters race pride, and in the days of slavery it furnished an outlet for the anguish of smitten hearts . . . The plantation songs known as the “spirituals” are the spontaneous outbursts of intense religious fervor, and had their origin chiefly in the campmeetings, the revivals, and in other religious exercises. They breathe a childlike faith in a personal Father and glow with the hope that the children of bondage will ultimately pass out of the wilderness of slavery into the land of freedom.<sup>5</sup>

## III. The Words of the Spirituals

In a hymnal or any song book the left hand side of the selection will list the author of the words and the right hand side will give the composer. When it comes to folksongs, including spirituals, we rarely know either one. These songs just sprang from the heart, probably words and music often at the same time.

We will nevertheless discuss words and music as our two main topics, in that order.

<sup>4</sup>In preparation for this article both authors listened to a CD of 1930’s British recordings of the contralto, including compositions by Bach, Handel, Schubert, and ending with four spirituals. The sound fidelity was very poor by today’s standards but the excellence of the renditions made up for for all surface noise.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted by Henry Edward Krehbiel in *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962), 30.

The literary content of the spirituals is nearly as wide and varied as the Bible itself. Famous stories from Genesis to Revelation are popularized in such universally-known songs (in the U.S.A., but also beyond its borders, through such artists as Miss Anderson<sup>6</sup>) as “Go Down Moses,” “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho,” “Little David Play on Your Harp,” “Ezekiel Saw the Wheel,” “Were You There?” and “My Lord, What a Morning.”

### The Literary Style of the Spirituals

The styles vary: plaintive, such as “Steal Away to Jesus”; devout, such as “Were You There?”; boisterous, such as “Joshua Fit [Fought] the Battle”; tender, such as “Sweet Little Jesus Boy”—and really the whole gamut of human emotions. What John Calvin said about the Psalms can also be said about spirituals: They express “an anatomy of all parts of the soul . . . All the sorrows, troubles, fears, doubts, hopes, pains, perplexities and stormy outbreaks by which the hearts of men are tossed have been depicted here to the very life.”<sup>7</sup>

The quality of the words varies greatly, but by and large the force of the words depends on repetition, deep sincerity, charming simplicity, sometimes humor, sometimes serious warning. The language is not formal American English, but casual and not always grammatically “correct.” This, however, is part of its charm. Who would trade “It’s Me, It’s Me, O Lord, Standin’ in the Need of Prayer” for “It is I, It is I, O Lord, Severely Lacking Intercession”?

Harold Courlander summarizes the variegated qualities of the spirituals:

They are not all equally good or equally evocative. Each carries the mark of the feeling and genius that created it. Some achieve the level of pure or great poetry while others contrive to make drama out of prosaic substance, and still others never quite manage to escape being doggerel.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> “Miss” Anderson was happily married (Mrs. Orpheus H. Fisher) but kept her maiden name for her public appearances.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by William MacDonald in “The Book of Psalms,” *Believers Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 545.

<sup>8</sup> Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 41-42.

### Political Versus Religious Interpretation of Spirituals

Courlander notes that today some people are saying the spirituals were actually *political*, not religious statements:

Considerable attention has been paid in recent times to the possibility that a large number of spirituals were not what they seemed on the surface, but in actuality were songs full of hidden meanings, hints, messages, and signals for slaves looking toward escape. The spiritual "Steal Away to Jesus," for example, frequently has been pointed out as a double-meaning song—ostensibly religious in intent, but in reality an invitation to the slaves to steal away to freedom:

Steal away, steal away to Jesus,  
Steal away, steal away home.  
I ain't got long to stay here.  
My Lord calls me, He calls me by the thunder,  
The trumpet sounds within my soul.  
I ain't got long to stay here.

Similarly, the spiritual "Go Down Moses" has been regarded as a significant double-meaning song:

When Israel was in Egypt's Land,  
Let my people go.  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,  
Let my people go.  
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's Land,  
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go!<sup>9</sup>

### The Doctrine of the Spirituals

By and large the spirituals reflect the conservative biblical Protestantism of the Old South. (Of course, there are exceptions.) Deep, sincere faith in God, in Christ, in the Bible, in heaven and hell—all are expressed through a uniquely African-American culture and outlook. Just as the sunlight is one as it hits a stained-glass window, yet separates inside the church to reveal a spectrum of variegated colors, so biblical stories and teachings are filtered through the polychrome window of different ethnic experiences to appeal to a wide variety of people.

While the spirituals were probably *employed* from time to time with a political meaning, it is best to see them as what they are: religious outpourings of a devout people.

<sup>9</sup> Courlander, *Negro Folk Music*, 79.

On the other hand, not all Negro spirituals pass the “grace test.” While one spiritual will express confident resting on the Savior’s blood atonement, another will stress works, human efforts, and a lack of assurance of salvation.

Some of the spirituals, like some of any other songs of Christendom, show a clear assurance of salvation, and others are fraught with doubts and anxieties. Others do not touch on this issue at all.

In 1801 a hymnal was published for the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a congregation in Philadelphia. There were two editions, both edited by Bethel’s minister, Richard Allen (1760-1831).

Richard Allen’s hymnal is of historic significance for several reasons. It was the first hymnbook compiled by a black man for use by a black congregation. As a “folk-selected” anthology, it indicates which hymns were popular among black Methodists at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many of these hymns served as source material for the spirituals of the slaves—the so-called Negro spirituals. To phrases, couplets, and stanzas culled from favorite hymns, the slaves added other verses and refrains to compose the texts of their spirituals. Finally, according to all evidence, Allen’s hymnal is apparently the earliest source in history that includes hymns to which “wandering” choruses or refrains are attached; that is, choruses that are freely added to any hymn rather than affixed permanently to specific hymns.<sup>10</sup>

### Free Grace Spirituals

The very first hymn in this premier African-American hymnal is quite specifically what we call Free Grace oriented. Here are the first two stanzas and refrain:

The voice of Free Grace cries, escape to the mountain,  
 For Adam’s lost race Christ hath open’d a fountain,  
 For sin and transgression, and every pollution,  
 His blood it flows freely in plenteous redemption.

*Refrain:*

Hallelujah to the Lamb who purchas’d our pardon,  
 We’ll praise Him again when we pass over Jordan.

<sup>10</sup> Eileen Southern, *Readings in Black American Music* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1983), 52.



That fountain so clear, in which all may find pardon,  
 From Jesus's side flows plenteous redemption,  
 Though your sins were increas'd as high as a mountain,  
 His blood flows freely in streams of salvation.

A spiritual that expresses a similar *assured knowledge* of salvation is "I Know the Lord's Laid His Hands on Me":

I'm born of God I know I am,  
 I know the Lord has laid His hands on me,  
 Been new born by the dying Lamb,  
 I know the Lord has laid His hands on me.

