

Journal of the  
**GRACE**  
Evangelical Society

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*"Faith Alone In Christ Alone"*



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Editor  
**Arthur L. Farstad**

Associate Editors  
**Zane C. Hodges**  
**Robert N. Wilkin**

Production  
**Cathy Beach**  
**Sue Broadwell**  
**Mark J. Farstad**

**Manuscripts, periodical and book reviews, and other communications** should be addressed to Cathy Beach, GES, P.O. Box 167128, Irving, TX 75016-7128.

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# We Believe In: SANCTIFICATION

## Part 5: Future Sanctification: Perfect, or Ultimate, Sanctification

ARTHUR L. FARSTAD

Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*  
Dallas, Texas

### I. Introduction

To dwell above with those we love,  
That will indeed be glory;  
But here below with some I know,  
Well, that's another story!<sup>1</sup>

Why is it that our fellow-Christians (and we mean *believers*, not mere professors) will seem so much more lovable in glory *than they do at present?* (This is to leave aside the issue of *our own* less-than-glorious reputations in the eyes of others.)

The answer lies in this last in a series of five articles on sanctification. In heaven we will be perfectly, or ultimately, sanctified. "Here below," however, while positionally perfect in Christ through past sanctification, our present performance (our progress or sometimes lack of it) shows how far we still have to go.

We have spent two and a half years of Journal articles on this subject because sanctification is so important and so crucial to our success in the Christian life.

Readers may remember that the first article, which was introductory, was by your editor, and the next three—the most difficult subjects theologically—were assigned to our director, Dr. Wilkin. Now it is my turn to close the series with a discussion of the future aspect of sanctifica-

<sup>1</sup> I learned this somewhat-less-than-Shakespearean quatrain from my first lecturer in homiletics, the irrepressible South-African-born preacher and hymn writer, the late Alfred P. Gibbs.

tion—where all will “indeed be glory.” At that time we will be able to reverse the clauses of the bumper-sticker theologian who wrote:

“CHRISTIANS AREN’T PERFECT—JUST FORGIVEN!”  
to  
“CHRISTIANS AREN’T JUST FORGIVEN—  
THEY’RE PERFECT!”

Happily, the time is actually coming when believers will be not only *forgiven*, but actually *perfect*!

Since many readers may be new to our Journal or may not have carefully digested (or even read) all of the previous articles, I would like to quote a nice summary paragraph by the late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer:

The Bible teaching in regard to sanctification, then, is (1) that all believers are *positionally* sanctified in Christ “once for all” at the moment they are saved. This sanctification is as perfect as He is perfect. (2) All believers are *being* sanctified by the power of God through the Word, and this sanctification is as perfect as the believer is perfect. So, also, (3) all believers *will* be sanctified and perfected in glory into the very image of the Son of God. The Bible, therefore, does not teach that any child of God is altogether sanctified experimentally in daily life before that final consummation of all things.<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that both the first *and* third aspects of sanctification are perfect, since they are not at all dependent on our own faulty present performance.

A good three-point, alliterated set of words suitable for teaching or preaching about the three aspects of sanctification is:

1. Positional sanctification
2. Progressive sanctification
3. Perfected sanctification

About this fascinating future blessing—the perfected, or ultimate, sanctification—let us now examine the biblical witness, make some (hopefully) helpful observations, and draw some conclusions. I have selected several NT passages for examination.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 6:285.

## II. Seeing Him and Being Like Him

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

While we are presently children of God and *positionally* perfect in Christ, John here tells us that when we see Christ as He really is, we'll be like Him. We'll never be gods,<sup>3</sup> but we will be Christlike—perfect in holiness.

## III. Being Conformed to the Image of God's Son

God the Father was so pleased with His well-beloved Son that He wants to have many sons and daughters who conform to His image:

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29).

What does Paul mean by “the image [*eikōn*] of His Son”? Certainly he does *not* mean that we will all outwardly be clones of the physical appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, even in His glorified, post-resurrection state. It has to do with the moral and spiritual qualities of Christ towards which we should be striving in present sanctification. Our “image” (modern usage) will then exactly match our real state, unlike now, when we “put our best foot forward” and tend to disguise our faults.

## IV. Being a Glorious, Blemish-Free Bride

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish (Eph 5:25-27).

Like the famous “kenosis” passage in Phil 2:5ff, as well as many other writings of Paul, sound doctrine is used to bolster sanctified living.<sup>4</sup> The good news is that no matter how far short we members of Christ's bride, the Church, fall in meeting NT ideals, ultimately we *will* be glorious,

<sup>3</sup> Contra Mormonism. Compare also Satan's claim to Eve: “Ye shall be as gods” (Gen 3:5, KJV).

<sup>4</sup> For example, humility in Phil 2:5ff; loving one's wife here.

spotless, wrinkle-free, holy, and with no blemishes! This, of course, has to do with likeness to Christ, not so much physical beauty, although I am convinced that there will be that as well.

### V. Possessing Needful Holiness

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

No matter how hard we pursue holiness at present, only the perfect holiness of the future will enable us to feel comfortable dwelling with a thrice-holy God. Church history, especially biography and autobiography, shows that it is the most devout, godly, and spiritual who are generally most aware of their own sinfulness. Christians who think they're really quite advanced in holiness have yet to experience their real potential for sin, even as believers.

### VI. Possessing the Perfection Needed to Enter

Christian music—or much of it—has been beautiful and inspiring. Some enemies of the Reformation complained that Luther corralled more people into his “heresy” through his hymns than through his preaching and teaching. When French Roman Catholics converted to Huguenots their neighbors would say, “They’ve gone to singing Psalms!”

Unfortunately, some of the most popular works contain at least a grain of poison in the form of false doctrine. Because words set to music tend to be remembered long after the sermon is forgotten, this is a real problem. Works salvation, the falling-away doctrine, and universalism are some of the heresies that crop up even in fairly sound hymnals.

A famous solo piece, quite beautiful and popular, is “The Holy City.” Sadly, this song includes the untrue lines, “. . . and all who would might enter it, and no one was denied.” False! As the following two passages clearly reveal, *many will be denied entrance*:

But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Rev 21:27).

But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie (Rev 22:15).

The contrast is between those who are inscribed in the Book of Life, and anything that is defiling or produces an abomination or a lie. This



shows that all the saints will *ultimately* be totally without sin, since they do *enter in*.

Revelation 22:15, the seventh from the last verse in the Bible, shows that all those inside the Holy City have been cleansed from sin, and it is *gross* sins that are mentioned. Many Christians committed some of these sins before salvation, and 1 Corinthians makes it clear that real Christians can commit carnal sins also, such as divisiveness, pride, drunkenness, and even the incest of chapter 5. Thus, serious faults can be true of believers still in the process of progressive sanctification, but none of these sins will appear when they receive final or ultimate sanctification.

## VII. Being Presented at the Heavenly Court

Jude reveals that not only is God able to keep His people from “falling” (KJV), but even today, He can keep us from “stumbling” (Greek, NKJV, etc.). The ultimate in sanctification is being presented “faultless,” as to a monarch at court:

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen (Jude 24-25).<sup>5</sup>

Dame Agatha Christie’s cleverly constructed mystery stories have intrigued millions around the globe, including members of the royal family of her native England. In her *Autobiography* she wrote that the greatest thrill in her checkered career (which included dispensing medicines in two world wars, world travel, archaeological work in the Middle East with her archaeologist husband, Max Mallowan), was being *presented* to Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace—and having lunch with her majesty.

For Americans perhaps the presentation of various “queens”—Cotton, Roses, and especially “Miss America”—to their “courts” is easier to appreciate.

<sup>5</sup> Some advocates of Free Grace understand the presentation of Jude 24 differently. They feel that it refers to the presentation at the Judgment Seat of Christ of only those believers who proved themselves faithful in their service of Christ. “Faultless” (Gk: *amōmos*) is thus understood in experiential terms. Compare Robert N. Wilkin, “He Is Able to Keep You from Stumbling! (Jude 24),” *The GES News*, January-February 1994, 2-3.

On a more personal level, millions of brides remember the thrill of being presented to the congregation following the words, "I now pronounce you man and wife."

And this last illustration is actually Pauline. The chaste virgin, the bride of Christ—including all of us who *have been* (positionally), *are* (progressively), and *shall be* (perfectly) sanctified—will one day be presented by the King of kings to His Heavenly Father.

### VIII. Conclusion

Having examined future, ultimate sanctification, we have now come to the close of our series on the three main areas of sanctification. In conclusion, it would be hard to improve on Dr. Ryrie's picture of all three. Everyone who has ever been a child can relate to this charming, down-to-earth story:

There is an excellent, though simple, illustration of these three phases of sanctification. It concerns the little girl who had just come out of the candy store having spent her allowance on a lollipop, when she spied her best girl friend coming down the street toward her. Being a properly brought up child she knew that unless she could think of something quickly she would be obliged to offer the lollipop to her little friend. Her dilemma between courtesy and hunger was solved by an action which quickly, certainly, and forever sanctified the lollipop for her own use alone. And that action was simply to lick it all over on both sides before her girl friend was alongside. By licking the lollipop she set it apart for herself; it was not now something the friend would want. This is like positional sanctification. The moment we receive the Lord as Saviour, God sets us apart for Himself, instantaneously, certainly and forever.

But that first lick did not mean much assimilation of the lollipop for our shrewd little girl. Nevertheless, she took care of that problem posthaste. She proceeded to keep on licking the candy and to make it practically what it already was positionally—her very own. This is progressive sanctification, and it is a process that continues throughout life. But finally there came that moment when the whole lollipop was completely in her mouth and stomach, when it was totally possessed by her. So it shall be with us when we go to be with Christ. We shall then be fully sanctified or fully set apart and possessed by Him. But it is that process of being made in practice what we are in position and what we shall be ultimately that is concerned with maturing Chris-

tian life, and it is something which is accomplished by various persons and means. It is oversimplification to say that God does it all, and it is a wrong inference to think that He does it apart from any means.<sup>6</sup>

Yes, we of the Free Grace persuasion do believe in sanctification. Contrary to common misrepresentation, we are not “antinomian”; we do not teach that believers can live carnal or selfish lifestyles with impunity. Our past and future sanctification are all of God. As to our present, progressive sanctification, the Lord expects us to do our part as well, and to use all the aids to godliness that He has so graciously provided.

<sup>6</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 62.



# A CRITIQUE OF KEITH A. FOURNIER'S

## *A House United? Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A Winning Alliance for the 21st Century*<sup>1</sup>

ROBERT N. WILKIN  
Executive Director  
Grace Evangelical Society  
Irving, TX

### I. Introduction

This book interests me greatly for a number of reasons. First, the man who assisted in the writing of this book, Bill Watkins, was my contemporary in seminary. Second, recently at a meeting of Bible scholars in Chicago, Bill and I had a brief conversation about the book. Third, the issue which this book addresses is vital to the clear proclamation of the Gospel. Fourth, this issue is now receiving widespread attention. This is due, in part, to the release in 1992 of a statement entitled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (which Fournier includes in full in the appendix). Fifth, and most significant, I believe this book addresses a very important Gospel issue.

The book begins in an arresting way: "I am a Christian. I am a Catholic Christian. I am an evangelical Catholic Christian" (p. 19). A little later, on the same page, Fournier admits that many Protestant Christians<sup>2</sup> have

<sup>1</sup> Keith A. Fournier with William D. Watkins. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994. 368 pp. Cloth, \$18.00. Editor's note: It has been a surprise, not to say a disappointment, to a number of people I've talked to, that the Navigators, an organization that has stressed memorization and meditation on God's Word, would publish a book that will offend so many conservative, Bible-believing Protestants.

<sup>2</sup> Since there are so many "protest" groups active today, many people doubtless think our word *Protestant* merely means *protesting against Roman Catholicism*. The Latin roots of the word suggest *bearing witness* (see *testatio* in Cassell's Latin Dictionary [New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1979], 601-602). In 1529, however, at the Diet of Speier, where the name *Protestant* was coined, the

a hard time accepting those claims because of their view of the Gospel.<sup>3</sup>

The critique to follow will attempt to demonstrate that Fournier has not proved that he is an evangelical Christian. However, before beginning this critique, we should note some of the book's strong points.

The title accurately describes the contents of the book, something which is very helpful to the reader. The cover is attractive. There is an appendix giving the complete 1992 statement entitled, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." Since that document directly relates to the discussion of whether a person can be born again by believing the gospel of Roman Catholicism,<sup>4</sup> it is very helpful to have it included. The tone of the book is irenic. Fournier comes across as a likable person.

The reports in the book of the author's efforts on behalf of the Pro-Life Movement are impressive, as are his strong commitment to conservative morality and his drive to make a difference with his life.

The impression the author leaves is that he is someone who might read this review and give it serious consideration. Beyond that, I hope that many Catholics will read and carefully consider this review.

We now turn to a critique of Fournier's book and of the thesis which it presents.

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Lutheran minority had good reason to protest the unfairness of Rome. The Catholic majority ordered that in Lutheran territories the Catholics should be tolerated, but in Catholic territories Lutherans were to have no freedom of worship. The term *Protestant* spread to refer to all Western European Christians who rejected Rome. See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1953), 727. Ed.

<sup>3</sup>On the other hand, as this book itself points out in many places, there are also many evangelical Christians who do *not* have a hard time accepting the idea that traditional Roman Catholics are evangelical Christians.

<sup>4</sup>The denomination "Roman Catholic" is actually a contradiction in terms. Early Christendom evolved into the "Old Catholic Church." Five major centers of Christianity had especially powerful bishops (*papas*, or popes). After the depredations of the Muslim invaders, these eventually narrowed down to two, Rome and Constantinople. The Eastern wing of the State religion came to be called *Orthodox*, the Western, *Catholic*. The word *Catholic* comes from the Greek *kath'holou*, "according to the whole," whence *katholikos*, "universal." *Roman* means restricted to the adherents of the pope of Rome. Hence "Roman Catholic" means "Restricted Universal" or "Exclusive All-Inclusive." "Roman Catholic" is an oxymoron. Ed.

## II. Biblical Argumentation Is Absent

Fournier is a lawyer, not a theologian. However, as no doubt he himself would agree, this does not excuse him from the need to show that what he's saying is biblical.

Fournier directly quotes 102 passages and refers to another 163 by my count. While that is not a lot of verses to quote or refer to in a book of this size, it certainly seems at first glance to be a sufficient number, depending, of course, on how they are cited. However, when these are examined more carefully, one can easily see that this book never really supports its case from Scripture at all.

First, references to verses are almost always made in footnotes, actually endnotes, which studies show most readers will not read. In addition, these references tend to be grouped together so that in some notes 10 or more passages are cited at once. This means that the author rarely even attempts to support his points with the Word of God.

Second, as you read the text of the book, you rarely see verses mentioned, let alone discussed. Less than one page in three has *any* mention of a text of Scripture.

Third, the author never once explains what a given passage means.<sup>5</sup> He merely quotes or refers to passages.

Fourth, when he does quote or cite verses, it is usually to support minor points. We do not find any scriptural support, for example, for the idea that Catholics and evangelical Protestants are both members of God's household. What passage or passages support such doctrinal diversity in God's family? Since the book's main title is the question, "A House United?", it is vital to establish this point. Yet it is assumed rather than established.

Fifth, passages which clearly require explanation in order to establish the case that Catholics are Christians are not explained. We need explanations of passages like John 5:24; 10:28-29; Acts 10:43-48; Rom 3:21-31; 4:1-8; 8:38-39; Gal 1:8-9; 3:6-14; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; 1 John 5:9-13; and Rev 22:17, to name but a few.

Sixth, when he does actually quote verses, the author switches from version to version as if Bible translations were a kind of smorgasbord. He cites the following versions: the *New International Version*, the *New*

<sup>5</sup>A possible exception is note 4 on page 360. There Fournier (or more likely Watkins) argues that death in Rom 5:12 refers to spiritual separation from God, not physical death, because of "the entire context of Paul in Romans 5 and 6." However, even here we are not given even one piece of evidence to support his point.

*American Standard Bible*, the *New King James Version*, the *New American Bible*, the *New Revised Standard Version*, and *The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English* (once). This is a questionable practice. It gives the reader the impression that the author will cite whatever version states the text as he sees it.

By comparison with other recent books attempting to prove a theological viewpoint, this book fails to carry its case biblically.<sup>6</sup>

### III. Fournier Relies on Experience to Prove His Case

Instead of establishing his case from the Bible, Fournier uses experience.

Chapter two (pp. 38-49) tells about his lapse from Catholicism as a child and the beginning of his return to Catholicism at age seventeen. In chapter three (pp. 50-61) Fournier reports on his selection of a college. He had a short stint in an Assembly of God Bible College in Lakeland, Florida. While there he decided he wanted to attend a Catholic school. Being from Boston, he went to Boston College to enroll. He only stayed a few days, however. While Boston College is a Catholic school, Fournier felt that at the time it "lacked a strong faith-nurturing environment" (p. 61). He ended up choosing a college recommended by someone he knew and trusted. He chose a Franciscan Catholic college: the College of Steubenville (Ohio).

In chapter four Fournier tells of his experiences at the College of Steubenville, including what he considered to be a revival there. Fournier jumps ahead nearly two decades in chapter five (pp. 76-97), recounting his involvement with Pat Robertson and his working in the newly created *Center for Law and Justice* in Virginia.

Chapter six ends the first third of the book. In it Fournier moves on to discuss an organization called *Liberty, Life, and Family*, which he founded in 1992. Thus the first third of the book is an expanded testimony of the author. A testimony of what? Of the Gospel of the Bible or of some other gospel? We will take up that issue in a moment.

<sup>6</sup> Compare, for example, Zane C. Hodges's, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989, and Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1989) and Joseph C. Dillow's, *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992).



The rest of the book is made up of chapters which explore various themes, such as: unity in history, unity in the face of persecution, the breakdown of the family, barriers to family reunion, our common heritage, a common agenda, and alliance building. While these chapters are not autobiographical, experience is used as the support for points made in these chapters as well. Here, however, Fournier moves beyond his experiences to those of others.

One type of argument from experience is to point out that many well-respected people agree with one's position (an *ad populum* argument). At many points Fournier does just that. At times he attempts to make his case by pointing to those who agree with him and saying they all surely can't be wrong. For example, when discussing Dave Hunt's critique of the ecumenical accord, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together,"<sup>7</sup> Fournier says:

Are Protestants as astute in their understanding of theology, history, and culture as J. I. Packer, Charles Colson, Os Guinness, Richard Land, Pat Robertson, John White, and Thomas Oden really that far off base? Are Catholics as devoutly committed to Jesus Christ as Richard John Neuhaus, William Bentley Ball, John Cardinal O'Connor, James Hitchcock, Peter Kreeft, and Ralph Martin really unsaved and deceivers of the faithful?<sup>8</sup>

This type of argument proves nothing. If God's Word is against an argument, it doesn't matter how many "heavyweights" support that argument. The majority is rarely right, anyway. Didn't the Lord say that "narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt 7:14)?

Surely Fournier himself would not be impressed with that same argument applied to the abortion debate. The majority of the Supreme Court decided that abortion was a constitutionally protected "right." No court since then has overturned that decision. In addition, a host of governors, senators, presidents, CEOs, and even pastors and theologians can be cited who believe that there is nothing morally wrong with abortion (and that forbidding it is actually a grave evil). I gather that Fournier would argue that abortion is wrong even if he were the only person on the planet who believed that way. His use of the *ad populum* argument is really nothing more than special pleading.

<sup>7</sup>Dave Hunt, "The Gospel Betrayed," *Berean Call*, May 1994, pp. 1-2ff.

<sup>8</sup>*A House United?*, 331.

Experience is excellent for illustrations of truth which has been established from Scripture. However, experience is absolutely worthless for establishing truth—especially experience contrary to Scripture.

#### IV. Catholics Don't Qualify As Evangelical Christians Under Fournier's Own Definition

In addition to the fact that Fournier doesn't build his case from Scripture and that he argues from experience, his effort to prove that Catholics are Christians fails at the level of definition. Under his own definition, Catholics don't qualify as evangelical Christians.

