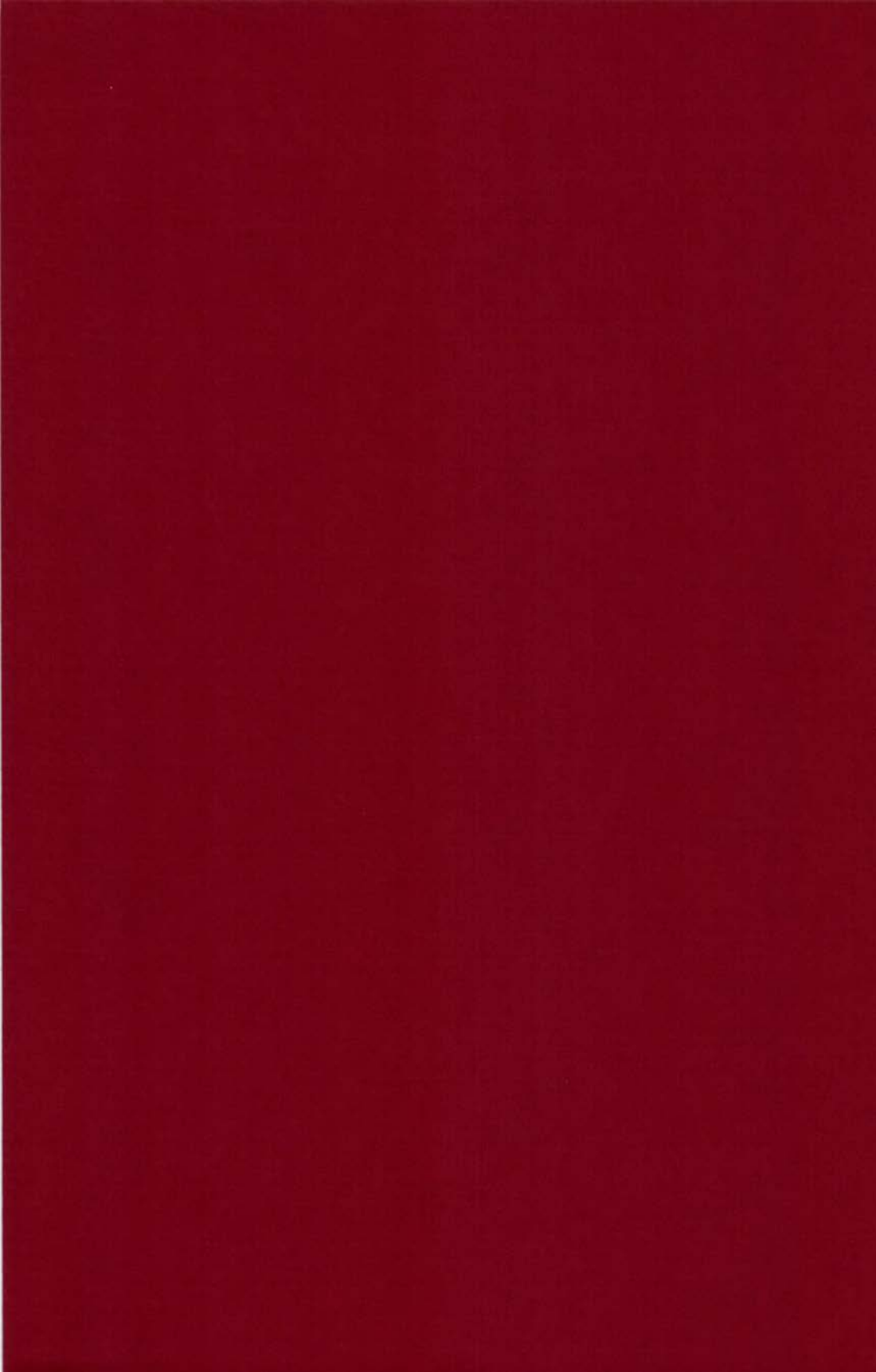


Journal of the
GRACE
Evangelical Society

"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"



Journal of the GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY

"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"

VOLUME 8	Autumn 1995	NUMBER 15
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A Dangerous Book or a Faulty Review? A Rejoinder to Robert Wilkin's Critique of <i>A House United</i> ? WILLIAM D. WATKINS	3-23
A Surrejoinder to William D. Watkins's Rejoinder to My Critique of <i>A House United</i> ? ROBERT N. WILKIN	25-37
The Faith of Demons: James 2:19 JOHN F. HART	39-54
Soteriological Implications of Five-Point Calvinism PHILIP F. CONGDON	55-68
A Voice from the Past: The True Grace of God in Which You Stand J. N. DARBY	69-73
Book Reviews	75-90
Periodical Reviews	91-95
A Hymn of Grace: Rock of Ages FRANCES A. MOSHER	97-99
Books Received	101-103

Journal of the
GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY
Published Semiannually by GES

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Journal subscriptions, renewals, and changes of address should be sent to the Grace Evangelical Society, P.O. Box 167128, Irving, TX 75016-7128. Subscription Rates: single copy, \$7.50 (U.S.); 1 year, \$15.00; 2 years, \$28.00; 3 years, \$39.00; 4 years, \$48.00. Members of GES receive the Journal at no additional charge beyond the membership dues of \$15.00 (\$10.00 for active full-time student members).

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A Dangerous Book or a Faulty Review? A Rejoinder to Robert Wilkin's Critique of *A HOUSE UNITED*?

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Abraham Lincoln once said, "He has a right to criticize, who has a heart to help."¹ As I read Robert Wilkin's review² of Keith Fournier's book *A House United? Evangelicals and Catholics Together-A Winning Alliance for the 21st Century*,³ a book I had a hand in producing, I had no doubt that Wilkin's intentions were good. He clearly believed that this book (from here on referred to as *AHU*) presented an unbiblical view of the Gospel, clothed it in Christian-looking garb, and tried to present it as biblical to its readers. This, he believed, made the message of *AHU* "dangerous," especially to "untaught believers" and others not "well-grounded in the Scriptures" (29). Despite, however, Wilkin's heart to help, I believe his head missed the mark, thereby leaving his readers with little help in assessing the message of *AHU* and its value for the Body of Christ.

Before I move to my rejoinder of his review essay, I would like to thank him for giving me the opportunity in this journal to respond to his comments. Dialogue, particularly among God's people, is imperative if we ever hope to learn what we hold in common and what we differ

¹ Abraham Lincoln, as quoted in *The Harper Book of Quotations*, 3rd ed., ed. Robert I. Fitzhenry (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 115.

² Robert N. Wilkin, "A Critique of Keith A. Fournier's *A House United? Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A Winning Alliance for the 21st Century*," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Spring 1995): 11-29. From this point forward, page references to this review article will be cited in parentheses in the main body of the text.

³ Keith A. Fournier with William D. Watkins (Colorado Springs: NavPress/Liberty, Life and Family, 1994).

on and why.⁴ Too often we resort to diatribes based more on suspicion, misinformation, and fear than careful research, sound reasoning, and a recognition of the value and dignity of all human beings as creatures made as God's image-bearers. As the executive director of the Grace Evangelical Society, Robert Wilkin, at least with me, has chosen to permit dialogue—Christian to Christian. For that I am grateful.

Now to my response.

I. Contributions

To his credit, Wilkin strives to commend *AHU* in whatever ways he believes he can. He praises the book's title and packaging, the propriety of including in an appendix the text of the 1992 accord "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," the book's irenic spirit, and Fournier's demeanor, social activism, unswerving commitment to "conservative morality," and "drive to make a difference with his life" (12). He concludes, and accurately, that Keith Fournier comes across in the book as a person who would give Wilkin's review "serious consideration" (12).⁵

Furthermore, Wilkin displays a desire to critique *AHU* rationally, biblically, and theologically. He seeks to avoid emotionalism and personal attacks.

⁴ Dialogue designed to seek understanding and reconciliation has been occurring between Christians of various confessions for quite some time. Some helpful resources on the content and fruit of such discussions are: Joseph A. Burgess and Jeffrey Gros, eds., *Growing Consensus: Church Dialogues in the United States, 1962-1991* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995); John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias, eds., *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992); H. George Anderson and James R. Crumley, Jr., eds., *Promoting Unity: Themes in Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989); George Carey, *A Tale of Two Churches: Can Protestants and Catholics Get Together?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985); the now eight-volume series *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965-1992); Geoffrey Wainwright, *The Ecumenical Moment: Crisis and Opportunity for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983).

⁵ After Keith Fournier read Wilkin's review of *AHU*, he called me on 31 July 1995 and told me he was glad Wilkin had attempted to interact intelligently with the book. He was doubtful he would have the opportunity to write a rejoinder due to his busy schedule, but he thought the review was worthy of a response. It was then that I told him I had already begun work on a rejoinder.

Wilkin is also forthright about expressing and examining his deepest concern about *AHU*: its presentation of the Gospel. He believes that what *AHU* teaches about salvation is unbiblical because it corresponds to the Roman Catholic viewpoint. Therefore this is the issue on which he focuses, considering other matters less important than this one.

Once again, I commend Wilkin for these aspects of his review.

II. Criticisms

With these points made, I would like to express the major problems I have with Wilkin's review. I have no intention of taking the article paragraph by paragraph, point by point, and detailing every jot and tittle with which I disagree. This rejoinder would be too long and tedious if I did that. Neither do I plan to defend the book's author, Keith Fournier, and all his beliefs. For example, I will not address Wilkin's objections regarding Fournier's self-ascribed status as an *evangelical* Christian (16-18, 24), even though I believe his objections can be adequately answered. Nor will I respond to his assertion that Fournier is not a theologian (a conclusion, I suspect, built on a very narrow definition of *theologian*⁶). Fournier is quite capable of handling such matters on his own. Rather, my objective is twofold: (1) point out two errors Wilkin makes about me, and (2) respond to five major criticisms Wilkin makes of *AHU*.

A. Errors of a Personal Nature

1. Co-author or Writer?

Wilkin mistakenly refers to me as the "co-author" of *AHU* (28). If I were a co-author, the word *and* would be found between Fournier's name and mine on the book's front cover, title page, and copyright page, but such is not found. Rather, *with* is used to link our names. The copy on the cover and title page reads "Keith A. Fournier with William D. Watkins," and the copyright page specifies that the book is copyrighted in Fournier's name only. These are common ways in which the publishing industry indicates authors and writers.

Another indication of Fournier's sole authorship is his use of the first-person pronoun *I* when referring to himself. He never uses *we* in a context that would indicate the presence of another author.

⁶ See R. C. Sproul's thoughts on this matter in his essay "Right Now Counts Forever," in *The Necessity of Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. John Jefferson Davis (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 15-18.

In addition, when Fournier passes out acknowledgments, he refers to me as "my writing partner" who saw "this book through its many editions, helping me make its truths come alive."⁷ In other words, I helped the author write his book. The book's arguments, viewpoints, and outline are largely his. I made some contributions in these areas and facilitated the writing and editing of the entire book, but Fournier had to approve everything because the book is his from beginning to end.

My participation as writer does not mean that I agree with every position or argument presented in the book (though I do, in fact, agree with much of it). In my now sixteen years in the publishing industry, I have worked with many authors who have expressed perspectives with which I disagree. On the other hand, in all cases the authors were Christians who embraced one of the many traditions within the realm of Christian orthodoxy.⁸ Some of these traditions were Presbyterian, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Evangelical Free, Baptist, United Church of Christ, independent Bible, Bible Fellowship, Nazarene, Berean, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Foursquare Gospel, Evangelical Congregational, Evangelical Covenant, Mennonite, fundamentalist, pentecostal, dispensational, Anglican, Episcopalian, Eastern Orthodox, and, yes, Roman Catholic. While working with adherents of these various traditions, I have learned a great deal about the breadth of Christian belief and practice, and I have grown to appreciate the church's diversity in spiritual unity.

Because I believe these traditions are rooted in orthodoxy despite differences between them on significant theological and ecclesiastical issues, I have no problem working with believers from these traditions, including working with Keith Fournier, whom I also count as a friend and know to be an untiring Christian advocate for the Judeo-Christian world view.

⁷ *AHU*, 6.

⁸ By *Christian orthodoxy* I mean the body of agreed-upon Christian belief as articulated in the creedal statements that came out of the church's first eight (indeed, only) ecumenical councils: the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, the first Council of Nicaea (AD 325), the Council of Ephesus (AD 431), the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), the second Council of Constantinople (AD 553), the third Council of Constantinople (AD 680), and the second Council of Nicaea (AD 787). Interestingly enough, there has yet to be an ecumenical council on the key soteriological issues that took center stage during the Protestant Reformation. This means that, unlike such doctrines as the Trinity and the Incarnation, many important issues concerning the doctrine of salvation are still unsettled in the church as a whole.

2. Confused Protestant?

As evidence for his claim that “It is possible for a saved individual to convert to Catholicism,” Wilkin refers to me. He states, “I am convinced that . . . Bill Watkins . . . is in danger of doing that” (28). To support his conviction, he quotes portions of a September 1994 letter I wrote about my interest in Catholicism (28, fn. 36), then he concludes, “Christians can become confused and can join groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church, that believe and teach a false gospel” (28). I readily admit Wilkin is right about two things: I have been saved by the grace of God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ; and saved people can—and indeed do—convert to Catholicism. On the other counts, however, Wilkin is mistaken.

First, Wilkin wrongly assumes that my letter was meant for public disbursement. It was, as he says, “an open letter” (28, fn. 36), but he fails to note that I wrote it as “an open letter to my friends and to those of you who have influenced me the most.”⁹ I even opened my letter with the words “Dear Friend.” This should have clearly indicated to Wilkin, to whom I never sent a copy of this letter, that this letter was personal. While I am not embarrassed by the public dissemination of my letter, due to its personal nature Wilkin should have sought my permission to publish any comments from it.¹⁰

Second, Wilkin misrepresents what I said in my letter by failing to set the quoted comments in their proper and explicit context. I wrote this piece of correspondence to let my friends know where I was on my spiritual journey and to dispel a rumor that I had “decided to become a Roman Catholic.” I denied I had become a member of the Roman Catholic Church, and I even mentioned several aspects of Catholic thought with which I still had “lingering questions,” among which were some matters related to “soteriology.” From here I explained my draw to Catholicism and detailed some of my struggles with Protestant Reformed thought. It was in this context that I wrote, “At this point, I know I am neither Calvinistic nor Lutheran in my doctrinal bent. In some respects I find myself closer to Wesleyanism. 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 than as

⁹ William D. Watkins, personal correspondence dated 24 September 1994.

¹⁰ To Wilkin’s credit, when I confronted him with this matter over the telephone, he apologized, stating that he thought my letter was an open letter to the public. He further noted that he would take editorial steps to ensure such a breach of privacy does not occur in the future.

an evangelical Protestant, though I do not disparage the latter label for myself or for others.”¹¹

Therefore, my letter was meant to convey that I was not a Roman Catholic, that I still considered myself an evangelical Protestant (more Wesleyan than Calvinistic or Lutheran), and that I most firmly identified with pre-Reformation Christianity—what I call “classical Christianity.” While I did not rule out becoming Roman Catholic sometime during my journey with God, I made it clear that I was not a Catholic and that I had many questions about Catholicism to address before I could ever become Catholic.

The fact that Wilkin failed to come to this conclusion shows his application of an impoverished hermeneutic and his acquiescence to the logical fallacy of suppressed evidence. Concerning the latter point, logician Howard Kahane writes, “Anyone who conceals evidence unfavorable to his own position is guilty of the fallacy of suppressed evidence.”¹² Wilkin committed this fallacy when he failed to provide his readers with the full context of my letter. For if he had presented my comments in their context, he would have been unable to validate his point.

In a follow-up letter to my friends dated 25 April 1995, I provided this update:

I just wanted you to know that some of the doctrinal barriers that have held me back from becoming Roman Catholic are still insurmountable to me and will likely remain so. It is not that I believe that the theological differences between Catholicism and Protestantism denote differences between heresy and orthodoxy. In this I take issue with many Catholic and Protestant apologists and theologians. Rather, I see many of the differences are related to different answers given to two central questions: How far can exegetical and theological conclusions be rightly extended? And what role will sources and disciplines outside of biblical exegesis be allowed to play in discovering truth, especially as it is revealed in holy writ?

The remainder of this letter briefly addressed each of these questions, then ended by saying, “While some of my disagreements with Catholicism remain, my respect and admiration for the Catholic tradition have deepened considerably. One day believers of all traditions and confes-

¹¹ Watkins, personal correspondence dated 24 September 1994.

¹² Howard Kahane, *Logic and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1973), 233. The bold-face type was omitted from the words *suppressed evidence*.

sions will stand before their common Savior together, visibly united forever. I look forward to that day, and I pray the Lord will use me on this side of heaven to help heal the divisions in His Body. That healing process begins with me—with each of us who claim Christ as our Savior and Lord.”

While my first letter does not give Wilkin adequate evidence to support his conviction that I was allegedly teetering on the precipice of becoming Roman Catholic, my second letter certainly undermines his conclusion.¹³ Hence both documents, taken together or separately, show that Wilkin’s interpretation is faulty.

Third, Wilkin implies I am among those “confused” Christians who sometimes join churches that “teach a false gospel” (28). Well, if I am confused, and I do not grant that I am, then my confusion is not due to a lack of information, education, or association in theologically conservative Christian circles, particularly evangelical Protestant ones. I have twenty years of formal education (with concentrations in systematic theology, philosophy, history, comparative religions, ethics, music, and biblical studies), fourteen years of additional study on my own (particularly in the areas of philosophy, theology, ethics, public-policy concerns, apologetics, spirituality, and biblical studies), twenty-three years of walking with God and serving Him in Christian ministry (e.g., teaching, speaking, debating, counseling, evangelizing, preaching, defending the faith, writing, editing, consulting), and sixteen years of Christian publishing experience, which have included the publication of about eighty pieces of my own work (e.g., popular articles, book reviews, scholarly essays, trade and academic books, and Bible study guides).

Moreover, I have spent sixteen years studying Catholic thought, steeping myself mostly in primary sources. Among the great Catholic thinkers from the past I have read are Tertullian, Augustine, Anselm, Athanasius, Bonaventure, Erasmus, and especially Thomas Aquinas. Some of the many contemporary Catholic scholars I have delved into are E. L. Mascall, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Jacques Maritain, Peter Kreeft,

¹³ I mentioned the existence of this second letter to Wilkin over the telephone during the last week of July 1995, and he indicated to me that he knew nothing about it. Of course, if Wilkin had contacted me to get permission to quote from my first letter, I could have told him then that he had arrived at a false conclusion concerning my relationship to Catholicism. And if my second letter had been written by that time, I could have forwarded a copy to him as further substantiation of my position. The bottom-line is that Wilkin could have reached me to verify or falsify his conclusion at any time, but he never did.

Richard John Neuhaus, Frederick Copleston, Etienne Gilson, Raymond E. Brown, Avery Dulles, Josef Pieper, Hugo Rahner, and Pope John Paul II. I have also pondered many of Catholicism's official statements of faith, including the declarations of the Council of Trent, the Vatican Council II, and the newly released *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.¹⁴ And I have worked alongside, dialogued with, and grown close to several committed Catholics. Through all of this I have attempted to understand Catholicism through Catholic eyes, not Protestant ones. Some critics may say this approach has blurred my vision. I would respond that it has cleared my sight. It is the same type of approach that most believing Protestants (and believing Catholics) strive to apply to Scripture—namely, interpreting the biblical text in light of its milieu and what the biblical writers actually said and believed, rather than interpreting it through the times, wishes, and beliefs of the exegete.

Wilkin apparently believes that my state of mind or rationale of belief or choices of association are confused. His justification for this conclusion amounts to his interpretation of my September 1994 letter. Since his interpretation is incorrect, he needs to muster more evidence to substantiate his implication. Of course, if he does not mean to suggest that I am confused, I would appreciate a statement to that effect.