*Refrain:*

Oh, I know the Lord,  
 I know the Lord,  
 I know the Lord has laid His hands on me.

He took me from the miry clay,  
 I know the Lord has laid His hands on me,  
 And told me to walk the narrow way,  
 I know the Lord has laid His hands on me.

I never felt such love before,  
 I know the Lord has laid His hands on me,  
 Saying, "Go in peace and sin no more,"  
 I know the Lord has laid His hands on me.

### Works-Oriented Spirituals

On the other hand, many spirituals are works-oriented and express only a *hope* of getting to heaven, "tryin' to get in":

I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow,  
 I'm in this world alone;  
 No hope in this world for tomorrow,  
 I'm trying to make heaven my home.

Sometimes I am tossed and driven,  
 Sometimes I don't know where to roam;  
 I've heard of a city called heaven,  
 I've started to make it my home.

My mother's gone on to pure glory,  
 My father's still walking in sin;  
 My sisters and brothers won't own me  
 Because I'm tryin' to get it.

Two other spirituals which express only the *desire* and the *hope* of eternal life include the following first stanzas with refrain or “chorus”:

**Good Lord, When I Die**

I want to go to Heaven  
When I die.

I want to go to Heaven  
When I die.

I want to go to Heaven  
When I die.

Good Lord, when I die.

*Refrain:*

Good Lord, when I die,

Good Lord, when I die,

Good Lord, when I die, shout one,

Good Lord, when I die.

**I Hope I'll Join the Band**

Ride up in the chariot,  
Soon-a in the morning,

Ride up in the chariot,  
Soon-a in the morning,

Ride up in the chariot,  
Soon-a in the morning,

And I hope I'll join the band.

*Refrain:*

Oh, Lord, have mercy on me,

Oh, Lord, have mercy on me,

Oh, Lord, have mercy on me,

And I hope I'll join the band.

#### IV. The Music of the Spirituals

In considering *the musical aspects* of the spirituals as separate from the texts of the songs, it is important, writes Krehbiel, to remember that spirituals are folksongs:

Such songs are marked by certain peculiarities of rhythm, form and melody which are traceable, more or less clearly, to racial (or national) temperament, modes of life, climatic and political conditions, geographical environment and language.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs*, 2.

## Roots

As folksongs, the spirituals which originated in the United States present an interesting phenomenon in that their musical peculiarities derive from a *merging* of racial or national musical characteristics. The musical influence most often associated with the songs is that of the various West African cultures represented among the African-American population of the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These people came from societies in which music was a vital part of every phase of daily life, and where music-making was considered necessary. It should be noted that while the music of these various cultures shared common characteristics, there were also features that distinguished one from another, just as many German folksongs have a sound quite distinct from many Scandinavian tunes, though the people of both groups historically come from a common stock.

In the United States, West African musical characteristics blended with European influences: "Many characteristics of African musical styles persist to this day. Some of those characteristics are melodic or rhythmic concepts."<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, "the European elements of Negro folk music in the United States are many. English, Scottish, and Irish folk tunes, sea chanteys, hymns, and white spirituals have made a deep impact."<sup>13</sup> James Cone maintains that "the spirituals are obviously not in an African musical idiom . . . But . . . the obstinate fact of a great difference between Negro folk songs and the white campmeeting hymns exists."<sup>14</sup>

## Variation of Form Within a Single Spiritual

A common characteristic of authentic folksongs is that any particular tune may exist in two or more forms, each containing slight variations from the others. This is because the songs were usually passed along orally for quite some time before being written down. One singer would render the tune a bit differently from the version he or she originally heard, and this rendition would persist in the versions performed by those to whom it was taught. It is worth noting that this is the case with spirituals. Written versions of the spirituals were taken down in the mid- to late 1800's by musicians interested in preserving them. Sometimes they

<sup>12</sup> Courlander, *Negro Folk Music*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1972), 11-12.

are slightly (or more than slightly) different from the versions performed by artists who include the spirituals in their repertoire. This may also be attributable to the fact that now, over one hundred years later, the current versions likely contain fewer of the “peculiarities” that the earlier versions derived from more direct West African influences. Indeed, these idiosyncrasies made a difficult job for the nineteenth century musicians. Wrote Lucy McKim Garrison, in 1862:

The off turns made in the throat, and the curious rhythmic effect produced by single voices chiming in at different irregular intervals, seem almost as impossible to place on the score as the singing of birds or the tones of an Aeolian Harp.<sup>15</sup>

In attempting to fit distinctively non-European idioms to a European notation system, it is almost certain that some of the “uncapturable” qualities of the spirituals were altered in the process. Since spirituals today are probably performed at least as much from written sources as from oral tradition, the versions we are familiar with vary somewhat from seventeenth and eighteenth century versions. In analyzing the musical features of spirituals we shall consider them as we commonly hear them performed today. The current versions still have enough distinctive features to readily set them apart from other bodies of music.

The three basic components of any type of music are (1) rhythm, (2) melody, and (3) harmony (or a lack thereof). In the case of spirituals, the two features which would likely be performed in the same *basic* way, regardless of the particular performer, are melody and rhythm. Harmonization of any particular tune may vary much more, depending on the type of performance (soloist, ensemble, choir, instrument, etc.) and the taste of the performer and/or arranger of the setting. Therefore, it seems most practical to limit the discussion here to features of melody and rhythm.

### Melody

A starting point for analyzing the melodic features of a body of music is the scale system, or systems, it employs. For example, most melodies rooted in European tradition are based on either the seven-tone major scale or one of three seven-tone minor scales which might be considered variations on the major scale.

<sup>15</sup> Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 191.

There are, however, numerous other scale systems. One of these, the *pentatonic* (five-tone) scale, “is probably the oldest tonal system in the world and the most widely dispersed.”<sup>16</sup> It is easy to hear the sound of this scale by playing only the black keys on a piano, or by singing the tones of a major scale, omitting the fourth and seventh tones: Do Re Mi [no Fa] Sol La [no Ti] Do. Its frequent use in the folk melodies of many widely divergent cultures suggests that the pentatonic scale may be a naturally comfortable system for the human voice to handle.