Many Evangelicals who approach a book like this one, this reviewer included, do so with a bias. We believe that Catholics who agree with the basic teachings of Rome are *not* evangelical Christians. The teachings of Rome seem to be clearly antithetical to evangelical Christianity at many key points. Thus Fournier's claim to be both a practicing Catholic and an evangelical Christian makes many wonder how he could substantiate his claim. If, but only if, he could show from Scripture that the gospel of Rome is the Gospel of the Bible, could he change the opinion of well-grounded Evangelicals. However, on the contrary, he reinforces the belief that the gospel of Rome is not the Gospel at all.

##### A. Fournier's Definition of Evangelical Christianity Is Inadequate

Fournier begins his definition of evangelical Christianity in this way:

An evangelical Christian, then, is one who believes the good news about Christ and proclaims it. In other words, an evangelical Christian is a proclaiming Christian. Anyone who knows Christ as Savior and Lord and tells others about Him can legitimately attach the adjective *evangelical* to the noun *Christian*. In fact, it's hard to imagine what a Christian would be without also being evangelical in orientation. Putting the two words together almost results in redundancy. It's close to talking about buildings that lack structure or ordering a hamburger without the meat. If it's a building, it has structure. If it's a hamburger, it has meat. You don't get one without the other. Likewise, if someone is a Christian, he or she should be an *evangelical* Christian. One who truly follows Christ not only believes the gospel but shares it.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 34, italics original. Fournier here confuses *evangelical* with *evangelistic*. Some cults are very evangelistic, yet deny even the basic Christian doctrines on which the Gospel rests (e.g., the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth).

In the very next paragraph he adds one additional requirement to being an evangelical Christian—obedience:

So in the truest sense of the term, I am an evangelical Christian. And if you are evangelical in your relationship, convictions, *and obedience to Christ*, you are a Christian too.<sup>10</sup>

Thus he defines an evangelical Christian as one who (1) believes the gospel, (2) shares the gospel, and (3) obeys Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Since obedience to Christ is open-ended, it isn't surprising that, according to Fournier, being an evangelical Christian also requires baptism (p. 35), perseverance in charity (p. 33), thinking, speaking, and acting properly (p. 33), and ongoing church membership (p. 33).

The expression *evangelical Christian* doesn't occur anywhere in Scripture. However, each of those words is found there.<sup>12</sup> In light of this, it is surprising to this reviewer that Fournier doesn't give any discussion of the biblical uses of these words. He simply assumes his own definition of the expression.

The word *Christian* occurs three times in the NT (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16). In Acts 26:28 *Christian* appears to be used as a synonym for *believer*. The other two citations seem to refer to believers who are under Christian instruction.

The word *evangelical* is the adjectival form of the Greek word *euangelion*, meaning *Gospel* or *Good News*.<sup>13</sup> It occurs 77 times in the NT. With but a few exceptions,<sup>14</sup> *euangelion* is used in the NT in reference to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., italics added.

<sup>11</sup> See, however, p. 61, where Fournier cites approvingly this definition by Carl Henry: "[An evangelical Christian is] one who affirms the good news that God forgives sin and gives new life to sinners on the grounds of the substitutionary death of Christ and His bodily resurrection." There is no mention here of sharing the Gospel or of obeying Christ. In light of earlier quotations that show that an evangelical Christian must also share his or her faith and obey Christ, it appears that Fournier is merely agreeing with Henry that being an evangelical Christian *includes* having such faith, not that this is all that is required.

<sup>12</sup> Strictly speaking only the root of the word *evangelical* occurs. The Greek NT has the root *evangel* in the words *euangelion* and *euangelizō*.

<sup>13</sup> The first two letters in *euangelion*, *eu*, when used as a prefix on a word normally mean "good" or "well." This prefix has come over into English too. We have words like *eulogy*, "good things said about a person," *euphony*, "good sounds," and *euphoria*, "good feeling."

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, 2 Cor 11:4 and Gal 1:6, which refer to "a different gospel" than the one Paul preached. Such a gospel, according to Paul, is not really "Good News" at all (cf. Gal 1:7).

There are three possible ways to define the expression *evangelical Christian*.

First, an evangelical Christian can be defined simply as one who believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Under this definition anyone who is trusting in Christ and Him alone for eternal life is an evangelical Christian.

Second, an evangelical Christian can be defined as one who believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ *and* all of the other fundamentals of the faith (such as the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, Jesus' bodily resurrection, and His second coming; cf. Gal 2:11-14ff.; 5:4; Col 2:4-10; 1 Tim 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:15-18). Under this definition there is a distinction between being a believer and being an evangelical Christian.

Third, the expression *evangelical Christian* can be used to refer to both one's beliefs and practices. In this case an *evangelical Christian* is an orthodox believer who is walking in fellowship with Christ. Under this definition it is proper to discuss one's works. Is the individual walking in love? Is he giving? Does he attend church regularly? Is he in the Word? Is he a person of prayer? Does he share his faith regularly?

It has been my experience that the most common use of the expression *evangelical Christian* today is the second one. Thus a believer not walking in fellowship could still be called an evangelical Christian.

However, even if we accept Fournier's definition, traditional Catholics are not evangelical Christians. Even under that definition, in order to be considered an evangelical Christian, one must believe the fundamentals of the faith. No amount of piety can overcome unorthodox beliefs, especially concerning the Gospel itself!

It is at this very point that Roman Catholics fail to qualify as evangelical Christians. While devout Catholics believe many of the fundamentals of the faith, they don't believe the most important one: the true biblical Gospel!<sup>15</sup>

### **B. Fournier's Definition of the Gospel Is Unbiblical**

The "gospel" which Fournier and other devout Catholics believe is not the Gospel which Jesus and the apostles taught. It is not the Gospel of the Bible. It is not the message of salvation by grace through faith alone apart from works. It is not a free gift. Instead, it is the gospel of Rome: salvation by grace through faith *plus works*—including baptism and other sacraments, turning from sins, doing good deeds, attending church, giving money, etc.

<sup>15</sup>This is not to suggest that there are *no* Catholics who are saved. See section VI below for further discussion of that issue.

While the author never attempts to explain his view of the gospel in detail, he gets his point across here and there throughout the book. Fournier says the following about the gospel:

Conversion is a process (p. 29).

There is an integral place for the deeds of faith (not deeds done apart from or in addition to faith) in the salvation process (p. 208).

Salvation must be sustained, nourished, and deepened (p. 33).

"One who does not however persevere in charity is not saved" (p. 33, citing the Second Vatican Council approvingly).

"All who have been justified by faith *in baptism* are incorporated into Christ" (p. 29, italics added, citing approvingly the "Decree on Ecumenism" by the bishops of the Catholic Church).

*How can a baby be saved without acknowledging Jesus?* Obviously, the infant cannot respond by faith. On the other hand, his parents, godparents, other believing relatives, and especially the church in its local expression can respond in his behalf. *The faith exercised need not be his* (p. 215, italics added).

A Christian [is] a follower of Christ (p. 25).<sup>16</sup>

The Eucharist, or Lord's Supper . . . [is] *a source of life* to all who will believe (p. 30, italics added).

Justification not only declares me righteous but [also] makes me righteous (p. 212).<sup>17</sup>

Justification is not the end-all of salvation; rather, it marks the beginning of the salvation process (p. 218).

Fournier didn't place these statements one after another as I have done. Instead, he sprinkled them throughout the book. It would have been more forthright to have a chapter in which he explained and defended his view of the Gospel.

Fournier's gospel is unbiblical. First, conversion is not a process. A person is saved the very moment he or she trusts in Christ (John 5:24; Eph 2:8-9).

Second, eternal salvation can't be lost (John 10:28-29; Rom 8:38-39).

<sup>16</sup>See also p. 24, where Fournier indicates that for people to believe in Christ requires them "to bow their knee before Jesus and submit to Him as Lord."

<sup>17</sup>This was a *cause célèbre* in the Reformation. See, for example, Paul Holloway, "A Return to Rome: Lordship Salvation's Doctrine of Faith," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1991, 13-21.

Third, salvation is not conditioned in any way upon deeds done, whether before or after conversion. Eternal salvation is “not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph 2:9).

Fourth, water baptism is not a condition of being incorporated into Christ (cf. Acts 10:43-48).

Fifth, people can't be saved on the basis of the faith of their parents, godparents, or the church. People must believe the Gospel for themselves (John 3:16; 5:24).

Sixth, a Christian is not automatically a follower of Christ. A Christian is one who believes in Christ. A disciple is one who follows Christ (whether he or she is a believer or an unbeliever!).<sup>18</sup>

Seventh, the Lord's Supper doesn't convey life to the recipient. The Lord's Supper is a special meal which is designed only for those who *already have life* (1 Cor 11:17-34).

Eighth, justification does not *make* one righteous in his behavior. It is a divine *declaration* of righteousness (Luke 18:14; Rom 3:24).<sup>19</sup> Those whom God has declared righteous don't always live righteously (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3; 11:30; Jas 5:19-20).

Anyone who believes the gospel as articulated by Fournier is not trusting in Christ alone to save Him. He is trusting in Christ plus baptism, the Eucharist, and his own works.

### C. Fournier's Attempt to Downplay Protestant/Catholic Differences Is Flawed

On several occasions Fournier does acknowledge in a general way that Roman Catholics have some different views from Protestants regarding salvation, but he attempts to smooth over the differences:

Between our various traditions and confessions, *there are numerous differences over God's role and humanity's role in the salvation process*, but these are Family differences. They are not disagreements between nonChristians and Christians but between committed Christians with different theological and biblical understandings. *Our differences are important, but they do not mean that some of us are going to hell while those who are "right" among us are going to Heaven. We are brothers and sisters in Christ...*<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The Lord Jesus had some disciples who were not believers (John 6:64).

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 16 above.

<sup>20</sup> *A House United?*, 266, emphasis added. Note that he refers to salvation as a “process.”

Even though the differences between us are still too great for us to fellowship together at the Lord's Table—the liturgical sign of Christian unity—I do not believe they are so great as to hinder us from making common cause to transform our culture for the sake of our common Savior and Lord.<sup>21</sup>

Fournier does not state what his areas of difference are. Surely it would be important to explain and discuss differences that he himself considers “numerous,” “important,” and “too great for us to fellowship together at the Lord's Table.” The reader may be left with the gnawing feeling that the author wants to avoid discussing divisive issues. Of course, that's the point. If the issues are so divisive that the author decided not to deal with them, then isn't the thesis of the book overturned by this alone? How can we be part of a “house united” if we have such numerous and important differences that we can't enjoy table fellowship together at the Lord's Supper?

Fournier gives no proof, biblical or theological, for his claim that though the differences are “numerous” and “important,” they “do not mean that some of us are going to hell while those who are ‘right’ among us are going to Heaven.” He seems to expect his readers to believe him simply because he makes a dogmatic assertion.

If his claim is true, couldn't a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness write a book making the same claim?<sup>22</sup> Don't they believe the gospel as they perceive it? Haven't they been baptized? Aren't they active in the Pro-Life movement and in other charitable outreaches? Don't they attend church and share their faith regularly?

If Fournier is allowed to sweep under the rug what he calls *numerous* and *important* “differences over God's role and humanity's role in the salvation process,” then the designation *evangelical Christian* becomes primarily a matter of conduct, not belief. Yet Fournier's own definition indicates that an evangelical Christian must believe the Gospel.

Indirectly, Fournier does acknowledge this objection. He cites the view of Reformed theologian R. C. Sproul regarding Catholics and the Catholic church:

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, while writing this article it came to my attention that there is a book by professor Stephen E. Robinson of Brigham Young University in which he makes just such a claim. In his book, entitled *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1991), he declares that Mormons are indeed Christians.

If justification by faith alone is an essential doctrine of Christianity, then any church [that denies that truth], no matter how virtuous it is . . . would have to be viewed as apostate.<sup>23</sup>

For the most part Fournier doesn't directly deal with this charge. However, I've found five indirect answers which he gives to that charge in the book:

1. Catholics are evangelical Christians since some Protestant ministers have converted to Catholicism.<sup>24</sup>
2. Catholics are Christians since some Catholics have also called Protestants unbelievers and apostates.<sup>25</sup>
3. Since Christ never intended His church to be a divided house, Catholics must be Christians.<sup>26</sup>
4. Catholics are evangelical Christians since every Christian's calling is "unity in diversity and diversity in unity."<sup>27</sup>
5. Catholics and evangelical Christians have a common book, a common history, a common creed, a common Savior, and a common mission.<sup>28</sup>

The first argument seems to have some weight. On reflection, however, it is a weak argument. Protestant ministers have indeed become Catholics. Yet haven't some also become Eastern Orthodox, Mormons, Buddhists, Hindus, and even atheists? The fact that some Protestants have become Catholics says nothing about whether Catholics are Christians. As a matter of fact, if Protestants have to *convert* to Catholicism, this suggests exactly the opposite point from the one that Fournier is trying to make: Catholicism and Protestantism *don't* share the same fundamental beliefs.<sup>29</sup> If they did, Protestants could join Catholic churches without being baptized or undergoing catechism.

<sup>23</sup> *A House United?*, 21, bracketed material and ellipsis original.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 23ff.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 24ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 250-52, 261-89.

<sup>29</sup> I became a Christian in college, at which time I joined a General Baptist Church. Several years later when I moved to the South, I joined a Southern Baptist Church. I wasn't required to *convert* to the Southern Baptist faith. I merely transferred my membership from one church to another. The same would not be the case if a Roman Catholic wished to become a Baptist or vice versa.



The second argument also backfires. The fact that some Catholics call Protestants heretics merely proves that Fournier isn't speaking for all Catholics when he claims that both Protestants and Catholics are Christians. Some Catholics recognize that the gospel of Catholicism can't be reconciled with the Gospel of evangelical Christianity. They realize that if Catholics are Christians, *then Protestants are not*, since they don't believe the same gospel.

The third argument is flawed on the grounds that only saved people are a part of God's house. Catholics are not members of God's household unless they trust in Christ and Him alone for eternal life, contrary to Catholic teaching.

The fourth argument is merely a restatement of the third.

The fifth argument is clever, but false in every particular. The official Roman Catholic Bible differs significantly from any of the versions used by evangelical Christians. In addition, Catholics base their theology on both their Bible *and their tradition*. The history of Catholicism differs sharply from that of evangelical Christianity. While there are *some* early creeds that *some* evangelical Christians may have in common with Catholics, there are many major doctrinal differences which separate us. So, too, while both point to Jesus as Savior, there is a major difference about what that *means*. And finally, while the mission of both groups is to evangelize, the message (the evangel) proclaimed is radically different, and as a result so is the mission.<sup>30</sup>

#### D. Fourniers' Failure to Discuss Key Bible Passages Is a Grave Weakness

A discussion of relevant biblical texts is absolutely essential if Fournier is to establish his point that Catholics and evangelical Christians believe the same gospel. An explanation of what Jesus meant in Matt 7:13-14 regarding the narrow gate that only a few will find seems important. An explanation of Luke 18:9-14, in which the self-righteous Pharisee was condemned and the trusting sinner went away justified without doing any good works, would also seem critical. And what of Gal 1:6-9 and the anathema against those proclaiming a false gospel? Does *anyone* qualify under that anathema today? If so, who?

<sup>30</sup> Again, we must differentiate between *evangelical* and *evangelistic*. The two most "evangelistic" groups today, Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, are the least *evangelical* in doctrine. See also footnote 9.

It would have helped to see a discussion of passages like Rom 4:1-8, 8:38-39, Gal 3:6-14, and Eph 2:8-9 as well.

These passages indicate that what we believe makes all the difference in the world. Yet not even one of these passages is explained by Fournier. In fact, he doesn't explain any passages at all in defense of his claim that Catholics and evangelical Christians believe the same gospel.

While there is much to object to in R. C. Sproul's Lordship Salvation theology, he is right in his insistence that the gospel of Rome is not the Gospel of the Bible. (Of course, neither is the gospel of Lordship Salvation biblical!) Catholicism is not Christianity. One cannot be saved by believing Roman Catholic doctrine.

#### **E. Fournier's Identification of Catholics as Evangelical Christians Is Mistaken**

According to Fournier's own definition, an evangelical Christian must believe the Gospel. Since the gospel of Rome—which Fournier believes—is not the Gospel of the Bible, Catholics are not evangelical Christians.

The logic of this is inescapable.

*Major Premise:* Evangelical Christians believe the Gospel.

*Minor Premise:* Catholics don't believe the Gospel.

*Conclusion:* Catholics are not evangelical Christians.

Fournier should have attempted to prove that Catholics believe the Gospel of the Bible. However, any such effort is doomed, since the gospel according to Rome is decidedly unbiblical.

### **V. Fournier Fails to Prove That Evangelicals Should Cooperate with Roman Catholics**

Fournier's main point, as indicated by the title, is that Evangelicals should cooperate with Roman Catholics in evangelism and in social outreach. That thesis is predicated upon his view that traditional Roman Catholics are (evangelical) Christians and hence that Evangelicals and Catholics are both members of the Body of Christ.

In the previous section we saw that Fournier failed to prove that Catholics are Christians. Therefore, unless Fournier were to advance other reasons for Evangelicals to unite with Catholics, there would be no reason to do so. However, Fournier doesn't advance any other reasons; hence his own case collapses like a house of cards.

Thus we may draw the following conclusions:

**A. Cooperation in Evangelism Is Unwise Since Catholics Don't Believe the Gospel**

If Catholics don't believe the Gospel, evangelical Christians can't in good conscience cooperate with them in evangelistic outreach. Some evangelical Christians, however, *do* cooperate with Catholics in evangelistic crusades.

Of course, in light of his view that Catholics and evangelical Christians agree on the fundamentals of the faith, Fournier thinks this is a good practice (cf. pp. 324-28).

But why would Evangelicals themselves wish to unite with Catholics in evangelistic outreach? The probable reason is a desire to increase their influence. Unfortunately, such cooperation leads to compromise and the net effect is not positive.<sup>31</sup>

Consider a city-wide evangelistic campaign. Let's suppose that Evangelist Brown is having a crusade in San Diego, California. He contacts all of the Protestant and Catholic churches in the city. His staff signs up as many churches as they can to sponsor the crusade. Sponsoring churches promise to provide counselors, to bring people to attend, and to follow-up individuals in their area who respond at the crusade.

This means that some of the counselors at the crusade will be practicing Catholics who believe their church's gospel of salvation by faith *plus works*. This is the "gospel" they will share with those whom they counsel. In addition, some of those who respond to the evangelist's message will be designated for Catholic churches to follow up!

Worse still, the evangelist must be careful not to say anything to offend the many Catholics who are working in the crusade. If he offends the Catholics, they won't cooperate with him in his future crusades. The preacher will be tempted to alter his message so that it will be acceptable to Catholics. In that case, then, the evangelist would not be proclaiming the Gospel at all. His proclamation would be an amalgam which Catholics and Protestants would feel comfortable with. His goal would then amount to little more than getting large numbers of people to attend and to come forward.

Theological compromise on a fundamental of the faith is clearly contrary to a commitment to God's truth.

<sup>31</sup> James says that "friendship with the world is enmity with God" and that "whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (Jas 4:4).

Evangelicals can't cooperate with Catholics in evangelism without the likelihood of terrible compromises like these taking place. Of course, it's true that the crowds may be bigger and that more Catholics are in the audience than there would otherwise be. This *does* mean that more Catholics are exposed to the message of the Protestant evangelist than would otherwise be the case. However, if the message being preached is not the clear Gospel, the whole procedure is flawed. The results are what we used to call in the campus ministry I once worked with: "evangelastic." Lots of numbers, yet with few people actually trusting Christ.<sup>32</sup>

### **B. Cooperation in Sports, Work, and the Like Is Fine Since No Spiritual Compromise Is Required**

While I don't believe it is wise or biblical to cooperate with Catholics in evangelism, I happen to believe that there is nothing wrong with cooperating with Catholics or Mormons or Buddhists—or even atheists—on some issues.

If I were on a basketball team and a teammate was an atheist who could shoot, I'd still pass him the ball! If I were a supervisor at a secular company in Salt Lake City, I wouldn't hesitate to delegate projects to a competent Mormon. If I were in Congress, I would freely ask other Congressmen to support my legislation regardless of their religion. If I were on the school board I would welcome the help of like-minded board members, even if they were agnostics.