Fourth, if I, or anyone else, became Roman Catholic, I would not describe that as a dangerous situation. Contrary to Wilkin, I have concluded from my studies that Roman Catholicism does not teach a "false gospel" (28). And I do not believe that the book *AHU* does either. (I will have more to say about this later.) If I thought that it did, I would not have participated in the project. Indeed, Fournier would not have either.

B. Responses to Five Major Criticisms

Here I would like to focus on five charges Wilkin makes against *AHU* and provide my answers to them.

1. *AHU* "never really supports its case from Scripture at all" (13).

Wilkin gives six arguments in support of this claim.

His first two arguments revolve around the citation of Bible verses. He seems perturbed that most "references to verses" are given in endnotes where "most readers will not read" them (13). Then, when references are given, sometimes ten or more passages are "cited at once," which "means that the author rarely even attempts to support his points

¹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New Hope, KY: St. Martin de Porres Community, 1994).

with the Word of God" (13). This is a strange conclusion indeed. If citing references to Scripture does not count as supporting one's points by the Word of God, then what does? This practice may not provide as full a support as detailing for readers the basis for one's exegetical conclusions, but that it fails to count as biblical support in any sense is very peculiar.

Indeed, if Wilkin wishes to lay such a charge at Fournier's doorstep, then he must apply it to himself as well. Wilkin also cites Scripture in footnotes without providing explicit exegetical support for his conclusions (see 17, fn. 14; 20, fn. 18; 25, fn. 31). He also does the same with extra-biblical sources—a book by church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette (11-12, fn. 2), and books by Zane Hodges and Joseph Dillow (14, fn. 6). Does all this mean that Wilkin really cannot contend that these books and Bible texts support his claims in any genuine sense? What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If Fournier is guilty as charged, so is Wilkin.

The third argument Wilkin brings to the fore is that Fournier "never once explains what a given passage means. He merely quotes or refers to passages" (13). This is a peculiar assertion too. While Fournier does not usually engage in a detailed exegesis of biblical texts, he certainly tells his readers what he understands the Bible to teach and in this context he quotes from or cites references to the pertinent Scripture passages.¹⁵ Jesus Christ and the biblical writers often did this also (e.g., see Matt 9:12-13; 12:1-8; Acts 2:14-21; Heb 10:36-39; 13:5-6; 1 Pet 3:8-12). Even Wilkin does it several times in his review of *AHU* (see 18, 19, 20, 26, 27). If this practice means its practitioners are not supplying a biblical case for their views, then not only Fournier but Wilkin, Jesus, and many of the biblical writers are guilty too.

Wilkin's fourth argument is that because "usually" only "minor points" in *AHU* receive biblical quotations or citations, the book lacks a genuine biblical case for its message (13). Really? Here are just a few of the "minor points" that occupy *AHU*: the Body of Christ as a visibly divided house; Jesus' prayerful desire that the Body be as one; Paul's teaching concerning the unity of the church; Jesus' compassion for the physical and emotional needs of people; mankind's fallen condition and

¹⁵ For example, see *AHU*, 23-24 (on John 17:11, 20-23; John 3:16-17; Eph 4:11-13), 72 (on Jas 5:16), 98-99 (on Neh 4:13-20), 101 (on 1 Pet 2:4), 105-107 (on Matt 28:18-20; Gen 1:26-30; Heb 13:12-14), 120-33 (on Isa 5:20-21), chs. 9, 10, and 12 (which contain numerous NT quotations and references, as well as explanations and background information).

God's plan of redemption; the early church as a culture with shared leadership, shared beliefs, shared Scriptures, shared practices and values, a shared mission, and shared persecution; the basis upon which Christians of all traditions and confessions (Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox) can build alliances to change the culture for the common good. I think it is obvious that none of these points are minor, and in *AHU* all of them are backed by Scripture, as well as by an array of other sources.

Wilkin's fifth argument centers on twelve Bible texts, all of which concern the gospel message. Wilkin contends that these texts must be "explained" by Fournier in order for him to "establish the case that Catholics are Christians" (13). The implication here is that these texts establish the evangelical Protestant understanding of salvation and undermine, if not contradict, the Catholic view. Well, if Wilkin believes this, he needs to demonstrate that these texts support his contention. Dismissing Fournier's position by assertion and suggestion does not suffice.

Wilkin's sixth argument is that Fournier uses too many Bible translations. Wilkin calls this a "questionable practice" that gives "the impression that the author will cite whatever version states the text as he sees it" (14). I am uncertain what Wilkin is driving at here. I know Fournier quoted from different Bible versions because he believed that certain versions better translated certain verses. Given this, Wilkin's objection would amount to saying that it is somehow a "questionable practice" for an author to switch between Bible translations because he believes that different versions best translate different verses. Perhaps Wilkin would have preferred Fournier had used, say, the NIV throughout his book, even if Fournier believed that in some cases other versions did a better job conveying the meaning of certain texts he wanted to quote or discuss. I cannot see why any author serious about communicating would consciously choose to do this. It is clear to me that an author should use whatever version best conveys a text's meaning. This is exactly what Fournier sought to do.

Perhaps, however, Wilkin is suggesting something else. Maybe what Fournier did bothers him because it gives the impression that Fournier was presenting his beliefs in a way that appeared to accord with Scripture even when he knew such was not the case. This interpretation of Wilkin's argument fits better with his desire to demonstrate that Fournier fails to support his case biblically. However, if this is what Wilkin means, then he needs to move his criticism beyond the mere impression of impropriety in order to give it adequate support. This

would entail him showing that Fournier did use different Bible versions to deceive his readers into believing that his faith convictions are biblical when they are not. Wilkin has not done this. Innuendo and suggestion are far cries from demonstration.

With this said, I have covered and found wanting all of Wilkin's arguments in support of his claim that *AHU* does not offer any genuine biblical support for its case. *AHU* does, indeed, offer a great deal of biblical support, especially for its main contentions. The book may not supply a lot of word studies¹⁶ or cite a slew of commentaries or address all of the Bible passages that would have satisfied Wilkin. But none of this entails the conclusion that Fournier offers no, or very little, real scriptural support for his beliefs. That conclusion is unfounded.

2. *AHU* relies on human experience to prove its case (14-16).

"Instead of establishing his case from the Bible, Fournier uses experience" (13), states Wilkin. Obviously Wilkin finds human experience an unacceptable criterion for demonstrating truth. As he states, "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" (16, italics added). I wonder how Wilkin knows it is true that he exists or leads an organization called the Grace Evangelical Society or is an alumnus of Dallas Theological Seminary without appealing to his own experience or that of others. None of these details of his life, nor any others for that matter, are mentioned in Scripture. But if they are not there, then according to his own criterion not only he but the rest of us can never establish his reality, assuming, of course, that "experience is absolutely worthless for establishing truth."

Perhaps Wilkin does not mean that human experience can establish no truths, since that leads to some obvious epistemological difficulties for him personally. He may mean instead that human experience cannot establish—that is, support¹⁷—any truths *found in Scripture*. If this is how his comments should be interpreted, his position is still seriously flawed.

¹⁶ I would like to point out, however, that *AHU* does contain some word studies, which are mostly brief. For example, see pp. 26 (*Christian*), 34 (*euangelion* and *euangelizō*), 102 (*apologia*), 161 (*genos*), 209 (*death*), 223 (*vicarius*), and 224 (*anti, antichrist*).

¹⁷ Wilkin uses words such as *support*, *make his case*, and *proves* as rough synonyms for *establish* (15), hence my reason for interpreting him this way.

First of all, the Bible itself records instances where human experience validates critical events and teachings. For example, when many people encountered Jesus, heard His teachings, and witnessed His miraculous power, they came to believe that He was who He claimed to be: the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God and Son of man (Matt 16:13-20; Luke 5:4-11; 7:18-29; John 4:1-42, 46-53; 9:1-38). After Jesus' resurrection, He provided further empirical evidence to His followers that He had indeed conquered sin and death and therefore was truly the way, the truth, and the life for all the world (Matt 28:9-10, 16-20; Luke 24:13-53; John 20:14-31; 21:4-14). The apostles' experience of Jesus had such confirming power that John appealed to it in the opening words of his first epistle as evidence that his message was true and should be heeded (1 John 1:1-4).

Extra-biblical human experience also provides evidential support of biblical teachings and predictions. For instance, the history of the church confirms the truth of Jesus' prophecy that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church (Matt 16:18). The moral, spiritual, and theological downward spiral of twentieth-century Western civilization verifies the truth of Rom 1:18-32. Even the life and testimony of every Christian gives additional verification that God is alive and well and at work on planet Earth, and that what He has revealed to us in nature, human experience, church history, and His written Word is true and certain.

Fournier draws on many facets of human experience to demonstrate, not just illustrate, various biblical teachings. He even reveals much about his own life as testimony to God's redemptive and transforming work and unfailing faithfulness. In this way he is following in the footsteps of the apostle Paul, who also appealed to his experience with the Lord as verification of his conversion and mission and of Jesus' resurrection, deity, and salvific gift to humankind (Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-29).

Human experience does help us discover and verify truth, including many significant truths found in Scripture.¹⁸ Fournier understands this and utilizes it effectively in *AHU*.

¹⁸ Defenses of this epistemological position can be found in Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976); Stuart C. Hackett, *The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim: A Philosophical and Critical Apologetic* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984); Jacques Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959); Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics; County Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1982).

3. *AHU* presents an unbiblical view of the Gospel (18-20).

Here we finally come to the crux of the matter. Does Fournier present an unbiblical gospel which is really no gospel at all? Is the Catholic understanding of salvation contrary to Scripture and therefore a false gospel? Wilkin obviously believes that each of these questions should be answered positively. This is a very serious charge that deserves a forthright answer. On the other hand, given the space limitations I have been allotted, I will not be able to answer it as fully as I could. Therefore, the following comments will have to suffice.

Neither Fournier nor I believe that the Catholic understanding of salvation is a "different gospel" (Gal 1:6) from the one presented in Scripture. It certainly is in many respects different from that taught by many evangelical Protestants. Of course, even evangelical Protestants have differing interpretations. Some believe in Lordship Salvation, while others, including Wilkin, do not (24). Some believe water baptism plays a vital role in regeneration, while others, such as Wilkin, give it lesser significance (20). Some believe salvation can be lost, while others, Wilkin included, deny this (19). Some believe that the Lord's Supper is a channel of God's forgiveness and empowering grace, while others, such as Wilkin, give it "special meal" status but reject it as a means of enabling or life-giving grace (20). Some believe that infants, when baptized, are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, while others would agree with Wilkin that one must be able to exercise one's own faith in order to be saved (20). Some believe salvation is in many senses a process, while others side with Wilkin claiming that salvation is an instantaneous event that occurs the "very moment" a person "trusts in Christ" (19). Soteriological differences also abound among such issues as the relationship between predestination and the human will, whether humans are free in any respect, what constitutes eternal torment, whether faith itself is a gift or simply a natural means to receiving the gift of salvation, the meaning and extent of human corruption, and the relationship between law and gospel.¹⁹

¹⁹ A few of the many sources that detail some of the variety of soteriological belief among Protestants are: Alan P. F. Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism, and Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983); Clark H. Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God, the Will of Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989); John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992); Ronald H. Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), and *Great Divides: Understanding the*

Since these differences (and many others) are found among evangelical Protestants (not to mention Christians of other orthodox traditions), the question arises, Which understanding of salvation will become the standard by which the Catholic view will be measured? The answer is plain in Wilkin's review: The standard is *his* understanding of salvation, which he identifies with what the Bible teaches on the subject. He does not demonstrate that his view is indeed *the* biblical one. In fact, he does what he accuses Fournier of doing: He declares his beliefs to be biblical, then he cites a handful of Bible references to support his assertions, but he does not exegete any of the cited texts (see 19-20). Neither does he deal with, much less cite, any of the texts that other Protestants and Catholics could use to challenge his views (e.g., John 3:5 and Acts 2:38 on baptism; Matt 13:20-21 and Heb 6:4-8 on whether salvation can be lost). Wilkin does not even acknowledge, except in the case of Lordship Salvation, that evangelical Protestants have any differing views on the biblical teaching of soteriology. Even when he mentions this single exception, he dismisses it out of hand as an unbiblical position (24). Clearly we are simply supposed to accept his interpretation as the authoritative, biblical one. Perhaps that approach satisfies the editors and readers of this journal, but I find it wholly inadequate, and I would imagine so would the many other evangelical Protestants who would not embrace many aspects of Wilkin's understanding of soteriology or his attempt to justify them from Scripture.

Of course, Wilkin's theological pronouncements go beyond evangelical Protestant thought and move into Catholic theology. He declares that Fournier's view of the Gospel 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*" (18). Is this true? Does Fournier believe that faith plus works saves us? According to Wilkin, Fournier does, even though he "never attempts to explain his view of the gospel in detail"

Controversies that Come Between Christians (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993); David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986); Peter Toon, *Justification and Sanctification* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1983); Melvin E. Dieter et al, *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987); Edward Fudge, "How Wide Is God's Mercy?," *Christianity Today* (27 April 1992), 30-33; "The Status of Justification by Faith in Paul's Thought: A Brief Survey of a Modern Debate," *Themelios* (April 1981): 4-11.

(18) but scatters his beliefs on this point “here and there throughout the book” (19). Wilkin even suggests Fournier was not being as candid with his readers as he should have been: “It would have been more forthright to have a chapter in which he [Fournier] explained and defended his view of the Gospel” (19).

I find Wilkin mistaken on all these points. Fournier does not believe in salvation by faith plus works. In fact, he addresses this charge in several respects in Chapter 1 and in other places of the book. But he most fully and directly responds to this accusation in Chapter 12, a fact Wilkin fails to reveal to his readers. (The fallacy of suppressed evidence again.) There Fournier introduces his discussion this way:

Many Christians misunderstand the Catholic theology of salvation as one of salvation by “good works.” Catholics, they say, try to earn Jesus’ acceptance into Heaven’s gate by performing deeds that would please Him . . . They believe Catholics have rejected the true gospel of salvation by faith alone through Christ alone by grace alone. Instead, they charge, Catholics have accepted the false gospel of salvation by faith plus good works apart from grace, which undermines Christ’s redemptive work on the cross.

Although some Catholics, as well as some Protestants, have adopted the “gospel” of faith plus good works equals salvation, this view does *not* represent Catholic theology. As we will see, there is an integral place for the deeds of faith (not deeds done apart from or in addition to faith) in the salvation process, but this must be understood in light of the *full* expression of the biblical concept of salvation. And this understanding flows from the biblical view of the human dilemma.²⁰

Fournier follows this introduction with a discussion of human fallenness, in which he concludes “that *all human beings are morally, intellectually, emotionally, volitionally, spiritually, and physically corrupted because of sin*. As a consequence of the original sin of our first parents, we have inherited and surrendered ourselves to a distorted, corrupted nature. We have dug ourselves into a pit so deep that we can’t climb out of it.”²¹ The only way out of this pit is through Christ, states Fournier: “When we place our trust in Him, God’s undeserved gift of salvation from sin becomes ours.”²² Then Fournier quotes as support one of those passages Wilkin says he never discusses—Eph 2:8-9.

²⁰ AHU, 208.

²¹ AHU, 211.

²² AHU, 212.

From here Fournier moves on to talk about justification and grace. In part he writes:

When I exercise faith in accepting God's free gift of grace in Christ, the Holy Spirit converts me and thereby brings about my justification. Moved by grace, I'm turned toward God and away from sin. In the biblical imagery [which Fournier had detailed earlier], I'm set free from sin, my sight is restored, I'm made alive in Christ, I become the recipient of His matchless riches, my deepest wounds are healed. I am no longer separated from God but reconciled to Him. The corruption sin has wrought is reversed in my life. In fact, in the very center of my being, I am changed. I am not merely forgiven, though that occurs. I am also purified; I am made a new creation. Put another way, justification not only declares me righteous but makes me righteous. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man." God makes me just, He doesn't just declare me so. He cleans my sin record and purges me of my sins.²³

Regarding justification and sanctification, Fournier explains: "Though we may be justified by faith in a moment, our justification is deepened through the sanctification process. This day-to-day process makes us holy, not at once, but over the period of our lifetimes. God works in our lives through the virtues of faith, hope, and love to bring this result about. And in that process, He gives us the privilege and ability to cooperate with Him. Among these virtues, love is the greatest, as the Apostle Paul told us it was: 'And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.'"²⁴

Do certain aspects of this Catholic understanding of salvation differ from some evangelical Protestant perspectives? Yes. Are these differences due to a faith-plus-works orientation? No. Fournier explicitly rejects this interpretation, and he does so because the Catholic Church does not teach it.²⁵ Wilkin, however, either does not realize this or thinks

²³ *AHU*, 212.

²⁴ *AHU*, 216.

²⁵ Apart from *AHU*, which he misinterprets, Wilkin never cites any Catholic sources in support of his claim that Catholicism teaches salvation by faith plus works. Some excellent sources, aside from *AHU*, that could have corrected his interpretation are: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 40-45, 481-90; H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, and Joseph A. Burgess, eds., *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985); Alan Schreck, *Catholic and Christian* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1984), ch. 1.

the charge of faith plus works still sticks anyway. Wilkin reasons that because Fournier believes that such things as water baptism, perseverance in charity, and the need to sustain, nourish, and deepen one's relationship to Christ are integral to the salvific process that this means he believes in salvation by faith *plus* works (19). It is true that Fournier believes there are "deeds of faith" that play a vital role in salvation, but he denies that these deeds have any salvific value "apart from or in addition to faith."²⁶ As he clearly says:

The integral relationship between faith and works has long troubled many believers of all traditions. But the Catholic theological understanding of the biblical teaching is clear: *We are converted to Christ by faith, not because of our good works; and we do good works only because we have the divine grace to do so.* Our good works flow out of our love for God and that which God loves, His creation. Faith must express itself dynamically in a life of love. As Paul describes it, what counts is "faith working through love." [Gal 5:6] Faith and works go together in God's Family-life plan. Without faith, works have no everlasting value. Without works, faith has no everlasting value either. Works apart from faith are dead; faith apart from works is dead also. If faith is genuine, good works will follow, and if good works are genuinely of God, saving faith will be present. Faith and good works are inseparable.²⁷

In light of all this, I think Wilkin's criticisms of Fournier's soteriology amount to no more than magisterial-like declarations which ignore (or suppress?) Fournier's explanations and defenses of the Catholic perspective. Wilkin erects a straw man, attempts to knock him down with inadequate criticisms, then declares victory on behalf of the "true gospel" and biblical integrity.

To top it off, nowhere in his review does Wilkin indicate a belief that Fournier is saved. He commends Fournier for a number of things, but he never grants that Fournier is a Christian, and this despite all the evidence to the contrary, including Fournier's testimony of faith and the obvious fruit of his faith (cf. Matt 7:17-20; 12:33-35; John 10:37-38). Wilkin is careful to say that Catholics can be saved, but not by "believing the gospel as taught in Catholicism" (27). Since Fournier does believe in this "gospel," he must not be saved, Wilkin has apparently reasoned. What Fournier needs to do, therefore, is to accept the Gospel accord-

²⁶ AHU, 208, italics added.

²⁷ AHU, 217.

ing to Wilkin. Given what Wilkin argues and how, it is hard to escape this conclusion. But as I have argued, the case Wilkin presents for his view of the Gospel is entirely inadequate for anyone to base their eternal destiny upon it.

My conclusion, therefore, is that an unbiased reading of *AHU* shows that Wilkin's assessment of Fournier's soteriology is invalid and unsound.²⁸ And since his critique fails on this, his most central concern of *AHU*, the reasoning of his entire review is in serious doubt. It is not Fournier's book that is "dangerous" (29), as Wilkin claims. It is Wilkin's review that is faulty and misguided.

4. *AHU* "sweeps under the rug" important differences between evangelical Protestants and Catholics (20-23).