In the early part of this century, musicologist Henry Krehbiel analyzed the musical features of 527 Afro-American folksongs. He found that 111 of the songs were completely based on the pentatonic scale.<sup>17</sup> Krehbiel classified another 331 of the songs as “major,” but noted that of this number “seventy-eight . . . have no seventh and forty-five have no fourth.”<sup>18</sup> The same author notes that “many Negro songs utilized . . . ‘gapped’ systems such as the ordinary major scale lacking its fourth or its seventh—in other words, the pentatonic plus an additional note, either the major fourth or the major seventh.”<sup>19</sup>

While none of the songs mentioned in this article is completely pentatonic, each is *essentially* so. For example, 81 of the 85 tones comprising “Deep River” (see Conclusion) are pentatonic; of the four non-pentatonic tones, three are the seventh tone of the major scale, and the other is the major fourth.

Besides a decided leaning toward pentatonic tonality, another melodic feature shared by many spirituals is a *wide compass*, that is, the difference in pitch between the lowest and highest notes of a melody. Few spirituals have a compass “smaller than an octave, and many extend over a range of a tenth or a twelfth.”<sup>20</sup> (Tenths, twelfths and octaves [eighths] are measurements of the distance between two pitches based on the number of scale tones separating them.) “Deep River” and “Were You There?” both cover a compass of an eleventh, while “My Lord, What a Mornin’” covers a ninth. By comparison, most hymn tunes based solely on European tradition cover a compass of an octave or less.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>17</sup> Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Courlander, *Negro Folk Music*, 15.

## Rhythm

Spirituals “show a decided preference for simple duple [= double] meters, as distinguished from triple meters.”<sup>21</sup> Meter, as students of poetry as well as music will remember, is the regular pattern of strong and weak beats upon which the syllables of a poem or the musical tones of a melody “ride.” In duple meter, beats are grouped together in twos: STRONG/weak. Groupings of four beats—STRONG/weak/weak/weak—would also be considered duple in musical analysis. It should be noted however, that duple meter using four beats to the pattern is frequently performed: STRONG/weak/WEAK/weak. The third beat in the pattern is given more emphasis than the second or fourth, but not as much as the first. In triple meter, beats are grouped by threes: STRONG/weak/weak. (“Amazing Grace” is an example of a melody in triple meter.) Less than one-tenth of the songs analyzed by Krehbiel were in triple time.<sup>22</sup> The spirituals discussed in this article are in duple meter.

Melodies based on European tradition ordinarily begin longer sounds on the stronger count or counts within the beat pattern being used. For example, in four-beat duple meter, longer sounds would ordinarily begin on beats one or three. When a longer sound is, instead, begun on a weak beat, the result is syncopation. Syncopated rhythmic patterns are a prominent feature of spirituals. In “My Lord, What a Mornin’,” the words “My Lord” and “Mornin’” are set to a syncopated pattern each time they occur. “Were You There?” syncopates the words “sometimes” and “tremble.” And syncopated patterns are used for “river,” “Jordan” and “campground” in the refrain of “Deep River,” as well as for the words “Oh, don’t” at the beginning of the song’s verse. “Deep River” also contains several examples of a one-syllable word sung on two different pitches using a syncopated rhythm: “go,” “feast,” and “land.”

The spirituals’ distinctive rhythmic patterns stem from their West African heritage.

Negro church music . . . [has] more sophisticated elements of offbeats, retarded beats, and anticipated beats than does Euro-American folk music in general. The import of African tradition to the rhythmic element in American Negro music is more or less taken for granted.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 193.

<sup>22</sup> Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs*, 95.

<sup>23</sup> Courlander, *Negro Folk Music*, 29.

In discussing Afro-American folk music in general, Southern notes that, "Against the fixed rhythms of the time-line, the melodies moved freely, producing cross rhythms that constantly clashed with the pulse patterns."<sup>24</sup>

In light of the preceding statement, it is worth noting that in spirituals *in general*, the rhythmic patterns, including syncopation, do *not* produce a "clashing" effect. The rhythms do not intrude upon the melodies but, rather, seem quite natural to the poetic and melodic flow. Krehbiel gives a possible explanation for this:

In South America and the West Indies, Spanish melody has been imposed on African rhythm. In the United States, the rhythmical element, though still dominant, has yielded measurably to the melodic, the dance having given way to religious worship, sensual bodily movement to emotional utterance.<sup>25</sup>

### Variety Mirrors the Creator

In molding and purifying the individual believer to be conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, God does not erase the unique aspects of temperament, ability, and personality with which He created that person. That He should desire all Christians to manifest one correct "clone" personality would be antithetical to the character of a God whose creation is nothing if not evidence that *He loves variety*. Likewise, there is not one homogenous, "holy" musical style. The evidence seems, instead, to suggest that our Lord delights in preserving the unique features of a culture's music while molding and purifying that music, through the believers who compose and perform it, into a worthy expression of worship to Him.

## V. Believing the Gospel Story

From earliest childhood Marian Anderson attended the Union Baptist Church of Philadelphia, where her voice was increasingly recognized and appreciated in choirs. Young Marian was not to be a nominal Christian or even just an active church member. She became what we would call a "believer."

While her friends included both black and white neighbors, when she got beyond the circle of people who knew and respected her family,

<sup>24</sup> Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 194.

<sup>25</sup> Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs*, 83.

Marian at times ran into racial prejudice that was devastating to a sensitive girl. Sometimes she felt hurt, sometimes anger, sometimes a mixture of both. Due to her mother's good training she wanted to have the power to love and forgive her enemies as Christ did when He was mistreated.

Not long after her father's passing away, there was a presentation at her church which included preaching by Pastor Wesley G. Parks interspersed with spirituals on the life of Christ sung by the senior choir.

The program of spirituals and Scripture that day was as follows:

- I. Sister Mary Had-a But One Child (Luke 2:1-20)
- II. Lit'l Boy (Luke 2:41-50)
- III. Hear de Lambs a-Cryin'? (John 21:15-22)
- IV. The Last Supper (Matt 26:17-30)
- V. They Led My Lord Away (Mark 14:41-26, 53)
- VI. Were You There? (John 19)
- VII. He Never Said a Mumblin' Word (Matt. 27:27-44)
- VIII. Did You Hear When Jesus Rose? (Mark 16)<sup>26</sup>

The second selection was about Jesus in the temple at the age of 12—just the age of Marian. She could relate to His desire to do His Father's business. She, too, had a longing to respond like Jesus to the hard knocks of life as God would desire.

After the eighth and final song, the preacher gave an invitation, an integral part of Baptist gospel services. He ended his appeal as follows:

And that's the whole gospel story, friends. You've heard it from the Word of God. The question is now—what will you do about it? Do you want Jesus Christ to be your Saviour?

For at least one Philadelphian girl that day about eight decades ago, the answer was "Yes!"

Her subsequent story indicates that the Lord Jesus did indeed give Marian the power to forgive those who trespassed against her, and to be, as one spiritual puts it, "a Christian in her heart."