No spiritual compromise is required in cases such as these. We live in the world. We have unbelievers as neighbors and co-workers. By cooperating with them in life, we may be able to share the Gospel with them.

### **C. Cooperation in Social Outreach Is a Judgment Call**

If an evangelical Christian wishes to participate in a Pro-Life march, the presence of Catholics, Mormons, or Buddhists need not stop him. The same is true with other forms of social outreach like feeding the hungry. If the basis of cooperation is not the Gospel, then a believer should be free to cooperate if he wishes (cf. 1 Cor 10:27).

<sup>32</sup>I believe there *are* people who trust Christ in these types of crusades. Some of the counselors and some of the churches which do follow up are clear on the Gospel. And, sometimes people can filter out the errors in what the evangelist is saying and trust in Christ alone in spite of the garbled message. However, the more anyone garbles the Gospel, the harder it is for a listener to see the truth and be saved.

Even so, we should be aware of the fact that many of the people we will work with in the outreach need to hear the Gospel. We may be used of God to share more than physical bread on such occasions.

We must always be aware, as well, that sometimes there is an evangelistic component in social outreach. If evangelism is a part of an outreach we are considering, we will, of course, want to make sure that it is the true biblical Gospel that will be proclaimed before we decide to participate.

## VI. Some Catholics Are Christians

While I don't agree with Fournier's claim that *all* devout Catholics are Christians,<sup>33</sup> I do believe that *some* Catholics, devout or otherwise, are.

The Lord Jesus said,

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

(John 3:16)

*Whoever* includes Catholics. There is no suggestion in what I've said earlier that there are *no* practicing Catholics who are born again. I believe that there are those who are. However, they were not saved by believing the gospel as taught in Catholicism. The only way of salvation is the biblical one of believing in Christ and Him alone for eternal life. That is not what the Roman Catholic Church teaches.

The question is not whether a Roman Catholic believes in the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His death on the cross, and His bodily resurrection. All devout, and even most nominal, Catholics believe these things. While these are all vital truths, God does not offer eternal life on the basis of believing any or all of these things. He promises eternal life on the basis of trusting Christ and Him alone for it.

Also, the question is not whether a Roman Catholic is a moral person who regularly attends church, prays, gives, spends time with his or her spouse and children, and so forth. Many Catholics fit that profile. However, morality does not save.

<sup>33</sup>While I found no direct claims as to what percentage of Roman Catholics are saved, Fournier's statements about conversion and good works clearly suggest that all practicing Catholics who are doing good works are saved. Of course, Fournier believes that any Catholic could lose his or her salvation by ceasing to do good deeds and by falling away from the Church of Rome.

The question is whether a Roman Catholic has ever placed his or her trust in Christ and Him alone for eternal life.

An active Catholic might come to faith in Christ through the witness of a family member or friend. It is even conceivable that an active Catholic might hear the Scripture in his own church and believe it!<sup>34</sup> Since not all who come to faith in Christ immediately leave the church in which they grew up,<sup>35</sup> it is reasonable to conclude that some practicing Catholics are born again.

It is also possible for a saved individual to convert to Catholicism. I am convinced that the co-author of the book, Bill Watkins, is in danger of doing that. While, to my knowledge, Bill has not converted to Catholicism yet, by his own admission he is, or at least was, seriously contemplating it.<sup>36</sup> Christians can become confused and can join groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church, that believe and teach a false gospel.

## VII. The Gospel Is Under Siege

The issue which this book addresses is, I feel, one which will be *the* issue over the next five years. It may well become “politically correct” to think of, and to refer to, Catholics as evangelical Christians. However, this is really a subtle attack on the Gospel of Grace.

<sup>34</sup> Of course, the more the Gospel is garbled, the harder it is for a listener to understand and believe it. However, since the Bible is read in Catholic churches, it is conceivable that a thoughtful, seeking Catholic might come to trust Christ and Him alone for eternal life through what he heard in church. Like Luther, he might become so frustrated in trying to work his way to God that he might begin to contemplate the meaning of Scripture for himself.

<sup>35</sup> Some even remain in that church their whole life.

<sup>36</sup> He wrote an open letter, dated September 24, 1994, in which he indicated: “At one point not too long ago I was prayerfully entertaining that option [to become a Roman Catholic]. I certainly have not ruled it out, and it is still an issue of prayer for me. But at this time I am not ready to make such a commitment . . . Keith [Fournier] and I have had many conversations about Catholic doctrine and practice, almost all of which have been initiated by me with absolutely no proselytizing pressure from Keith.” He went on to say, “I am also closer to the spirit and many of the conclusions of Catholic thought than I ever have been before. In fact, I prefer to refer to myself as a classical Christian [rather] than as an evangelical Protestant, though I do not disparage the latter label for myself or for others.”

The message of Fournier's book is actually dangerous. Untaught believers who read it may be duped into thinking that Catholics are Christians and that the gospel of Catholicism is only cosmetically different from the Gospel of evangelical Christianity. Sadly, some (many?) untaught believers will likely end up converting to Catholicism as a result. Worse still, unsaved Catholics and Protestants who read this book will have their works-salvation thinking reinforced.

This book is must reading for pastors, educators, and well-grounded laypeople. However, those who are not well-grounded in the Scriptures should be encouraged to avoid this book, unless they read it with the help of a mature believer.

The spirit of our age strongly supports tolerance and unity. This book is written in that spirit. While I believe in tolerance in non-essentials, we must not sacrifice an essential point of doctrine, the Gospel, on the altar of tolerance and unity. Some things are worth dividing over. The Gospel is certainly one of those things.

*A House United? Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A Winning Alliance for the 21st Century?* I think not.





# BELIEVERS AND THE BEMA

EARL RADMACHER\*

## I. Introduction

Several years ago while I was preaching in a church in the state of Washington, the pastor forgot to pray before we proceeded. So, as he was about to sit down he said to me, "Oh, by the way, I forgot to pray. Would you pray before you preach?" And I did. It gave me an opportunity to have a little fun (I think the Lord has probably forgiven me for that). I prayed the shortest prayer that I've ever prayed in public. I simply said, "Dear Father, I pray that you will save me tonight for Jesus' sake. Amen." And then I quickly opened my eyes and looked around the audience. It was really an interesting sight. People didn't know what was coming off. They apparently had an unsaved preacher in their pulpit—the pulpit of the First Baptist Church. I suppose they began to think, "Well, I've been told that things are really going to the dogs. And they tell me it starts in the seminaries. And here we have a seminary president to prove it. He has just confessed before the Lord that he needs to be saved."

I watched the people as they turned to one another and began to talk. Some of them began to clean out their ears because they were sure that they had not heard properly. But, they *had* heard properly. They *were* listening to an unsaved preacher. What is even more disconcerting is that you are reading an article by one who is still unsaved. If you were to ask me, "Are you saved?" and I were to give you a biblical answer that is true to my experience, I would have to say, "I *have been*, I *am being*, and I *shall be* saved. Which would you like to talk about?"

Unfortunately, most talk most of the time, if not almost exclusively, is on the first tense of salvation: I *have been* saved from the *penalty* of sin. *That* Scripture calls *salvation* (Acts 16:31). It also calls that justification (Rom 3:24). But, in addition to what *has* happened to me, I am *being* saved every day from the *power* of sin (Heb 7:25). *That* the Scripture calls *sanctification*. Because of God's faithfulness, I shall yet

\*Earl Radmacher, who received his ThM and ThD degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary, is recognized for his works on inerrancy and, in particular, for his two works *Can We Trust The Bible?* and *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and The Bible*. He served for 25 years as President of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon. He is currently President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of Theology Emeritus. Ed.

be saved one day from the *presence* of sin altogether (1 John 3:2, 1 Pet 1:5). *That* the Scripture calls *glorification*. All three of those are called "salvation" in the Word of God. But unfortunately, the typical evangelical Christian has narrowed salvation way down to justification, and we talk almost exclusively of salvation as justification or regeneration or what happened to us at the beginning of our life in Christ. That is extremely unfortunate. Not unfortunate because this is not worthy of being talked about, but unfortunate because many people, in talking only about that and in trying to squeeze everything into that, tend to distort even the first tense of salvation.

## II. Propping Up the Gospel

There are many people today who are rightfully distressed by the level of living of many of their fellow Christians, at least those who *profess* life in Christ. They see them coming to the Lord Jesus, claiming Him as Savior, but witnessing little or no change in their lives. That is not only the observation of fellow Christians, that is the observation of such a neutral observer as the Gallup Poll. For when the Gallup Poll evaluates lifestyles of all people, religious and not religious, it frankly sees little difference in the lifestyle and ethical system between those who profess to be born again and those who do not. That is disconcerting, to say the least!

Consequently, there have been many people today who, I think, are in danger of corrupting the Gospel of grace because they want to keep adding to what is necessary to be a Christian. They talk about the fruits which are necessary or which must be evident if you are *really* a child of God. Of course, everybody has a different set. We all have our own little package of what will happen to you. So we have a rigid box that we develop and everybody must fit that box into our set of evidences that must happen in that person's life if they are real, if they are genuine. So some people would say in that package, "You must dance." Other people would say, "You must *not* dance." Some would include what you must wear in there. Some would exclude what you must wear. Some could wear almost nothing. Some would insist on wearing a great deal. We all have different ways in which we decorate our faces. Some folks would probably feel that I am among the ranks of the unregenerate for having such a hairy face.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For many years Dr. Radmacher has sported a beard. Ed.

It is interesting, isn't it, that when it comes to the evidences, there are all different packages that different people lay upon us. Jesus does not do that. Many wise pastors have insisted that the basis for knowing that I am a Christian is not what *I* do but what God's Word says about what *Christ* has done and continues to do for those who have believed (John 1:12; 1 John 5:13). I know I belong to Christ because I have believed in Jesus Christ as my only Savior and Redeemer from eternal destruction. It's not the evidences of my life that are my basis for knowing that. It's the Word of God. God said it. That settles it. I am fearful of those today, who because of a genuine, valid concern about the lack of growth and the lack of evident Christian lifestyle, are willing to try to prop up the Gospel by adding to it. Zane Hodges has a book entitled *The Gospel Under Siege*<sup>2</sup> which is particularly helpful to read. I would agree with him in saying that much of what is happening today in this attempt to correct and change a believer's lifestyle isn't paving the road back to Wittenberg, but it's paving the road back to Rome. We're coming back to a justification by works that is not a great deal different from that which Martin Luther was delivered from in his church situation.

### III. Moving from the Nursery to the Infantry

Having said that, am I less concerned than some others about the failure of believers to move on to maturity in Christ? No, I am desperately concerned about it, for I believe that America probably has the largest spiritual nursery that it has ever had in its history, and that can be a real drain on the resources. We desperately need to move people out of the nursery and into the infantry. We need to matriculate soldiers.

Those of you who have had or now have infants know that infants are not productive. They are only a drain on the resources. They constantly are demanding, demanding, demanding of your time, energy, and resources, and they give nothing in return. They are not productive. But all of us hope that somewhere along the line those cute little babies will grow up and be productive. God has the same desire. He wants His children, who cause rejoicing in heaven when they come to Him, to really grow up and become productive. He gives us the example of the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer (in 2 Tim 2:3-6), and many other illustrations of productivity. God is desirous that we move on to maturity. That we grow up. Most of the content of Scripture is committed to

<sup>2</sup>Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, Revised Edition (Dallas: Redención Viva), 1981, 1992.

this. The “let us go on to maturity” of Hebrews is the thrust of the Bible. But, never would God compromise the Gospel of Grace by seeking to urge you to move on by making you doubt, through the evidences of your life, whether you’re really a Christian. God doesn’t use double-talk. Grace is grace (see Rom 4:4; 11:6).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a heroic German minister during the Nazi era, reacted to the failure of many professing Christians to stand strong under persecution. He coined the term “cheap grace” to characterize their profession. Today others have picked up on that and have been willing to charge others with espousing a cheap grace. I like better what Charles Stanley says in response to that. When some have said “cheap grace,” he says, “Oh, better than that. It’s free. Not cheap, it’s free.” Don’t compromise that. God justifies freely—without cost (Rom 3:24). There is some cleaning up we need to do today in our teaching with regard to that. It starts with the way we deal with children right up through adults. We constantly want to help God out. We constantly want to add to. So, to little children we say, “Give your heart to Jesus.” That is totally contrary to the Word of God. Never does God ever tell an unregenerate person to give Him anything. He doesn’t have anything worth giving to God. God says, “I want to give *you* something.” And he says, “Believe it.” But we have a hard time believing that because everybody else we ever run into insists that we give them something in return. God says, “I want to give you something. Will you believe it and receive it without trying to add to it?” By the way, believing is surely not unique. We do it every day of our lives. What is unique about this believing is the *object* of it.

And so, the apostle John 99 times uses that perfectly good word which many seem to depreciate, simply *believe*. Not “give your heart to.” Not “surrender to” and not a lot of other things that put effort on the part of man, but simply “believe.” “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). God is offering something truly unique, and of all things, what I need to do is believe what He has said and receive it. Just accept it. “Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to Thy cross I cling,” the well-loved hymn<sup>3</sup> rightly says. Now that message is being distorted today by well-meaning, prominent men in pulpits who preach what is referred to as *Lordship Salvation*. That is, that I must receive Christ not only as my Savior, but also as my Lord in order to be regenerated. It

<sup>3</sup> “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” by Augustus Toplady (1740-1778).

seems like I must come into the family as a mature person, not as a baby. They speak of the gift of life as a “costly gift.” One wonders how they can stray so far from a simple dictionary definition of “gift,” let alone the specific description of Rom 3:24.

I like what S. Lewis Johnson said years ago: “We accept one as Savior who also is Lord and having received Him as Savior we will find out more and more of His Lordship. If we are slow about it, He will take us to the woodshed. For, He promises us that every son that He receives, He chastises.” So, God is able to deal with those who come simply believing. I believe that there is a missing note in evangelism that can be a legitimate corrective and a powerful motivator in place of what is being used in the compromise of the Gospel today. And, that is to move on in our thinking from justification, through sanctification, to glorification. What is going to happen to me in the life to come?

#### IV. Training Time for Reigning Time

A few years ago I heard a seminary graduate with a doctorate state in a Sunday school class that when we get to heaven, we will all be *equal* there. I know of nothing further removed from the truth. There will be no equality in heaven. If there were, then the whole doctrine of rewards would mean absolutely nothing, and it would be utterly stupid for Paul to say “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others I myself should become disqualified” (1 Cor 9:27).

Now there is a whole host in Christendom that reads *regeneration*-salvation into that passage, and therefore they say that you can lose it, namely, your justification. I belonged to that group for 20 years and I regularly lost it. I gained it on Sunday and lost it on Monday. I lost it for the rest of the week and got it again the next Sunday. So they and I unfortunately missed the whole point of that passage, because all you have to do is read the preceding context and the apostle Paul makes it clear that the thing he is working for is the “prize,” the imperishable crown. He is not talking about *justification* salvation there at all. He is talking about *glorification* salvation and what he will be in the life to come. He did not work to gain justification. He did not discipline his body to gain justification, but he plainly says “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

Disqualified from what? From the incorruptible, imperishable crown! My position of service with Jesus Christ in the life to come! God offers

me life without cost. He paid the full cost. He says you can have it by believing and receiving it. But, what you do with it will have everything to do with what you will do in the life to come in the reign with Jesus Christ. I am becoming today as a child of God what I will be in the life to come. God leaves that up to me. Choose your position. Today is a day of becoming. Then is a day of being what I have become. I am training today to reign tomorrow. As one Michigan preacher used to put it, "This is training time for reigning time."

Now there are many ways that God seeks to get that across to me. The Scripture is loaded with this teaching and how we keep missing it I can't understand. For example, in Luke 19:12-13 Jesus says,

A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them "Do business till I come."

In other words, I've given you a nest egg. Now go out and see what you can do with it. Use it. Do business till I come. This is the essence of stewardship. Then it goes on,

But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying "We will not have this man to reign over us" (v 14).

This is a reference to those who did not belong to him. Our Lord continues,

And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, "Master, your mina has earned ten minas." And he said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities" (vv 15-17).

That's Jesus talking. He continues His parable:

And the second came, saying, "Master, your mina has earned five minas." Likewise he said to him, "You also be over five cities." And another came, saying, "Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow." And he said to him, "Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?" And he said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas."

At this point many would complain, "Unfair!" Not so! This is a matter of having demonstrated faithful stewardship of the Master's resources.

In other words, if you don't know how to steward the resources I've given you now, how will I let you steward *eternal* things? So you have disqualified yourself from what could have been a significant position of service as a co-ruler with Jesus Christ in the life to come (compare Rom 8:17).

Now Jesus must have had that as a familiar story because there is a little different rendition of it in Matthew 25:14-30.

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to *his own ability*; and immediately he went on a journey (vv 14-15).

If we had more space to really dig into this parable it would be a helpful complement to consider because God will judge me not according to *your* ability but according to *my* ability that He has sovereignly given me (see Phil 2:12-13). So the five talents that He gives or the two talents or the one talent all are in accordance with ability, and the final judgment is not made on how much you have in the last count. It isn't the person who has the most clothes that wins or the one who has the most toys that wins, no matter what the bumper stickers say. In the final analysis, the test is *faithfulness to what I was given*. It isn't the athlete that runs the fastest, but the one who keeps the rules and finishes the race (see 2 Tim 2:5; 4:7-8).

In 1 Cor 4:2, Paul tells us that "it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." What is a *steward*? A steward is a manager of somebody else's property or equipment. When I came into the family of God, God gave me a sovereign deposit and said, in effect, "Now take it and trade with it. Use it. Show me what kind of commitment you have got. If you *do* nothing with it you will get nothing." That's the gist of 1 Cor 3:12-15. Another portrayal of it is wood, hay, and stubble versus gold, silver, and precious stones. Everyone's work will be tried of what *sort*, right? Not how much, but of what sort it is. The wood, hay, and stubble will be burned up but the believer will be saved, "yet so as through fire" (v 15). Why? Grace! Not by what he did. He will be in heaven because of what Jesus Christ did.

There is the grand old hymn that puts it so well: "Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne."<sup>4</sup> Why? Grace. That's one dimension. That's justification. Unfortunately, I find some people today who want to change the meaning of the word *justification* from "*declaring* someone righteous" to "*making* someone righteous." That is a failure to understand the teaching of imputation in Rom 4:1-8. That's a return to Roman Catholicism. That is exactly the definition of justification by Rome: "To *make* righteous." No, no, not make righteous, but *declare* righteous! At the moment of faith my position is changed so that in God's sight I am perfect. I am righteous. "Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne." As I write these words, I stand in God's sight faultless and perfect because God Almighty sees me through Jesus Christ. There is no compromise to that. No one who knows Jesus Christ will ever appear at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20. Believers *shall* appear, however, at the Judgment Seat of Christ and will be judged by their works (2 Cor 5:10).

It is significant to note that both the unregenerate and the regenerate will be judged by their works. The *unregenerate* will be judged by their works at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-14) and the result of that judgment will be degrees of eternal punishment in hell (compare Matt 11:22-24). The *regenerate* will be judged by their works at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the result of that judgment will either be reward or the lack of it (2 Cor 5:10).

I can never be judged for my sins because my sins have been paid for (John 5:24). The Lord Jesus Christ became sin for me. I owed a debt I couldn't pay. He paid a debt He didn't owe. Christ, who knew no sin, became the epitome of sin for me in order that I, who knew no righteousness might become the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). What a transaction that was! What an exchange! All of my sins traded in for His righteousness.

Don't compromise that. Don't try to shore that up by motivating the person to good works by that. No, the motivation to good works is the Judgment Seat of Christ. And if we would have people who have come to faith in Jesus Christ focus more on the Judgment Seat of Christ, on their glorification, on their manifestation, in the life to come, they would be able to agree with Paul that these light momentary afflictions are producing for them an eternal and exceedingly heavy weight of glory (see 2 Cor 4:17).