Wilkin says that "Fournier does not state what his areas of difference are" with Protestants, particularly those differences that keep Catholics and Protestants from enjoying "table fellowship together at the Lord's Supper" (21). It is true that Fournier does not provide a list of all the differences between Catholics and Protestants, though many of them are listed in the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" document reprinted in *AHU*'s appendix.²⁹ There was no real need to focus much attention on the many issues that divide Catholics and Protestants. Books dealing with the differences abound,³⁰ and most Protestants and Catholics have ample opportunities to learn about at least some of the more divisive issues in their various church communities. *AHU* largely assumes that Catholics and Protestants, particularly those of the evangelical persuasion, will have some information about the conflicts and probably a good idea where they stand on those matters. What Fournier

²⁸ Wilkin candidly admits he approached *AHU* with a bias against Catholic teaching, particularly in regard to the Catholic understanding of the gospel (16).

²⁹ *AHU*, 341.

³⁰ In addition to the many excellent sources cited in note 4, some others have recently been published that in my opinion are less informed and often more inflammatory in their rhetoric and reckless in their charges. Two of these publications are Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994), and John F. MacArthur, *Reckless Faith: When the Church Loses Its Will to Discern* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994). Two more responsible and scholarly publications, yet, in my view, still flawed, are John Armstrong, ed., *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides and Unites Us* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), and Norman Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995).

chose to do was to focus more on our commonalities rather than our differences and to deal more with our attitudes and actions toward one another and how we can better channel our resources for the common good of the culture. This is what makes *AHU* unique; this is its greatest contribution to the ongoing controversies over and dialogue about co-operation among Christians of various orthodox traditions.

This does not mean that Fournier ignores or tries to gloss over the differences between Protestants and Catholics. The first page of the first chapter of *AHU* openly acknowledges and specifies what many Protestants believe Catholicism teaches and how that differs from “the three cardinal tenets of the Reformation.”³¹ The rest of this chapter goes into more detail about what many Protestants believe about Roman Catholicism and why Fournier, in spite of those perceptions, can legitimately call himself an evangelical Catholic Christian. Chapter 11 deals with the Protestant Reformation and its aftermath, and chapter 12 addresses two accusations many Protestants commonly raise against Catholicism—namely, that it embraces a false gospel and that it is an anti-Christ religion.

Given all of this, I do not understand how Wilkin concluded that Fournier “sweep[s] under the rug” the differences between Protestants and Catholics. After all, Fournier even faces head-on Wilkin’s central concern that the Catholic view of the gospel is unbiblical. Apparently Fournier did not write the book the way Wilkin would have liked him to. This was due to Fournier’s vision for *AHU*. He wanted his book to be an apologetic and a clarion call for alliance-building among Christians from all traditions and confessions. He wanted Christians to consider why they should link arms and how they could do it while still affirming their ecclesiastical and doctrinal distinctives. I think *AHU* fulfills that desire quite well, and many other evangelical Protestants and Catholics have agreed.³²

5. *AHU* fails to prove that evangelical Protestants should cooperate with Catholics (24-27).

Wilkin states, “Fournier’s main point . . . is that Evangelicals should cooperate with Roman Catholics in evangelism and in social outreach” (24). Wilkin concludes that Fournier does not make his case because he

³¹ *AHU*, 19.

³² For example, *AHU*’s foreword is written by Protestant Pat Robertson. The book’s jacket contains endorsements from Catholics Charles Rice, Michael Scanlan, E. Michael Jones, and Harald Bredesen, and from Protestants Terry Lindvall, Vinson Synan, and Ralph Reed, Jr.

fails to establish the thesis on which it rests, namely, that "Catholics are Christians" (24). And since Fournier gives no "other reasons for Evangelicals to unite with Catholics . . . his own case collapses like a house of cards" (24). I have three problems with Wilkin's argument.

First, Fournier does not argue that evangelical Protestants and Catholics should cooperate in evangelistic efforts. He is certainly not opposed to that, and he occasionally gives examples of individuals and organizations that do this. But he explicitly gives several reasons why "I have not focused my attention in this book on cooperative evangelistic efforts."³³ Perhaps Wilkin did not read the book carefully, so he missed this fact. Or maybe he read the book through such biased glasses that he misinterpreted Fournier's comments or suppressed them. Whatever happened, the effect was the same: He misstated and misrepresented *AHU*.

Second, as I have already argued, I think Fournier does establish the fact that Catholics who have trusted in Christ as their Lord and Savior are Christians.

Third, Fournier advances many reasons for evangelical Protestants and Catholics to join forces to change the culture. In the chapter called "A Common Agenda," Fournier discusses numerous issues that could be effectively dealt with through alliance-building efforts: issues of truth, religious freedom, life and death, education, equality of opportunity and responsibility, economic freedom and cultural integrity, and public policy at home and abroad.³⁴ Any one of these issues provides reason enough for concerned people of faith to pool their resources and make common cause for the transformation of the culture.

Therefore, Fournier's case does not fold like a house of cards but stands on the bedrock of the combined building blocks of Scripture, Christian theology, church history, human experience, reason, and in-the-trenches proven praxis.

III. Conclusion

I would like to end this rejoinder with some final thoughts from Keith Fournier about salvation. After acknowledging once again that Christians differ even on issues of soteriology, Fournier gets to the heart of

³³ *AHU*, 267.

³⁴ *AHU*, 261-89.

our essential agreement, whether we are Protestant, Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox believers:

On the issue of salvation . . . we all agree that it begins with God, continues with God, and ends with God. Grace surrounds every aspect of salvation. So any role we play in the salvation plan, including the exercise of faith, is ultimately due to God's unmerited, undeserved, gratuitous grace, which comes to us through Christ's redemptive work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Christ alone merits our salvation. If this understanding is heretical, if it is truly a false gospel, then all of us—Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox—stand condemned. But this gospel is not a false gospel. It is the truth. The church has affirmed it as such since her inception. The apostles taught it because they heard it from the Lord incarnate Himself. On this Rock Catholics stand.³⁵

And so stand all Christians.

May we learn to stand together on this Gospel in faith, love, and hope, and thereby more fully and effectively incarnate Christ's prayer for His Church (John 17:20-26).

³⁵ *AHU*, 221.

A Surrejoinder to William D. Watkins's Rejoinder to My Critique of *A House United*?

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I. Introduction

In this surrejoinder^{*} I receive an unusual opportunity. As I indicated in my critique of *A House United*? (hereafter *AHU*), I believe that it is a dangerous book. I felt a responsibility to point out its flaws and its dangers. Now I have an opportunity to critique what I perceive to be an equally problematic project, the rejoinder by William D. Watkins.

I very much appreciate Bill taking the time to respond to my critique of the book which he helped to write. I feel that this sort of interaction is both interesting (it has been for me!) and profitable.

Of course, some of our readers may question the wisdom of printing a rejoinder by someone who clearly disagrees with the Free Grace viewpoint. But all the editors felt that our readers would understand that this sort of exchange is a valuable medium for confronting the objections of our critics.

I have had several public debates on Lordship Salvation, one with a Bible college professor, one with a seminary professor, and one with a pastor. The rejoinder and surrejoinder in this issue of the Journal are merely a written form of debate.

The Journal's policy in this type of exchange is that rejoinders will be printed only if the rejoinder is timely, well written, and reasonably irenic in tone.

In the present case, it would be tedious if I attempted to answer each and every point raised in the rejoinder. Therefore, I will be responding to those points which I consider to be the most crucial.

^{*} Editor's note: A literary rejoinder is a response to an article or critique. A surrejoinder is a response to a rejoinder.

II. Kudos Appreciated

It was gratifying to read that Watkins felt that I displayed “a desire to critique *AHU* rationally, biblically, and theologically” and that I sought “to avoid emotionalism and personal attacks.” Bill told me in a phone conversation that Keith Fournier, the author of *AHU*, shared these same feelings.

This is encouraging because GES seeks not only to teach about grace, but also to foster graciousness. While we wish to boldly confront distortions of the Gospel, this should be done in such a way as to leave the door open for those who disagree to reconsider their position without being hindered by undue harshness (2 Tim 2:24-25).

III. Responses to Criticisms

A. Co-author or Writer?

I stand corrected. I didn’t recognize that *writer*, rather than *co-author*, was the proper term to use in a case where the word *with* is used between the names of two people on the cover.

This remark by Bill deserves comment: “My participation as writer does not mean that I agree with every position or argument presented in the book (though I do, in fact, agree with much of it).” Bill went on to list authors from 23 different denominations and groups with whom he has worked. Yet, he says, “in all cases the authors were Christians.”

This says a lot about Watkins’s view of the Gospel. In his view the Gospel must be extremely flexible if he feels that groups as diametrically opposed as Reformed and United Church of Christ, or fundamentalist and Episcopalian, are seen as sharing a common view of the Gospel.

I was uncomfortable with Watkins’s repeated reference in this section to various *traditions* within Christianity. While this is a common practice among many Evangelicals today, I dislike it because many of these “traditions” distort the Gospel of Christ. The differences involved are not merely cosmetic, as Watkins implies. In the history of the Church many have died as martyrs over the differences between these “traditions.”

B. Confused Protestant?

In my critique I quoted from what I thought was an open letter by Bill Watkins. I was led to this conclusion by the fact that it began impersonally with “Dear Friend,” and that nothing in the letter said anything personal about the recipient. However, I am sorry, and have

told Bill so personally, that I did not check with Bill before referring to the letter. *Mea culpa*.

In this section Bill sounded a bit testy. He accused me of applying an "impoverished hermeneutic" in which I "suppressed evidence" in order to validate my point.

While the entire text of Bill's letter was not printed, I feel that he wasn't misrepresented. I expressed my opinion that he was in danger of becoming a Roman Catholic. It seems likely that the vast majority of people reading his open letter would conclude the same.

Possibly the problem is with the hermeneutic employed by Watkins. To say that one is in danger of doing something is not to assign a degree of probability to it. My purpose was simply to illustrate a fact he readily admits is true, that some saved individuals *have become* practicing Roman Catholics. As he no doubt knows, many Reformed theologians don't believe that is possible. They would most likely conclude that anyone who converts to Catholicism was never saved in the first place.

Watkins takes great pains to mention his extensive training and personal study. He seems to feel that his training was called into question. How he drew that conclusion is hard to say. Bill is very intelligent and extremely well educated. Actually, the fact that he is bright and that he has 20 years of formal education and 14 years of additional study underlines my point. A person can be intelligent and well trained and yet come to the opinion expressed by Watkins in his rejoinder: "I have concluded from my studies that Roman Catholicism does not teach a 'false gospel.'" That is a shocking statement for a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary to make!

C. Lack of Scriptural Support?

I objected to the fact that most references to Scripture in *AHU* are made in endnotes, which studies show that most people don't read. Watkins sees no problem with this practice. He asks, "If citing references to Scripture does not count as supporting one's points with the Word of God, then what does?"

Watkins missed my point. I didn't say that proof texting "does not count." It is, as Watkins admits, not nearly as helpful as detailed explanation of the text. However, my point was that Fournier rarely even used proof texts in the portion of the book most people read. Watkins didn't comment on that point.

Watkins also tries to turn my argument against me: "Wilkin also cites Scripture in footnotes without providing explicit exegetical support for his conclusions."

In the first place, Watkins seems to equate my use of *footnotes* with Fournier's use of *endnotes*. He says, "Wilkin also cites Scripture in footnotes." However, Fournier did not cite Scripture in footnotes. He did so in endnotes which I personally found to be difficult to access since the numbering of endnotes begins again in each new chapter. Thus you must not merely turn to the back of the book to look up endnote number 1, for example. There are actually 20 different endnotes #1. You must look to see which chapter number you are in and then turn to the back of the book and still hope to remember the correct endnote number. Footnotes are *much* easier to consult, since they appear on the bottom of the page being read.

In the second place, a critique is not an exegetical article. However, a book arguing that Catholics are part of the family of God must be exegetical in order to convince discerning readers.

In the third place, Watkins gives a total of three examples in which I cite verses in footnotes. Interestingly, those are the only three occurrences of that in the article. None of the three do what Fournier repeatedly did: give the bare reference to verses without either commenting on them or printing the verses. Watkins fails to notice, or notices but fails to mention, that whenever I merely cite a verse reference, I do so *in the text*. This puts the reference in a place every reader will notice it. Watkins also fails to notice or point out that in an article of only 19 pages I cite 44 passages of Scripture. My average number of verses referred to per page is 7 times that of Fournier.

Watkins also has a clever objection to my argument that Fournier "never once explains what a given passage means." First, he admits to the basic truth of that statement: "Fournier does not usually engage in a detailed exegesis of biblical texts." That seems to imply that he *occasionally* does engage in detailed exegesis. Yet Watkins does not cite even one example. I was unable to find a single example of detailed exegesis by Fournier.

Second, he then asserts that "he certainly tells his readers what he understands the Bible to teach and in this context he quotes from or cites references to the pertinent Scripture passages." In a footnote (n 15) he cites ten specific examples. Upon looking up the best ten examples that Watkins could find, I found that they are really nothing more than prooftexts.

Third, attempting a *coup de grâce*, Watkins asserts that the authors of Scripture did this also. I did not suggest it is unbiblical to quote texts without explanation. What I was suggesting is that explanations of Bible

texts are necessary in order to prove one's case, and Fournier does not do this.

At one point Watkins attempts to shift the burden of proof to me. In a debate, the offense has the burden of proof. If the offense proves nothing, the defense wins. I pointed out that Fournier failed to explain 12 key NT texts dealing with the Gospel. Watkins turns that around and says that "if Wilkin believes this, he needs to demonstrate that these texts support his contention." I have done what he requests in our bimonthly newsletter and in the Journal. However, that is not the point. The burden of proof is on Fournier. He is the one suggesting that the Reformation (and evidently the Counter Reformation) was *much ado about nothing*.

The defense in the O. J. Simpson trial was quick to point out that the prosecution had brought forward no eyewitnesses to the murders and no murder weapon. If the prosecution had shot back that it was the defense's job to find the killer(s) and the eyewitnesses and the murder weapon(s), they would have been making a claim akin to Watkins's here. Rest assured, if I were writing a book on the question of whether the gospel of Rome is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I would go on the offensive and clearly show how verses such as the 12 passages I cited prove that it is not.

D. Reliance on Experience?

In my critique I pointed out that Fournier builds his case upon experience. Watkins has three basic responses here: 1) The use of experience is indeed a valid basis for establishing whether a theological claim is true or not. 2) All people use experience to establish truth. 3) The Bible itself uses experience to establish truth. Let's consider each of those points.

The first point is a concession to what I was saying, that Fournier uses experience to build his case.

The second point is valid as far as it goes. Science is built upon experimentation and observation. We know the boiling point of water at a given temperature and pressure because of observation, not because it is recorded in Scripture. Admittedly, I am aware of facts about myself due to my experiences, and these experiences and facts are not recorded in Scripture.

However, that is beside the point. Watkins ignores the context of my remark. I wrote: "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." I was *not* saying that experience is absolutely worthless in

establishing truth of any kind. I was speaking in context of "truth which has been established from Scripture."

For example, the Bible clearly and unequivocally states that God exists. Thus if I know that the Bible is the Word of God, it's impossible to prove from experience, or from anything else, that God does *not* exist.

If the Bible is the Word of God as Fournier, Watkins, and I all agree, then if it speaks on a subject, it is the final authority. We must *establish* truth from the Bible and nowhere else. There's the rub. That is not the case in Roman Catholic thought. For a Catholic, the Bible, experience, reason, and church tradition are all vitally, if not equally, important ways to establish spiritual truths. Watkins himself notes toward the end of his rejoinder, "Fournier's case does not fold like a house of cards but stands on the bedrock of the combined building blocks of *Scripture, Christian theology, church history, human experience, reason, and in-the-trenches proven praxis*" (italics added). More often than not, the sad result of this practice is that the clear meaning of Scripture is subverted.

E. A Distorted Gospel?

We now get to the heart of the issue. To Watkins's credit, he does not back down here. He devotes more space to this question than to anything else in his rejoinder. Here we gain some fascinating insights into the crux of this debate.

Watkins defends the position that the Roman Catholic view of the Gospel is biblical. He does this with these arguments: 1) Even among Protestants there are significant differences in many respects on the Gospel. 2) I establish the correctness of my view of the Gospel by "pronouncement," not by demonstrating that my view is the biblical one. 3) Fournier and Roman Catholicism do not teach salvation by grace through faith plus works.

Differences even among Protestants. The first argument is interesting. Watkins seems to be suggesting that since even Protestants disagree among themselves on the Gospel, then this proves that the differences he admits exist between Catholics and Protestants on the Gospel are not significant enough to make one or the other unbiblical. This is curious reasoning.

As *JOTGES* readers know, we are convinced that many Protestants believe and teach a view of the Gospel that is *unbiblical*. How that shows that Roman Catholics believe and teach a *biblical* view of the Gospel escapes me.

Watkins does not explain how "conflicting" gospels can all be the true biblical Gospel. For example, he indicates that some believe in Lord-

ship Salvation and some do not. He fails to point out that people on both sides of this issue agree that only *one* of the positions is true and saving (see, for example, Charles Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 170; John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, Revised Edition, pp. xx-xxiii).

Does Watkins believe that there is more than one way to heaven? Would he hold that water baptism, partaking of the Lord's Supper, submission to the Lordship of Christ, and trusting in Christ alone, are four different ways of being regenerated?

The source of the Free Grace Gospel. Watkins's second argument is that my view of the Gospel is established for our readers by pronouncement rather than by biblical proof. That is a rehashing of a complaint Watkins raised earlier. He stated: "He cites a handful of Bible references to support his assertions, but then does not exegete any of the cited texts." As mentioned previously, a critique is not an exegetical article. Bill is a bit unrealistic if he expects me in 19 pages to critique a 365-page book and to exegete a number of Gospel texts as well.

Does Catholicism teach salvation by faith plus works? Watkins's third argument, that Fournier and Roman Catholicism do not teach salvation by grace through faith plus works, is the center of the debate. Watkins cites three lines of proof for this point.

His first line of proof is a quotation in which Fournier directly and unequivocally denies that he or Catholicism teaches salvation by faith plus works. If Watkins had stopped here, his case would have been more convincing. After all, Fournier denies that he teaches salvation by works.

Despite Fournier's denial, his own words show that he *does* teach salvation by works. (For example, see the statements which follow under Watkins's second line of proof below.) Yet I am not accusing Fournier or Watkins of being intentionally disingenuous here. Fournier's definition of faith *includes* works. Hence he can, in some sense, speak of justification by faith alone. However, to avoid confusing his readers, he should have indicated that he clearly does not believe that one is justified simply by trusting in Christ and Him alone for eternal life. Maybe this is part of the difference to which Watkins refers when he says, "It [the Catholic understanding of salvation] is in many respects different from that taught by many evangelical Protestants."

Perhaps the readers will permit me to provide some additional details regarding the Roman Catholic view of saving faith. The importance of this question warrants additional comment.

In the November 7th, 1986 issue of *Christianity Today*, Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles responded to a number of questions about how

Catholic doctrine compares with Protestant doctrine. Concerning faith he said,

One can also understand faith in a more global or inclusive way: *faith as a loving, trusting commitment of one's whole self to God*. That is the sense of the term as it was used in Vatican II. *If you understand faith in that broad sense, then you can use an expression like "justification by faith"* (p. 27, italics added).

Evangelical theologian Paul Holloway has pointed out that this understanding of saving faith has long been the position of Catholicism. Augustine taught that faith must *produce* works of love (*fides operatur* or "productive faith") in order to be saving. Later Catholic theologians said that faith must *include* works of love to be saving (*fides formata* or "formed faith"). Holloway notes, "In simpler terms, for the scholastics, works stopped being the *product* of faith and became an *integral part* of it" ("Lordship Salvation's Doctrine of Faith," *JOTGES*, Autumn 1991, p. 17).