## VI. Miss Anderson's Evaluation of Spirituals

Perhaps only African Americans can *completely* relate to the spirituals,

<sup>26</sup> Most of the details of Marian's coming to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are from *The Deep River Girl* by Harry J. Albus (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), Chapter 6, "Believing the Gospel Story," 42-46.



but there are people of many ethnic groups who love these songs—especially Bible Christians.

Although she learned to sing sophisticated music *in nine languages* with finesse, clarity, and good diction, Marian Anderson still preferred as her favorites, the beloved songs of her childhood and youth in her family's Baptist church in Philadelphia.

Let us take two excerpts from her beautifully and graciously written autobiography.

First, an experience she had with a great song about the death of our Lord:

I am reminded of a time when I sang "The Crucifixion" in Oslo. This spiritual is one of the most deeply emotional of all the songs I know. In its simple words and moving music it captures the terror and tragedy of that awful moment. I felt it all that night. I was so deeply stirred myself that I was on the verge of tears, and I believe that some in the audience did weep. There was so much applause that I could not go on to the next number, so I sang it a second time. I was not happy with the repetition. One critic the next day wrote that it should not have been repeated, and he was right. When you have been given something special in a moment of grace, it is sacrilegious to be greedy.<sup>27</sup>

She tells elsewhere how warmly she was received in Scandinavia, especially by the Norwegians.

In Israel Miss Anderson was also well received and had tea with the President and his wife, met the Prime Minister, and the widow of the first President, Mrs. Chaim Weizmann.

I took occasion to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I did the Stations of the Cross . . . We went to Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, and the Dead Sea, and visited the River Jordan, which had tremendous implications for me. I remembered the words of the spiritual—"The River Jordan is so wide, I don't know how to get to the other side."

It turned out, in fact, to be quite narrow and muddy and was a bit of a disappointment. I went to see the walls of Jericho—another name that had all kinds of meaning for me. I thought of the spiritual's lines, "Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down." But the walls were not high any more. Archaeologists were doing some excavation in the area, and, seeing the results of their work, I realized that the walls must have been high after all.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *My Lord What a Morning*, 203-204.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

The American singer was impressed by the *kibbutzim* (Israeli collective farms) and was pleased to share in a thousand-strong Passover celebration. "The seder and the gathering," she writes, "were impressive and moving."<sup>29</sup>

But the great contralto had seen several places mentioned in the spirituals. For Christianity is a historical faith built on real people who lived, worshiped, and died in real places:

And it came to me that the Negro made images out of the Bible that were as vaulting as his aspirations. He had a desire to escape from the confining restrictions and burdens of the life he led. The making and singing of a song constituted an act of liberation, even if it was one that lasted only briefly in the imagination. He expressed his emotions and dreams in terms that were closest to him—terms from the Bible. He could see Heaven and Jerusalem and Calvary and the stone that was rolled away from the tomb. Being oppressed and persecuted, he dreamed of a city called Heaven, which would be a new home of peace and love.

I could see in Israel the geographic places that represented the reality, and they stirred me deeply. I kept thinking that my people had captured the essence of that reality and had gone beyond it to express in the spirituals the deepest necessities of their human predicament.<sup>30</sup>

Long before the fall of the Soviet Union, from Leningrad to Moscow, Miss Anderson's concerts were packed. She was warned, however, not to sing religious songs or spirituals in the U.S.S.R. because they would "fall on deaf ears."<sup>31</sup>

"They are the songs of my people," Marian had answered. "I shall sing them whenever and wherever I please."

And she did.<sup>32</sup>

Schubert, one of Miss Anderson's favorite composers, is well known for his setting of *Ave Maria*, a song banned by the communists.<sup>33</sup> The announcer called it "An Aria by Schubert." At the end of her first Soviet tour, however, people rushed down the aisle, pounded on the stage, and cried, "Deep River! Heaven, Heaven!"

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 261-62.

<sup>31</sup> Newman, *Lady from Philadelphia*, 79.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> At one of her concerts, the usually brightly-lit concert hall was dark except for a powerful spotlight on the American contralto. Later it was learned why: Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin was in the audience!

One of the songs that the Soviets clamored for may seem at first blush to be far-fetched. But the references to “robes,” “crowns,” and “harps” are all derived from the last book of the Bible:

### Heaven

Ah you got shoes, I got shoes,  
All of God's children got shoes.  
And when I get to heaven goin' to try on my shoes,  
I'm goin' to shout all over God's heaven.

#### *Refrain*

Oh heaven, heaven,  
Everybody talkin' about heaven ain't goin' there,  
Heaven, heaven,  
I'm goin' to shout all over God's heaven.

Well you got a robe, I got a robe,  
All of God's children got a robe,  
And when I get to heaven goin' to try on my robe,  
Goin' to shout all over God's heaven.

Well you got a crown, I got a crown,  
All of God's children got a crown,  
And when I get to heaven goin' to try on my crown,  
Goin' to shout all over God's heaven.

Well you got a harp, I got a harp,  
All of God's children got a harp,  
Ah when I get to heaven goin' to play on my harp,  
I'm goin' to shout all over God's heaven.

It is noteworthy that this song includes the words “everybody talkin' about heaven ain't goin' there.” When it was popular to be thought a Christian (unlike today), many no doubt professed a faith they did not really possess. Sadly, today, things have become so secular that few people are even *talking* about heaven, and there are many who aren't trusting in Christ alone to get them there.

## VII. Conclusion

We have only been able to touch on a few aspects of just a handful of spirituals, and especially the type of song that Marian Anderson loved better than any other.

Harold Courlander summarized his chapter called “Anthems and Spirituals” with this sensitive and artistic paragraph:

The Negro musical literature dealing with religious subject matter is rich and panoramic. It encompasses the anthems and spirituals with which we are largely familiar, chanted or half-sung sermons, improvisations by laboring gangs, the songs of itinerant street singers, and the spontaneous cries or hollers that are heard in the open fields. There is great variation among them in music and subject matter, but they all draw upon a common wellspring of inspiration and imagery . . . The total picture is one of splendid vision and a sensitive comprehension of the religious precepts out of which the vision derives.<sup>34</sup>

Shirlee P. Newman tells of attending Miss Anderson’s farewell concert at Boston’s Symphony Hall. In her floor-length slim white gown “she was as regal as the royalty for whom she has sung.”<sup>35</sup>

Her dignity, her stature, her confidence, her bearing, came from within. Standing in the curve of the piano before the golden pipes on the stage of Symphony Hall, she was in *her* world . . .

“But I thought she was dowdy,” whispered a voice behind me. “She’s stunning!”

“I thought she was older,” whispered another. “How old *is* she, anyhow?”

Miss Anderson doesn’t tell. And neither shall I. It really does not matter. She is ageless.