<sup>4</sup> "The Solid Rock" by Edward Mote (1797-1874).



I am becoming today what I will be in the life to come. How are you doing? Are you progressing? Will you have ten cities, five cities, or no cities? Will the stewardship that God has put into your hands be taken away from you and given to someone else who knows how to use it? Are you using God's resources to your own interest? A steward is not an owner; a steward is a *manager*. A steward is a trustee, and it is required of stewards that they be faithful to the intent of the owner if they are going to be well thought of by that owner.

God tells the person with one mina, "You faithless, wicked servant! I will take away from you what you have. Why didn't you at least lend it out for interest? Why did you go and hide it in the ground?" What is God talking about? He is not talking about justification, He is talking about our present use of what He has entrusted to us, and our consequent position and privilege of service to His glory in His reign. Listen! Where I go is dependent on the One I know. What I will do when I get there is totally dependent on what I do now with what He gave me from the time I received that life from Him. That's the motivating factor. Don't compromise the Gospel of Grace by trying to add to it in order to motivate people on to maturity. The true motivation is glorification and what I shall do in the life to come.

## V. From Stewardship to Rulership

God puts that in another picture and I want to take you to this one more picture in Revelation 19. In verses 7-8, we have a beautiful scene. It follows up on those verses that inspired Handel's famed "Hallelujah Chorus." You remember them from verse 6:

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" (v 6).

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright" (vv 7-8a).

Now you ask yourself, what is this fine linen? What is this picture? What is this wardrobe he's talking about here? Well, you don't have to look very far; he explains it. The next phrase reads, "For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." The King James Version reads, "The *righteousness* of the saints." That's an unfortunate rendering that leads one astray because the text is not a singular, it's a plural. The *righteousness* of the saint is Jesus Christ. "Clothed in His righteousness alone,

faultless to stand before the throne.” But, the *righteousnesses*<sup>5</sup> of the saints are the righteous acts the saints have done since they’ve been declared righteous. They are at this point of the vision clothed in their righteousnesses and, thus, God looks here at this picture not as crowns and not as rulers over cities, but as a wardrobe. So, if you put rewards in this frame of reference, we are today sewing our wardrobe that we shall wear in the life to come.

Now for us modern Westerners that isn’t all that big a picture because we don’t make major distinctions on the basis of clothes we wear, do we? But in that time they did. There was a wardrobe for an emperor and no one else wore an emperor’s robes. There was a toga for Roman senators and no one else wore their kind of clothes. There was a tunic for a slave, which wasn’t much, and a person wasn’t particularly delighted to wear that wardrobe. People were known by the clothes they wore, and so God, accommodating Himself to that culture and that environment, illustrates this whole concept of rewards using that framework. He says that as they come together now after the Judgment Seat, after they have been rewarded, that they are clothed in the garments of their righteousnesses, of their righteous acts.

So in one picture it’s *crowns* we wear, in another picture it’s *garments* we wear, in another picture it’s positions of *rulership* that are there. God seeks to come from every angle possible to stimulate us about the life to come and to make us think with Paul that this life’s momentary afflictions are *nothing* compared to the rewards of the coming age. He says it’s nothing *in comparison to eternity*. You say it’s heavy; He says it’s light in comparison to the heavy weight of glory that is to be mine in the life to come. He says, “Will you take time to think about it? Will you recognize that every cup of cold water you give in Jesus’ name will receive a fair and just reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ?” (Matt 10:42). There is no effort that I can make in the energy of the Spirit of God that will not receive recognition and eternal consequence. If we would get hold of that, if we could only grasp the great doctrine of rewards in our glorification, we would not find ourselves needing to compromise justification and the great Reformation restoration of the truth that means to “declare righteous” not to “make righteous,” in

<sup>5</sup>Also, the word here is not the usual word for the quality of righteousness (*dikaiōsynē*), but the plural of a different but related word (*dikaiōma*). The *-ma* ending in Greek nouns commonly means something that receives action. In this case, something righteous is *done*, hence “righteous acts” (NKJV).

order to beef it up. We have a vacuum in our thinking that is crying to be filled.

I remember when I first got hold of that passage in Revelation 19 seriously just before 1976. I was asked to speak at the Bicentennial Prophecy Conference in Philadelphia. I entitled my message "Bikini Believers at the Bema." And I submit to you that in light of 1 Cor 3:12-15 there are going to be, I'm afraid, many. So Paul says, I don't take this lightly. "I discipline my body." Unfortunately the NASB says "I buffet my body." That's a poor rendering because it is easy to misunderstand. Paul said, "I discipline my body." One of the toughest things that you and I have to do in this materialistic, affluent, satiated society is to discipline our body. Yet, that is what is going to bring the crown. That's what is going to bring the position of service with Jesus Christ in the life to come.

I run into some people who say, "Well, I don't believe you ought to work for reward, I believe you ought to work for the Lord." I want to submit something to you. It's impossible for you to work for the Lord *without* working for reward because the delight of the heart of Jesus Christ will be to give out all the rewards that He can possibly fairly give out. But He won't do it unjustly (Rev 22:12). He won't do it unrighteously, and the person who is not willing to pick up his or her cross, so to speak, as a disciple, who is not willing to suffer for Christ, *shall not reign*.

Second Timothy 2:11-13 is very specific:

This is a faithful saying:  
 For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.  
 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.  
 If we deny Him, He also will deny us.  
 If we are faithless, He remains faithful;  
 He cannot deny Himself.

What a beautiful little song<sup>6</sup> they sang then! If I have died with Christ I shall live with Christ. That can stand alone. If I died with Him, I shall live with Him. That is a point action—not repeated. If there was a moment in time where I was crucified with Christ through my act of faith in His crucifixion on my behalf, if that took place I shall live with Him for all eternity. (The best commentary on v 11 is Rom 6:1-8). But he says, secondly, if I suffer for Him, I'll also reign with Him (See also Rom 8:17).

<sup>6</sup>It is widely held by Bible scholars that these lines are an early Christian hymn, either quoted by the apostle or composed by him.

That's a second fact. One comes at the *beginning* of my life in Christ on earth. The other comes at the *end*. One is a *gift*. The other is a *prize*. Endless confusion is created by those who mix these up. Now the next two statements finish the first two. The third one parallels the second one. Let me state the second one again: If I suffer with Him, I shall also reign with Him. If I deny Him—deny Him what? Deny Him that suffering, which He allows me to undergo in His stead, He will also deny me. Deny me what? Deny me the reign that would be awarded to me for having suffered that way for Him.

But so we don't get it mixed up at all, he comes back with a fourth statement that parallels the first one which begins "If we are faithless . . ." Now we would expect the closure of that statement to be "He will be faithless." That would be the parallel, but it can't be that way with God because God isn't like that. And so it says, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." That's our God. My God is faithful. My God can't lie. My God can't be faithless and He must stick by what He said to me. He said, "I give to them eternal life and they shall never—no not at all, ever—perish" (John 10:28a).<sup>7</sup> "I give eternal life without any works. I give it free. It's grace. It's all of grace. And by that they shall become My children. By simply believing. And having believed, they will not only have the privilege of being My children but they will have the privilege of having the opportunity to use a stewardship that I've put in trust to them to earn a position of rulership in the life to come" (Rom 8:17).

Today I am becoming what I will be in the life to come and that motivates me. I don't feel like I want to hold back. I want to give it my all. I don't need to live a *long time*. What I *do* need to do is live *qualitatively* because a *short life* of that kind on earth will have a long effect through all eternity. A "weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:17), a kind of manifestation where I shall reflect the glory of Jesus Christ forever and ever.

If you don't know Christ, come drink of the water free of charge (Rev 22:17). Don't start talking about what you will have to do: you haven't got the grace to do it. He doesn't come asking you to bring something. God comes saying, "I have something for you. Come and receive it. Come and get it." Then, when, in effect, you have received it and you've been made new in Him, you've been given life, you will recognize that it's not only your privilege to have life but it's your possibility to faith-

<sup>7</sup>The paraphrasing is suggested by the double negative found in the original language.

fully use the resources He gave you to help set up your position of service with Christ in the life to come.

## VI. Conclusion

In conclusion I go back to the beginning. "Cheap grace" is a bad phrase. It's not cheap, it's *free*, and God offers it that way. Whatever happened to the word *believe*?<sup>8</sup> Just believe, and a mighty transaction will take place. You will be made a child of God. You will exchange all of your sin for His righteousness. You will never, ever, in all of eternity, be brought under judgment for even one sin again. For if God were to ever judge you for sins once paid for by Jesus Christ, God's entire kingdom would fall. Sins paid for once can't be paid for again. Christ paid it in full. From the cross he shouted in triumph, "It is finished!" All you need to do if you are without it is to take it. Believe it and receive it.

But reader, if you know Him as your Savior do a progress check. Where are you in the process of becoming? Do you like what you see? If you don't, you have time to make some changes that will effect you in your position and privilege with Christ in the life to come. Become a believer who's ready for the Bema.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>There is a book by this title by AWANA missionary at large, Donald H. Bunge. Ed.

<sup>9</sup>*Bema* is the Greek word for the tribunal, or judicial bench, on which a judge sat.



## A Voice from the Past:

# GRACE\*

D. L. MOODY<sup>1</sup>

I am going to take tonight a subject rather than a text. I want to talk to you about Free Grace. I say "Free Grace"; perhaps I had better drop the word *free* and say just *grace*. There is a sermon just in the meaning of the word. It is one of those words that are very little understood at the present time, like the word *Gospel*. There are a great many that are partakers of the spirit of Christ or of grace that don't know its meaning. I think it is a good idea to go to Webster's dictionary and look up the meaning of these words that we hear so often but don't fully understand. You seldom go into a religious assembly but you hear the word *grace*, and yet I was a partaker of the grace of God for years before I knew what it meant. I could not tell the difference between grace and law. Now *grace* means "unlimited mercy," "undeserved favor," or "unmerited love."

I had a man come today to see me, and his plea was that he was not fit to be saved. He said there was no hope for him because he had sinned all his life and there was nothing good in him. I was very much gratified to hear him say that. There is hope for that man—and I suppose he is here tonight—and there is hope for any man who thinks there is

\* This message was delivered in New York and taken *verbatim* from stenographic reports for *The New York Daily Tribune*. It was revised and corrected by H. H. Birks and published in *Glad Tidings, Comprising Sermons and Prayer-Meeting Talks Delivered at the N. Y. Hippodrome* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1876), 149-59. A few spelling and punctuation updatings and more frequent paragraph breaks are the only changes in the text; no words have been changed or omitted.

<sup>1</sup> Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) was one of—if not *the*—greatest evangelist in history. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people became believers through his ministry, thousands of them through one on one conversations with him. Raised in Massachusetts by a widow with nine children, Moody could only afford a few terms of schooling. Even the simple sermon in this issue shows his poor grammar ("he don't") several times. What he lacked in schooling he made up for in fervor and even became an educator, founding the first "Bible Institute" in America (1886), now named after him. In 1873 he started the Moody-Sankey evangelistic campaigns in Britain that also greatly enhanced his reputation in the U.S.A., where he had his greatest harvest.

nothing good in him. That was the lesson Christ tried to teach the Jews—the lesson of grace. But they were trying to prove themselves to be better than other people. They were of the seed of Abraham and under the Mosaic law, and better than the people about them.

Now let us get at the source of this stream, that has been flowing through the world these hundreds of years. You know that men have been trying to find the source of the Nile.<sup>2</sup> Wouldn't it be as profitable to try and find the source of grace, because this is a stream we are all interested in? I want to call your attention to the first chapter of John, the 14th and 17th verses:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.<sup>3</sup>

Then the 17th verse:

For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Then the 5th chapter of Romans, the 15th verse:

But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

There it is called the free gift—it abounded to many. Then in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, the 1st chapter and the 3d verse:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus.

Now bear in mind that He is the God of all grace. We wouldn't know anything about grace if it wasn't for Jesus Christ. Men talk about grace, but they don't know much about it. These bankers, they talk about grace. If you want to borrow a thousand dollars, if you can give good security, they will let you have it and take your note, and you give your note

<sup>2</sup>John Hanning Speke had discovered Lake Victoria in 1858. When Moody gave this message, the sources of the Nile intrigued now-famous Scots missionary-explorer David Livingston, among others. The year before this sermon was published (1875) British-American explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley sailed around Lake Victoria and in 1889 discovered Lake Edward (between modern Zaire and Uganda).

<sup>3</sup>This and all other Bible quotations have been updated from the King James to the New King James for easier reading.



and say, "So many months after date I promise to pay a thousand dollars." Then they give you what they call three days' grace, but they make you pay interest for those three days. *That ain't grace.*<sup>4</sup> Then when your note comes due, if you can't pay but nine hundred and fifty dollars, they would sell everything you have got and make you pay the fifty dollars. Grace is giving the interest, principal, and all. I tell you, if you want to get any grace, you must know God. He is the God of all grace. He wants to deal in grace; He wants to deal with that unmerited mercy, undeserved favor, unmerited love; and if God don't love man until he is worthy of His love, He won't have time for very much love for him; He is the God of all grace.

Unto whom does He offer grace? I would like to have you turn to your Bibles to two or three texts; to the 21st chapter of Matthew, the 28th verse:

"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you."

Why? Because He loved those publicans [tax collectors] and harlots more than He did those Pharisees? No; it was because they wouldn't repent, because they wouldn't take grace. They didn't believe they needed the grace of God. A man who believes that he is lost is near salvation. Why? Because you haven't got to work to convince him that he is lost. Now here is a man that said he wouldn't go, and then he saw that he was wrong, and repented and went, and this man was the man that grace held up. Any man or any woman here tonight who will repent and turn to God, God will save them. It don't make any difference what your life has been in the past. He will turn to any that will turn to Him.

I was preaching one Sunday in a church where there was a fashionable audience, and after I got through the sermon I said: "If there are any that would like to tarry a little while, and would like to stay and talk, I would be glad to talk with you." They all got up, turned around, and went out. I felt as though I was abandoned. When I was going out I saw a man getting behind the furnace. He hadn't any coat on, and he was weeping bitterly. I said, "My friend, what is the trouble?"

<sup>4</sup>Emphasis supplied. Ed.

He said, "You told me tonight that I could be saved; that the grace of God would reach me. You told me that there wasn't a man so far gone but the grace of God would reach him." He said: "I am an exile from my family; I have drunk up twenty thousand dollars within the last few months; I have drunk up the coat off my back, and if there is hope for a poor sinner like me I should like to be saved."

It was just like a cup of refreshment to talk to that man. I didn't dare give him money for fear that he would drink it up, but I got him a place to stay that night, took an interest in him, and got him a coat, and six months after that, when I left Chicago for Europe—four months after—that man was one of the most earnest Christian men I knew. The Lord had blessed him wonderfully. He was an active, capable man. The grace of God can save just such if they will only repent.<sup>5</sup> I don't care how low he has become, the grace of God can purge him of all sin, and place him among the blessed. In proportion as man is a sinner much more does the grace of God abound. There isn't a man but that the grace of God will give him the victory if he will only accept it.

I want you to turn a moment to a passage you will find in the 7th chapter of Mark:

From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter."

Now, just see how Christ dealt with that woman—a Syro-Phoenician, a Gentile; she didn't belong to the seed of Abraham at all. He came to save His own, but His own received Him not. Christ was willing to give to the Jews grace. He dealt in grace with a liberal hand, but those that He was desirous to shower grace upon wouldn't take it. But this woman belonged to a different people—and just hear her story. I wonder what would happen if Christ should come and speak that way now? Suppose He should come into this assembly and take any woman here and call her a dog.

<sup>5</sup>It is clear from this article as a whole that Moody did *not* mean "change your life and then you can be saved." Ed.

Why, that Syro-Phoenician woman might have said, "Call me a dog! Talk to me like that! Why I know a woman who belongs to the seed of Abraham who lives down near me, and she is the worst and meanest woman in the neighborhood. I am as good as she is any day." She might have gone away without a blessing if she had not felt her utter destitution and lost condition. But Jesus only said that to her just to try her, and after calling her a dog,<sup>6</sup> she only broke forth into a despairing cry, "Yes, Lord—yes, Lord." Christ had said it was more blessed to give than to receive. She took His place and received His blessing and His commands. She was satisfied to be given only a crumb, as long as He heard her petition. So, instead of giving her a crumb, she got a whole loaf.

And so will you get the fullest beneficence of Christ if you lift your heart up to Him. Oh, that many would but just take her place, understand how low and unworthy they are, and cry unto Jesus. If you do, Christ will lift you up and bless you.

But then the great trouble is that people will not confess that they have need of grace. Such miserable Pharisaism is the worst feature of the present time. They think they can get salvation without the grace of God. The old saying is that when you come to Jesus as a beggar you go away as a prince. Instead of doing that, they feel so self-confident and proud that they come always as princes and go away beggars. If you want the Son of God to deal with you, come as a beggar and He will have mercy upon you. Look at the great crowd going up to the Temple. They feel they have strength of themselves, and all pass on, proud and haughty, except one poor man, who smites himself on the breast and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

If you want to see the idea that the Jews had as to who was worthy, and how they thought that that kind of worthiness should be rewarded, just take your Bibles and look at the seventh chapter of Luke. It reads there:

Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth noticing that in the original the word for dog (*kyonarion*) is a diminutive (cf. NKJV: "little dogs"), referring to the house pets the children had, not to the snarling curs that roamed the streets of middle Eastern cities acting as living garbage disposals. Ed.

Yes, that was the Jew's idea of the reason He should come, because he was "worthy." What made him worthy? "For he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue." He was not worthy because he was a sinner. Oh, no; not at all. But he was worthy because "he has built us a synagogue." Ha! That was the same old story—the story of the present day. There is a great deal of that now. Give that man the most prominent place in church; let him have the best pew and the one furthest up in church, because he is "worthy." He has built the church perhaps; or he has endowed a seminary. No matter where his money came from. He may have got it gambling in stocks, or doing something else of a like character; but he has given it to us. Oh, yes, he is worthy. He may have made his enormous gains by distilling whisky even! Make room for him, he has got a gold ring on; make room for her, she has got a good dress on. So said the Jews: "Now, Lord, come at once, for he built us a synagogue. Oh, he is worthy. You must not refuse or halt; You must come at once." That was the Jews' idea, and it is the idea of the world today.

But how do you expect to get grace that way? The moment you put it on the ground of being worthy of it, then to receive it would not be grace at all. It would only amount to this: that if the Lord should give a man grace because He owed it to him, He would only be paying a debt. Jesus, however, went with them in this instance to teach them a lesson. Luke goes on to say:

Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof."

That is the kind of humility we want; that is the kind of men we are hunting after—a man that is not worthy. See how quick he will be saved when he is in that frame of mind. I suppose that someone had run in to tell this centurion that Jesus was approaching the house. And the centurion sent to Him to say he was not worthy that He should come to him, "I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed."

This centurion had faith, at any rate. If he thought himself unworthy to come to Jesus, he sent friends whom he considered better than himself. How common it is to think yourself good and all other people bad. It is good to see a man consider himself a poor, unworthy man. "[God,] I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed." Thank God, he had faith. No matter how many sins we have if we only have faith. In this case, because he

had faith Jesus healed his servant without coming to him at all. He hadn't to go to the house and examine his pulse, and see his tongue. Then He didn't have to write out a prescription and send him to the drugstore. No; he said, "All right, your servant shall live."

For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, "Go," and he goes; and to another, "Come," and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this," and he does it. When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him.

It is only twice, I think, that Jesus marveled. He marveled at the unbelief of the Jews; and again, at the faith of the centurion—"He . . . turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, 'I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'" Here is a Gentile, He said in effect, here is a man not of the seed of Abraham, and yet what faith he shows! Why, here is a centurion, and he has more faith than the chosen people of God. Jesus granted the petition at once. When He saw a genuine check presented for payment He cashed it at once. He pays instantly in the gold of Heaven, without any hesitation or discount.

"And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick." Found him perfectly well, leaping and dancing around the house, praising God. He had been at the point of death one minute, and the next he had been made perfectly well.