The Council of Trent stated 33 canons concerning justification. A number of them well illustrate the Catholic view of faith. Each of these canons is an *anathema* against those who teach what was considered by the Council of Trent to be false doctrine on justification. Interestingly the Free Grace view of justification is repeatedly anathematized!

Canon 12 says, "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be accursed" (*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, English Translation by H. J. Schroeder [Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1978]).

Canon 20 says, "If anyone says that a man who is justified and however perfect is not bound to observe the commandments of God and the Church, but only to believe, as if the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life without the condition of observing the commandments, let him be anathema."

Likewise, Canon 21 reads, "If anyone says that Christ Jesus was given by God to men as a redeemer in whom to trust, and not also as a legislator whom to obey, let him be anathema."

Watkins's second line of proof is Fournier's own explanations of the gospel. Note what Watkins cites as Fournier's view of the relationship between faith and works: "There is an integral place for the deeds of faith (not deeds done apart from or in addition to faith) in the salvation process." I don't see how this proves Watkins's assertion that the Catholic

view of the gospel is not a different gospel. In my estimation, he is essentially conceding the point. Fournier speaks of deeds which are *not in addition to faith* nor which are *done apart from* faith. He is merely restating the Catholic position of "formed faith," that saving faith includes loving obedience.

In the quotation cited by Watkins, Fournier speaks of "the salvation process." Concerning the so-called "process of salvation" of which Fournier speaks, Dulles says:

We thank God for having put us on the path that leads to final salvation, but we do not boast that we've already been saved in the sense that we can't be lost. That would lead to a wrong attitude toward God. We are always conscious of our sinfulness, which makes it possible for us to fall away (p. 27).

The Bible does not teach that salvation is a process or that salvation can be lost. However, if it did, then when I wrote in my critique that salvation occurs at the moment of faith and that it is irreversible, I would be teaching a false gospel. How Watkins can reconcile two such divergent views as being the same gospel remains a mystery to me.

Watkins moves into another dangerous minefield when he cites Fournier's view of justification: "Justification not only *declares* me righteous but *makes* me righteous . . . God makes me just, He doesn't just declare me so" (italics added). Watkins appears to be unaware that this is a major issue in the Protestant-Catholic Gospel debate.

Commenting on the distinction between a Reformed and Roman Catholic view of justification, Dulles says:

There may be something of a difference, then, between evangelicals and Catholics. We maintain that justification is not simply extrinsic. It originates outside but is received in us, so we are not only reputed just but are made really just or righteous. There is an inner transformation in justification itself. That inner change could also be called sanctification. Thus justification and sanctification, for Catholics, are really inseparable" (p. 27).

Many would agree with me that Dulles was understating the case considerably when he said, "There may be something of a difference, then, between evangelicals and Catholics [on justification]." The difference between those two views is the difference between the Gospel and a counterfeit version of it—a big difference according to the apostle Paul (cf. Gal 1:6-9).

Canon 11 of the Council of Trent also rejects the idea that justification is merely the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer, without the infusion of charity (= acts of love):

If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema.

The idea that one must actually live righteously to be justified is completely contrary to the Reformation cry, *sola fide*, by faith alone. Dulles as much as admits that when he says: "Vatican II speaks of faith as a loving obedience, and in that sense you could say faith alone is sufficient to justify" (p. 27).

Believers are called to holiness (1 Pet 1:16). One of the reasons God has saved us is so that we will glorify Him by producing good works (Eph 2:8-10). However, to assert that faith is "loving obedience" is to proclaim a false gospel. Faith is simply a conviction that something is true. In terms of the Gospel, it is the conviction that the crucified and risen Lord gives me eternal life simply because I am trusting Him and Him alone for it.

To believe that I am saved, at least in part, because I am lovingly obedient, is to fail to trust in Christ *alone* for eternal life. Catholics, like anyone else, can be saved only if they come to trust in Christ and Him alone for eternal life.

Before leaving the issue of the position of Fournier and Catholicism on the Gospel, I feel I should comment on a question Watkins raises. He wonders whether I think Fournier is saved or not. He comes to the conclusion that I must believe Fournier is not saved since I am convinced he doesn't believe the biblical Gospel.

Watkins evidently failed to read my critique carefully enough on this point. I clearly stated that "Christians can become confused and can join groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church, that believe and teach a false gospel." I also made it clear elsewhere in the article that salvation can't be lost. Thus I was affirming that a person who today believes a false gospel might nonetheless be saved. The question is whether he or she *ever* trusted in Christ and Him alone or not.

Frankly, I don't have enough information to know if Fournier is saved or not. He may have trusted in Christ and Him alone at some point in the past. If so, he is a confused believer. If not, he is an unbeliever.

I am at a bit of a loss as to why Watkins is concerned as to whether I think Fournier is saved or not. What difference does that make in terms of this debate? I certainly hope that Fournier is saved. Or, if not, that he *will be saved* by faith alone apart from works.

The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc.: 1910, 1913) sums up well the difference between Catholics and Protestants concerning justification (p. 578). It says:

The Protestants claim the following three qualities for justification: certainty, equality, [and] the impossibility of ever losing it. Diametrically opposed to these qualities are those defended by the Council of Trent (sess. VI, cap. 9-11): uncertainty (*incertitudo*), inequality (*inequalitas*), [and] amissibility (*amissibilitas*).

Note that the encyclopedia says that Catholicism is *diametrically opposed* to Protestantism concerning those three points regarding justification. "Diametrically opposed" does not suggest much common ground!

Fournier clearly maintains the Catholic view of justification. Watkins does not deny this. Yet Fournier and Watkins insist that these differences between Catholics and Evangelicals are, in fact, *not diametrically opposed*. I strongly agree with *The Catholic Encyclopedia* on this point.

F. Cooperation Between Evangelicals and Catholics?

I suggested that Fournier's main point in the book is "that Evangelicals should cooperate with Roman Catholics in evangelism and in social outreach." In response Watkins cites this sentence from Fournier in the book, "I have not focused my attention in this book on cooperative evangelistic efforts."

Bill neglected to continue the quotation. Fournier goes on, "I hope one day we will preach the basic gospel message together to a dying world. And I think that will happen if we commit ourselves to listen more closely to each other . . . I also believe that as we work together on social issues, we will discover how much we really do have in common" (p. 267).

Watkins himself states in his rejoinder, "He is certainly not opposed to that (cooperation in evangelism), and he occasionally gives examples of individuals and organizations that do this."

IV. Conclusion

I would like to end my surrejoinder with a few statements from Fournier about eternal salvation, followed by a few brief comments. Alongside each statement by Fournier, I will give a quotation from Scripture which contradicts his point.

"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).

"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).

"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).

"You have been saved" (Eph 2:8).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim 2:13).

"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect" (1 Cor 1:17).

"Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor 11:24, the apostle Paul's instructions regarding the Lord's Supper).

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works . . ." (Rom 4:4-6).

The gospel of Roman Catholicism is not the Gospel of the apostles. Despite Watkins's assertions to the contrary, the gospel of Rome is salvation by faith plus works.

It puzzles me why Watkins doesn't see that the gospel of Rome and the Free Grace Gospel cannot both be right. They are clearly conflicting messages. If the gospel of Rome is correct, then all who hold to the Free Grace Gospel are *unsaved*, since we don't confess our sins to priests,

don't hear mass, haven't been baptized in order to be saved, don't believe the true Gospel, etc. Perhaps Watkins's ecumenical outlook requires him to play down the evidence for deep doctrinal divisions within Christendom. But ignoring these divisions in the face of hard evidence is not a realistic, or helpful, approach.

May we stand firm on the one and only message of the Gospel. May we avoid compromise on the fundamental issue of the Gospel. And, as we have opportunity, let us share the Good News with our Catholic friends, neighbors, and relatives. For only when Catholics (and nonCatholics) come to faith in Christ and Him alone for eternal life can we truly be spiritually united with them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

THE FAITH OF DEMONS: JAMES 2:19

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I. Introduction

Informed Christians are aware of the ongoing debate in modern evangelicalism concerning the content of the Gospel and the nature of faith. In the heat of the discussion, it's inevitable that the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone will not be allowed to rest without a hurried disclaimer: "True faith will inevitably evidence itself in a life of consistent good works." An appeal is made to James 2 as final confirmation that genuine saving faith *must* produce consistent good works, otherwise such a "faith" is obviously spurious.¹ While other passages are cited as confirming this theology, James 2 is given preeminence.² This seems a little surprising when some scholars see the Epistle of James as practically oriented rather than theologically oriented. Burdick even feels

¹ We list only a short sample: John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Faith Works, The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 139-55; Edmond D. Hiebert, *The Epistle of James* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 43-45; James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 120-24; Peter Davids, *The Epistle of James*, in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 49-51, 120-21; Robert V. Rakestraw, "James 2:14-26: Does James Contradict Pauline Soteriology?" *Criswell Theological Review* 1 (Fall 1986): 31-50; John Polhill, "Prejudice, Partiality, and Faith: James 2," *Review and Expositor* 83 (Summer 1986): 395-404; R. E. Glaze, Jr., "The Relationship of Faith to Works," *The Theological Educator* 34 (Fall 1986): 35-42.

² This seems to be witnessed by the series of papers presented before the Evangelical Theological Society and printed in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (March 1990): John F. MacArthur, Jr., "Faith According to the Apostle James," 13-34; Earl D. Radmacher, "First Response to 'Faith According to the Apostle James,' by John F. MacArthur, Jr.," 35-41; Robert L. Saucy, "Second Response to 'Faith According to the Apostle James' by John F. MacArthur, Jr.," 43-47.

that, with the exception of Philemon, James "is without doubt the least theological of all NT books."³

A natural reading of the epistle fails to uncover hints that a genuine Christian faith will by its very nature produce ongoing good works. If it were not for the clear theological conflict with Pauline justification by faith, such verses as Jas 2:14 would simply be read as an exhortation to add works to one's faith as a means of *gaining* salvation and not as a by-product of it.

The primary purpose of this article is to reexamine the issues in Jas 2:14-26 in light of the gospel debate. We contend that the Jacobean passage does not establish the traditional Reformed theological position that genuine faith always results in consistent, visible works. Instead, it reflects James's exhortations to his readers to add works to their (genuine) faith for progressive sanctification. Our intention is not to examine each verse sequentially nor to present a detailed interpretation. Instead, we will exegetically investigate key points of contention according to their relative importance to the debate. A lengthy theological discussion to define genuine faith will be avoided.⁴ Instead, we will supply the exegetical evidence that eliminates this verse as a prooftext used to define genuine faith.

A few observations should be noted at the outset. It is not denied that genuine faith will result in some change in the believer. Those holding to the Free Grace teaching do not assert that faith can exist without any change whatsoever. Most, if not all, Free Grace proponents, believe that good works will inevitably result from faith, but not necessarily as visibly as we desire them to appear and not necessarily as consistently as

³ Donald W. Burdick, "James," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 12:164.

⁴ John MacArthur voices the opinion that Zane Hodges, a Free Grace scholar, never specifically defines what faith is in his writings. Shortly after his objection, he writes, "Hodges presupposes something of a description of faith, though not really a full definition: 'What faith really is, in biblical language, is receiving the testimony of God. It is the *inward conviction* that what God says to us in the Gospel is true'" [italics in both Hodges and MacArthur] (MacArthur, "James," 15). The real problem seems to be a dissatisfaction with the *way* Free Grace authors define faith. MacArthur elsewhere uses a similar description, drawing from Heb 11:1: "In other words, real faith implicitly takes God at His word. Faith is a supernatural confidence in—and therefore reliance on—the One who made the promises . . . It is a trust that brings absolute here-and-now certainty to 'things hoped for'" (MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 40). I know of no Free Grace advocate who would object to this definition as it stands.

the Lord would desire them to appear. Hodges writes:

We must add that there is no need to quarrel with the Reformers' view that where there is justifying faith, *works will undoubtedly exist too* [italics added]. This is a reasonable assumption for any Christian unless he has been converted on his death bed! But it is quite wrong to claim that a life of dedicated obedience is guaranteed by regeneration, or even that such works as there are must be visible to a human observer. God alone may be able to detect the fruits of regeneration in some of His children.⁵

Charles Ryrie, a Free Grace theologian, views James 2 as explaining a false faith that has no works. On the other hand, he understands that works may not always be evident in a believer's life. He comments, "Every Christian will bear spiritual fruit: somewhere, sometime, somehow."⁶ Three further qualifications are added in his explanation: a believer may not always be fruitful; the fruit may not be outwardly evident; and the fruit may not be my "definition" of what fruit should be.⁷ So while the gospel debate centers on many concepts in James 2, the debate does not hang on coming to the identical conclusions in every point.⁸

II. The Interlocutor of 2:18-19

But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! (Jas 2:18-19)

Whenever it is argued that faith is more than a *mere intellectual assent* (i.e., that faith must also include surrender/commitment to the Lordship of Christ),⁹ reference is hastily made to the demons' faith men-

⁵ Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1989), 215. Unfortunately, this is in the endnotes of the book rather than in the main text.

⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 45. See pages 132-33 for his discussion of James 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁸ Saucy, "Second Response," 46. Having said this, however, we must add that according to MacArthur, "The single factor that distinguishes counterfeit faith from the real thing is the righteous behavior inevitably produced in those who have authentic faith" (MacArthur, "James," 16).

⁹ Although this article cannot discuss it, there are more possibilities for defining genuine faith than just two: "Mere intellectual assent" vis-à-vis commitment to the Lordship of Christ. Some Free Grace theologians, such as Ryrie, reject *both* of these options (Ryrie, *Salvation*, 118-23).

tioned in v 19. It might even be said that Jas 2:19 forms the preeminent argument for the perspective that true faith comprises more than a superficial, intellectual "faith." The appeal is so widespread that it is difficult to find an author holding to the viewpoint who does not employ 2:19 in this way. A few citations will be beneficial.

No more stunning illustration of dead faith has ever been presented [than James 2:19]. Yes, even the demons have faith. Will this "someone" . . . intimate that the demons are saved by their faith; that the Christian to whom he says, "Thou hast faith," need, [sic] no better faith?¹⁰

My question is, what kind of faith is it that permits a person, having affirmed Jesus Christ as Jehovah God, to continue in an unbroken pattern of sin and rebellion? Is that not demonic faith (James 2:19), orthodox but not efficacious?¹¹

Is "faith" minus commitment a true biblical faith? We remember that the apostle James goes so far as to insist . . . that a faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 26). Such "faith" is useless (v. 20), worth nothing (v. 16). It is a claim to faith only (v. 14), not genuine faith, . . . no different from the assent of the demons who "believe . . . and shudder" (Jas 2:19).¹²

James implies [in using 2:19] that demonic faith is greater than fraudulent faith of a false professor, for demonic faith produces fear, whereas unsaved men have "no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). If the demons believe, tremble, and are not saved, what does that say about those who profess to believe and don't even tremble?

(cf. Isa 66:2, 5).¹³

¹⁰ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 585.

¹¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus: What Does Jesus Mean When He Says, 'Follow Me?'* revised and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 74, n. 1; see also page 29, n. 3; pages 38, 186, 235. No less than five different appeals are made to this verse to support the claim that faith without works does not redeem.

In this viewpoint, the problem of unbroken sin and rebellion in a "Christian" is traced to an initial "faith" that was less than a full surrender to the Lordship of Christ. This, of course, does not solve the dilemma. We might just as logically ask, "What kind of faith is it that permits a person, having surrendered fully to the Lordship of Christ (and to all outward appearances lived obediently to Him for years), to fall into and continue in an unbroken pattern of sin and rebellion?"

¹² James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 17.

¹³ MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 151.

A. A Genuine *Crux Interpretum*

In light of how frequently a "false faith" theology is bolstered by a reference to the faith of demons in Jas 2:19, one would think the passage would pose no exegetical difficulties. Surprisingly enough, the very opposite is the case. The problems are so complex that some scholars think 2:18-19 might be the most difficult passage in the entire NT!¹⁴ Hiebert remarks, "Efforts to establish the precise force of the verse [18] have taxed the ingenuity of the commentators."¹⁵ Nevertheless, the confidence in using 2:19 to support a faith-works formula is enthusiastically maintained in spite of the ongoing confusion that arises from 2:18-19. Davids argues that the basic sense of the verses is clear despite the problems.¹⁶ But is it feasible to defend the dominant clarity of the passage when numerous details are so ambiguous? He himself remarks, "It is obvious, then, that none of the solutions to this passage is without its problems."¹⁷

Several others also cast their vote for the clarity of the basic elements regardless of the many obscurities. Chester and Martin believe the section "is notoriously obscure and difficult," but add that the main point is clear: the inseparability of faith and works.¹⁸ Therefore, the preceding testimonies lead us to believe that the text under consideration may justly be called a *crux interpretum*,¹⁹ and those who seek an illustration for some form of "false faith" here should tread the ground more cautiously.²⁰

¹⁴ Martin Dibelius, *James*, ed. Helmut Koester, translated by Michael A. William, revised by Heinrich Greeven (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 154; Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 87.

¹⁵ Hiebert, *James*, 182; cf. also Adamson, *James*, 135.

¹⁶ Davids, *James*, 123; also, "However one reads it [v 18], the essential point James is making is clear" (MacArthur, "James," 24-25).

¹⁷ Davids, *James*, 124.

¹⁸ Andrew Chester and Ralph P. Martin, *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 22.

¹⁹ Cf. Scott McKnight, "James 2:12a: The Unidentifiable Interlocutor," *Westminster Theological Journal* (Fall 1990): 355, who calls 18a "this *crux interpretum*," over against Davids, *James*, 123, who challenges such an idea with, "This is not a *crux interpretum*, for . . . the general sense of the verse is clear enough in its context."

²⁰ Cf. for example, Saucy's opinion: "Surely the demonic faith is used to illustrate a nonsaving faith in the spiritual, eternal sense [emphasis added] . . ." (Saucy, "Second Response," 45).

B. Exegetical Options

To the ordinary reader, options for the interpretation of 2:18-20 are almost too numerous and confusing to decipher. Perhaps the really crucial questions for exegetical consideration include: 1) How far do the words of this imaginary person extend—through the end of v 18, or even into v 19?; and 2) Who is the one mentioned in the introductory statement of 2:18, “But someone may say . . .”? Is he an ally helping James respond to an opponent (or James himself),²¹ simply an opponent,²² or one who gives two viewpoints that somewhat agree with James but add qualifications to the apostle’s perspective?²³ In the latter scenario, the respondent offers a plea for tolerance and pluralism. His suggestion is that both the one who has faith and the one who has works are acceptable before God.

To take the words of the person in 2:18a as an ally or in any way agreeing with James is strange. The only rationale for this sentiment is the fact that this imaginary “someone” claims to have works (2:18b, “and I have works”). But James has just lamented the absence of such works (2:14-16). How can an opponent make such a claim? Seemingly, his self-description has taken up the very position James defends.²⁴ In addition,

²¹ Lenski, *James*, 583; Adamson, *James*, 124-25; J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James, The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Comments*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), 99-100.

²² Davids, *James*, 124; Glaze, “Relationship of Faith to Works,” 40.

²³ Mayor, *James*, 99-101; Polhill, “James,” 400; Burdick, “James,” 183; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistles of James and John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 91; Lorin L. Cranford, “An Exposition of James 2,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 29 (Fall 1986): 27; Douglas J. Moo, *James*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 105-106. This view is reflected in the Good News Bible (Today’s English Version) and NEB translations.

Moo suggests the interlocutor defends a position where one person who has just faith is considered equally acceptable to another who has works. But James declares that the two are inseparable. This interpretation is similar to Erasmus’s conception of the passage as a debate between one side that promoted faith without works and another side that supported works without faith, with James taking a mediating position; Timothy George, “A Right Strawy Epistle: Reformation Perspectives on James,” *Review and Expositor* 83 (Summer 1986): 375.