I had been early for the concert that Sunday afternoon, and I’d lingered in the lobby watching the audience assemble. Boston society arrived in chauffeur-driven limousines . . . political dignitaries alighted from cars with single-digit license plates . . . But perhaps the most stirring arrival of all was a frail young Negro woman who was lifted from her taxi into a wheelchair. She shivered, and as an usher wheeled her past, I heard him say, “Miss, it’s so cold—you should be wearing a coat.”

“Oh!” she said, her bright laughter echoing through the crowded lobby, “don’t worry about *me*. This is the happiest day of my life. I’m going to hear Marian Anderson.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Courlander, *Negro Folk Music*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> Newman, *Lady from Philadelphia*, 79.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

On April 8, 1993 Marian Anderson, in her 90's,<sup>37</sup> crossed over that river that she sang about so eloquently:

**Deep River**

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,  
Deep river, Lord,  
I want to cross over into campground.

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,  
Deep river, Lord,  
I want to cross over into campground.

O don't you want to go to that gospel feast,  
That promised land where all is peace?

Oh, deep river, Lord,  
I want to cross over into campground.

<sup>37</sup> Her "official" birthdate is given as 1902, but rumor has it that it was really about 1897.



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## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Running to Win! A Positive Biblical Approach to Rewards and Inheritance.* By G. Harry Leafe. Houston: Scriptel Publishers, 1992. 105 pp. Paper, \$7.00.

This small book, almost identical in size to our Journal, deals with a mighty big topic: the doctrine of eternal rewards.

Leafe writes: "Everything that we face in life is a part of God's training program for us as His children. Nothing is excepted! And it is through this training program that we are matured and prepared to receive our inheritance" (p. 54).

This is a book which clearly maintains a Free Grace view of the Gospel and challenges the reader to live wholeheartedly for God in light of our coming review at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

However, I found myself a bit uncomfortable with some of the author's conclusions. For example:

1. While it is not crystal clear, Leafe seems to argue for limited atonement, the view that Christ only died for the elect (cf. pp. 67-71, especially p. 71).

2. The author also seems to believe that regeneration logically precedes faith (p. 71).

3. He sees in the overcomer passages of Revelation 2-3 four sections which deal with blessings which will be true of *all* believers (2:7, 11; 3:5a, 12b) and four which deal with rewards which will only be true of *some*—that is, faithful—believers (2:17; 3:5b; 2:26-28 and 3:21; 3:12a; see pp. 102-104). The author gives no defense of his novel interpretation. I find it highly unlikely.

Overall I feel the topic covered deserves a more polished and thorough treatment than this work offers. However, as there is so little written on the subject, some readers may find this to be a helpful supplement to their library if read with discernment.

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Roanoke, TX

*Leaders in the Making: A Workbook for Discovering and Developing Church Leaders.* By Paul N. Benware and Brian Harris. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991. 120 pp. Paper, \$8.99.

As the subtitle indicates, this is a workbook designed to be used by churches to discover and develop church leaders.

The book is divided into four major study areas: (1) The Inner Life of Church Leaders, (2) The Biblical Ideals for Church Leaders, (3) The Evangelistic Work of Church Leaders, and (4) The Shepherding Ministries of Church Leaders. Each of these major areas is then subdivided into between three and seven sessions. All together there are a total of twenty sessions, averaging about five pages each.

Each session contains teaching followed by questions designed to make the reader think through what he has read. The questions are not the simple fill-in-the-blank variety (like: "In the Sermon on the Mount, who is the speaker?). The following are some representative questions: "What are several contrasts between [the Holy Spirit's] filling and baptizing?" "What are your greatest hindrances to prayer?" "Do you have a Bible reading plan?" "What is it?" "What results in a church when the biblical list [of requirements for an elder] is not consciously followed in leadership selection?" "What happens when a church focuses on just a few of the qualifications and neglects the others?" "What is the biblical expression for what a sinner must do to be saved?"

Of special interest to our readers is that this book takes a solid Free Grace stand. In fact, several of the twenty sessions deal with the message of evangelism.

I find this to be a helpful workbook and I recommend it for use by church boards.

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Roanoke, TX

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*It's Greek to Me! An Easy Self-Study of the New Testament Language.* Volume 1. By John Hart. Chesterton, IN: Hart and Home Publishers, 1993. 97 pp. Paper, \$20.95 (includes shipping and handling).

This is a fun book. A middle school or high school student could realistically learn the basics of Koine Greek, the Greek found in the NT,



by working his or her way through this book. If the student is guided by a parent, progress would be even more assured. (And, mom or dad would learn the basics of the language of the NT as well!)

The book is filled with clever illustrations, excellent exercises, and simple yet clear explanations.

After reading and working through this book, one should be able to say and write the Greek alphabet, identify several hundred Greek words, and translate simple phrases and sentences from the Greek NT.

By the way, the author is a solid Free Grace proponent and a longtime member of GES. I recommend this book highly for anyone wishing to learn more about the language of the NT.

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Roanoke, TX

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*The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life.* By Charles Stanley. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992. 239 pp. Cloth, \$17.99.

This book by the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia is a practical work that will edify believers. Although it does contain some doctrinal points, the book is primarily designed to help Christians in their daily experience with God. Stanley desires that all Christians be filled with the Holy Spirit and partake of the benefits that He provides.

To this end, the book is organized into three sections. Part One chronicles the personal pilgrimage of the author as he discovers the person of the Holy Spirit and the relationship of the believer to Him. Part Two covers the various aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the believer. Part Three examines the role of the Holy Spirit in making decisions. The reviewer was particularly helped by this last section, as Stanley explored the interrelationship of peace, conscience, the Word, and wisdom in making sound decisions.

The writing is very clear and will appeal to a broad spectrum of people. Each chapter ends with some thought-provoking questions or ideas. The author uses many helpful personal illustrations to reinforce his points.

"The wonderful Spirit-filled life" should be "the normal Christian life." This book will assist Christians in achieving this end.

Gregory P. Sapaugh  
Flint, Texas

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*Nelson's Concordance of Bible Phrases.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992. 752 pp. Cloth, \$19.99.

Students of the Bible will find this unique concordance very helpful. Unlike the typical concordance, which is a listing of verses in which an individual *word* occurs, this one lists all the verses where a particular *phrase* occurs. The editors have chosen 5,200 common phrases from the Bible and arranged them alphabetically according to the first word in the phrase.

The usefulness of this type of resource is readily apparent. For example, if one wanted to study the contexts of the phrase "sons of God," with this concordance he can look up the phrase directly and find all ten occurrences of it. With the traditional concordance, the student would have to look up either "sons" or "God," both of which appear in hundreds of verses, and do a painstaking search to find the verses where both words appear together.