You may be made whole too, friends. You may even be on the borders of hell, and yet be made an inhabitant of the Kingdom of Heaven. Think of this, you men that are the slaves of strong drink. You may be mangled and bruised by sin, but the grace of God can save you. He is the God of grace. I hope that grace will flow into your souls tonight. Christ is the sinner's friend. If you have read your Bibles carefully you will see that Christ always took the side of the sinner. Of course, He came down on the hypocrites, and well He might. Those haughty Pharisees He took sides against, but where a poor, miserable, humble, penitent sinner came to Him for grace he always found it. You always read that He deals in grace, and tonight He will have mercy on you that confess your sins to Him. If you want to be saved come right straight to Him. He comes to deal in grace: He comes to bless, and why don't you let Him? Let Him bless you now. Let Him take your sins away now.

A man said to me the other night, "I feel I have got to do something."

I said to him, "If this grace is unmerited and free, what are you going to do?" And I warn you tonight, my friends, against trying to work out

your own salvation. It really is a question whether it don't keep more people out of the kingdom of God than anything else.

When at Newcastle,<sup>7</sup> I was preaching one night, and I said that grace was free; that all were to stop trying to be saved.

A woman came down and said to me: "Oh, how wretched I am! I have been trying to be a Christian, and yet you have been telling me tonight not to try!"

"Has that made you wretched?" I asked.

"Yes. If I stop trying, what will become of me?"

I said: "But if grace is free what are you going to do? You cannot get it by working."

She said, "I can't understand it."

"Well, let me call your attention now to a few passages of Scripture."

I turn to the second chapter of Ephesians and the 8th and 9th verses:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Salvation is a gift from God. If a man worked it out, he would boast of what he had done, and say, "Oh, I did it." A Scotchman once said it took two persons to effect his salvation—"God gave me His grace and I fought against Him." It is not then for men to work, or they will boast of it, and when a man boasts you may be sure there is no conversion. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, neither can the leopard change his spots. We do not work to *get* salvation, but we work it out *after* we get it.<sup>8</sup> If we are ever saved it must be by grace alone. If you pay anything for salvation it ceases to be a gift. But God isn't down here selling salvation. And what have you to give Him if He was? What do you suppose you would give? Ah, we're bankrupt. "The gift of God is eternal life"; that's your hope. "He who . . . climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

Now who will take salvation tonight? Oh, you may have it if you will. "To him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt." The difference between Martha and Mary was that Martha was trying to do something for the Lord, and Mary was just taking something from Him as a gift. He'll smile upon you if you'll just take grace from Him. "It is to him who does not work but believes" that blessings come. After you get to the Cross, there you may work all you can. If you are lost, you go to hell in the full blaze of the Gospel. That grace is free to

<sup>7</sup>During one of Moody's evangelistic meetings in England.

<sup>8</sup>Emphasis supplied. Ed.

all. To every policeman here, every fireman, every usher, every singer, every man, woman, and child, every reporter, all of you. What more do you want God to do than He has done? Oh, I hope the grace of God will reach every heart here. Oh, be wise, and open the door of your hearts and let in the King of glory. *You'll be saved when you believe.*<sup>9</sup> It is written, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all." If you are lost there is one thing you must do, and that is *trample the grace of God under your feet.*<sup>10</sup> It won't be because you can't be saved, but because you won't. Young man, will you be saved tonight? It's a question for you yourself to settle. If we could settle it for you we would, but you must believe for yourself. Christ said to that poor sinning woman, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." Oh, sinner, hear those words. Oh, may the grace of God reach your heart tonight.

<sup>9</sup>Emphasis supplied. Ed.

<sup>10</sup>Emphasis supplied. It is possible that the word *not* was left out by the transcriber by mistake: "one thing you must not do." However, Moody is probably saying: there is one thing you do to be saved (believe the Gospel) and one thing you do to be lost (reject the Gospel). Assuming our original text is correct, it is likely that Moody's intonation in voicing it made his meaning crystal clear. Ed.





Grace in the Arts:  
**THE ALPHA STRATAGEM**  
An Annotated Work of Fiction  
Part 2

**FRANK D. CARMICAL**  
Evangelist  
Harvester Ministries, Inc.  
Plano, Texas

Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold . . . But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world . . .<sup>1</sup>

*1 Peter 1:18-20*

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

*Ephesians 1:4*

And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was . . . Father, I desire that they also whom You gave me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold my glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world . . .

*John 17:5, 24*

### Prologue

Having read the biblical passages above, meditate on the phrase *before the foundation of the world*. Let your imagination take flight back to that time before time.

Imagine what it could have been like *after* God created the Universe of starry galaxies when all the angelic sons of God sang for joy, but *during* that fearful day when Lucifer, the anointed cherub, began to lead a rebellion against the Most High. What ingredients went into that fateful decision faced by every angelic being—to choose loyalty to the Creator or disloyalty, forever heading down the path of eternal doom?

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

Think back to that same era of pre-history when the incarnation of the Son of God and His work on the cross were events in the distant future. Conceive of a time when salvation by grace was only a prophecy, pre-written in Heaven. What awesome preparations were made for our redemption, not only before we were born, but before the Earth itself was born?

Fasten your seatbelts. You are about to embark on a fictional journey down the corridor of time, across the ages of history, and back to eternity past.

### Synopsis of Part 1

Lucifer, leader of the angelic rebellion, began his temptation of the angels who guard and rule the planets of earth's solar system [given here with their Roman or popular names in parenthesis]: Apollo, (the Sun); Hermes (Mercury); Aphrodite (Venus); Gaia (Earth); Artemis, (Earth's moon); Ares (Mars); Hera (as the planet destined to be destroyed and become the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter); Zeus (Jupiter); Chronus (Saturn); Ouranos (Uranus); Poseidon (Neptune); and Hades (Pluto). A majority of these planetary angels voted to accompany the Prince of Darkness on a journey.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Let no reader suppose that the author believes in gods, goddesses, or the Earth-worshipping, New Age, "Gaia" cult (see "When God Was a Woman," *TIME*, May 6, 1991). In classical Greek, *gē* generally meant "the earth or world; the land in contrast to the water . . . In ancient Gk. mythology, *gē* and *ouranos*, sky, are among the oldest deities." ("Earth, Land, World," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, General Editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 1:517. In this story, Gaia, Ouranos, and the other characters named after the Greek deities are the angels assigned to govern and control the planets of their same name or characteristic. For example, here Gaia is the planetary angel of earth, third planet from the sun.

Since the sexless nature of angels is clearly taught by our Lord in Matt 22:30, this author does not believe in male or female angels. However, although angels in the Scriptures consistently were spoken of in the masculine and took on the human form of *men* (Gen 19:1-5; Judg 13:1-21; Mark 16:5), at least one passage leaves open the possibility that angels could also be viewed as feminine (Zech 5:9-11). Thus, for fiction, *The Alpha Stratagem* posits unfallen, masculine and feminine angelic beings portrayed by the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece, who decide in the story to join or not to join Lucifer's rebellion.

For the classic theological treatise on this subject of angels and their relationship to physical matter, see *The Summa Theologica* by Thomas Aquinas (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 1: 269-377.

Lucifer took this group of twelve on a guided tour of Planet Heaven, visiting specific sites: the Library, where the Eternal Written Word of God was stored, the Universal History Museum, where items such as the real Ark of the Covenant and the real Ark of Noah would someday be preserved and put on display after human history, the building site of the New Jerusalem, and finally the Mount of Election, a colossal slab of clear gold etched with the name of every saint in future history.

Over Gaia's many objections, and building his case little by little, Lucifer attempted to create doubt about God's justice, because of His lavish grace and love for the future saints of human history and the lack of any such salvation provided for angels. During a short break, Gaia was comforted by the angel Gabriel, and Zeus discovered Lucifer's real stratagem—to kill the Son of God.

## I

The next stop on this most unusual journey brought Lucifer and his band of twelve planetary angels to the outskirts of the Divine Palace itself. Here were to be found the stables for the Royal Family, a family which Lucifer was quick to point out was "politically incorrect," as we humans would say, for it discriminated against angels in favor of humans.

Outside the Palace were barns and stalls, stacked one on top of another at least ten billion high. Here were housed and fed not earthly, but heavenly steeds—huge, white, fearsome horses. These were not at all the grotesque, winged beings that the Greeks would one day imagine in mythology, but intelligent, fiercely proud creatures that could fly by a sheer act of the will.

Having taken a tour of the immaculate stables with one of the angelic guides, Lucifer addressed his companions: "Why do you think He keeps these proud beasts? Why train them for war?"

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For the classic fictional presentation of planetary angels as well as the idea of masculine and feminine angelic beings, the author highly recommends C. S. Lewis's "Space Trilogy:" *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength* (all published in paperback in New York by Macmillan Publishing Co.). In the author's opinion, this trilogy is some of the most creative fiction ever written.

For the classic work on these gods and goddesses in Greek mythology, see Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1940), 24-46.

“The crown Prince of Heaven and His ‘redeemed’ bride shall someday invade the earth riding these creatures and make it His property forever.”

Gaia smiled. “And when He comes again, I shall kneel on that day and lay my crown at His feet which will then be scarred by nails.”<sup>3</sup>

Ignoring her, Lucifer looked at the others. “Make no mistake. He will return as a conquering General. It will be an invasion—not only of earth, but of all your planets. You will be conquered, subjugated, and never again able to rule them as you do now.”

Ares spoke up. “We won’t stand for that!”

Gaia shook her head in disgust. “Lucifer, you are truly insane. None of our worlds are ours to start with. They already belong to Him. He made them. He has a right to them. He has simply entrusted them to us for a while. To deny this is to deny that we are creatures.

“But that’s what bothers you, isn’t it? You detest being a creature. That’s why you aspire to be God! At last, I’m beginning to understand you!”

Again ignoring her, Lucifer continued: “Do you all hear how accurately she stated the divine principle of stewardship? *It all belongs to Him*. You each have the privilege of being vassal lords with your pitiful castles and serfs, but one day the King’s Son will come, and of course, you’ll gladly give it all back to Him on your knees, like your sincere, but misguided sister Gaia.

“Well, I’m here to tell you that you don’t have to take that kind of treatment. Not from Him. Not from anybody!”

“And I’m sure,” said Gaia, “that in *your* magnanimous hands we would all be equals.”

“Better to serve Egypt than to die in the wilderness of allegiance to Him!<sup>4</sup> He hoards it all, pretending to give, but all the while planning to take it back. Is that really the kind of Person you all wish to continue serving?”

<sup>3</sup> “It is related that Queen Victoria, deeply touched by a sermon of F. W. Farrar on the Lord’s Second Coming, said to him, ‘Dean Farrar, I should like to be living when Jesus comes, so that I could lay the crown of England at His feet.’” Henry H. Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), 447.

<sup>4</sup> The spirit of rebellion exhibited in the wilderness by Israel finds its very *origin* here in the angelic rebellion. Here I am using the literary device of allusion, used by Milton, T. S. Elliot, etc. Whereas this device normally alludes to *past* literature, the time of the story *is* eternity past, so the allusions *must* be to the future.

Ares shouted back, “No! Hades, is that what you want?”

Hades remained enigmatic and silent as ever.

As they left, Lucifer called out. “Our business in Heaven is finished. Now, journey with me to your world, Gaia—to Earth!” And then he noted, “Black king takes white king’s knight!”

## II

The thirteen flew through outer space faster than light, hopping dimensions as easily as children hop across stones in a brook. They arrived at the edge of the solar system in *no time* at all.

Lucifer sneered, “Ah, home, sweet home. And dear Hades, we are now passing your small, forgotten world. But it won’t be forgotten long! Here is the future prison house for all those mortals of the human race with whom mortality will catch up! How do you think it will feel to have all those Old Testament saints as well as the spiritual descendants of Cain locked up on your surface?”

Hades growled. “Don’t speak to me about it!”

“Forgive me, dear brother. You should know that I am on your side.”

When the group arrived at Earth, Lucifer addressed Gaia. “Your highness, do we have your permission to enter the atmosphere of your world and land on the surface?”

“Of course. I never stopped you from coming before.”

As the angels entered Earth’s atmosphere effortlessly and descended through the clouds, they began to notice the life forms for which this planet was famous. The one giant continent was teeming with gigantic animal life and thick vegetation.

Flying to the center of the continent, the group arrived at their destination—Old Eden. Miners dug deep underground on other worlds to find gold, silver, and precious stones, but here on old earth, these metals and gems were found on top of the ground, as common as gravel.

Most spectacular of all sites in Old Eden was Lucifer’s Pavilion, located at the head of four ancient rivers, the chief ones being the Old Tigris and the Old Euphrates. Here, Lucifer had performed many a concert for the Almighty. Every precious stone, from diamonds to emeralds to sapphires to rubies, had gone into the building materials so that the entire amphitheater glistened like it was ablaze—only with cold fire. The Edenic Pavilion was so acoustically perfect that the passing waters of the rivers could be amplified to the thunderous crashing of a tidal wave onto a rocky shore or hushed to the whisper of a single dew drop falling onto the still surface of a pond deep in some silent woods.

Lucifer mused. "Some of my very best vocal and instrumental performances took place here."<sup>5</sup>

"Naturally," Gaia quipped, "modesty forbids you to say more!"

Ignoring her, the old serpent continued. "It was here that I first began to grow dissatisfied with the Divine ways. Look! This is a world of unintelligent life with fabulous gems fit only for intelligent life! Why all this waste when they could have been sold and given to the poor planets who have no such wealth? Such egotistical extravagance and overindulgence makes me sick!"

Gaia landed in the center of the amphitheater. She spoke and her voice carried with perfect clarity to every corner of the pavilion. "No, you're terribly, stubbornly wrong! The things you accuse our Sovereign Lord of are not selfishness, but virtues you'll never understand.

"Listen to me, all of you. God is lavishly superabundant in all He does.<sup>6</sup> Why are there trillions of stars that He calls by name every one differing from another in glory? Why are there billions of snowflakes, no two of which are alike? Why do millions of wildflowers decorate the face of your world, Aphrodite, that no eye will ever see?

"This is the way the universe is because the cosmos can't help but reflect its Creator. That's the kind of Person He is. Extravagant? Yes! And a million times more in grace and love and mercy—especially to those who will inhabit my world some day."

"Precisely my point, Gaia. The prodigality displayed here is an example of what He'll do for *them*, but what He'll never do for *us*.

"You see, He's always in a quandary. Loving them and not appreciating us. Wanting to hate sin and yet love the sinner. He wants to be just and merciful, but the two are mutually exclusive.

"It's merely a symptom of His greater shortcoming. He wants a unified whole to reality when reality is clearly a plurality. There are no absolutes—relativity and pluralism must reign in metaphysics as well as morality. He created it and it takes a creature like me to understand it! His vision is too broad. That's why it's distorted."

Zeus could not contain himself, striking his sword on his shield sending sparks flying. "Brilliant! The creature has surpassed the Creator!"

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 28:11-19.

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Dr. S. Craig Glickman for the ideas on God's lavish superabundance taken from his unpublished classnotes in Soteriology at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas in 1980.

Gaia laughed. “Lucifer, I just realized that for this entire tour you’ve done nothing but talk about God. You’re obsessed with Him.”

“Nonsense!”

“You can never achieve your real goal. You want to be *like* Him, but with every word you find yourself changing and growing more *unlike* Him.”

“You’re going too far.”

“Now I’ve found your Achilles’ heel! What sticks in your craw is that He is infinite and you are finite and you can never be what He is—you’ll always be a *mere* creature!”

“Silence!”

Gaia laughed again. “Check!”

### III

The thirteen angels de-materialized and transported themselves deep within the earth to its molten core—a lake of fire.

Lucifer began. “To those of you who join me, this is our eternal home—a maximum security penitentiary, an asylum for the criminally insane, a galactic concentration camp. The real horror of it is its proximity for eternity to the New Jerusalem<sup>7</sup>—in hell, we’ll be able to see their party, but unable to participate. No mercy. No redemption. No way out.

“Here His true character is revealed. He plays favorites. Heaven for some and hell for others who disagree with Him.”

Gaia addressed the other angels. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Has it come to this that you will abandon the God who made you for the creature He has made? Join Lucifer and you deserve this fate!”

Lucifer shook his head in disgust. “Fundamentalism at its primordial best! He tortures us forever simply because we disagree. He calls my good evil simply because it’s a different good from His. He’s so narrow minded that He thinks only He is right! Now, I tell you that He is evil!”

Gaia shouted back, “Fool and Blasphemer! You’d have no standard of good and evil at all without the absolute standard of His Person.”

“And you, madam, are a fanatic of the most pathetic sort—is He so weak and ineffectual that a mere created thing like you must defend Him?”

<sup>7</sup> Compare Isa 66:22-24; Luke 16:23; and Rev 14:10.

“He could wipe you out of existence with a single thought.”

“But instead He decides to barbecue me forever—so much for ‘His lovingkindness enduring forever!’”

“In His mercy, He’ll allow you to say NO to Him forever. He forces His love on no one. The feeblest faith receives all that Heaven offers. He doesn’t lock you in your prison. It’s *you* who lock Him out.”<sup>8</sup>

Zeus interrupted. “I’ve seen enough for eternity. Let’s get out of here. Apollo, it’s time for us to vote.”

Gaia spoke before Lucifer could open his mouth. “Let me say one more thing before you cast your votes. This time, you are voting forever. You have seen the place God has prepared for the devil and his angels. Is that really where you want to spend eternity?”

Lucifer sneered. “So now we’re going to use the old fear tactic. What a noble way to motivate us!”

Gaia spoke to her fellow planets. “He’s wrong, my brothers and sisters. Our Sovereign Lord is so gracious, He’ll use any and every means to keep a man or an angel from going to hell—any means that doesn’t compromise His Word. Which is worse, fear of the flames or being a fool burning in those flames forever?”

Lucifer scoffed. “And now, we see her practicing the old insult tactic—which we pull out of the magician’s hat when the fear tactic fails to get results!”

Gaia raised her voice. “Until today, has our Sovereign Lord ever once given any of you the slightest reason to question Him? Why in so short a time are you now prepared to abandon that long-standing trust and betray the One who’s never done you anything but good? Doesn’t He deserve the benefit of the doubt? Take Him at His Word, trust Him, and He will explain everything in time. Is it so unreasonable to treat Him just as you and I would want to be treated?”

She smiled. “I expect better things from you, brothers and sisters. I know that four of you have already defected to the other side. I know that Lucifer is about to win a major victory today, but let’s not give

<sup>8</sup>For outstanding evangelical defenses of the doctrine of hell, see C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1962), 118-28; *The Great Divorce* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1946); and Norman L. Geisler, *The Roots of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 101-105. Calvin Miller has written of hell in a marvelous allegory called *The Singer* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 129: “‘God, can you be merciful and send me off to hell and lock me in forever?’ ‘No, Pilgrim, I will not send you there, but if you chose to go there, I could never lock you out.’”



him the satisfaction of one more vote over our two-thirds majority. I am asking the other seven of you to side with me for an 8 to 4 loss—a victory in disguise.

“I’m asking you seven to join me in a vote that says ‘thank you’ to Lucifer!”

“W-what?” cried both Lucifer and Zeus, as the other angels looked at Gaia in disbelief.

There was the passion of truth and the conviction of triumph in her voice. “Yes, listen to me, all of you. Thank you, Lucifer, for the tour of Heaven and Earth that you’ve given us today. I admit I voted against going with you. And now I have to admit that I’m sorry I voted that way.”

Apollo tried to interrupt her, but Gaia continued, giving him a wink.

“I’ve learned so much today that I have always taken for granted—that we have all taken for granted.

“Such fabulous wealth and such magnificent splendor has been right here in front of our eyes all this time and we’ve been so busy, so preoccupied with our own responsibilities that we’ve neglected them. Lucifer, without you, I’d never have seen all this.”

Lucifer frowned. “This is some sort of trick—you’ve seen these things before.”

Gaia shook her head. “I’m not talking about seeing with my eyes. You’ve helped open the eyes of my *heart*. It wasn’t until I saw through your twisted eyes that I looked into my own heart and soul and realized how blind I’ve been.