For a good overview of these alternatives and others, see McKnight, “Interlocutor,” 355-59; Martin, *James*, 86-89.

²⁴ Cranford, “James 2,” 27; McKnight, “Interlocutor,” 355.

reading the verse this way gravely weakens the sense of the adversative *alla* ("but") that begins the introductory formula, "But someone will say."²⁵

But the most serious obstacle to overcome is the nature of the introductory formula itself. This interlocutory style resembles the dialogical Greek diatribe and everywhere the words that follow it contain the comments of an objector.²⁶ According to McKnight,

Scholars are agreed that the introductory formula cannot without violence be taken in any other way than as relaying the view of an interlocutor. Evidence is abundant, including 1 Cor 15:35; Rom 9:19; 11:19; Luke 4:23; Jos. J. W. 2.365; 3.367; 4 Mac 2:24; *Barn.* 9:6; Xen. *Cyr.* 4.3.10.²⁷

The third approach above—that the respondent offers a compromise position to James—runs into equally insurmountable difficulties. For example, it must apply to the personal pronouns "you" and "I" (2:18) an obscure indefiniteness such as, "*One* has faith; *another* has works." Handling the pronouns in such a manner is quite unnatural to NT grammar.²⁸ And like the ally view, it must deny the logical connection between the "someone" of 2:18a with the "someone" of 2:14 and 2:16.²⁹ Interpreting the words of 2:18a and following must involve perceiving them as the words of an opponent.

C. The Content of Faith in 2:19

It is generally thought that the faith of the demons forms a challenge to the objector of 2:18 "to recognize the true nature of an orthodox faith that is inoperative."³⁰ Three primary objections can be raised against the

²⁵ Martin, *James*, 86.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁷ McKnight, "Interlocutor," 356. Davids, *James*, 124, also agrees that the formula introduces an objector since Greek literature has never revealed a common stylistic pattern other than that of introducing a dissenting voice.

²⁸ Martin, *James*, 87; Davids, *James*, 123-23.

²⁹ N. B., Cranford, "James," 27, who denies that the objection of 2:18a is similar to the objection of 2:14 and 2:16. Yet he seems to concede that this understanding of 2:18a seems unnatural. He states: "Quite probable is the view that the objector here is not to be seen in detailed parallel to the *tis* ["someone"] either in verse fourteen or sixteen. Rather it is an objection which James sets up somewhat strangely as a way to call attention to the inseparableness of faith and works."

³⁰ Hiebert, *James*, 186.

supposition that Jas 2:19 proves that true faith involves commitment, works, or some element beyond mental assent (i.e., faith in propositional truth).

First, the content of faith in the passage is not soteriological. It is regularly identified that the statement "You believe that God is one; the demons also believe . . ." is monotheistic and thoroughly Jewish. But no evangelical theologian purports that any individual is ever redeemed by any kind of faith in the oneness of God. What is clear is the fact that "precisely the unique content of the Christian faith is not represented here."³¹ Gordon Clark's question is appropriate: "The text says the devils believed in monotheism. Why cannot the difference between the devils and Christians be the different propositions believed, rather than a psychological element in belief?"³² In other words, the text does not say that the demons believe in Christ as Savior, or even that they believe in Christ as Savior and Lord. Those who use the illustration of the demons' faith

³¹ Dibelius, *James*, 158.

³² Gordon H. Clark, *The Johannine Logos* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.), 81; see also Ryrie, *Salvation*, 121-22. At this point, the popular distinction between a head belief and a heart belief naturally comes to mind, the former involving merely an "intellectual assent" and the latter involving some additional element of commitment or reliance. That man can be so truncated as to be able to sincerely believe with his mind (i.e., a false faith) yet not believe with his heart is theologically suspect. If the head represents the intellect while the heart represents the will, what place do the emotions have in the faith process? Could a person have an insufficient faith because he has believed with his mind (head) and submitted his will (heart) but has not believed with his emotions? Even Clark, who is a Reformed theologian, expresses strong sentiments against the head-heart division. He has evinced from the use of *pistis* ("faith") in the Gospel of John that genuine faith can certainly be an intellectual assent, i.e., that the fundamental meaning of *pistis* is belief in a proposition (cf. the very purpose statement of the Gospel, John 20:31). "There is no antithesis between believing Jesus as a person and believing what he says" (Clark, *Logos*, 71). There are not three options: false faith, true faith, and no faith. Only two options present themselves on the pages of Scripture: faith and no faith.

Rakestraw points out that in Jas 2:19 the text says that the demons "believe that . . ." (*pisteuō + hoti*), not "believe in . . ." Therefore, the faith under discussion is intellectual and lacks the commitment necessary for true faith (Rakestraw, 'James 2:12-26,' 36). But the very same construction is used no less than twelve times in the Gospel of John alone to connote genuine faith, including the purpose statement in John 20:31. Other references include 6:69; 8:24; 11:27, 42; 13:19; 14:10-11; 16:27, 30; 17:8, 21.

to prove the existence of a false intellectual faith that does not redeem, are “comparing apples with oranges.” Therefore, it is pressing the case too far to find in this passage an example of the kind of false faith that is inadequate to regenerate because it fails to produce consistent works. This argument has no clear value.

D. Demons and People: An Illogical Comparison

A second major objection to the traditional proof-texting of 2:19 is this: No faith the demons have can be compared with faith that people have. Even if the text read, “You believe that Jesus is the Christ [cf. John 20:31]; . . . The demons also believe . . .,” an inadequacy in comparison would still be evident. Although the words for “faith” are never used elsewhere for the response of demons, it is true that in the Gospels the demons know that Jesus is the Son of God (Matt 8:29).³³ They even yield to his Lordship (Mark 1:24; 5:7; Matt 8:29-30).

Nevertheless, if demons had faith in Christ, i.e., if they trusted in His sacrifice for their redemption, they would not be born again. It would not matter whether the faith was intellectual assent or full surrender. There simply is no redemption for demons (Heb 2:14). On the other hand, whenever a person trusts in Christ solely as his sinbearer, he is forensically justified.³⁴ In regard to eternal salvation, demons and people cannot be compared. Evangelicals should abandon their use of Jas 2:19 if for no other reason than this: The faith of demons cannot and should not be compared with the faith of human beings.

E. The Opponent Speaks in 2:19

Yet a third consideration demands our attention in 2:19. We have in the words *all' erei tis* (“But someone will say”) the obvious introduction of an objector. But what follows seems to be a reversal of what we

³³ Wilkin holds that the fear exhibited by the demons is evidence that they really do believe in monotheism (Robert N. Wilkin, “An Exegetical Evaluation of the Reformed Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints” [Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982], 11). Polhill’s comment is interesting: “*More than mere intellectual assent* is involved in the demonic acknowledgment of God,” in that they fully recognized who Jesus was and understood that their very existence was in his control [*italics added*] (Polhill, “James 2,” 404, n 28). Despite this admission, he uses 2:19 to establish that James’s concern is an intellectual-assent-only faith (page 400).

³⁴ James is in agreement with all of the NT in making Christ the object of faith (2:1).

might expect: James is said to have faith while the objector claims to have works. Dibelius comes to the conclusion that the text has suffered corruption, making the passage impervious.³⁵ But the solution may be found by discovering how far the objector's words extend.³⁶ Hodges perceptively asks, "Is it possible that the exegetical difficulties involved here are actually due to a failure to read *all* the objector's words?" [*italics original*].³⁷

Once again the options are sundry. A survey of the placement of quotation marks in various translations of Jas 2:18-20 shows that as many as four possibilities exist. They are arranged below with a representative translation, starting from the shortest suggested words of the objector down to the longest. The underlined portion reflects the placement of the quotation marks in each version.

Option #1: Moffatt³⁸

¹⁸Someone will object, "*And you claim to have faith!*" Yes, and I claim to have deeds as well; you show me your faith without any deeds, and I will show you by my deeds what faith is! ¹⁹You believe in one God? Well and good. So do the devils, and they shudder. ²⁰But will you understand, you senseless fellow, that faith without deeds is dead?

Option #2: NIV³⁹

¹⁸But someone will say, "*You have faith; I have deeds.*" Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. ²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

³⁵ Dibelius, *James*, 157-58.

³⁶ "The first investigation incumbent upon the interpreter is to determine how far the opponent's objection extends and where the author's words begin again" (*Ibid.*, 154). On the other hand, McKnight holds that the beginning of James's response in 2:18b is one of the "elements of exegesis which, if not certain, [is] unquestionably on the side of probability." He spends only one sentence to decide the case (McKnight, 'Interlocutor,' 359-60).

³⁷ Zane C. Hodges, "Light on James Two From Textual Criticism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120 (October 1963):343.

³⁸ James Moffatt, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1926).

³⁹ Cf. also RSV, NRSV, NKJV, NAB, GNB (Today's English Version), Berkeley, NEB (loosely).

Option #3: NASB⁴⁰

¹⁸But someone may well say, "*You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*" ¹⁹You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

Option #4: Weymouth⁴¹

¹⁸Nay, someone will say, "*You have faith, I have actions; prove to me your faith from corresponding actions and I will prove mine to you by my actions.*" ¹⁹You believe that God is one, and you are quite right: evil spirits also believe this, and shudder." ²⁰But, idle boaster, are you willing to be taught how it is that faith apart from obedience is worthless?

As is obvious from these options, the Greek text does not contain some form of inspired punctuation to help decide the case. So how are these options to be settled? While the literature complicates the decisions, insight is available. As we have already concluded, the phrase, "But someone will say," undoubtedly contains a standard formula for introducing an objection. Hodges expresses the opinion that *ō anthrōpe kene* ("You foolish man") can be best understood as James's response to the objector, whose words carry through two verses (2:18-19), not one. This is the pattern taken by the Weymouth version in the fourth option above. Convincing support for this conception is found in the similar biblical parallels in 1 Cor 15:36 and Rom 9:19 where the rebuttals commence with a rebuking appellative strikingly parallel to Jas 2:20.⁴² For consistency, the NASB is used without its quotation marks for all the verses in the following chart:

Jas 2:18-20	1 Cor 15:35-36	Rom 9:19-20
Introductory Formula		
But someone may well say,	But someone will say,	You will say to me then,

⁴⁰ Cf. also Phillips, New Century Version, The Webster Bible (1833), Douay Version.

⁴¹ Richard F. Weymouth, *The New Testament in Modern Speech* (London: James Clark and Company, 1905); cf. also Williams version, *The New Testament* (1986 ed. only); *Young's Literal Translation* (1898); and Martin, *James*, 76-77, 88-89, 90, who holds this option with reservations.

⁴² Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistle of James* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1994), 65; see also the same author's work, *Dead Faith: What Is It?* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1987), 16-17.

Objector's Words

You have faith, and I
have works; show me
your faith without the
works, and I will show
you my faith by works.
You believe that God
is one. Yo do well; the
demons also believe
and shudder.

How are the dead raised?	Why does He still
And with what kind	find fault? For who
of body do they come?	resists His will?

Apostle's Response

But are you willing to
recognize, you foolish
fellow, that faith with-
out works is useless?

You fool! That which	On the contrary,
you sow does not come	who are you, O man,
to life unless it dies . . .	who answers back
	to God?

As can be seen in the chart, in both of the Pauline texts the rejoinder to the imaginary objector begins with a pronouncement of the man's foolishness. But in James, the remark about the objector's folly comes at the beginning of verse 20, not in verse 18 or 19. If this is accepted, the counterproposal to James encompasses all of 2:18-19.⁴³ These parallel stylistic structures make it nearly impossible to take the text in any other way than that 2:18-19 is a complete unit—the entire words of an opponent to James.⁴⁴ Although secular literature can also be cited with the same stylistic blueprint, the biblical pattern is convincing in and of itself.⁴⁵

McKnight, attempting to confirm the unity of 2:18b-19 (but as the response from James), really gives evidence of the unity of all of

⁴³ Others who take the two verses as a unit (but as an ally to James) include Mayor, *James*, 101; Robert Johnstone, *A Commentary on James*, revised ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 188-91.

⁴⁴ Lenski rejects these parallels, arguing that both the form of these biblical texts and the parallels in secular literature are different from James. Why he thinks so is not given. It is more likely that he is viewing the words in 2:18b from his inclination that they are the words of an ally. This influences his interpretation (Lenski, *James*, 583).

⁴⁵ For an overview of the parallels in secular literature, see Dibelius, *James*, 154, n. 29.

2:18-19 (apart from the introductory formula, of course). In a footnote he observes:

Observe the neat structure of 2:14-26: (1) 2:14 and 2:17 form an inclusio, both verbally (cf. *erga de mē echē* ["and he does not have works"] and *mē echē erga* ["it does not have works"]) and rhetorically (question/conclusion); (2) 2:20 forms an inclusio with 2:26 both rhetorically (question/conclusion) and materially (cf. *argē* ["useless"] with *nekra* ["dead"]).⁴⁶

Martin, citing R. W. Wall's unpublished article on the passage, lists two other supports for extending the objector's statement through the end of 2:19: 1) a chiasmic structure is found in 2:18-19; and 2) the rebuke in verse 20 is so severe that it necessitates more than a briefly stated objection.⁴⁷ But added to that is the salient affinity between *sy pistin echeis* ("you [yourself] have faith") in 2:18 and *sy pisteueis* ("you [yourself] believe") in 2:19, making it all the more likely that both verses come from the mouth of the same person.

What then is the meaning intended by the zealous antagonist?⁴⁸ Only a brief answer can be offered here. With the help of textual criticism, the *chōris* ("without") of 18b is best replaced by the superior reading of

⁴⁶ McKnight, "Interlocutor," 363, n. 38. The inclusion between 2:20 and 2:26 is strengthened if we read the *nekra* ["dead"] of the Majority Text in 2:20.

⁴⁷ R. W. Wall, "Interlocutor and James, James 2:18-20 Reconsidered," unpublished article cited in Martin, *James*, 76-77. In the 1 Corinthians and Romans 9 parallels, the objector's words carry for two sentences, not one. This backs up Wall's observation about the rebuke necessitating more than a concise protest. Regrettably, the chiasmic structure is not printed in Martin's commentary.

⁴⁸ A defense of the meaning of the text is not crucial for our thesis. The point to be stressed is that the words of 2:19 are the opinions of an opponent of James, not the theology of James himself! Therefore, Heide seems to be missing the point in stating, "Whether James or some supposed debater is speaking in verse 19 is of little consequence to this debate . . . James ultimately agrees with what is being said" (Heide, "James 2:14," 95). Heide's thought is that 2:14-17 and 2:20-26 still teach that a dead faith is an intellectual faith that does not redeem, regardless of how we interpret 2:19. But it may also be that Jas 2:19 has been unconsciously applied to 2:14-26 to prove that a dead faith is a false faith. Once this theology has permeated the passage, there is no further need for Heide and others to use 2:19. The intellectual, false faith theology stands by itself throughout 2:14-26. Despite Heide's disclaimer, the identity of the spokesperson in 2:19 has significant consequences for the debate, as was documented in the introduction to this article.

ek ("by") found in the Majority Text and the Textus Receptus (but omitted from the KJV).⁴⁹ The resultant meaning is a challenge by the objector for faith to be demonstrated by works (2:18). His challenge is reflected in the words *deixon moi* ("Show me") and *soi deixō* ("I will show you"). The point of the demonstration lies in the supposed impossibility of displaying any works that can prove the existence of faith since two disparate "works" arise from the same affirmation of faith. The demons believe there is one God and tremble; James believes the same thing but does good works.⁵⁰

In modern terms, the imaginary objector might have said, "James, you start with a doctrinal point, and show me what good work proves you believe this. If you can do that, I'll do the reverse. I'll name a good work and show what doctrine must be behind it. It's impossible! For example, James, you believe that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And you have a monogamous marriage. But the Mormons believe that too, and some of them are polygamous. So works can't show us anything about a person's faith. No one can *see* faith."

By so arguing, the objector hopes to salvage some value for a verbalized faith.⁵¹ James had stated that both speaking and acting on our faith in the Lord Jesus (2:12 with 2:1) were required of the believer, and that works show us that one's faith is living and vital (2:17).⁵² Therefore,

⁴⁹ Wall, "Interlocutor and James," cited in Martin, *James*, 76-77. The Weymouth version appears to read the *ek* also. The reading of *ek* ["by"] is certainly the *lectio difficilior*. Internal evidence, such as the chiastic structure discussed below, helps confirm this reading. For a defense of this reading together with a fuller explanation of the meaning, see either work by Hodges, "Light on James Two," 343-47 or *Dead Faith*, 16-17.

⁵⁰ That *kalōs poieis* ("you do well" or "you do right") can be rendered this way (= "you do good [works]") is seen from its use in Luke 6:27 and Matt 5:24; 12:12; cf. also *kalōs poieite* ("you are doing what is right/good") in Jas 2:8 and *kalon poiein* ("to do what is right/good") in Jas 4:17.

⁵¹ The theme of an undisciplined tongue flows throughout the book of James, and begins as early as 1:13, "let no one *say* when he is tested . . ." Many among James's readers were verbalizing this misconception of the nature of their trials. James 2:14 fits into this theme. As a Christian, to *say* that I have faith (2:14) but not involve myself in good deeds is a sin of my tongue as well as a sin of my life.

⁵² "Dead faith" for James does not mean a false faith but a useless faith. A productive faith is his theme from the beginning. His directions are to count trials as joyful "because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (NIV, 1:3-4). This productive-faith theme must be allowed to impact our thinking of James 2 (cf. 2:22).

works can demonstrate one's faith. The opponent disagrees, speculating that no one can see the vitality of faith by works. The following rebuttal by James is designed to prove that faith was surely visible through the works of Abraham. The only way to *see* faith is through works; to merely talk our faith is useless to meet practical needs (cf. 2:15-16 where someone speaks but doesn't act). The *blepeis* ("you [singular] see") in 2:22 is then directed toward the challenge of *deixon moi* ("Show me," 2:18) by the objector. The *horate* ("you see"), now moving to the plural, draws the readership back into the truth that James is stressing.

Perhaps the following analysis will assist us to understand this interpretation of the opponent's words. The text reveals an internal chiasmic format underlying the challenge to James. The translation follows the Majority Text⁵³ and should be read from the top down, and from left to right. The chiasmic format is incomplete (the bottom right) because: 1) the imaginary opponent has supplied James's response for him, and 2) the opponent does not hold that a further reply by James is possible.

		The Starting Point:	The Challenge:	Exhibit A:	Exhibit B:
			Works Do Not Show One's Faith	James Has Faith and Good Works	Demons Have Faith and No Good Works
		2:18a	2:18b	2:19a	2:19b
James	A ¹ Faith	You have faith	Show me your faith	You believe that God is one	The demons also believe
		↓	↓	↓	↓
	B ¹ Works		by your works	You do well!	and shudder
			↓	↓	
Objector	B ² Works	and I have works	and I will show you by my works		
	A ² Faith		my faith		

⁵³ *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, ed. Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2nd ed., 1982).

III. Conclusion

This study has attempted to establish numerous precautions against using Jas 2:19 as a proof-text for the concept and theology of a "false faith." First, any passage that is fraught with such comprehensive exegetical challenges should not be a primary (and perhaps not even a secondary) foundation for a theological superstructure. But this is exactly how Jas 2:19 has been employed by many evangelicals. Those using the verse to promote the existence of a supposed "head faith" over against genuine faith should be more circumspect in their handling of the passage on this ground alone.

Further serious caveats have been highlighted. Two factors render the application of demonic faith to earthly living completely inappropriate: 1) The content of faith that the demons are said to possess is not the content of faith for eternal life; and 2) Any possible faith that demons can possess—whether it is intellectual assent or full and complete surrender to the Lordship of Christ—cannot gain eternal life for them. There is no redemption for the evil angels. It is illogical to compare faith of the spirit world with faith in the human realm.