Examples of some of the better-known phrases represented in the concordance are "kingdom of God," "day of the Lord," "Spirit of God," "eternal life," and "he who believes." There is also a key-word index if only one word of the phrase is remembered.

*Nelson's Concordance of Bible Phrases* will be a time-saving asset to any library.

Gregory P. Sapaugh  
Flint, Texas

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*Follow Me: The Master's Plan for Men.* By David E. Schroeder. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992. 243 pp. Paper, \$10.99.

This ambitious book lays out a discipleship plan especially for men based on the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its unique feature is that it focuses on character transformation in a small group context, focusing on fifteen character traits found in Luke. Some of the chapter titles are:

“Obeying Anyhow: Teachability,” “Welcoming Newness: Flexibility,” “Praying Tenaciously: Dependency,” and “Living Carefree: Contentment.”

Mr. Schroeder is director of Higher Education for the Christian and Missionary Alliance and leads workshops and seminars for men. He writes with passion about the subject, and his eighteen years of study and experience with discipling men shines through the material. There is an accompanying workbook for discussion groups.

The author is to be commended for the effort he has put into this work. Too many works on discipleship delve only into mechanics or disciplines rather than changing one's character.

However, the fly in the ointment, and a big one at that, is the Lordship slant to the book which comes out repeatedly. Discussing the new patch and the old garment (Matt 9:16), he comments: “Repeatedly Jesus implied, ‘Either take my teaching, my lifestyle, my world-view, and my kingdom fully, or do not take any of it. Do not try to pull bits and pieces together to make up your own religion’” (p. 44). Discussing selflessness, he writes, “According to Luke 9, what does being incorporated ‘in Christ’ involve? The terms of incorporation require three things: knowing who he is (vv 18-20), understanding the implications of discipleship (vv 21-22), and following him by fully identifying with him (vv 23-27)” (pp. 102-103). So to be “in Christ” requires not just faith but full acceptance of the terms of discipleship! To make our position “in Christ” dependent on our “understanding the implications of discipleship” and “fully identifying with him” leads either to insecurity or Pharisaism. The implications of discipleship are not understood in a moment but over a lifetime. As always, this failure to distinguish between the free gift of eternal life and the high cost of maturing discipleship muddles the Scriptures as well as the Gospel.

**Robert W. Oliver**

Pastor

Forked River Baptist Church

Lanoka Harbor, NJ

*Spiritual Warfare. Victory Over the Powers of This Dark World.* By Timothy M. Warner. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991. 160 pp. Paper, \$7.95.

The content of this book is an edited form of the Church Growth Lectures given in 1988 at Fuller Theological Seminary. The author is a professor of missions and evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

The central thread of the book is the necessity of "power encounters" in the defeat of the devil. The author's description of a power encounter includes such matters as prayer and a holy life. Yet the burden of the book is to persuade us to conquer our spiritual enemy through direct confrontations (casting out demons, rebuking Satan, etc).

To be sure, many sound truths are presented which may be commonly found in evangelical approaches to Satan and demons. In this light, many have highly recommended the book (see the back jacket). Nevertheless, my own disagreements with its content raise serious questions with regard to its value.

In the author's view, the church must liberate those enslaved to Satan so as to "make disciples" and fulfill the Great Commission. Supernatural manifestations of divine power over Satan must accompany the preaching of the Gospel. Yet, this theology of a "power encounter" effaces biblical salvation and sanctification. The power of the Gospel of grace alone for deliverance becomes deficient (cf. Rom 1:16), and the "power encounter" to deliver a Christian approaches a second-work-of-grace doctrine (cf. p. 65)

A few of the other teachings in the book which cannot be supported exegetically include: (1) demonic possession/oppression can be passed on sexually (p. 73) or genetically (pp. 73, 107); (2) the issue in demon possession is not the location (inside versus outside) (pp. 80-85); (3) Christians can be demon-possessed; (4) at baptism, new believers should renounce Satan so as to be delivered from any potential demonic possession or control (pp. 108, 120-21); (5) Christians must pray against territorial spirits; and (6) demons attach themselves to objects and places, and need to be "cleansed" (pp. 90, 93-95).

This book is best suited as a primer in the theology of moderate "deliverance ministries." While a call for balance is found in its pages, look for it elsewhere.

**John F. Hart**  
Associate Professor of Bible  
Moody Bible Institute  
Chicago, IL

*Today's Pastors.* By George Barna. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993. 169 pp. Cloth, \$15.99.

George Barna is not a pastor. How, then, can he write a book *about* pastors and designed *for* pastors? The answer is because George Barna is *not* a pastor. The best way to arrive at unbiased, objective conclusions is to distance oneself from the subject under examination. This Barna has done with great skill and proficiency. *Today's Pastors* is a book of invaluable scientific data. In compiling his information, the author surveyed more than 1,000 senior pastors throughout the country. His findings are based on scientific standards of research. In fact, the *Barna Institute* specializes in Christian and church-related studies.

In his latest work, the author takes the pulse of America's pulpits. He answers the question: "Are today's pastors in hot water?" The sobering reality, based on Barna's research, is *yes*. For instance, only 41% of pastors believe that since entering the pastoral ministry their passion for ministry has increased. Forty-nine percent feel that pastoring has been difficult on their families. "Building meaningful relationships" rated last in a list of the primary joys of pastoring. Finally, almost 20% of pastors rate themselves as "poor" in the area of personal evangelism. These are just a few of the revealing statistics regarding today's pastors.

This is not a theological book. It is not the author's intention to judge whether certain trends in today's pulpits are right or wrong. His goal is simply to present the results of his research, draw conclusions based on those results, and then make a few suggestions. At a time when Christian bookstores are overflowing with self-help books and manuals for effective ministry, *Today's Pastors* is a welcome relief. As a pastor, I highly recommend this book, not only to my fellow pastors, but to any believer interested in learning more about the heartbeat of the preacher.

**J. B. Hixson**

Pastor

Tremont Baptist Church

Tremont, IL

*Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments.* By Randy Alcorn. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1992. 294 pp. Paper, \$8.99.

In all the media coverage of the rhetoric and actions surrounding the abortion controversy, one might even get the impression that pro-lifers believe abortion to be an “evil work” somehow crucial to a person’s eternal destiny. Some in the Free Grace movement might therefore be tempted to avoid getting involved.