“Lucifer was right! We *have* been acting like slaves—doing our duties, keeping our small part of the universe going, the planets spinning and rotating—while all along we haven’t taken out the time to see our Creator as He is. If we’re paupers in a palace, it’s not because He’s made us that way. It’s because we’ve made ourselves beggarly by closing our eyes to the blessings around us.

“How gracious our Sovereign Lord is! He’s never once demanded that we worship Him or thank Him or honor Him. And that’s all the more reason to remain loyal to Him, no matter what the cost.

“Brothers and sisters, I appeal to you on behalf of Him who has never once taken from us, but has always given to us and blessed us. I know you’ll do what’s right, not for me, nor for yourselves, but for His sake, because *He* deserves it!

“I’ve said all I can to persuade you.” Gaia turned to Lucifer, compassion entering her face for the first time. “Go ahead. Win this game of yours. We’ll see who loses the most.”

Lucifer bowed in mock courtesy. "Yes. We shall see."  
Gaia called to her brother, "Apollo, take the vote."

#### IV

Apollo held up his emblems. "I call for a vote. If you choose to remain loyal to God, vote Yes. If not, then say No. Remember our group's majority rule—better than two-thirds vote is needed by the majority to block Lucifer's taking control of our solar system. This is the most important decision you will ever make. I trust you will all make it well, because you make it for eternity."

The decision was made by each angel in a way unfathomable to a human being. It was made by each of these heavenly beings in a moment immeasurably short or an age incalculably long, or better, outside of time altogether. They decided in no time, but the consequences were still just as awesome as that for any future soul in the human race, deciding Heaven or Hell.

Apollo began. "We go in order. As for me, I vote Yes—I remain loyal to our Lord of Hosts.

"Hermes, how do you vote?"

Hermes looked at Gaia and smiled handsomely. "Yes!"

Apollo smiled too and looked to the second in order of his children. "Aphrodite, what is your decision?"

After a long pause, she sobbed and covered her face with her hands. When she finally looked up, a beauty and innocence was gone from her countenance forever. She spoke with a new tone in her voice. "No. I won't serve Him anymore. I join Lucifer."

At this, Zeus and Ares cheered.

Apollo looked at the only blue-green planet in his solar system. "Gaia?" Gaia swallowed hard at the shock of her sister's defection. Then she raised her chin courageously. "Yes. All praise forever to the Name above all names!"

Apollo called to Gaia's moon. "And what is your vote, Artemis?"

She answered sweetly. "Yes."

Angrily, Ares spoke up. "And I vote No. From this day forward, I am at war with the Almighty!"

"And how do you vote, Hera?" said Apollo.

"Can I wait until last?" she asked.

"You cannot abstain this time," answered Apollo.

"I know," said Hera, "But grant me this request. I wish to vote last."

"Very well," said Apollo, "And now we turn to the giants."

Smiling perversely, Zeus threw a thunderbolt into the sky. “And I vote No. From this day forward, I proclaim myself king of the planets and the gods. I bow to no one but Lucifer!”

Chronus paused a long while before speaking. When he did speak, it was with conviction. “Yes. I will not forsake Him who will never forsake me.”

“What?” cried Zeus. “How could you do this to me?”

Chronus smiled. “To whom am I being disloyal, brother? To you or your new master?” Then, he briskly took his place by Gaia’s side and glanced at Ouranos in silent appeal.

Ouranus looked at Zeus sadly and also walked toward Gaia. “Yes. I never defected. My journey with Satan is over.”

“Traitors!” yelled Zeus. “You’ll all pay for this.”

Apollo looked to the angel of the sea planet. “Poseidon?”

Poseidon answered, “Nor can I be disloyal to One who’s never been disloyal to me! I vote Yes.”

Zeus growled. “What’s going on here? Gaia, have you bought their votes?”

Gaia looked at Zeus and raised her eyebrows. “Remember, you’ve joined the other side. From now on, you must get used to the taste of defeat.”

Apollo called to far away Hades. “And you, son?”

Hades whispered, “No.”

Zeus clapped his hands. “We have the four votes to block your majority, Gaia.”

Hera interrupted. “And now I will vote.” She looked at Gaia and smiled. “Because it’s right and because we must do right even when everyone else does wrong, I vote Yes!”

Gaia shouted triumphantly. “You’ve won our solar system, Lucifer, but you’ve lost the war. Your average here was no better than anywhere else. In spite of all your boasts, you’ve never managed to pull any more than a third of any of the stars from Heaven with your dragon’s tail.”

Lucifer’s voice was no longer like that of a gentleman or an angel of light. “But *I have* won your solar system and now your puny planets are my pawns to do with as I please.”

## V

Zeus spoke up. “But aren’t we going to decide together?”

“Shut up, Zeus,” said Lucifer, “you fat, pompous idiot. I’m in charge of this game now and you’ll do what I say.”

Zeus hung his head in defiant shame, tasting the first bitter fruits of rebellion.

Lucifer took over like a general. "Now to business. Zeus, you and Hades are in charge of the outer planets. Destroy them so completely that no plant, animal, or person can ever live on them again. Ares, you and Aphrodite, destroy your own worlds, and then Hermes's. Zeus, I'll leave Hera to you and Ares—do with her planet whatever you wish. Leave Gaia and Artemis to me."

The remaining loyalist angels raised their voices in outrage as Lucifer and his followers went to work.

Apollo raised his hands. "We didn't have a majority vote to block them. We must submit to whatever they do."

As their voices subsided, Gaia spoke kindly to them. "Dear brothers and sisters, not one of you will suffer as my world will, but someday, you'll understand when our Sovereign Lord makes all things new. For now, let us be brave. Soon it will all be over."

What followed was destruction and chaos unlike anything witnessed in the history of the cosmos. Hermes's planet was reduced to a desolate wasteland, alternately freezing and blazing without its former atmospheric canopy to protect it.

So quickly had Aphrodite changed that when she destroyed her world, she could only look upon the fiery scene with contempt. Once second in beauty only to earth, the planet that would one day be called Venus became one of the most hostile of worlds, with crushing atmospheric pressure and intense heat matched only by reddish clouds laced with sulfuric acid.

Ares destroyed his own world with the glee of a hoodlum gone berserk on some inner city street. The once lush world of green vegetation and Venetian-style canals became a cold, barren desert.

A special punishment was meted out for Hera by Zeus and Ares. Together, the two bullies exploded and pulverized their sister's world, creating an orbiting band of asteroids between them.

Zeus took longer to unmake his own planet, but when he was done, it was unrecognizable. Like Aphrodite's destruction of her world, Zeus made his forever hostile to any living thing—no solid surface, but a maelstrom of gases with temperatures in thousands of degrees Fahrenheit and zones of lethal radiation surrounding the poisonous atmosphere.

Chronus's huge, but inviting planet, was reduced at the surface to a mass of toxic gases. One of the moons was accidentally destroyed by

Zeus creating an unexpectedly beautiful by-product—what would later come to be known as “the rings of Saturn.”<sup>9</sup>

Ouranus, the solar system’s miniature of planet Heaven, was not only destroyed, but kicked on its side—its axis tilting at a right angle and creating a dark, sinister crescent—not from north to south pole, like earth’s moon, but from one side of its equator to the other.<sup>10</sup>

Stripped of its beautiful oceans, Poseidon’s planet became a ball of frozen, blue-green methane. Hades, the last and loneliest of the planets, turned his world into a dark, frozen waste, in preparation for the day when it would be used as the place of the departed dead of earth.

For the unmaking of the earth and her satellite, Lucifer summoned his artistic muses and best demonic musicians to play their compositions. As this symphony of decadence and self-indulgence played, Lucifer hurled comets at Gaia’s world. He killed the dinosaurs instantaneously and mercifully, while he kneaded the surface of the earth like dough, burying both the jewels of the Edenic Pavilion and the bones of the giant reptiles. These convolutions shifted tectonic plates, causing massive earthquakes and volcanoes. Giant tidal waves overwhelmed the one large continent, submerging it under water.

Lucifer next turned his fury toward Artemis. The Moon’s pristine, porcelain-white face was showered with meteors until it was pitted and scarred with craters. No night sky would ever again see that face without its ugly splotches and blotches.

Apollo’s star, the sun, was left untouched physically, but the angel could barely control his grief and outrage as he watched the massacre of his planetary children. With his bow, he shot giant solar flares out into space. The loyal planets lifted up their voices and wept. Not until a distant future day called the New Creation would their worlds be whole again.

As clouds of steam and gas rose into the atmosphere, Gaia took one last look at Apollo, whose light and warmth would now be dimmed for the first time. Her face was wet with hot, salty tears, just like her planet’s surface, which was now a vast, worldwide ocean. As the temperature began to drop and ice began to form at the poles, Gaia turned her eyes to her little sister, always so close that even the oceans’ tides were pulled daily toward her.

<sup>9</sup>A popular theory about how Saturn came to have its beautiful rings is that one of its moons was destroyed and the orbiting debris over time formed into rings. See Patrick Moore and David Hardy, *The New Challenge of the Stars* (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1978), 28-29.

<sup>10</sup>Moore, *Ibid.*, 32-33.

For a moment, Gaia saw a faint halo encircling Artemis's once pearl-like orb, but soon the last gaseous clouds sealed the earth's atmosphere like a crypt. Gaia wept uncontrollably and inconsolably.

Was all lost? Was there no hope? Then, just as before, she felt the comforting hand of Gabriel and heard his soothing words of challenge and encouragement: "If you hold on to your life, you'll never keep it. If you let go of your life, you'll never lose it."<sup>11</sup>

Lucifer surveyed his masterpiece of extermination with satisfaction. Once again he addressed God directly. "Black king takes white queen. Your King, your precious Son, is left unprotected. Once again, check. It's still Your move!"

## VI

News of the destruction reached the planet Heaven quickly. The great feeling there for all who heard was sadness, not surprise. The four living creatures, the twenty-four elders around the throne, and the myriads of millions of angels watched and waited in silence.

The Father spoke in perfect, righteous pride of the best Son a Father ever had:

"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,  
My Elect One in whom My soul delights!  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.  
He will not cry out, nor raise His voice,  
Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.  
A bruised reed He will not break,  
And smoking flax He will not quench;  
He will bring forth justice for truth.  
He will not fail nor be discouraged,  
Till He has established justice in the earth;  
And the coastlands shall wait for His law."<sup>12</sup>

The Son replied in perfect, selfless submission, forever after the example for God's people:

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,  
But a body You have prepared for Me.

<sup>11</sup> This paraphrase of Jesus' words from Matt 10:39 is the advice given to Gaia by Gabriel. For a human, Jesus' words mean giving up your life in discipleship in return for eternal rewards. For the angels, this meant having their planets destroyed, only to be recreated in the future (Genesis 1 and Revelation 21).

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 42:1-4.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin  
 You had no pleasure.  
 Behold, I have come—  
 In the volume of the book it is written of Me—  
 To do Your will, O God.”<sup>13</sup>  
 “Not My will, but Yours, be done.”<sup>14</sup>

The Spirit intoned in perfected, errorless inspiration, as He would do again through the writing quill of a New Covenant writer millennia hence:

“For to which of the angels did He ever say:

At that moment, the Father began to speak, superimposing His voice upon the Spirit’s words, who was quoting the Father, the two together in stereophonic unison:

“‘You are my Son, Today I have begotten You?’”

The Spirit alone began once more alone:

“And again:”

And the Father joined Him a second time:

“‘I will be to Him a Father and He shall be to Me a Son?’”

The Spirit quoted a third time:

“But when He again brings the firstborn  
 into the world, He says:

And the Father continued the phrase for a third time:

“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

The Father addressed His only begotten Son:

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;  
 A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.  
 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;  
 Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You  
 With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.  
 You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,  
 And the heavens are the work of Your hands;  
 They will perish, but You remain;  
 And they will all grow old like a garment;  
 Like a cloak You will fold them up,

<sup>13</sup> Hebrews 10:5-7.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 22:42.

And they will be changed.  
 But You are the same,  
 And Your years will not fail.  
 Sit at My right hand,  
 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."<sup>15</sup>

The Son prayed in eternal prescience, filled with such love that all saints and angels for all eternity could not comprehend its length and depth and breadth and height—love for the Father and love for those loved by the Father:

“Father, the hour has come.  
 Glorify Your Son,  
 that Your Son also may glorify You,  
 as You have given Him authority over all flesh,  
 that He should give eternal life to as many as  
 You have given Him.  
 And this is eternal life,  
 that they may know You, the only true God,  
 And Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.  
 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself,  
 with the glory which I had with You before the world was.  
 Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me  
 may be with Me where I am,  
 that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me;  
 for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”<sup>16</sup>

And the Father replied, announcing from eternity past into time, His Paternal imprimatur on the Crown Prince of Heavenly Peace:

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>17</sup>

At this, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit each began to shine more brilliantly than the combined light of all the constellations. All the mighty suns and stars in space paled before this true Light which lightens every man. This trinity of suns merged slowly and majestically to form one sun, yet the combined glory of the one sun was no brighter than the three suns.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 1:5-6; 8-9; 13.

<sup>16</sup> John 17:1-3, 5, 24.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 3:17.

<sup>18</sup> One of the most helpful books this author has found to illustrate the tri-unity of God is the classic work written before the turn of the century by Nathan R. Wood, *The Trinity in the Universe* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978).



Then the eternal Spirit was sent on His Divine Mission, proceeding from the Father and the Son, leaving, yet never-absent, parting, but ever-present. This was no chess game—this was life: eternal life versus eternal death; the pure, snow-bleached whiteness of Holiness and Righteousness versus the foul, swamp-stained blackness of Iniquity and Injustice; the true heavyweight championship, with the Son of Man stepping into the ring of time and space to be followed later by the Man of Sin.<sup>19</sup> All the other chess pieces had been lost to Lucifer, but it only takes One King to win. The *real* Alpha Stratagem had begun.<sup>20</sup>

## VII

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”<sup>21</sup>

In the void, a form appeared above the shoreless sea. The Spirit hovered with concern above the waters. Where all was darkness and chill

<sup>19</sup>Second Thessalonians 2:3. The conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, between Christ and the Antichrist can be traced through Scripture from Gen 3:15 through Rev 20:10.

<sup>20</sup>The first president of Dallas Theological Seminary, Lewis Sperry Chafer, in *Systematic Theology*, 1:376-77, has written the following about the incarnation of Christ as it relates to the universe and not just to humanity: “It is too often assumed that the coming of Christ into the world was an unprepared and abrupt visitation . . . The extent of Christ’s estate which was His before He came into the world is well described by Dr. Samuel Harris: ‘Thus in the knowledge of Christ we are lifted above the “provincialism of this planet” and brought into fellowship with angels and archangels, with finite spirits of all orders and all worlds. God, in that eternal mode of his being called the Logos, the Word, the Son, existed and was working out great ends of eternal wisdom and love before his advent in Christ on earth . . . In ways unknown to us, he may have revealed himself to the rational inhabitants of other worlds in his likeness to them as personal Spirit. He may have been trusted and adored by innumerable myriads of finite persons from other worlds before he revealed himself on earth in the son of Mary . . .’ (*God the Creator and Lord of All*, I, 413). Another has suggested that this earth might be ‘the Bethlehem of the universe’ . . . There are those, Dr. I. A. Dorner in particular, who hold, and with much reason and some Scripture, that the first advent was not alone a mission related to the cure of sin, but that it was required in the progress of divine self-revelation. He maintains that to see God revealed in Christ Jesus is an essential experience for any and all who will reach the realms of glory, whether they have sinned or not. What deep and hidden meaning is contained in the words that Christ while here on earth was ‘seen of angels?’”

<sup>21</sup>Genesis 1:1-2.

and death, He began to impart light and warmth and life, like a mother bird cradling and caring for her young.<sup>22</sup>

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light;’ and there was light.”<sup>23</sup>

In a future day, these same agents, the Spirit and the Word, would accomplish salvation on an even grander scale—not only redeeming creation, but also redeeming man, who was to become the fallen lord of this creation.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men . . . He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Our story depends theologically upon a widely held evangelical interpretation of Gen 1:1-3 which is popularly known as the “Gap Theory.” Proponents of this view have included Arno C. Gaebelin in *The Annotated Bible* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1970), 16-18; Clarence Larkin in *Dispensational Truth* (Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Estate, 1920), 22-24; William MacDonald in *The Believer’s Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 32; Allen P. Ross “Genesis,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 28; Eric Sauer in *From Eternity to Eternity*, trans. by G. H. Lang (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), 17-19; C. I. Scofield in *The New Scofield Study Bible*, 1989 Edition (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 1-2. In fairness, it is important to note that the majority of Jewish and Christian interpreters, both traditionally and in modern times, have not held to this view, preferring to interpret Genesis 1 as an account of God’s creation in the absolute beginning.

Bruce K. Waltke, in his *Creation and Chaos* (Portland: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974), 18-39, argues convincingly that a “gap” is impossible exegetically and linguistically within Gen 1:1-3. However, Waltke, following suggestions made by Merrill F. Unger in *Unger’s Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody press, 1966), 37-38, leaves the door open for a gap of undetermined length between Gen 1:1 and God’s original creation. What is crucial to this “modified” gap theory is that both Genesis 1 and 3 are parallel in structure and theological presuppositions. Genesis 1 describes the circumstances of God’s re-creation of the Earth, but does not give us any information about how or why the Earth was ‘without form and void.’ Genesis 3 describes the circumstances of the fall of Man, but does not give us any information about how or where the serpent came from. In this interpretation, the unity of Gen 1:1-3 as a narrative is preserved, while the theological presuppositions of a ruined earth and the existence of Satan must be derived from other texts.

<sup>23</sup>Genesis 1:3.

<sup>24</sup>John 1:1-4, 10-12. The whole story of the angels is a leadup to this point—the earth recreated, a type of man’s salvation, predestined by the Trinity.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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*The Gospel According to Rome.* By James G. McCarthy. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995. 397 pp. Paper, \$11.99.

“The Turks are at the Gates of Vienna!” These dramatic words from the Louis de Rochemont film “Martin Luther” (1953) are relevant today. In the 16th century Lutherans were pressed to reunite with Rome to form a solid front against the encroaching Muslims. Today the Muslims—not to mention the New-Agers, Hindus, cultists, and secularists—are at the gates of London, Paris, and New York.

The handsome young Irish-American (from a family of eight, both of whose Irish-born parents were also from families of eight) has written the best book on why Evangelicals should *not* and *cannot* unite with Rome, even on lesser levels. Unlike some books, this one is compassionate and loving rather than excessively harsh.

McCarthy is a teacher at the small but influential Discipleship Internship Training Program at San Leandro, California. His book is up-to-date (using the recent *Catechismus Ecclesiae Catholicae*), covers all the main problems (salvation, the mass, Mary, and authority—the four main parts of his book), and has important appendices on infant baptismal regeneration, the seven sacraments, the Roman Catholic Bible, NT references to tradition, and *Sola Scriptura*. It also has 558 notes and documentation, plus Scripture and subject indices.

The following samples of Roman Catholic doctrines (with page numbers from *The Catholic Catechism*) versus biblical teachings on salvation should show the quality of the book:

### Salvation: Error Versus Truth

#### The Catholic Church Teaches

1. Justification is a transformation of the soul in which original sin is removed and sanctifying grace infused [1987-1995].

2. Initial justification is by means of baptism [1262-1274].

#### The Bible Teaches

Justification is an act of God in which He declares a sinner to be righteous in His sight, having forgiven his sins and imputed to him God's own righteousness (Rom 3:21-4:8).

Justification is by faith alone (Rom 3:28).