Finally, it has been demonstrated that the words of Jas 2:19 are not spoken by James himself. Instead, Jas 2:18-19 as a whole comes from the mouth of the imaginary objector introduced in 2:18a. It should be obvious that if this is the case, Evangelicals will need to abandon the use of this verse to establish orthodox definitions of faith. Should we teach as truth that which comes from the mouth of an objector to the apostle James?

SOTERIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF FIVE-POINT CALVINISM

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I. Introduction

The theological issues relating to the doctrines of election and salvation have been covered extensively in recent years. Basically, there are four views on election:

- 1) God elected those individuals who would be saved based on His foreknowledge that they would believe;
- 2) God unconditionally elected individuals He would save based on His sovereign choice alone;
- 3) God elected those individuals who would be saved, yet also gave them the free will to choose whether or not to believe (a seeming paradox);
- 4) God elected those who would be saved through the "Elect One," Jesus Christ; all who by faith are "in Christ" are elect in that corporate Body.¹

None of these views is without some difficult exegetical problems in Scripture. However, I find the theology of five-point Calvinism (view #2 above²) to be inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture.

It is not the purpose of this essay to respond to specific issues in the doctrine of election and salvation. Exponents of free grace salvation have discussed biblical and exegetical problems with the doctrines of five-point Calvinism.³ Rather, the purpose of this essay is to discuss the

¹ Of these views, I can accept the tension of the third, but lean toward the "corporate election" position.

² Five-point Calvinism is also known variously as Classical Calvinism, Neo-Puritanism, or experimental Predestinarianism. Its implications are often exhibited in the teachings of Lordship Salvation.

³ For a catalogue of passages affecting this question, and extensive exegetical discussion of the issues, I highly recommend Joseph Dillow's book *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle Publishing Company, 1992).

implications of this doctrine.

II. Five-Point Calvinism and the Attributes of God

Classical Calvinists sometimes state that the individual unconditional election view is necessary to account for God's attributes. They emphasize God's sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and immutability. But do corporate election and free will disregard God's attributes? Let me offer a few thoughts.

1) What takes the greater power (omnipotence): to create beings who have no ability to choose—who are mere pawns on God's cosmic chessboard—or to create beings who have the freedom to accept or reject God's salvation? I submit, the latter. How powerful is God? Powerful enough to save sinners? Yes. Powerful enough to change sinners into obedient saints? Yes. Powerful enough to keep saved sinners saved, even if they fail to always live faithful, obedient lives? Yes. This, I submit, is the real demonstration of the power of God's salvation in Christ. When we stand in glory, we will see many who apparently by human standards did not measure up. Their Christian growth was stunted, their witness non-existent, and their obedience inconsistent. And then we will truly grasp the power of God's saving grace—a grace that is greater than all our sin.

2) What about the divine attribute of love, which so essentially reflects the nature of God (1 John 4:8)? Would a God who ordained the existence of immortal beings without making any provision for them to escape eternal torment be a cruel being? What kind of God would call on mankind to "believe and be saved" when He knows they cannot? Suppose you are out on a cruise in your luxurious yacht. You receive a distress signal, and come upon the site of a shipwreck with 30 or 40 people still thrashing about in the water. It turns out they are thugs—pirates out to loot vessels just like yours—whose ship went down. These people have no merit which would motivate you to save them, but you are moved with love for them nevertheless—you can't bear to watch them drown. So you instruct one of your servants to get a lifesaver ready, and—at random—pick out three or four, and haul them aboard. Then, disregarding the rest, you head for shore. Is this mercy and love? Admittedly, the parallel is not perfect, but it illustrates a truth: If God elects individuals to salvation, and could have elected as many as He wanted (none of whom was deserving) why would He only elect some?

3) Concerning the nature of love, what kind of relationship is there between God and people who could never choose Him—but are “irresistibly” called? A seminary professor of mine used to say that forced love is not love. God does not force His love on people.

For these and other reasons, I question the idea that individual unconditional election and five-point Calvinism best reflects the attributes of God. A God who sovereignly offers salvation to all through His elect Savior reflects both power and love. In addition to the question of divine attributes, however, there are ramifications of this doctrinal decision for each person’s life and ministry. On this point both sides agree. It is to these implications that we now turn.

III. Getting Our Theological Bearings

Some time ago I received a letter from *Insight for Living* ministry. In the letter, Chuck Swindoll looked back over his years in pastoral ministry and listed some of the lessons he had learned. One of those he mentioned was this: *I have learned that thinking theologically pays off, big time!* Thinking theologically means that you look at a system of doctrine not in isolation, but in conjunction with other biblical truth. How does it fit? What does it mean? We all need to begin thinking theologically.

It is like having a long line of dominoes. You knock over the first one, and all the others eventually fall. Thinking theologically is like looking ahead—seeing what dominoes will fall if you knock over the first one. It means asking the question, “What are the ramifications of this doctrine? Where does it lead?”

This means, of course, that you must understand the meaning of the five points of “Classical” Calvinism. Let me take a run at it. The five points are:

Total Depravity
Unconditional Election
Limited Atonement
Irresistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints.⁴

⁴ These were created at the Synod of Dort in 1619, and affirmed by the Westminster Assembly in 1648. They stand or fall as a unit. For example, a theologian might well reject “U” (unconditional election) because he is convinced that “L” is unbiblical.

According to the Classical Calvinists' system, man is *totally depraved*—by which they mean he cannot even respond to the Gospel message. These individuals are “dead” and must be regenerated *before* they can even have faith! This leads to *unconditional election*, meaning that God sovereignly (arbitrarily) chose those who would be saved, and thus, there is a *limited atonement* (atonement is “limited” to those He chooses). This in turn implies *irresistible grace*, since no one whom God elects will be lost (no one who is elected can reject Christ, just as no one who is not elected can receive Him). Finally, this leads to *perseverance of the saints*, meaning, to Classical Calvinists, *not* simply that the believer is eternally secure, but that the true believer will never fall away.⁵ A life of faithful obedience, therefore, is an inevitable result of salvation.

Most Christians have heard of T-U-L-I-P. I submit that a tulip is a beautiful flower, but it is bad theology. The fruit of the flower is appealing; the fruit of the theology is appalling.⁶

⁵ There are various views on the precise meaning of “falling away,” but in general it means that the “true” Christian will continue in good works, and not lapse permanently into sinfulness.

⁶ As previously noted, Classical Calvinist teaching is popularly seen in Lordship Salvation theology, which is an application of “P” (Perseverance of the Saints) to the message of the Gospel. It is defended by men like Walter Chantry, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970); James M. Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986); John F. MacArthur, Jr. *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), *Faith Works* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993); John H. Gerstner *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991); R. C. Sproul, and J. I. Packer (various writings), and numerous other Reformed theologians. Because of his adherence to pre-millennial dispensationalism (a position traditionally rejected by Classical Calvinists), MacArthur has become to many the most visible defender of this theology. However, he is only expressing doctrine which was developed in the writings of theologians since the days of the Puritans, and was codified in the Westminster Confession. For an example of his allegiance to Westminster teaching, see *Faith Works*, 180-81. For the purposes of contemporary understanding, the student should consider, therefore, this response to be a criticism of Lordship Salvation doctrine.

IV. What "TULIP" Does to the Gospel Message

The first area in which this issue makes a difference is in the Gospel message. What is it that we are to tell a person when we witness? What is the good news?

The gospel message of Classical Five-Point Calvinism is often expressed in a way which makes faith and works necessary for salvation.

Understand *why*: It is because man is spiritually dead, and is regenerated by God apart from any response on the part of man, and because God's purpose cannot be thwarted ("true" faith cannot fail to issue in works), that a saved person will inevitably and absolutely "persevere" in the faith. Thus, works, as an *inevitable result*, are necessary for salvation.

To be fair, we should note that Classical Calvinists usually object to this by describing the gospel message as *not* "faith + works = justification," but "faith = justification + works."⁷ I submit that anyone with a basic knowledge of logic can easily demonstrate that these two end up in the same place.

In the first equation, faith alone does not lead to justification; works must be added. But in the second, once again faith alone does not lead to justification; if works do not follow, then there was no faith. This is no more than a word game. It is best seen in the old Calvinist saying: "You are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves you is never alone." Let me complete it: "You are saved by faith alone (apart from works), but the faith that saves you is never alone (apart from works)." This is internally inconsistent.

Suppose you go to a car lot to buy a used car, and purchase a car for \$5,000. If you have the \$5,000, you may pay it right then. If you don't, the salesman may arrange a loan for you to pay it back over a period of years. But does the fact that you don't pay anything up front mean that you got the car free? Absolutely not. You are paying for it—the payment is just an inevitable result of your buying the car. To paraphrase the Classical Calvinist saying: "You are a car-owner by signing a sales agreement alone (apart from any money changing hands), but the signing of a sales agreement by which you are a car-owner is never alone (apart from money changing hands)." If the money doesn't change hands, you lose the car (this wording reflects Arminian theology; in Calvinist theology, you never had the car in the first place!).

So too it is foolishness to say that salvation is by faith alone, but that faith is not true faith unless it comes with works. Let's be honest: this is

⁷ See, for example, MacArthur, Jr., *Faith Works*, 87f.

salvation by works. And in unguarded moments—and increasingly boldly in our day—Classical Calvinists often say exactly this.

John Gerstner is one such theologian. He writes:

From the essential truth that no sinner in himself can merit salvation, the antinomian draws the erroneous conclusion that good works need not accompany faith in the saint. The question is not whether good works are necessary to salvation, but in what way they are necessary. As the inevitable outworking of saving faith, they are necessary for salvation.

And again:

Thus, good works may be said to be a condition for obtaining salvation in that they inevitably accompany genuine faith.⁸

The apostle Paul would never agree with this! In fact, he is precise on the distinction between faith and works. For example:

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Rom 4:4-5).

In Galatians 2:16, with an eye toward the legalistic theology of the Judaizers, he writes:

... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified.

And again,

... not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5-6).

⁸ Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 210. This is not a new view. Arthur Pink, a well-known five-point Calvinist is called by some “a Puritan born out of time.” In *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 600, cited in Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, 11f., he quotes John Owens—the prince of Puritan expositors—with approval: “but yet our own diligent endeavor is such an *indispensable means* for that end, as that without it, it will not be brought about . . . If we are in Christ, God hath given us the lives of our souls, and hath taken upon Himself, in His covenant, the preservation of them. But yet we may say, with reference unto the *means* that He hath appointed, when storms and trials arise, *unless we use our diligent endeavors, we cannot be saved.*”

Of course, Lordship Salvation theologians know these Scriptures too. So how can they support works as necessary for salvation? They do it by creating two categories, *non-meritorious works* (works which *inevitably result* from salvation), and *meritorious works* (works which result in salvation). The former verify or validate one's salvation; the latter, of course, are impossible. These two categories of works result in comments like these from MacArthur:

Meritorious works have nothing to do with faith. But *faith works* have everything to do with it . . . faith that does not produce works is dead faith, inefficacious faith. Faith that remains idle is no better than the faith the demons display.⁹

Again on the same page:

The believer himself contributes nothing *meritorious* [italics mine] to the saving process.¹⁰

Later in the same book, he again writes:

As we have seen time and time again in our study, *meritorious works* [italics mine] have no place in salvation.¹¹

Likewise Gerstner, in his book attacking dispensationalists, writes that

virtually all dispensationalists, do not see the elementary difference between *non-meritorious* "requirements," "conditions," "necessary obligations," "indispensable duties," and "musts," as the natural out-working of true faith, in distinction from faith in the Savior *plus meritorious works* as the very basis of salvation.¹²

Guilty as charged! I confess, I do not see this distinction in Scripture. In fact it isn't there. It exists in Classical Calvinist/Lordship Salvation theology, but not in the Bible. Works are works; they either are or are not necessary for salvation. With the apostle Paul, I say they are not; we are saved "by grace . . . through faith . . . not of works" (Eph 2:8-9).

While more could be said here, we now move on to one other area in which the TULIP doctrines of Lordship Salvation affect Christian life and ministry.

⁹ MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 53, italics his.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 207. He goes on to state that while works do not contribute to our salvation, failure to do those works we know we should do means we are not saved.

¹² Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 226.

V. What "TULIP" Does to Assurance of Salvation

Few long-cherished doctrines of believers are more under attack today than the belief in the possibility of assurance of salvation. Can you know that you are saved? Most believers would probably answer that question in the affirmative—even if their lives might not be shining examples of Christian growth. But the teaching of TULIP would allow them no such assurance.

Absolute assurance of salvation is impossible in Classical Five-Point Calvinism and Lordship Theology.

Hard to believe . . . but demonstrably true.

Understand *why*: Since works are an *inevitable* outcome of "true" salvation, one can only know he or she is saved by the presence of good works.¹³ But since no one is perfect (although some consistent five-point Calvinists believe in "sinless perfection"), any assurance is at best imperfect as well. Therefore, you may *think* you believed in Jesus Christ, may *think* you had saving faith, but be sadly mistaken. To explain this, Calvinist theologians must create two kinds of faith, "spurious" faith (faith that does not save) and "genuine" faith (faith that results in works, and thus saves). This distinction is common in classical Calvinist writings. For example:

There is a spurious as well as a genuine faith. *Every man, when he thinks he believes, is conscious of exercising what he thinks is faith.* Such is the correct statement of these facts of consciousness. Now suppose the faith, of which the man is conscious, turns out a spurious faith, must not his be a spurious consciousness? And he, being without the illumination of the Spirit, will be in the dark as to its hollowness.¹⁴

In other words, you may *think* you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, yet be unsaved, and because unsaved, be totally blind to the fact you are unsaved! This reminds me of something I heard John MacArthur say on my car radio one day while driving in Kansas. It so startled me at the time that I stopped the car and wrote it down.

¹³ Classical Calvinists actually base assurance on three foundations: 1) God's promises of saving and keeping, 2) the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, and 3) the saints' perseverance. However, only the third of these is observable on a personal level; thus it is the only real basis of assurance. See MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 184-92, and James M. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 431-40.

¹⁴ Robert L. Dabney, *Discussions by Robert L. Dabney*, n.d., 180-81.

He was calling on listeners to examine themselves to see if they were really saved. He said:

“You may be a spiritual defector who hasn’t defected yet.”

Just think! You may have trusted Christ, been baptized, and be preparing for full-time vocational Christian service, but you can’t know whether you’re saved; you may just be fooled.

R. C. Sproul, a well-known Calvinist, in an article entitled “Assurance of Salvation,” writes:

There are people in this world who are not saved, but who are convinced that they are. The presence of such people causes genuine Christians to doubt their salvation. After all, we wonder, suppose I am in this category? Suppose I am mistaken about my salvation and am really going to hell? How can I know that I am a real Christian?

A while back I had one of those moments of acute self-awareness that we have from time to time, and suddenly the question hit me: ‘R.C., what if you are not one of the redeemed? What if your destiny is not heaven after all, but hell?’ Let me tell you that I was flooded in my body with a chill that went from my head to the bottom of my spine. I was terrified.

I tried to grab hold of myself. I thought, ‘Well, it’s a good sign that I’m worried about this. Only true Christians really care about salvation.’ But then I began to take stock of my life, and I looked at my performance. My sins came pouring into my mind, and the more I looked at myself, the worse I felt. I thought, ‘Maybe it’s really true. Maybe I’m not saved after all.’

I went to my room and began to read the Bible. On my knees I said, ‘Well, here I am. I can’t point to my obedience. There’s nothing I can offer. I can rely only on Your atonement for my sins. I can only throw myself on your mercy.’ Even then I knew that some people only flee to the Cross to escape hell, not out of a real turning to God. I could not be sure about my own heart and motivation. Then I remembered John 6:68. Jesus had been giving out hard teaching, and many of His former followers had left Him. When He asked Peter if he was also going to leave, Peter said, ‘Where else can we go? Only You have words of eternal life.’ In other words, Peter was also uncomfortable, but he realized that being uncomfortable with Jesus was better than any other option.¹⁵

¹⁵ This article is found in *TableTalk*, a publication of Sproul’s own Ligonier Ministries, November, 1989, 20.

What a ghastly view! We are left in this lifetime in an uncomfortable quandary—unable to know whether we are saved or not! This view was expressed a few years ago by a former seminary professor. In a debate at seminary he said that no one could be 100% sure he was saved. He pegged 99.9% as the maximum amount of certainty (is that “certainty”?) one could have. On the basis of his life and works, he claimed to be 99% sure he was saved, but admitted he might be far less “certain.” You could have cut the air with a knife when a student stood during the question and answer time and asked with incredulity if she could ever know she was saved.¹⁶

When our assurance of salvation is based *at all* on our works, we can never have absolute assurance! This is reflected in a reluctance among Lordship theologians to talk about assurance of salvation, particularly with new believers, and especially with children.¹⁷ After all, until they have lived out their lives, they can’t know whether they might fall away from the faith, and thus prove that they were never really saved in the first place. Once again, in their system, practical assurance of salvation is dependent on our works, not on the finished work of Christ.

But does Scripture discourage giving objective assurance of salvation? Hardly! On the contrary, the Lord Jesus (John 5:24), Paul (Rom 8:38-39), and John (1 John 5:11-13) have no qualms about offering absolute, objective assurance of salvation. Furthermore, works are *never* included as a requirement for assurance.¹⁸

Does the Bible teach that sinning “Christians” are really unsaved? Not at all! The Corinthians were far from spiritually mature, yet Paul calls them “babes in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1-4). God wants us to *know* that we are His children, not to *doubt* it. He does not make sonship contingent on obedience. But does He want us to change? Does He chasten us like a loving father? Does the Holy Spirit grieve when we stray from Him?

¹⁶ For other examples in writing, see Boice, *Christ’s Call to Discipleship*, 166f; Chantry, *Today’s Gospel*, 73-77; MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 23, 178, 189-94.

¹⁷ John MacArthur, in discussing how we should witness to children, writes: “It is the Holy Spirit’s task, not ours, to offer assurance . . . so don’t overemphasize objective assurance with children” (*Faith Works*, 209). And why not? Because some “who profess Christ in childhood turn away” (210).

¹⁸ Second Corinthians 13:5 and 2 Pet 1:10, two passages commonly cited as proof that works are necessary for assurance of salvation, are actually both addressing the issue of *faithfulness* in the Christian life and the consequent reception of *rewards*. See Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, 295-300.

Does God remain faithful to us even when we are unfaithful toward Him? Yes, yes, and again yes!

The best evidence that a life of good works is *not* an inevitable outcome of salvation is the NT itself. Why do the writers of the epistles constantly concern themselves with exhorting believers to good works if such works are inevitable? After all, God's purpose, if it cannot be thwarted, would mean that those believers would never stray from the truth, would never fall into sin, and in fact—if we are honest with Scripture—would never sin, period (1 John 3:9). But over and over again we find appeals for Christians to live lives consistent with their faith. Why? One Lordship Salvation teacher told me he thought it was because Paul and other NT authors knew that in the churches to which they were writing there was a mixture of believers and unbelievers, and they were just covering all the bases. Historically, this is doubtful, but even if it were true, it doesn't explain the passages, because the writers *base their appeals to live godly lives on the faith which exists in their readers* (see Rom 12:1f; Eph 4:1f; Col 2:6f; etc.) Did Paul doubt Timothy's salvation? (See 1 Tim 6:11-14, 20-21; 2 Tim 1:8f, 13; 2:1, 3ff, 15, 21; 3:14f!) What about Philemon (8-10)? Obviously, these calls to holiness are made because the NT writers knew that believers are not infallible, that they are still tempted to sin, tempted to relax, prone to evil. All fallen creation is bound in this sinful sphere; that's why Paul writes in Rom 8:22-25 that all creation, including believers, longingly awaits Christ's return when we will finally be freed from the presence of sin and become what we should be.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, let us make some observations.