Fortunately, this book answers the challenges that may come when one takes a stand for the unborn. The author shows his Free Grace sentiments in Appendix A, “Finding Forgiveness After an Abortion.” There he writes: “There is no righteous deed we can do that will earn us salvation (Titus 3:5). We come to Christ empty-handed. Salvation is described as a gift—‘For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not of works, so that no one can boast’ (Eph 2:8-9). This gift cannot be worked for, earned, or achieved. It is not dependent on our effort but solely on Christ’s generosity and sacrifice on our behalf.”

He goes on to say: “You may feel, ‘But I don’t deserve forgiveness after all I’ve done.’ That’s exactly right. None of us deserves forgiveness. If we deserved it, we wouldn’t need it. That’s the point of grace. Christ got what we deserved on the cross, so we could get what we don’t deserve—forgiveness, a clean slate, a fresh start. Once forgiven, we can look forward to spending eternity in heaven with Christ and our spiritual family (John 14:1-3; Rev 20:11-22:6). And once forgiven, you can look forward to being reunited in heaven with all your loved ones covered by the blood of Christ, including the child you lost through abortion (1 Thess 4:13-18).”

Alcorn’s care in articulating his stand on Free Grace has also been exercised in his organization of the six main divisions of the book, which is a tool in the ongoing struggle to protect the unborn.

Dan Mosher  
Elder  
Christ Congregation  
Dallas, TX

*John Nelson Darby*. By Max S. Weremchuk. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1992. Translated from the German, *John Nelson Darby und die Anfänge einer Bewegung*, 1988. 256 pp. Cloth, \$14.99.

A strong GES supporter was challenged by an antidispensationalist about the father of modern dispensationalism: "He wasn't very *educated*." My friend, though a seminary graduate, had no answer. This book would have been a good reply.

After all, a man who studied at Westminster School, London (at the Abbey), where most of the teaching was in Greek and Latin; who as a teenager won the gold medal in [Greek and Latin] classics at Trinity University, Dublin; who spoke fluent French, German, Dutch, Italian, fair Spanish, and learned Maori in New Zealand in later years; who translated the Bible into three of these languages (also English!), with some help; who wrote 40 volumes of books, booklets, articles, hymns and poems, can scarcely be called "uneducated."

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), of an aristocratic Anglo-Irish family—there is even a family castle in Ireland—gave up all to follow Christ. This entailed 50 years of living out of a suitcase in much of Europe and in nearly all of the English-speaking world; founding dozens of congregations; pioneering the [re-]discovery of the pretribulation rapture, dispensational premillennialism, and the priesthood of believers. Since nearly all of these doctrines—not to mention the Free Grace position, which Darby also advocated—are under attack today, it is no wonder that Darby is widely maligned.

Though overly lauded by his devotees and overly lambasted by his detractors, Darby was, as nearly all admit, totally sold-out to Christ. He strongly influenced American evangelicalism, especially through Moody and Scofield.

This book is Teutonic in its thoroughness: It includes a family tree, original sources quoted at length, pictures, maps, Darby's poems, Appendices A-L, extensive endnotes, bibliography, and acknowledgements.

Who should read this book? All those interested in the doctrines mentioned above, as well as people interested in the early Brethren Assemblies. F. F. Bruce, who represented those British brethren who rejected much of Darby's theology, nevertheless called this book "a valuable study and certainly worthy of publication."

For any readers from the Netherlands who may want a factual European approach to Darby and his views, this book is also available in Dutch.

**Arthur L. Farstad**  
Editor  
*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*  
Dallas, TX



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## PERIODICAL REVIEWS

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**“Divine Control and Human Freedom: Is Middle Knowledge the Answer?”** David Basinger, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, March 1993, pp. 55-64.

This is an excellent article dealing with the issue of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Basinger presents the case for a view which preserves both human freedom and divine omnipotence. That view is called *middle knowledge*.

The author defines *middle knowledge* by citing the leading evangelical proponent of it, William Craig: “Since [a God with middle knowledge] knows what any free creature would do in any situation, he can, by creating the appropriate situations, bring it about that creatures will achieve his ends and purposes and that they will do so freely...In his infinite intelligence, God is able to plan a world in which his designs are achieved by creatures acting freely (p. 60).”

Basinger then illustrates the concept with a very understandable and preachable story about wishing to get his six-year-old daughter to choose freely to read ten pages of a Dr. Seuss book between the time she came home from school and the time she went to bed. He pointed out that if he were omniscient he would know exactly which approaches to his daughter (time, place, tone of voice, etc.) would lend to her freely choosing to obey and which would not.

He even pointed out that this approach has the weakness that it is conceivable that no approach to his daughter would result in her freely choosing to read the material!

Basinger points out the various other views of the problem (e.g., theological compatibilism, determinism, and paradox indeterminism).

I strongly recommend this article. It is a fine introduction to the question of God’s sovereignty and human freedom.

The reader should be wary, however, since the author doesn’t indicate his view of the Gospel in the article. As he is a professor at a Wesleyan college, it is quite likely that he holds erroneous views on the Gospel (e.g., most Wesleyans believe that loss of salvation is possible).

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*  
Roanoke, TX

“Romans 8:28-29 and the Assurance of the Believer,” D. Edmond Hiebert, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June 1991, pp. 170-83.

Dr. Hiebert is a gracious and godly man who, over the years, has penned many expositions of NT passages. He is Professor Emeritus of NT for the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno.

The assurance to which Hiebert refers in the title of this article is not the assurance of salvation. Instead it is the assurance that whatever happens to believers is used by God to make them more like His Son. This is the comfort of Romans 8:28, one of the great consoling verses in Scripture, and Hiebert does not miss it.

This text is not only comforting, but controversial, however, and here Hiebert is less helpful. For exegesis, and maneuvering through the minefield of possible translations, the student would be better served by either of the recent commentaries by Cranfield (1975) or Moo (1991). Hiebert references neither, but leans heavily on Lenski.

The main problem is theological—the verse seems too sweeping (“all things”) in view of the perplexing tragedies that plague God’s people. Some recent versions (NIV, RSV, NEB) mitigate the problem by taking *panta* as an accusative of respect (“God works in all things”), but Paul had access to *en pasin* if that was his intent. No, the traditional translation stands (KJV, ASV, NKJV), with its theological problem. How is it to be resolved? While it may be helpful to note (as Hiebert does, following Dunn) that this was “a common axiom of antiquity,” the resolution surely lies in the direction of v 29, and defining “the good” as our present and ultimate conformity to the image of Christ.

Of interest to *JOTGES* readers is the formal parallelism of “those who love God” (28a) and “those who are called according to His purpose” (28c). Hiebert is probably correct, with most interpreters, to call these the same group of people, i.e., all believers, viewed first from the human and then from the divine side. We would be quick to point out that neither Paul nor his fellow apostles assumed that believers always love God (e.g., 1 Cor 8:3; John 14:15; Rev 2:4). While this is true, it does not serve Paul’s purpose to distinguish here, and “those who love God” is probably a general description of God’s chosen people. Unfortunately, Hiebert carelessly presses the generalization and produces a theological *faux pas*: “This abiding love for God is the difference between the regenerated individual and the unsaved.”