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|--|--|
| 3. Adults must prepare for justification through faith and good works [1247-1249].   | God justifies ungodly sinners who believe (Romans 4:5). Good works are the <i>result</i> of salvation, not the cause (Eph 2:8-10).             |
| 4. Justification is furthered by sacraments and good works [1212, 1392, 2010].   | Justification is the imputation of the perfect righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). In Christ the believer has been made complete (Col 2:10).    |
| 5. Justification is lost through mortal sin [1033, 1855, 1874].  | Justification cannot be lost. Those whom God justifies will be saved from the wrath of God (Rom 5:8, 9).                                       |
| 6. Catholics guilty of mortal sin are justified again through the sacrament of penance [980, 1446].  | There is no second justification. Those whom God justifies He also will glorify (Rom 8:30).  |
| 7. Salvation from the eternal consequences of sin is a lifelong process [161-162, 1254-1255].  | Salvation from the eternal consequences of sin is an instantaneous and secure act of God coinciding with justification (Rom 5:9).              |
| 8. Salvation is attained by cooperating with grace through faith, good works, and participation in the sacraments [183, 1129, 1815, 2002]. | Salvation is attained by grace through faith apart from works (Eph 2:8, 9). Good works are the result, not the cause, of salvation (Eph 2:10). |
| 9. Sanctifying grace is a quality of the soul, a supernatural disposition that perfects the soul [1999-2000].                              | Grace is the undeserved favor of God (Eph 1:7, 8).   |
| 10. Grace is merited by good works [2010, 2027].   | Grace is a free gift (Rom 11:6).   |

While it is popular to have a foreword by someone with “name recognition” (usually, but not in this case, advertised on the cover), the use of John MacArthur, Jr., seemed a questionable choice in light of that preacher-writer’s less-than-orthodox views on the blood atonement and the eternal Sonship of our Lord. Also, MacArthur’s views on the gospel, in this reviewer’s opinion, do not reflect first generation Reformation clarity on *Sola Fide*. In fairness, however, MacArthur’s foreword is well done (though less irenic than the book), as it points up the real issue. Like R. C. Sproul’s November, 1993 *Table Talk*, he shows that the ten differences listed by the recent Colson-Robertson-Packer-Bright accord with Roman Catholic leaders (agreeing not to try to evangelize one

another) are nothing compared to the real difference: *the Gospel*. Just how is one saved? (See Dr. Wilkin's article-length review in this issue of *JOTGES*.)

As the efforts increase to blur the distinction between salvation by grace through faith alone and salvation by faith plus sacraments plus works, the importance of this and similar books becomes evident.

McCarthy also has a fine video featuring interviews with former Catholic clergy, monks, and nuns who are now strong evangelicals. Like *The Gospel According to Rome*, "Catholicism: Crisis of Faith" is Catholic-user friendly, and not an "over-the-wall" exposé of scandals. *JOTGES* readers who live in heavily Roman Catholic areas especially may want a copy. It is available in English and Spanish.

McCarthy's book is powerful, documented, irenic, and biblical. It deserves wide distribution.

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Dallas, TX

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*Keep the Fire!* By Don Anderson. Foreword by Dr. Howard Hendricks. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1994. 288 pp. Paper, \$8.99.

The present reviewer has no trouble reading small print, but admittedly does belong to what the author calls "approaching your senior years." Anderson has a masters degree in theology from Dallas Theological Seminary and a doctorate in marriage and family counseling from Talbot School of Theology. For 20 years the emphasis of his ministry has been working with *senior* adults. This may explain the large, clear, black type and good margins in this book: he's sensitive to the needs of others.

Many people (especially men) look forward to retirement for years and then, soon after it arrives, hate it as boring and worthless. Many die soon after retirement because they feel they're no use to anyone.

Anderson's well-organized book for Christian men and women is jam-packed with true stories, ideas, principles on how to really make the decades labeled "senior" by the media, fruitful, fun, and full of flavor!

Many people need to find out the facts and truths in this book. For example, how many know that Michelangelo, Ben Franklin, Churchill, Schweitzer, Grandma Moses, Colonel Sanders, Amos Alonzo Stagg, and Ronald Reagan made major contributions to society in their 70s, 80s, and, in Stagg's case, even the 90s? (pp. 23-24).

Dr. Anderson wants all Christians to keep going on for God in the many ways he suggests, even when we're of "retirement age"—and well beyond.

This book will be helpful to Christian "senior citizens" who may be "over the hill" in the estimate of modern Western culture. They can be getting their "mansion over the hilltop" pre-furnished with rewards for good works done even when (dare we use the word?) "old." The author clearly believes that a real believer (he cites Demas, 2 Tim 4:10) can make the wrong choice and "live for the temporal instead of the eternal" (p. 269).

His last paragraph gives his philosophy of life for senior believers: "My prayer for you and me as we mature is that the vision and passion for a strong finish will intensify, and that absolutely nothing will stop us from doing it up right. Press on, persevere, and point toward home. Oh to be able to shout with the Savior, 'Tetelestai!—It is finished!' so that the watching throng knows we gave it our best shot" (p. 278).

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Dallas, TX

*How Can I Be Sure I'm a Christian? What the Bible Says About Assurance of Salvation.* By Donald S. Whitney. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994. 160 pp. Paper, \$7.00.

I read this book with great interest, hoping to find a book on assurance that actually offered the readers 100% certainty of salvation based on the promises of God.

The tone of the book is warm and friendly.

Whitney begins fairly well. He writes: "The assurance of salvation rests primarily on the character of God, the work of Jesus Christ, and the truth of God's promises" (p. 28). Shortly thereafter he says, "The first place to look for such assurance is Godward, not selfward" (p. 34). Unfortu-

nately, the words “primarily” and “the first place” in those sentences shows that he does not consider the promises of God’s Word sufficient, by themselves, for assurance. In fact, the second sentence is immediately followed by a disclaimer indicating that our works *do* have a place in assurance, though they aren’t the starting place.

Whitney presents an excellent story of H. A. Ironside dealing with a man’s doubts about his salvation (p. 35). Ironside points the man to Scripture for assurance. Whitney then ends the chapter by asking, “Isn’t that enough to rest on?” I felt like saying a hearty “Amen!” Yet while that rhetorical question expects a Yes answer, the author goes on in the rest of the book to give a No answer.

The author goes on to say that assurance also depends on the inner witness of the Spirit (pp. 37-48) and says that “assurance may be experienced partly through the presence of the attitudes and actions the Bible says will accompany salvation” (p. 52). While that may sound similar to the GES position that good works may have a *secondary, confirming value*, that is not what is meant.

The author indicates that the purpose of 1 John, for example, is “to help believers gain the assurance of salvation” (p. 52). He then goes on to give ten tests including, “Do you share the intimacies of the Christian life with other believers?” “Do you have a deep awareness of your sin against the Word and love of God?” “Do you live in conscious obedience to the Word of God?” “Do you despise the world and its ways?” “Do you long for the return of Jesus Christ and to be made like Him?” “Do you habitually do what is right more and sin less?” “Do you love other Christians sacrificially and want to be with them?” “Do you discern the presence of the Holy Spirit within you?” “Do you enjoy listening to the doctrines the apostles of Jesus taught?” and “Do you believe what the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ?” It’s easy to see that only one of those ten questions involves our belief (faith) in the Word of God. Nine of the ten involve attitudes and actions.

Very telling is the author’s recounting of his experience talking with a seven-year-old girl who wished to be baptized. After asking her several questions about what she believed, he told her parents, “You see her every day and obviously know her much better than I. Have you perceived any changes since her profession of faith? In ways that only a parent might notice, have you observed more sensitivity to sin, or more of a hunger for spiritual things, or an increased desire to please God?” (p. 97).

Thus, despite earlier statements that assurance is primarily based on the Word of God, the author views one's attitudes and actions as of at least equal importance in assurance.

The bottom line is that under such thinking certainty is impossible. One can't be certain he is saved if he is focusing even in part on his own flawed actions and attitudes.

Standard Reformed understandings of passages like Jas 2:14, 2 Cor 13:5, 2 Pet 1:10, and 1 John 2:3 are found in this book. In addition, the author repeatedly indicates that there are two conditions for eternal salvation: repentance—which he defines as a change of mind which results in a change of behavior—and faith (cf. pp. 13, 31-32, 37). He does say on p. 31 that repentance is sometimes used as a synonym for faith and that they are two sides of the same coin. However, since he indicates on a number of other occasions that both repentance and faith are required for salvation, the overall impression is that repentance is an independent condition for salvation.

How can I be sure I am a Christian? Unfortunately, this book does not tell us.

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Irving, TX

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*The Myth of Certainty.* By Daniel Taylor. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992. 158 pp. Paper, \$9.99.

Many people in and out of church today struggle with the issue of doubt. Am I saved or am I lost? Is the Bible trustworthy?

With this book Taylor seeks to help such people. I appreciate his aim. It's a good one. I, too, very much believe in helping those struggling with doubt.

However, while his motive may be excellent, his method is not. Taylor does not give the doubter anything concrete to grasp. In fact, as the title suggests, he feels it is important that the doubter recognizes that certainty is a myth.

You might think that the author would counsel doubters to eliminate their doubts before attempting to share the Gospel. However, since Taylor feels that total elimination of doubts is impossible, he suggests



that “we [can] pass our faith on to others [even] if we are not certain about it ourselves” (p. 152)! He argues that “conviction” is all we need to share our faith.

Taylor is unclear as to whether he does or does not believe in eternal security: “Nothing worthwhile is easy, certainly not the life of faith in the twentieth century. Faith can be simultaneously incredibly strong and painfully fragile. Doctrines of eternal security notwithstanding, the choice to discontinue the whole experiment of seeking God is always present—as is the choice to begin, or to begin once more. These choices are sometimes made consciously, often by default. We tire of the struggle of faith as an athlete tires in a contest or a soldier grows weary in battle” (p. 112).

In a nutshell Taylor’s approach to the doubting of Christians is this: Doubts are a normal and healthy part of the Christian life. Don’t leave your church and Christianity simply because you have doubts. Instead, embrace your doubts, live with your doubts, be satisfied with probable truth.

This approach is misguided in my estimation. Doubters need to be shown the truth. They need to know that God wants them to be certain. When Jesus asked Martha if she believed in Him she did not give an equivocal answer (John 11:27). She gave an affirmative answer. She was certain. And, if Martha was certain, we can be too (cf. 1 John 5:13).

I don’t recommend this book.

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Irving, TX

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***Unmasked! Recognizing and Dealing with Imposters in the Church.***

By O.S. Hawkins. Chicago: Moody Press, 1989. 99 pp. Paper, \$5.95.

I have mixed emotions after reading this book. On the one hand, I am very much in agreement with the author on the dreadful spread of liberalism in conservative churches, schools, and denominations. It’s important that we maintain doctrinal purity. The foundations of our faith must not be destroyed.

On the other hand, I disagree with the author’s claim that “a truly born-again person cannot become an apostate” (p. 36). Passages like

1 Tim 1:19-20 and 2 Tim 2:16-18 show that a true Christian can become an apostate.

I also can't agree when Hawkins suggests that all true believers have peace, are loving, and are productive (pp. 26-29). This logically leads to assurance by works, even though the author is discussing the issue of how to discern if *others* are truly saved or not.

Most *JOTGES* readers will be disappointed with his treatment of passages like Luke 8:13 (he says that the stony-ground people don't truly believe in Christ, p. 36), 2 Pet 2:21-22 (he concludes that the dupes weren't true believers, p. 23), and Jude 24-25 (he indicates that no true believer will fall and that all true believers will be presented faultless, pp. 91-99).

This book is a helpful warning against the danger of apostasy. It is not helpful, however, in its exegesis or in its conclusions regarding believers and apostasy.

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Irving, TX

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*John*. By John Calvin. The Crossway Classic Commentaries. Alister McGrath and J. I. Packer, Series Editors. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994. 473 pp. Paper, \$13.99.

This commentary was originally published in 1553, over 450 years ago. In his introduction, series editor J. I. Packer says, "This commentary is one of Calvin's best pieces of work, and one of the best elucidations of the evangelist's text ever achieved" (p. x).

Overall I find this to be a very helpful commentary. While it is handicapped by missing out on nearly four and a half centuries of study on the fourth Gospel, it is very insightful and well worth having.

Unfortunately, the commentary is based on the NIV. Since Calvin wrote before even the KJV appeared, portions of the NIV text quite often seem out of place with his comments.

Calvin's comments on Jesus' evangelistic encounter with the woman at the well are excellent. He points out that when the woman left her water pot (4:28), this is John's way of saying that she believed in Christ (p. 106). While many modern commentators come to the same conclu-

sion, Calvin drew his conclusion without their help. (Maybe the moderns are dependent on Calvin!) In addition, Calvin takes this opportunity to speak of the zeal for evangelism she obviously manifested. He uses that to call all of his readers to share their faith as well.

Calvin shows that Jesus pointed out the woman's sinfulness and led her to see her need of salvation. Yet he does not, as some have tried to do today, suggest that Jesus asked her to give up her sinful behavior to gain eternal life.

His comments on John 10:10b are outstanding, and a bit enigmatic concerning the increase of the Spirit: "The greater progress anyone makes in faith, the closer he comes to fullness of life, because the Spirit, who is life, increases in him" (p. 256).

Also excellent are his comments on John 1:29; 3:36; 6:27-29; and 21:15-19.

I looked with interest at his comments on three problem texts on saving faith: John 2:23-25, 8:30-32ff., and 12:42-43. In all three cases I had mixed feelings. I was sorry to see that he concluded in each case that the faith in view was less than *saving* faith. However, I was happy in that he concluded that the faith was *real* faith. He simply felt in each case that the faith in question was faith in some aspect of Jesus (such as His being a prophet) and not in Christ as one's sole Savior from sin.

I was encouraged to see that even in places like these where I disagreed with Calvin, his tone was gracious, and, while he obviously held his views with conviction, there wasn't the sharp edge on his writing that is found in much modern Reformed writing, and also in some of Calvin's other works (he has little patience with Anabaptists and papists!)

I think that many would be quite surprised if Calvin were alive today. I believe many modern Calvinists would be surprised to see him come down on the Free Grace side of the Gospel debate. If he had the advantage of the modern discussion of these issues by men like Chafer, Ryrie, and Hodges, I think Calvin might be a full-fledged member of GES!

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Irving, TX

*The Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary: Volume 2: New Testament.* Edited by Kenneth L. Barker and John Kohlenberger III. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994. 1243 pp. Cloth, \$32.99.

This one-volume commentary on the NT is an abridgment of the 5 volumes of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* which cover the NT. As its title indicates, it is based on the New International Version of the Bible.

This work is significantly larger than Dallas Seminary's *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, NT edition, containing about 250 more pages.

A slight disappointment is that, unlike the unabridged 5-volume version, the text of Scripture is not printed in the commentary. While this saves a lot of space, it makes using the commentary more difficult.

With authors such as Donald Carson (Matthew), James Boice (Galatians), and Homer Kent, Jr. (Philippians), it should be no surprise that much of the exposition has a Lordship Salvation slant. Consider, for example, these sample remarks:

The determinative factor regarding who enters the kingdom is obedience to the Father's will (v. 19; cf. 12:50).

(p. 37, under Matt 7:21-23)

Paul adds a solemn warning, saying that those who habitually practice such things will never inherit God's kingdom. This does not mean that if Christians fall into an isolated lapse into sin through getting drunk or some such thing, they thereby lose their salvation. Rather, Paul is referring to a habitual continuation in sins of the sinful nature, and his point is that those who continually practice such sins give evidence of having never received God's Spirit. When he says that he warned the Galatians of this previously (presumably when he was among them), he reveals that his preaching was never what one might call mere evangelism but that it always contained a strong dose of the standard of morality expected from Christians.

(p. 740, under Gal 5:21)

Regeneration initiates believers into a life with obligations, one of which is to obey Jesus our Lord. Hence, working out salvation does not mean "working for" salvation, but making salvation operational. Justification must be followed by sanctification, by which the new life in Christ is consciously appropriated and demonstrated.

(p. 799, under Phil 2:12)

Faith that saves requires faith that proves itself in the deeds it produces . . . Faith that does not issue in regenerate actions is superficial and spurious.

(p. 1027, under James 2:14)

A person enrolled in the book of life by faith remains in it by faithfulness and can be erased only by disloyalty.

(p. 1149, under Rev 3:5)

I don't mean to imply that the exposition is *solely* from a Lordship Salvation perspective. Consider, for example, these comments:

Appearance before Christ's tribunal is the privilege of Christians. His judgment is concerned with the assessment of works and, indirectly, of character, not with the determination of one's eternal destiny. Judgment on the basis of works is not opposed to justification on the basis of faith. Delivered from "observing the law" (Rom 3:28), Christians are presently committed to "work produced by faith" (1 Thess 1:3). Not all verdicts on the Judgment Day, however, will be comforting (see comment on 1 Cor 3:15).

(p. 677, under 2 Cor 5:9-10)

Since future salvation has been so fully provided by Christ's finished work, it cannot be cancelled by lack of readiness. Moral preparedness or unpreparedness does not affect the issue one way or the other; believers are secure in their salvation.

(p. 867, under 1 Thess 5:10)

The future for Christians who diligently pursue holiness is very bright. They will "receive a rich welcome." They will not barely make it into the kingdom or "be saved . . . only as one escaping through the flames" (1 Cor 3:15); but each one will receive the Lord's "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt 25:21).

(p. 1066, under 2 Pet 1:11)

Overall I would rate this commentary as a helpful addition to the library of the discerning reader looking for a one-volume NT commentary.

**Robert N. Wilkin**

Associate Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Irving, TX

*Lordship Salvation: Some Crucial Questions and Answers. Including a Reply to "So Great Salvation" by Charles C. Ryrie and "Absolutely Free!" by Zane C. Hodges.* By Robert Lescelius. Asheville, NC: Revival Literature, 1992. 217 pp. Paper, \$6.99.

Add another book to the lordship side of the Lordship Salvation controversy. The balance of books is on their side, and debate would be greatly slanted were it not for the ongoing work of GES and this journal.

There is really only one thing new in this book by Robert Lescelius, a Baptist with a background in missions and teaching. He tries to be a bit more friendly, irenic, and sincere in his presentation of the debate. This is not to say that he forgoes imposing on Free Grace (a term he refuses to use, preferring "non-lordship") the usual charges of "easy believism," antinomianism, and departure from historic evangelical Christianity. He merely does it without the emotional rhetoric of some of the other writers.

What is interesting is that he quotes and defends John MacArthur, Jr. so rarely. This has the loud ring of a silent indictment. He does assert that there are those on the Lordship Salvation side who have "presented Christ's lordship to the point of works salvation" (p. 5). This book however, will not convince discerning readers that Lescelius has escaped his own indictment. How can he, when he says, "One must separate works from faith for salvation (Eph 2:8-9), but one must not divorce obedience from faith in salvation (Heb 5:9)" (p. 24)? Who separates works from obedience?!

What is most disappointing in the book is the lack of firsthand exegesis and interaction with the key biblical passages. The author is content to simply proof-text almost all of his arguments for lordship interpretations. This simply will not suffice, satisfy, or persuade at this point in the debate. After this, his second line of argumentation is to quote Reformed theologians. It should be no surprise that Lescelius equates evangelical Christianity with Reformed theology, since he quotes John Gerstner freely.

It is also not surprising that as the author embraces Lordship Salvation, he relinquishes assurance. Doubts can be *good*, we are told. And though assurance rests on three legs, the first being the promises of God, the second the witness of the Spirit, and the third the evidence of a holy life, "assurance increases through obedience to the Word" (p. 83). The oxymoronic notion of assurance by degrees only shows that *any* assurance ultimately rests on obedience and works in this system.

I would at least commend Lescelius for honesty. For example, he unabashedly says that "Grace and demand are not incompatible" (p. 68), a logical extension of his theology. (Shall we scratch Rom 4:4; 11:6; and Eph 2:8-9?) He is also honest enough to recognize the spectrum of Free Grace positions, and seems to represent them fairly enough, though his arguments against Ryrie and Hodges are predictable, and have all been heard and answered in the GES forum before.

I would not recommend this book because it offers no serious exegetical help and is little more than a catalog of quotations from notable Reformed theologians.

**Charles C. Bing**

Pastor

Burleson Bible Church

Burleson, TX

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*Growing Through Conflict.* By Erwin Lutzer. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992. 156 pp. Paper, \$5.99.

This short and easy-to-read Bible study book is from the Life-in-Perspective Series. As always, Dr. Lutzer captures the reader with his simple, clear, and illustrative style.

The book is meant to be read along with most of 1 and 2 Samuel on David's life. It accomplishes its purpose of helping the student understand and apply the scriptural truth about David's life. One of Lutzer's strengths, exhibited here as in his other books, is his ability to draw from the Bible and state clearly principles for application. These are very helpful and practical.