1) The astute listener—and theological thinker—will realize that the classical Calvinist doctrine of salvation is *functionally* the same as the Arminian doctrine. Arminian theology teaches that you are saved by faith, but that you stay saved by works. Classical Calvinist theology teaches that you are saved by faith, but if you don't have works, you were never saved in the first place. Both systems of theology make works necessary for salvation. This shared doctrine was noted by a recognized authority on Calvinism, R. T. Kendall, in his Oxford University Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. In the introduction he notes that his study shows "the surprising degree of reciprocity that exists between Westminster theology and the

doctrine of faith in Jacobus Arminius."¹⁹ Today, many have come to see this.

2) Another curious parallel is evident between Classical Calvinist theology and Roman Catholic theology. The two share an inclusion of works in the gospel message, and an impossibility of assurance of salvation. Although MacArthur would loathe the association, I do not see the practical difference between his statement on salvation²⁰ and that of Roman Catholicism.²¹ Both hold to the primacy of God's grace; both include the necessity of our works. Apart from theological name-calling and the *ex nihilo* creation of sub-categories of faith (spurious and genuine) and works (meritorious and non-meritorious), there is no functional disagreement.

This fact is especially important to understand in light of recent attempts by Protestant and Roman Catholic church leaders to begin to reunite the two groups. Many were shocked to see the names of some prominent Classical Calvinist theologians among the signers of the peace document. I was not. Why not? Because Lordship Salvation teaching has long been recognized as leading to Catholic soteriology. For example, Dr. Earl Radmacher, President Emeritus of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, wrote in 1990:

Finally, as Paul felt the strong need to warn the elders of Ephesus concerning distorted teachings from among the brethren, we have as great a need today. *I fear that some current definitions of faith and repentance are not paving the road back to Wittenberg but, rather, paving the road back to Rome.* Justification is becoming "to make righteous" rather than "to declare righteous." Repentance is becoming "penitence" (if not "penance") rather than "changing the mind." And "faith" is receiving more analysis and scrutinizing rather than the "object of faith."²²

3) Concerning the meaning of justification, we rightly part company with those who suggest that the atonement extends to *physical* and

¹⁹ R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 3-4.

²⁰ "It is free but it costs everything." *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 220.

²¹ "Eternal life is at once the free gift of God and something which we must earn for ourselves." Fr. R. Creighton-Jobe, "Laying Up Our Treasure in Heaven," in *AD2000* (Nov, 1993), 20.

²² Earl D. Radmacher, "First Response to 'Faith According to the Apostle James' by John F. MacArthur, Jr.," *JETS* 33:1 (March, 1990), 40-41 (italics mine).

financial healing (the so-called “health and wealth gospel”). The atonement deals with our position before God and the healing of our sin-sickness, not our physical well-being. But equally erroneous is the idea that atonement extends to our actions, guaranteeing progressive sanctification. The three aspects of the believer’s salvation must be preserved: *Justification* (positional holiness) refers to (past) salvation from the penalty of sin. *Sanctification* (progressive holiness) refers to (present) salvation from the power of sin. *Glorification* (potential or perfect holiness) refers to (future) salvation from the presence of sin.

4) Classical Calvinists may talk about man having a “free will,” but it is a very limited freedom! That is, a person may choose to reject Christ—all people do—but only those who have been elected may choose to accept Him. This is no “free will”! Are the open invitations to trust Christ in the Bible actually a cruel hoax? I don’t think so. Are all people free to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior for their sin? Yes. That is why the call to missions is so urgent.

Some years ago I spent a summer selling books in Ohio. One day I passed a little church—it was called a Missionary Church. I was interested in missions, and was a member of a church in the same denominational family, so this sounded great. Then I went to the house of someone who attended the church. I asked about missionaries. It seems they didn’t support any—nor did they send any out. Why? They were staunch Classical Calvinists. I would call them consistent; they believed that since God elected and predestined any and all who would be saved in eternity past, the best thing they could do was to pray for all these to be saved. They spent their time not witnessing, but praying for God to bring in all those whom He had chosen for salvation. They were consistent Classical Calvinists, but not consistent with Scripture! Matthew 18:19-20 tells us to “Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing . . . and teaching”—not just go to prayer meetings. We are exhorted by mission leaders and evangelists to consider giving our lives in missionary service. Why? Because if people do not hear and believe in the only Name under heaven by which they can be saved (Acts 4:12; Rom 10:14), then they will be forever separated from God.

VII. Epilogue

Much more could be said, but the purity of the Gospel and assurance of salvation are the most important issues at stake here. The need to protect these doctrines has never been greater. Consider the results of a recent survey by the Barna Research Group. They found that among

churchgoers who share their faith with others, almost half (48%) believed that "if people are generally good, or do enough good things for others . . . they will earn places in heaven." George Barna concluded: "There is plenty of reason for churches to worry if nearly one-half of their people who believe in evangelism also believe in salvation by works . . . The central message of Protestantism is in salvation by faith alone in Christ, yet [many] Protestant evangelizers seem to be preaching a different message."²³

My prayer today is that all of us, to borrow the titles from two books which deal very well with this issue, will dedicate ourselves to always proclaim our *So Great Salvation*²⁴ wherever we go, and to offer it to all *Absolutely Free*.²⁵

²³ As reported in *Moody* 94:2 (October 1993), 67.

²⁴ Charles C. Ryrie (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990).

²⁵ Zane C. Hodges (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989, and Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1989).

A Voice from the Past:

THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD IN WHICH YOU STAND

J. N. DARBY*

—I have written to you briefly; exhorting and testifying that this is [the] true grace of God in which ye stand (1 Peter 5:12b, “New Translation”¹).

GOD is made known to us as the “*God of all grace*,” and the position in which we are set is that of “tasting that He is *gracious*.” How hard it is for us to believe this, that the Lord is *gracious*. The natural feeling of our hearts is, “I know that thou are an austere man”; there is the want in all of us naturally of the understanding of the *Grace of God*.

There is sometimes the thought that grace implies God’s *passing over sin*, but no, grace supposes sin to be so horribly bad a thing that God cannot tolerate it: were it in the power of man, after being unrighteous and evil, to patch up his ways, and mend himself so as to stand before

* John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) was a nineteenth century protagonist for grace who gained a reputation for controversy for taking a stand against the politics of his own church (he was originally a priest in the Church of Ireland). Later he crossed swords with the Jesuits on the continent (endangering his life, some reports say), the Reformed Establishment in Switzerland, Cardinal Newman (whom he knew as a young Evangelical), his brother, Frances Newman, who became a rationalist, and even George Müller of Bristol.

There are 40 volumes of Darby’s *Collected Writings*. He was a remarkable linguist, outstanding in Greek, Hebrew, Latin, French, German, Dutch, and Italian, and competent in Spanish. Late in his life he learned Maori in New Zealand. Darby had a strong influence on the American Bible Conference movement, the Scofield Reference Bible, and fundamentalism.

Though from an aristocratic family (they owned a castle in Ireland), he gave it all up to travel the world teaching the Bible, at times living a Spartan existence. Darby was a graduate of Westminster (Abbey) School and Trinity University (Dublin), where he won the gold medal in classics as a teenager.

¹ This translation was “New” in 1869 and 71, so it is now usually called the Darby Translation. Darby translated the Bible into French and German during his continental ministries, and finished the NT and the Pentateuch in English

God, there would be no need of *grace*. The very fact of the Lord being gracious shows sin to be so evil a thing that, man being a sinner, his state is utterly ruined and hopeless, and nothing but *free grace* will do for him—can meet his need.

We must learn what God is to us, not by our own thoughts, but by what He has revealed Himself to be, and that is, "*The God of all Grace*." The moment I understand that I am a sinful man, and yet that it was because the Lord knew the full extent of my sin, and what its hateful-ness was, that He came to me, I understand what grace is. Faith makes me see that God is greater than my sin, and not that my sin is greater than God. The Lord that I have known as laying down His life for me, is the same Lord I have to do with every day of my life, and all His dealings with me are on the same principles of *grace*. The great secret of growth is, the looking up to the Lord as *gracious*. How precious, how strengthening it is to know that Jesus is at this moment feeling and exercising the same love towards me as when He died on the cross for me.

This is a truth that should be used by us in the most common every-day circumstances of life. Suppose, for instance, I find an evil temper in myself, which I feel it difficult to overcome; let me bring it to Jesus as my Friend, and virtue² goes out of Him for my need. *Faith* should be ever thus in exercise against temptations, and not simply my own effort; my own effort against it will never be sufficient. The source of real strength is in the sense of the Lord being *gracious*. The natural man in us always disbelieves Christ as the only source of strength and of every blessing. Suppose my soul is out of communion, the natural heart says, "I must correct the cause of this before I can come to Christ," but *He is gracious*; and knowing this, the way is to return to Him *at once, just as we are*, and then humble ourselves deeply before Him. It is only in *Him* and from *Him* that we shall find that which will restore our souls. Humbleness in His presence is the only real humbleness. If we own ourselves in His presence to be *just what we are*, we shall find that He will show us nothing but *grace*.

It is Jesus who gives abiding rest to our souls, and not what our thoughts about ourselves may be. Faith never thinks about that which

before he died. First Samuel through Malachi were completed from his French and German versions and published soon after his death. Darby himself used the Authorized Version in his English-speaking ministries. His own very literal work, with many scholarly footnotes, was for Bible study. It is still in print.

² Darby is no doubt using the word in the older sense of "power" (cf. Latin *virtus* and Luke 6:19, KJV). Ed.

is in ourselves as its ground of rest; it receives, loves, and apprehends what God has revealed, and what are God's thoughts about Jesus, in whom is *His rest*. As knowing Jesus to be precious to our souls, our eyes and our hearts being occupied with Him, they will be effectually prevented from being taken up with the vanity and sin around; and this too will be our strength against the sin and corruption of our own hearts. Whatever I see in myself that is not in Him is sin, but then it is not thinking of my own sins, and my own vileness, and being occupied with them, that will humble me, but thinking of the Lord Jesus, dwelling upon the excellency in Him. It is well to be done with ourselves, and to be taken up with Jesus. We are entitled to forget ourselves, we are entitled to forget our sins, we are entitled to forget all but Jesus.

There is nothing so hard for our hearts as to abide in the sense of *grace*, to continue practically conscious that we are not under law but under *grace*; it is by *grace* that the heart is "established," but then there is nothing more difficult for us really to comprehend than the fullness of *grace*, the "*Grace of God wherein we stand*," and to walk in the power and consciousness of it . . . It is only in the presence of God that we can know it, and *there* it is our privilege to be. The moment we get away from the presence of God, there will always be certain workings of *our own* thoughts within us, and our own thoughts can never reach up to the thoughts of *God* about us, to the "*Grace of God*."

Anything that I had the smallest possible right to expect could not be pure, free *grace*—could not be the "*Grace of God* . . ." It is alone when in communion with Him that we are able to measure *everything* according to *His grace* . . . It is impossible, when we are abiding in the sense of God's presence, for anything, be what it may—even the state of the church—to shake us, for we count on God, and then all things become a sphere and scene for the operation of *His grace*.

The having very simple thoughts of *grace* is the true source of our strength as Christians; and the abiding in the sense of *grace*, in the presence of God, is the secret of all holiness, peace, and quietness of spirit.

The "*Grace of God*" is so unlimited, so full, so perfect, that if we get for a moment out of the presence of God, we cannot have the true consciousness of it, we have no strength to apprehend it; and if we attempt to know it out of His presence, we shall only turn it to licentiousness. If we look at the simple fact of what *grace* is, it has no limits, no bounds. Be we what we may (and we cannot be worse than we are), in spite of all that, what God is towards us is LOVE. Neither our joy nor our peace is dependent on what we are to God, but on what *He is to us*, and this is *grace*.

Grace supposes all the sin that is in us, and is the blessed revelation that, through Jesus, all this sin and evil has been put away. A single sin is more horrible to God than a thousand sins—nay, than all the sins in the world are to us; and yet, with the fullest consciousness of what *we* are, all that God is pleased to be towards us is LOVE.

In Romans 7, the state described is that of a person quickened, but whose whole set of reasonings center in *himself*. . . he stops short of *grace*, of the simple fact that, whatever be his state, let him be as bad as he may, GOD IS LOVE, and only love towards him. Instead of looking at God, it is all “I,” “I,” “I.” Faith looks at God, as He has revealed Himself in grace . . . Let me ask you, “Am I—or is my state—the object of faith?” No, faith never makes what is in *my heart* its object, but *God’s revelation of Himself in grace*.

Grace has reference to what GOD is, and not to what we are, except indeed that the very greatness of our sins does but magnify the extent of the “*Grace of God*.” At the same time, we must remember that the object and necessary effect of grace is to bring our souls into communion with God—to sanctify us, by bringing the soul to know God, and to love Him; therefore the knowledge of grace is the true source of sanctification.

The triumph of grace is seen in this, that when man’s enmity had cast out Jesus from the earth, God’s love had brought in salvation by that very act—came in to atone for the sin of those who had rejected Him. In the view of the fullest development of man’s sin, faith sees the fullest development of God’s *grace*. I have got away from grace if I have the slightest doubt or hesitation about God’s love. I shall then be saying, “I am unhappy because I am not what I should like to be”: *that* is not the question. The real question is, whether *God* is what we should like Him to be, whether Jesus is all we could wish. If the consciousness of what we are—of what we find in ourselves, has any other effect than, while it humbles us, to increase our adoration of what God is, we are off the ground of pure grace. Is there distress and distrust in your minds? See if it be not because you are still saying “I,” “I,” and losing sight of God’s grace.

It is better to be thinking of what God is than of what we are. This looking at ourselves, at the bottom is really pride, a want of the thorough consciousness that we are *good for nothing*. Till we see this we never look quite away from self to God. In looking to Christ, it is our privilege to forget ourselves. *True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in not thinking of ourselves at all. I am*

too bad to be worth thinking about. What I want is, to forget myself and to look to God, who is indeed worth all my thoughts. Is there need of being humbled about ourselves? We may be quite sure that will do it.

Beloved, if we can say as in Romans 7, "In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no *good thing*," we have thought quite long enough about ourselves; let us then think about Him who thought about us with thoughts of good and not of evil, long before we had thought of ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of grace about us are, and take up the words of faith, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

BOOK REVIEWS

Vital Theological Issues: Examining Enduring Issues of Theology. Roy B. Zuck, General Editor. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1994. 232 pp. Paper, \$12.99.

This is the fourth volume in Kregel's Vital Issues Series. Eighteen articles centered around crucial theological concerns are assembled from *Bibliotheca Sacra*, the journal published by Dallas Theological Seminary. The articles span a wide range of dates (the 1930s, when Dallas took over *BibSac* to the present) and subjects. Topics include such matters as miracles, the sovereignty of God, inerrancy, hermeneutics, dispensationalism, and premillennialism. The style is scholarly, yet quite "user-friendly" for the layperson.

Some articles follow typical Calvinistic orientations, such as "Prayer and the Sovereignty of God," "Is Foreknowledge Equivalent to Foreordination?" and "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Conversion." Others do not: "The Significance of Pentecost," "For Whom Did Christ Die?" and "The Purpose of the Law." In "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Conversion" the author stresses the Calvinistic doctrine of inability. Unbelievers are said to be able to "comprehend divine revelation" and to "articulate the terms of the gospel." Yet, they are unable to believe divine truth. It is natural to ask, "How are unbelievers capable of 'comprehending' truth but incapable of *believing* it?" Further, how is it that nonChristians are unable to accept truth by faith but are still held accountable for unbelief? Are people condemned for something they are *unable* (not just unwilling) to do? Such questions are not addressed.

Since some of the articles were written several years ago, inadequacies may arise. A few comments are outdated (e.g., postmillennialism "has almost vanished"). Occasionally, current evangelical debate is not clearly addressed. In the article, "Untold Billions: Are They Really Lost?" there are no resources cited since 1980, despite the flare-up of this issue among evangelicals in recent years.

Yet all the articles, including the one just mentioned, are relevant to current trends, and some "voices from the past" (to use a *JOTGES* phrase) seem uncanny in this regard. In "The Present Work of Christ in Hebrews," the author disavows that Hebrews places any emphasis

on Christ's present rulership over the world, despite the many commentators who suggest it. This comment is pertinent to recent discussions between classic and so-called progressive dispensationalism.

Those with theological interests should not pass up the opportunity to read two classic articles by Lewis Sperry Chafer, chief founder of Dallas Seminary, and one by Alva J. McClain, founder of Grace Theological Seminary. In his article on the mediatorial kingdom, McClain argues quite reasonably that in Acts a valid offer of the kingdom was presented to Israel and that this fact demands that the book be interpreted according to its transitional nature.

Nearly half of these 18 articles touch on issues pertaining to the doctrines of salvation and sanctification. Of vital interest to the subject of salvation are "Has Lordship Salvation Been Taught Throughout Church History?" by Tom Lewellen and "The Terms of Salvation" by Chafer. The latter was also the first "Voice from the Past" published by the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* in the autumn of 1988. I cannot avoid expressing a personal note about the renewed joy I experienced in reading again Dr. Chafer's description of the freeness of eternal life.

John F. Hart

Professor of Bible
Moody Bible Institute
Chicago, IL

The Ultimate Deception. By Ray Comfort. S. Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, Inc., 1993. 269 pp. Paper \$5.95.

This book is by an itinerant preacher from New Zealand, living in Southern California, who is burdened about the Gospel and the need to proclaim it clearly. We are in total agreement on that.

He is against what he calls the "Jesus gives happiness" gospel (pp. 15ff.). In this we are in full agreement as well.

The so-called converts of many evangelistic crusades today, Comfort says, are illegitimate since the people do not hear the real Gospel. He gives many examples of large numbers of "converts" at crusades, most of whom never darken the door of churches one year later (cf. pp. 35-39). Again, I agree.

Our final point of agreement concerns the need for people to recognize that they need salvation.

The problem with this book is that it *too* presents a false gospel. Comfort holds to Lordship Salvation. While he doesn't dwell at length on what one must do to be saved—which surprised me, since the book decries false practices—Comfort clearly indicates that to gain eternal life one must turn from his sins and make Jesus Christ his Lord (cf. pp. 15-16, 148-50, 268). In addition, he says that if a person's works aren't holy then he or she was never saved in the first place (cf. pp. 186-90, 199-200).

This book is not particularly well organized; it's a bit difficult at times to follow the point the author is trying to make. However, the book is written in a popular style and will appeal to some. It appears that Comfort is a charismatic and that this book is directed primarily to charismatics (pp. 8-10).

This book is for those who wish to have in their library a popular level book defending Lordship Salvation.

Robert N. Wilkin

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

Lord and Christ: The Implications of Lordship for Faith and Life. By Ernest C. Reisinger. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1994. 178 pp. Paper \$8.99.

Reisinger makes no effort to hide the fact that his theology comes from the doctrinal constructs of men. Some of the sources he cites to define terms and explain theology are: the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Baptist Confession of 1689, the Heidelberg Catechism, *The Psalter* of the Christian Reformed Church, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Puritan Samuel Bolton, Puritan John Owen, David Brainerd, Robert L. Dabney, A. A. Hodge, John Gerstner, R. C. Sproul, and J. I. Packer. Many of the quotations of these sources are lengthy.

This book is not exegetical in nature. While Reisinger does attempt to use the Bible to support his arguments, he does so without careful, detailed explanations of the text.

Reisinger repeats the offensive pejorative label for the Free Grace view, *the nonLordship position*, used by MacArthur in *Faith Works*. This was a poor choice. It causes gracious Lordship Salvationists (I have met some) embarrassment and it offends many Reformed people. The continued use of this label says a great deal about the theology which would use it.

We will continue to avoid returning evil for evil. (For example, we won't call their position *the nonGrace position*.)