Hiebert closes strongly by envisioning the coming day when God's Son will be "surrounded by many brethren conformed to His likeness." That is the blessed assurance of every believer!

**Jim Congdon**

Pastor

Topeka Bible Church

Topeka, KS

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**"1 Tim 2:15: A Possible Understanding of a Difficult Text,"** David R. Kimberley, *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, December 1992, 481-86.

David Kimberley, senior pastor of St. John's United Church of Christ in Massillon, Ohio, addresses the difficult text of 1 Tim. 2:15, "Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self control."

Kimberley's main purpose is to establish that Paul was combatting gnostic influences in Ephesus in 1 Timothy. He surveys the various interpretations of the passage. He omits, however, the view that "saved" here can mean something other than deliverance from eternal condemnation. Most of the article develops the theory of gnostic influence in Ephesus and discusses gnostic anti-gender beliefs. The author does not elaborate on the practical or theological problems his interpretation raises.

According to Kimberley, gnosticism sought to annul the distinction between men and women, deprecated women in general and childbearing in particular. In gnostic teaching, giving birth was an awful reminder of the differences between male and female, and an occasion for condemnation for the woman in question as she had brought yet another human being into this world. Paul sought to reassure Christian women that child-bearing was a noble occupation. Thus, "the sense of the text is that women will be saved in childbearing, not condemned, *as long as they continue in faith* [italics added]" (p. 486). Kimberley thus opens himself up to the charge of Lordship teaching. Again he comments, "she will be saved through bearing children *if she continues in the essential attributes of faith and love and holiness, with modesty* [italics added]" (p. 486).

The article leaves unanswered more questions than it answers. The explanation of "saved" as "the eternal salvation of women in its fullest

NT sense" (p. 482) does not add to an understanding of the text. Are we to believe that faith *plus* love *plus* holiness *plus* modesty and childbearing are essential for the eternal salvation of women?

The question should be asked, "saved from what?" Options include salvation from eternal judgment (Eph 2:8), from false teachers (1 Tim 4:15), from temporal judgment (Jas 5:20), from sickness (Jas 5:15), or from a wasted life (Luke 9:24). Salvation in the NT essentially means "deliverance from something" and that "something" must be determined from the text and its context. In this context deliverance from a wasted life is most likely in view (cf. 1 Tim 2:10; 2 Cor 5:10).

For a better discussion of this difficult text see Ann Bowman's article, "Women in Ministry: An Exegetical Study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (April-June 1992): 193-213.

**Robert W. Oliver**  
Pastor  
Forked River Baptist Church  
Lanoka Harbor, NJ

## A NATIVITY SPIRITUAL

FRANCES A. MOSHER

Pianist, Christ Congregation  
Dallas, Texas

### SWEET LITTLE JESUS BOY

Sweet little Jesus Boy,  
They made You be born in a manger;  
Sweet little holy Child,  
We didn't know who You was.

Didn't know You come to save us, Lord,  
To take our sins away,  
But please, Sir, forgive us, Lord;  
We didn't know who You was.

You done told us how—  
We is a-tryin'.  
Master, You done showed us how,  
Even when You'se dyin'.

Jest seem like we can't do right—  
Look how we treated You;  
Our eyes was blind, we couldn't see;  
We didn't know 'twas You.

Sweet little Jesus Boy,  
They made You be born in a manger.  
Sweet little holy Child,  
We didn't know who You was.

The lyrics of this lovely Christmas spiritual are outstanding on two counts. First, they demonstrate the affectionate response to the story of the Christ Child that is common to people of all races and cultures, and second, they address two important doctrinal issues with profound simplicity.

The lyricist's belief in the deity of Christ is apparent by his (or her) addressing the "sweet little Jesus Boy" as both "Sir" and "Lord," as well as by the frequent apology that, "We didn't know who You was." The true meaning of "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14a) is often understood by the average person all the while it eludes

many who hold advanced degrees in theology. This testifies to our Lord's words in Matt 11:25: "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes."

The lyrics also demonstrate the singer's understanding that the purpose of our Lord's coming was "to save us . . . to take our sin away." While it is true that a reference is made in the song to Christ's serving as an *example* to us, there is also recognition of our inherent inability to *follow* that example. It is evident that the lyricist recognized our inability to meet God's standard and the subsequent necessity of Jesus' saving us and taking our sins away. Jesus did not just set a good example and start us on the road to working for our salvation; He actually took our sin *away*. Christ Himself states that our salvation was the primary purpose of His coming: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The total efficacy of the Savior in completely taking away our sins is expressed in Heb 8:12b: "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

In "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" we find simple expression of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the forgiveness granted through His merit, not our own.

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ANDERSON, NEIL T. *Living Free in Christ*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993. Pp. 310. \$15.99 (cloth)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Stomping Out the Darkness*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993. Pp. 210. \$8.99 (paper).

ANKERBERG, JOHN, and JOHN WELDON. *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Mormonism*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1992. Pp. 484. \$13.99 (paper).

BAHNSEN, GREG L. , et al. *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. Pp. 416. \$17.99 (paper).

BALMER, RANDALL. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Pp. 294. \$10.95 (paper).

BARNA, GEORGE. *Absolute Confusion*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993-94. Pp. 309. \$16.99 (paper).

BELL, JAMES. *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. Wheaton: Victor Books, Division of Scripture Press Publications, 1993. Pp. 251. \$14.99 (paper).

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BOWMAN, ROBERT M. *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. Pp. 165. \$7.99 (paper).

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- KOIVISTO, REX A. *One Lord, One Faith*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993. Pp. 408. \$19.99 (cloth).
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- LESCELIUS, ROBERT. *Lordship Salvation*. Asheville, NC: Revival Literature, 1992. Pp. 217. \$6.99 (paper).
- LLOYD-JONES, MARTYN. *Walking with God*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993. Pp. 144. \$8.99 (paper).
- LONDON, H.B., JR. and NEIL B. WISEMAN. *Pastors At Risk*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993. Pp. 240. \$14.99 (cloth).
- LUCADO, MAX. *And the Angels Were Silent*. Portland: Multnomah Press, 1992. Pp. 261. \$16.99 (cloth).



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WALLS, DAVID. *Finding God in the Dark*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993. Pp. 199. \$9.99 (paper).

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WIERSBE, WARREN W. *On Being a Servant of God*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993. Pp. 150. \$14.99 (cloth).

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