Since it was written at a popular level, the seasoned student may find this study of David a bit light most of the time. Also, the theme of conflict used to outline the book tends to rob this study of David's life from many of the *other* rich applications which could be drawn.

I recommend the book as an introductory study of David's life, or as a source of encouragement for those who need help in conflict. Pastors and teachers who are teaching through the life of David will also find here a rich source of illustrative and applicational material.

**Charles C. Bing**

Pastor

Burleson Bible Church

Burleson, TX

*Leadershift*. By Doug Murren. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994. 228 pp. Cloth, \$15.99.

Doug Murren is a self-proclaimed “third-wave charismatic” who believes that all the sign gifts (such as prophecy) are active today. He has seen his church in Kirkland, Washington grow from just a few members to several thousand in less than 15 years.

On the surface, Murren seems to discuss a subject of great merit: churches definitely need more and better leaders. And, of course, being a leader in 1995 requires some different skills and gifts than in the past. However, shortly into the first chapter, the reader will discover that this is merely another in the barrage of books about the “seeker-sensitive” model of church growth.

The author claims that “the underlying purpose of the book is to help churches reach lost and hurting people—it is a book about evangelism” (p. 8). Such a statement immediately ignites the interest of anyone committed to the clear proclamation of the Gospel. Unfortunately, this “book about evangelism” fails to discuss effective ways to communicate the Gospel. Rather it presents chapter after chapter about paradigm changes and how to attract the unchurched into the worship service.

Largely anecdotal in nature, Murren’s discussion of paradigms is worthy of some positive critique. He has a firm grasp on the nature of change and how to manage change. He correctly concludes, “The most effective among us will be those who can communicate a vision and inspire others to work toward it” (p. 53).

The complaint this reviewer has with *Leadershift* is that this method of church growth compromises sound doctrine for the sake of packed pews. For example, Murren once invited an avowed non-Christian to preach to his congregation of 4,000 people during a worship service (p. 47). His rationale for inviting Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein to preach: “I had him here to illustrate the paradigm of love” (p. 48). It seems that Murren hoped that by reaching out to Eckstein and sharing his pulpit with him, he might eventually win him to the Lord. This method of evangelism is not only unusual, it neglects the needs of the congregation who had gathered to hear a Spirit-filled message from the Word of God.

In his analysis of the unchurched (p. 58), the author states, “They don’t have a concept of final authority . . . The concept of trusting the Bible as infallible is foreign to most modern ears.” Therefore, he says, “Communicators must take their listeners through a logical process and allow them to join in the process of making a conclusion” (p. 58). This is a



dangerous approach to take. Whether or not the world acknowledges that God's Word is the truth doesn't change the fact that it *is* the Truth. As someone has said, "We don't need to argue over how sharp the sword of God's Word is . . . we just need to use it!"

**J.B. Hixson**

Pastor

Tremont Baptist Church

Tremont, IL

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*The Population of Heaven: A Biblical Response to the Inclusivist Position on Who Will Be Saved.* By Ramesh P. Richard. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994. 170 pp. Paper, \$9.99.

*The Population of Heaven* is an excellent response to the inclusivist positions of Clark Pinnock and John Sanders.

According to inclusivism, people don't need to know anything about Christ to be saved. While inclusivists like Pinnock and Sanders say that people are saved by faith, they do *not* believe that the content of that faith must be Christ. Faith in Allah, Vishnu, or any god or gods can save, as long as the faith is sincere.

Dr. Richard evaluates the philosophical presuppositions of inclusivism and then compares this position with relevant biblical texts. He shows that inclusivism does not take into account the radically different doctrines of God in the various religions, including various monotheistic, pantheistic, and deistic ones.

The author also shows that inclusivism emphasizes the love of God but doesn't even discuss the judgment passages in the Bible. God does condemn the content of other religions and gives specific content that must be believed in order to be rightly related to Him. Richard has an especially good section on passages which show that to be saved people must specifically trust in the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g., Acts 4:12; 10:43; John 3:16; and 14:6).

This is an excellent critique of pluralism from an evangelical perspective and I highly recommend it.

**R. Michael Duffy**

Missionary

The Hague

Netherlands



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## PERIODICAL REVIEWS

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“He Saved Others; He Cannot Save Himself: A Literary-Critical Perspective on the Markan Miracles,” Frank J. Matera, *Interpretation*, January 1993, pp. 15-26.

In this article, a Roman Catholic scholar examines the miracles of the Gospel of Mark using the literary-critical method. In harmony with literary criticism, he doesn't deny the historicity of Mark, but neither does he affirm it. Mark is merely treated as a unified narrative with thematic developments.

According to Matera, Mark describes Jesus' preaching as summoning people to faith and repentance. The miracle narratives do the same. By describing Jesus' healings and exorcisms, Mark presents Jesus' miraculous activities in a way that proclaims the imminent kingdom and calls people to reform their lives. This is accomplished by Mark's narrative plot: resistance to Jesus' teaching and ministry. Two reactions inevitably accompany Jesus' miracles. Since miracles are acts of salvation, those who experience His power to heal are those who repent and believe (cf. 2:5; 5:34; 10:32; etc.). But resistance to Jesus' miracles demonstrates a lack of faith and repentance. So conflict arises.

Mark's eighteen miracles are grouped by Matera into four categories. (1) Five miracles (1:21-3:6) follow Jesus' pronouncement that the kingdom is near (1:15). These healings, together with summary descriptions of Jesus' miracles in all of Galilee, allow Mark to depict Jesus' preaching in terms of His miraculous activities. (2) Four miracles describe Jesus' authority over nature, demons, sickness, and death (4:35-5:43). By avoiding intervening material, Mark ties these miracles to the parable discourse (4:1-34) and the concept of the inbreaking kingdom. (3) Six miracles (6:7-8:26) highlight the ongoing plot of conflict. Mark makes it obvious that many in the crowd have not understood Jesus' messianic office and have not repented. (4) Three miracles follow the pivotal confession of Peter in 8:27-30. Here miracles portray the need to suffer—a new emphasis in light of Jesus' imminent death.

The article lacks clear definitions of terms. What is meant by *kingdom*, *repentance*, and *salvation*? No distinction is ever made between kinds of *salvation*. In Mark, the word *salvation/saved* is used of both

physical and spiritual healing. While these may occur simultaneously, they are not identical.

Further, the author interchanges *repentance* with the need for people to *change and reform their lives* (pp. 16, 25). If miracles are acts of salvation which show people have repented and believed, then eternal life is dependent on faith *and a reformed life*. What could be further from biblical truth?

This article has several profitable facets. Evangelicals are sometimes guilty of perceiving the miracles of Jesus as mere acts of compassion. But as Matera shows, Mark inseparably links Jesus' miracles with His proclamation of the kingdom. Also, he rightly understands that in Mark the faith associated with miracles is not problematic or inferior. Instead, when confronted with Jesus' miracles, it's the lack of faith that is problematic. Unfortunately, lordship theology often suggests that belief based on Jesus' miracles is evidence of a "false faith."

**John F. Hart**

Professor of Bible  
Moody Bible Institute  
Chicago, IL

**"Receiving the Kingdom of God as a Child: Children and Riches in Luke 18:15ff.,"** Stephen Fowl, *New Testament Studies*, January 1993, pp. 153-58.

In Luke 18:15-17 children being brought to Jesus are obstructed by the disciples. In Jesus' corrective, He teaches that "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child will not enter it" (v 17). Most commentators depend on 18:14 ("I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted") and Matthew 18:4 ("Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven") for their interpretation of Luke's record of Jesus' saying.

Fowl objects, suggesting that Luke 18:15ff. begins a new unit of material. Therefore, the statement about humility in v 14 should not be used to interpret v 17. Instead, the stories of the rich young ruler and the disciples' reaction (18:18-30), the blind man near Jericho (18:35-43), and Zacchaeus (19:1-10) are the interpretive keys. As proofs of the new break at 18:15, Fowl argues that (1) 18:1-14 is tied to the previous context by

the subject of the Second Coming; and (2) the humility of 18:14 is a matured reflection of one's own sinfulness as illustrated in the tax collector—obviously not a childlike virtue.

After examining the four subsequent incidents to 18:17, Fowl conjectures that the unifying element is the single-minded abandonment of anything that prevents one from finding salvation. Therefore, 18:17 means that, as a child pursues an affection with single-minded vigor, so must those who seek eternal life. The rich man exemplifies the failure of such a single-minded pursuit. He is unwilling to do the one thing he lacked for entrance into life: sell all his goods and give to the poor. In contrast, the disciples have abandoned their possessions to follow Christ, the blind man persistently cries out despite public disapproval, and Zacchaeus readily gives away his riches. Each of these receives salvation (18:30; 18:42; 19:9).

Contrary to the author's logic, many details in 18:1-14 lead up to 18:15ff. and make a decisive break at 18:15 impossible. Both the story of the importunate widow who sought legal protection (18:1-8) and the unpretentious tax collector (18:9-14) express dependence (faith) on a judge/God. The story of the widow climaxes with the question about finding faith on the earth (18:8). The parable of the tax collector begins by addressing those who had faith in their own righteousness (v 9), did not humble themselves, and therefore were not justified as was the tax collector (vv 13-14). Finally, contrary to Fowl, the one thing the rich man lacked (v 22) was faith, i.e., childlike humility that depends on God to be justified (cf. Mark 10:24, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!"). Fowl's contextual analysis is not convincing.

Soteriological issues are also obscured. While the rich man failed to give away all his possessions, Zacchaeus promised to give away only *half* of his. Does half constitute enough to save him? Why not all? The justified tax collector (presumably rich like Zacchaeus) gave away nothing! Neither did the blind man. Only his faith is said to have healed (saved) him.

The subject of humility in Luke 18:14 can indeed be used to interpret the childlike reception of the kingdom in 18:15-17. As a child humbly depends on others, by faith we humbly depend on Christ for our eternal destiny: "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling."

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

“Can Fallen Leaders Be Restored to Leadership?”, Jay E. Smith, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October–December 1994, pp. 455–80.

Illinois Bible teacher Jay Smith has written a long, heavily annotated and minutely researched article to help answer the question posed in the title. He sees “the current epidemic of sexual immorality among Christian leaders” as sharply dividing public opinion.

Types of sin, different lengths of time involved, and so forth are not included. “Leaders” are generally pastors, overseers, bishops, and elders. Footnote 3 is slightly off in that it equates “pastor” with the other three. Granted, in the NT (but not later, generally), overseers, bishops, and elders are “the same office-holder.” *Pastor*, a word used very seldom in the church sense (Eph 4:11) in the NT, is actually a *spiritual gift*, which may or may not be possessed by every elder-overseer.

Smith surveys OT rules on moral standards for priests, but admits these do not really parallel NT church leaders except in general, moral uses. Five sexual sins got the *death* penalty by OT law: adultery, rape, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality (p. 477, n. 93). This at least shows how bad these sins are among religious leaders.

The apostle Paul’s statement that sins other than sexual immorality are committed “outside the body” (1 Cor 6:18), in light of drunkenness, murder, drugs, etc., has proved difficult to all commentators. Smith explains in detail that this may actually be a “slogan” of the Corinthians themselves that Paul is *answering*. There are several Corinthian phrases that Paul is answering, and this section of Smith’s article is well worth studying.

A major problem in restoration of high-profile leaders who have slipped morally, is that the *outside world* is often unwilling to *ever* forgive Christians or the churches they represent. Many church people also are slow to accept one who has fallen in the area of sex.

Since the NT doesn’t give a hard-and-fast answer to the issue (does Gal 6:1 refer to leaders?), we can’t be too dogmatic.

This article is thorough and fair-minded. I recommend it to all those who need to help decide cases of leaders who slip up in the area of morality.

The writer ends with this helpful summary:

Does God then forbid the restoration of fallen leaders? No. Does He leave open the possibility? Yes. Does that possibility look promising? Yes and no. If both the life and reputation of the fallen elder can be rehabilitated, his prospects for restoration are promising. However,

rehabilitating his reputation, not to mention his life, will be particularly difficult, for squandering one's reputation is "a snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:7), and he does not yield up his prey easily.

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*

Dallas, TX

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**"Why Jesus' Disciples Wouldn't Wash Their Hands,"** John Ortberg, *Christianity Today*, August 15, 1994, pp. 26-28.

In this short article Ortberg makes a distinction between what he calls the "boundary-oriented approach" to the spiritual life and the "centered approach" (p. 26). He favors the latter. In his view, Christians tend to place too much emphasis on legalistic, inconsequential standards rather than focusing on "what is at the heart of God's will for human life" (p. 28).

What many would call *moral standards*, Ortberg argues, are really "boundary markers" (p. 27). These boundary markers exclude those outside the body of Christ who may disagree with them. The author believes we need to proclaim God's will regarding social issues such as homosexuality, yet not at the risk of alienating, excluding, or offending homosexuals. The author condemns, for example, anti-gay-rights bumper stickers that read, "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve" (p. 27). Such a placard is called by Ortberg a "boundary marker."

Ortberg says that another name for boundary markers is "legalism" (p. 27). It would seem, therefore, that he would classify speaking out against homosexuality and other forms of immorality as legalism. This reasoning is hard to follow. The boundary marker approach to the spiritual life creates a spirit of exclusivism, says Ortberg. It develops in us a rationale of all or nothing at all. What the Church really needs, according to the author, is believers who are willing to orient themselves away from these fringe issues and toward the center.

The irony in Ortberg's philosophy is seen when he applies it to saving faith. It would seem that someone who minimizes moral standards would hardly subscribe to works salvation. Yet, in reality, Ortberg takes Lordship Salvation to an extreme: "To a large extent, we have replaced 'Follow me' with 'Are you clear about how to get into heaven when you die?' The inevitable consequence is that 'following' is considered desir-

able but optional.” According to Ortberg, the boundary-oriented approach leads us to speak in terms of the “minimal requirements for getting into heaven,” rather than in terms of the ultimate requirement: “following Christ” (p. 28).

Clearly this author confuses discipleship and salvation. The real issue in salvation is “How do you get to heaven?” In Scripture the answer to that question is crystal clear. Jesus says in John 6:47, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.” Contrary to Ortberg’s philosophy, salvation *is* a boundary issue. Those on one side of the boundary are going to heaven and those on the other side of the boundary are going to hell. Furthermore, according to the Bible, *that boundary is faith*.

**J.B. Hixson**

Pastor

Tremont Baptist Church

Tremont, IL



## A HYMN OF GRACE

ARTHUR L. FARSTAD

Editor

and

FRANCES A. MOSHER

Pianist, Christ Congregation

Dallas, Texas

# LORD, WITH GLOWING HEART I'D PRAISE THEE

Lord, with glowing heart I'd praise Thee  
For the bliss Thy love bestows,  
For the pard'ning grace that saves me,  
And the peace that from it flows:  
Help, O God, my weak endeavor;  
This dull soul to rapture raise;  
Thou must light the flame, or never  
Can my love be warmed to praise.

Praise, my soul, the God that sought thee,  
Wretched wand'rer, far astray;  
Found thee lost, and kindly brought thee  
From the paths of death away:  
Praise with love's devoutest feeling,  
Him who saw thy guiltborn fear,  
And, the light of hope revealing,  
Bade the blood-stained cross appear.

Praise thy Saviour God that drew thee  
To that cross, new life to give,  
Held a blood-sealed pardon to thee,  
Bade thee look to Him and live:  
Praise the grace whose threats alarmed thee,  
Roused thee from thy fatal ease,  
Praise the grace whose promise warmed thee,  
Praise the grace that whispered peace.

Lord, this bosom's ardent feeling  
 Vainly would my lips express:  
 Low before Thy footstool kneeling,  
 Deign thy suppliant's pray'r to bless:  
 Let Thy love, my soul's chief treasure,  
 Love's pure flame within me raise;  
 And, since words can never measure,  
 Let my life show forth Thy praise. Amen.

—Francis Scott Key (1779-1843)

## I

Two trends in contemporary North American culture that distress many conservative people, especially Christians, are “dumbing down” and “de-christianization.”

“Dumbing down,” as the name suggests, is the lowering of standards in speech, language, literature, education, songs, and other areas of life. Many non-Christians are also appalled at what seems like a sellout of our great cultural and linguistic heritage.

Dechristianization, with its overemphasis on “pluralism” and the glorification of all cultures that are *non-Christian*, is a self-explanatory term. Much of our mass media and even a great deal of the government seem bent (would “hell-bent” in its literal, not slang usage, be too strong?) on playing down, distorting, misrepresenting, ignoring, or totally dismissing the deep Christian roots and fruits of our American, British, and Canadian cultures. History is being re-written (or omitted) where it used to show the great debt we all owe to Christian—and especially Protestant and biblical—ideas and writings.

One specific attack has been an attempt to replace the American national anthem with something else. The excuse is that it is “too hard to sing.” Actually, the tune “To Anacreon in Heaven,” was originally a popular drinking song attributed to British composer John Stafford Smith (1750-1836).<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the “politically incorrect” fourth and last stanza is a more likely reason, with its triple mention of the Deity (emphasis supplied):

<sup>1</sup> “Star-Spangled Banner,” in *Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia*, Editor-in-Chief Joseph Laffan Morse (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1973), 22:195.

- IV. O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand  
 Between their lov'd homes and the war's desolation!  
 Blest with vict'ry and peace  
 may the *heav'n*-rescued land  
 Praise the *Power* that hath made and preserv'd us  
 a nation!  
 Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
 And this be our motto: "In *God* is our trust!"  
 And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
 O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

First printed as a handbill and then in a Baltimore newspaper, Francis Scott Key's song became popular and was finally officially recognized as the U.S. national anthem on March 3, 1931.

In reading a hymn a day in my quiet time, I found that Mr. Key had written a hymn in 1817 (perhaps a poem made into a hymn) that was included in my current devotional hymnary.<sup>2</sup>

Francis Scott Key is one of thousands of active Christians who brighten our history with their lives and testimonies. Key, a Maryland-born lawyer and poet, while detained aboard a British frigate during the War of 1812, witnessed the British bombardment of Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor.

At daybreak the gifted writer penned his now-famous words. As the first light dawned he saw whipping in the breeze the "star-spangled banner"—"our flag was still there." This flag is now in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, and the song it inspired is still in the hearts of millions of Key's loyal countrymen.

Francis Scott Key was no nominal Christian. An Episcopalian Sunday school teacher in the days when that denomination was much more biblically oriented on the whole than today, he went on to become the Secretary of the American Sunday School Union.

Key also wrote the essay, *The Power of Literature and Its Connection with Religion* (1834), and a book simply called *Poems*, published in 1857, 14 years after his death.

We thought our readers would enjoy reading another example from the pen of this great national figure.

<sup>2</sup> *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1949), Hymn #315.

## II

In considering God's grace in the salvation of sinful man, one is likely first to focus on the cross-work of Christ in paying the penalty our sin deserves, and on the fact that we become beneficiaries of that payment when we look to Christ in simple faith, apart from any work or merit of our own. This seems to be what Francis Scott Key has in mind in the first stanza's phrase, ". . . the pard'ning grace that saves me," and the third stanza's, "Held a blood-sealed pardon to thee, Bade thee look to Him and live." However, the hymn also focuses, in the second and third stanzas, on God's gracious initiative in seeking us out and drawing us to become recipients of His grace. Romans 5:8 comes to mind: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The hymnal in which we found "Lord, with Glowing Heart I'd Praise Thee" sets the poem to the tune<sup>3</sup> "Fabem," composed by John H. Wilcox in 1849. This lovely tune fits the words quite well, but may be unfamiliar to many. Some more likely familiar tunes which would fit the poem well are "Hymn to Joy" ("Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee") by Beethoven, "Austrian Hymn" ("Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken") by Franz Joseph Haydn, "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," by Robert Lowry, "Beecher" ("Love Divine, All Loves Excelling") by Zundel, and "Hyfrydol" ("Praise the Lord! Ye Heavens, Adore Him") by Rowland Prichard.

<sup>3</sup> The meter is 8.7.8.7 doubled.

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