JOTGES readers will find several sections of the book particularly interesting. Reisinger makes a number of unguarded statements. For instance, he suggests that *spurious* faith, faith that won't save, "has Christ as its object," "receives the Word of God," and "cause[s] people to prepare for the coming of the Lord" (pp. 43-44). The texts he uses to support these points are John 2:23-24, Matt 13:20-21, and Matt 25:1-13. In this section he comes close to convincing the reader that what he calls *spurious* faith is actually *saving* faith. The chapters on assurance of salvation and self examination (pp. 109-145) are well worth reading in this regard. Of special interest is the section called "Six Directives for Proper Self-Examination" (pp. 141-43). These include: "You must know what the marks of a true Christian are," "Do not trust your heart's first reaction . . . Your feelings may deceive you," "Do not rest on the marks of grace for salvation," and "Don't come to conclusions about your relationship to Christ when it is wintertime in your soul."

I recommend this book for well-grounded believers since it gives additional insights into the thinking of Lordship Salvation partisans.

Robert N. Wilkin

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

Is Jesus the Only Savior? By Ronald H. Nash. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994. 188 pp. Paper, \$12.99.

This important book evaluates the growing influence of pluralism and inclusivism as over against traditional Christian exclusivism. *Pluralism* answers the title of the book with "No." *Inclusivism* answers the title of the book with "Yes, but . . ." or that Jesus' death for our sins is the necessary *grounds* for salvation, but *explicit faith in Him* is not necessary. Nash defends *exclusivism*, which answers "Yes, period."

The author recognizes the emotional appeal of the two positions in question because they seem to resolve tensions over the fate of the unevangelized. But Nash finds them awash with difficulties.

He first discusses John Hick's pluralism, then turns to the inclusivism of Clark Pinnock and John Sanders. In each case, Nash masterfully

points out the logical, theological, and practical problems of both pluralism and inclusivism. Most seriously, he shows how they undermine or even deny the validity of statements of propositional truth, the veracity of the Bible, and in the case of pluralism, the deity of Christ.

Ironically, adoption of either pluralism or inclusivism will work to doom the masses that its proponents so want to include in salvation. Both views, as also universalism (the belief that all people will be saved), take the impetus out of missions. Instead of an imperative, evangelism becomes a nice suggestion.

We should be alarmed at Nash's estimate of the influence of inclusivism in evangelicalism. He claims over 50% of evangelical Christian denominational and missions leaders and theological educators are inclusivists. If this is true, then his book is all the more important.

Nash's philosophical and biblical arguments against these false views of salvation are well-aimed and powerful. On occasion his Reformed theological position grates against Free Grace thinking, but these few occurrences are incidental to his main arguments. In fact, I found it interesting that a Reformed theologian was happy to refer to salvation in unencumbered terms of "faith in Jesus Christ" when removed from the Lordship debate.

Those who are theologically inclined, or who are confronted by these unbiblical views, will greatly appreciate this book. It is a valuable contribution defending the uniqueness and the very heart of evangelical Christianity.

Charles C. Bing

Pastor

Burleson Bible Church

Burleson, TX

Money, Possessions, and Eternity. By Randy Alcorn. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1989. 451 pp. Paper, \$10.95.

As a pastor, Alcorn set out to preach a three-message series on money. His study led to this twenty-one chapter book with five appendices and a study guide.

As a pastor, I too set out to preach a three-message series on money, but like Alcorn, I soon discovered that there is too much said in the Bible about the subject for anything less than a full series. Before I found his

book, I read or perused a half dozen others on the subject. None came close to this one in thoroughness, clarity, depth, and biblical accuracy.

Alcorn groups his chapters into four sections. The first covers the problems of materialism, the second deals with money and possessions in relationship to eternity, the third concerns giving, and the fourth discusses how to handle money wisely and biblically.

What will be most exciting to grace-oriented readers is his second section, which discusses stewardship and eternal rewards. Here is a practical application of the grace view of rewards. His discussion is complete and biblical. He is very careful to explain the difference between salvation and rewards and the conditions for each.

Compared to what some others are saying in relation to the Christian and finances, Alcorn's perspective is refreshing. I read one book that suggested that those who do not handle money well may not be going to heaven! I also recently heard a popular Christian financial advisor on the radio say that he thinks people who do not give adequate financial support to their pastor are not Christians.

Every Christian faces daily decisions about stewardship issues. How we handle our money and possessions may well be the greatest determiner of rewards in eternity, as evidenced by the number of parables in which Christ addressed stewardship and accompanying rewards for shrewdness and faithfulness.

I recommend this book to everyone. It will be a valuable resource for life, teaching, or preaching.

Charles C. Bing

Pastor

Burleson Bible Church

Burleson, TX

The Eternal Sonship of Christ. By George W. Zeller and Renald E. Showers. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1993. 127 pp. Paper, \$8.99.

Several Evangelicals have recently concluded that Christ only *became* the Son of God at His incarnation and therefore His Sonship was not eternal. In *The Eternal Sonship of Christ*, Zeller and Showers deal with all the passages used to argue that view. They demonstrate persuasively that the term "Son of God" relates to Christ's deity and is of an eternal nature. Some additional points are given as to why this is an important doctrine. *The Eternal Sonship of Christ* consists of ten chapters and two

appendices. It has several short chapters that outline the deity, preexistence, and incarnation of Christ. The rest of the book deals with the doctrine of Christ's eternal Sonship and why it is important.

Chapter 7, "The Meaning of the Term 'Son of God,'" is especially well written. Showers demonstrates that the term "Son of God" has a three-fold significance: It means that the Son is a *separate Person* from His Father; the Son is *the heir*, not the servant; and the Son has the *same nature* as His Father. The third point in particular was convincing, since "Son of God" is used in several contexts that teach the deity of our Lord (e.g. Heb 1:2-3, 8 and John 5:17-18).

Appendix A contains a helpful article by S. Herbert Bess which originally appeared in the *Grace Journal*. It is entitled, "The Term 'Son of God' in The Light of Old Testament Idiom." Bess traces the usage of "Son" in the OT and shows how the term "Son of God" in the NT means that Christ possessed the same nature as the Father.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in studying issues related to the deity of Christ.

R. Michael Duffy
Missionary
The Hague
Netherlands

The Power of His Presence. By Adrian Rogers. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1995. 191 pp. Cloth, \$14.99.

This motivating book for Christians by Southern Baptist pastor Adrian Rogers merits a somewhat mixed review, I believe. First, four points of commendation are in order.

First, it is a book on the inner, or spiritual, life. We need more of these "to be" books; we are swamped with "to do" books.

Second, Rogers roots the spiritual life where it must be rooted, in the presence of God in us. Many have made the mistake of rooting the spiritual life in its evidences, such as purity or power. The *title* is misleading, but the book does not make that mistake. Admittedly, the theme sentence is jarring. "Real salvation," it intones, "is not merely about getting man out of earth into heaven. It is also about getting God out of heaven and back into man" (pp. ix, 42). But one can overlook a bit of questionable logic when the subject is as sublime as the presence of God within man.

Third, the author wisely uses the biblical type of the OT tabernacle and temple as his central metaphor for God's presence. This leads him down biblical paths to fruitful applications, such as that all of life is sacred and none of it secular for us who are full-time temples (pp. 26-28). Unfortunately, he also leads the reader down some speculative trails. It's not so certain, for example, that the tabernacle was tripartite because God is a Trinity (p. 16), and even less likely that it illumines the tripartite nature of man (pp. 17-20). Here, as elsewhere, distinctions are drawn too neatly. Accuracy is sacrificed on the altar of homily; interpretation makes way for alliteration. Still, the metaphor is interesting.

Fourth, Rogers scores some valuable points when he steps up to face some of the great issues of salvation and the spiritual life:

The Spirit-filled life is the normal Christian life (p. 48).

The filling of the Spirit in Eph 5:18 is a process, not a crisis (p. 56).

There are carnal, deformed Christians (pp. 72-74).

Christians out of fellowship with God are subject to repeated spiritual failure, satanic corruption, addiction, and destruction (pp. 112-23).

Regular confession of sin for forgiveness is necessary for daily fellowship with God (p. 110).

God will forgive us only if we forgive others (p. 138).

Assurance of salvation is vital. "The lack of assurance is a great problem among Gods people. Living without assurance is like driving with your parking brake on" (p. 157).

Unfortunately, it is just here that Rogers is most contradictory and confusing. He closes the book with not one, but two presentations of eternal security. But chapters 12 and 13 are so disparate that one wonders if Rogers himself wavers between two opinions.

Chapter 12 is entitled "Blessed Assurance." It is anything but that, since it offers a three-legged stool of assurance: my present faith in Christ, my present behavior, and God's work and word and witness. That's a shaky stool, since as any reader of the previous chapters might testify, two of those legs totter because they are legs of flesh.

By the end of chapter 13, there is no assurance left for people who do not have "a burning desire to live for God" or for those who do not "love the church" or for those who fail to keep "all of God's commandments"! Feeling the pinch, Rogers announces that "keep His commandments" really just means "*desire* to keep His commandments," but it won't wash.

One suspects that Rogers is aware of his confusion, but that his misreading of 1 John 2-3 and James 2 occasionally drives him to preach a conditional assurance.

In contrast, the final chapter establishes our eternal security on seven sturdy pillars, all firmly planted in heaven. Here our assurance is founded on Christ's statement (John 5:24) that our eternal life began the moment we believed (p. 182). This rings true. It also rebuts the statement 20 pages earlier that the only belief that matters for assurance is "right-now belief." One cannot believe both chapter 12 and chapter 13. If Adrian Rogers is wavering between these two opinions, we hope he chooses the latter.

Jim Congdon

Pastor

Topeka Bible Church

Topeka, KS

Hard Sayings of Jesus. By F. F. Bruce. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983. 265 pp. Paper, \$10.99.

The obvious purpose of F. F. Bruce's *Hard Sayings of Jesus*, is to make difficult teachings of Jesus easier to understand. Yet, Bruce's theology makes them impenetrable. Don't misunderstand, the book *does* offer some valuable insights. Bruce's historical and cultural knowledge is often illuminating. But his theological bias dominates his interpretations and makes many hard sayings even harder.

One example of this is in chapter 48, where Bruce discusses Mark 10:25, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Referring to the rich man, he writes, "His record in keeping the commandments was unimpeachable . . . and Jesus said nothing to suggest that his claim was exaggerated. But, *to test the strength of his commitment*, Jesus bade him to sell his property and distribute the proceeds among the poor (p. 180, emphasis mine).

This approach is especially dangerous because it leads to a works or Lordship approach to salvation. Bruce doesn't see Jesus exposing the rich man's *total inability*—and thus his need for a Savior. No, he feels that even the disciples "had not realized, perhaps, just how stringent the terms of entry into the kingdom were—and are" (p. 181).

Jesus' explanation of Mark 10:24 "How hard it is for those who trust

in riches to enter the kingdom of God" (contained in the vast majority of manuscripts) is explained away. Bruce writes, "This could be an attempt to soften the hardness of his words, making it possible for a reader to comfort himself with the thought; 'I have riches, indeed, but I do not trust in them: I am all right.'" However, the problem was exactly what Jesus said. People naturally trust in themselves, their goodness, their merit, not in Christ Jesus, for salvation. Increased wealth can lead to increased self-dependence and self-righteousness.

Another example of Bruce's theological bias appears when he quotes an epigram translated "Believe, and thou hast eaten," to explain how we should respond to Jesus as the Bread of life (p. 24). Bruce then goes on to cite favorably the interpretation of Bernard of Clairvaux: "Bernard expounds the words 'he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life' as meaning: 'He who *reflects on my death, and after my example mortifies his members which are on earth*, has eternal life'—in other words, If you suffer with me, you will also reign with me" (italics mine). Thus Bruce appears to agree that mortifying one's members and suffering are part of *believing*. But this kind of interpretation torpedoes the grace of God. It is salvation by works, not by grace.

These are but two examples of the author's approach. But they are illustrative of his grid. Bruce equates the demands of the Gospel with the demands of discipleship, and believing with good works. By doing so, he misleads people to believe a "gospel" that is not good news at all.

Dan Hauge

Pastor

Tabernacle Baptist Church

George, IA

John the Maverick Gospel. By Robert Kysar. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. Revised edition. 157 pp. Paper, \$12.99.

When I first began reading this book I had high hopes of finding some worthwhile observations within it, despite the author's liberal credentials. And I was encouraged, while still on the first page of the preface, when I read that this introduction to John was specifically organized to draw its readers into the pages of the Gospel itself rather than to function as a substitute for personal interaction with the biblical text. However, it took only a few pages before the author's antsupernatural

assumptions became painfully obvious. While Dr. Kysar admits that he doesn't know who wrote the Gospel or whether the author was a man or a woman, *he can definitely rule out* the man traditionally assumed to be the human author—John the son of Zebedee. This served as a preview for his consistently liberal views throughout the book. In his discussion of the relationship between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels, Kysar directly questions the historicity of both, asking, "Which of the two accounts (if either)—the Synoptics or the Fourth Gospel—is historically accurate?" (p. 6). While he simply assumes that John and the Synoptics can't possibly be reconciled, he more than once ridicules anyone who would suggest possible harmonizations. So much for objectivity!

As far as sources are concerned, Kysar believes that there are three major and "different" (read *contradictory*) "traditions" found in the NT. One is represented by the Synoptic Gospels, a second is represented by the Gospel of John, and a third is represented by the writings of Paul. He thus is free to say, "I want to stress at the beginning of this introduction to the religious thought of the Fourth Gospel that it represents a unique form of early Christian thought. It is a *heterodox form of Christianity*, at least when compared with the other literature in the New Testament" (p. 2, italics added).

In the body of the book, one finds chapters on the Sonship of Jesus, dualism in John, the concept of faith in the Fourth Gospel, Johannine eschatology, and John as the Universal Gospel. Throughout these pages Kysar does what liberal theologians tend to do—add an "extra step" to his exegesis. That is, after describing "what the author says," he goes on to explain that away by revealing "what the real meaning should be for modern readers." Thus while Kysar will admit that the author of the Fourth Gospel wrote to reveal that Jesus was "a divine, heavenly being" he will also tell us that in reality Jesus was only a very enlightened human being.

Chapter three, "Seeing is Believing—Johannine Concepts of Faith" will be especially disappointing to members of the Grace Evangelical Society. Kysar sees a categorical difference between what he labels "signs faith" and "mature faith." And he makes a serious exegetical error in stating that "believe" means "personal allegiance" to Jesus (p. 93). Near the end of this chapter he makes the incredible statements, "The Fourth Evangelist never uses the noun 'faith' or 'belief,' but always and only the verb 'to believe.' What does this mean? Faith is not a state of being but a dynamic becoming. If faith is always a verb, that surely implies

that faith is not something one does once and for all time. Rather, faith as a verb means that believing is a decision made once only to have to be made over and over again, or a gift accepted not once but again and again. Faith is a continuing dynamic, not a state of being" (p. 94).

In summary, this work is not recommended except to those who are interested in examining how the liberal mindset explains away the clear meaning and intent of the Gospel of John. This book is a sad example of how "modern scholarship" can completely misread both the basic narrative and the underlying theology of the Bible generally and the Fourth Gospel in particular.

Brad McCoy

Pastor

Tanglewood Bible Fellowship

Duncan, OK

Deceived by the Light. By Doug Groothuis. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995. 203 pp. Paper, \$8.99.

This excellent book is both a detailed biblical response to the popular (but sadly heretical) bestseller *Embraced by the Light* by Betty Eadie, and a synthetic analysis of "Near-Death Experiences" (NDEs) generally. In a review published in the Autumn 1994 issue of *JOTGES*, I briefly evaluated Mrs. Eadie's manifesto. In *Deceived by the Light*, Dr. Doug Groothuis, Assistant Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Ethics at Denver Seminary, interacts in detail with Mrs. Eadie's widely read description of her NDE. Groothuis demonstrates that not only does her story contradict itself, but more importantly it contradicts many key biblical truths.

However, don't be misled by the title. Although this book begins with and thoroughly interacts with Mrs. Eadie's book, *Deceived by the Light* is much more than just a response to her *Embraced by the Light*. Dr. Groothuis displays an impressive amount of research and reflection on much of the standard literature on Near-Death Experiences in a readable form that will benefit anyone interested in this fascinating subject. Groothuis synthesizes the writings of NDE pioneers such as Raymond Moody, Kenneth Ring, Michael Saboom, Melvin Morse, and Susan Blackmore, among others. The reader is thus exposed to a huge amount of primary material, and herein lies a large part of the value of this worthwhile book.

The book consists of ten chapters (including "Betty and the Light,"

"What Happens in a Near-Death Experience?", and "The Bible and the Near-Death Experience"). The Appendix, "Is It All in the Brain?", refutes the major arguments that seek to explain away the transcendental reality of all NDEs by means of physiological or pharmacological mechanisms.

Dr. Groothuis's final conclusion is that it would be unwise to build a theology of life after death based exclusively on the subjective and sometimes contradictory data of NDEs. However, he does believe that some NDEs are in fact valid experiences of a spiritual interface between life and death. But his basic premise, that all members of the Grace Evangelical Society will strongly appreciate, is that NDEs, like all subjective experiences, must be evaluated by the objective, ultimate lens of the Scriptures.

Although the book lacks a Scripture index, its value is enhanced by an excellent annotated bibliography and endnotes.

Brad McCoy

Pastor

Tanglewood Bible Fellowship

Duncan, OK

Guilt-Free Living. By Robert Jeffress. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995. 256 pp. Cloth, \$15.99.

According to the author the purpose of his book is to help the reader "eliminate those unrealistic, self-imposed expectations about different life areas" that cause a person to wallow around in guilt and never truly enjoy life (p. 5). Jeffress believes that God has reasonable and attainable standards for the various areas of one's life, which when met, can create a sense of "closure—the assurance that we have done enough" (p. 6).

Hopefully *Guilt-Free Living* is likely to have the same widespread impact on the Christian community as books like Swindoll's *The Grace Awakening* and Hodges's *Grace in Eclipse*. Indeed, these books share a similar premise. Jeffress suggests that most believers spend their lives trying to prove their worthiness before God by "performing" for Him. Even believers who would fight to the death for the doctrine of salvation by faith *apart* from works often get caught in the "works web." Although saved apart from works, many believe in practice that acceptance comes through striving to reach a higher goal. However, true

acceptance in the Christian life comes not from doing more and more and more but from doing "enough" (chap. 1).

To some Christians this book might be viewed as soft on sin. But guilt-free living, says Jeffress, is not about denying the reality of sin in our lives. Some people, he says, *feel* guilty because they *are* guilty (p. 21). Yet once we have accepted God's free gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sin that accompanies it, "guilt-free existence" is quite possible and more importantly—it's biblical (p. 21). Moses, Solomon, Nehemiah, Paul, and even the Lord Jesus all experienced closure in their lives (p. 11). That is, they knew when they had done enough.

Jeffress goes beyond principle into practical application in his book. After laying a solid biblical foundation, he proceeds to demonstrate how the freedom from guilt and self-imposed pressures can affect many areas of one's life. A few areas touched on are marriage, Bible study, money management, work, and ministry (this is an especially good chapter).

At a time when Christian bookstores are filled with books which place unrealistic—often impossible—demands on believers, this book is a liberating breath of fresh air. It's an accurate and profound harmonization of the Free Grace doctrine of salvation with the doctrine of sanctification. Don't just read this book. Read it and pass it on to others.

J. B. Hixson

Pastor

Tremont Baptist Church

Tremont, IL

Amazing Grace. Hymn Texts for Devotional Use. Edited by Bert Polman, Marilyn Kay Stulken, and James R. Sydnor. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994. 310 pp. Paper, \$15.99.

It is a pleasure for one who already reads a hymn every day, along with the Bible and a devotional classic, to review a book that promotes this practice which is so enriching to a person's spiritual life.

A leading hymnologist, Louis Fitz-Gerald Benson, is quoted in the preface on why a "home hymnal" with just words and no music is helpful: "Hymns that are not made personally familiar by devotional reading have not much spiritual influence . . . It is only the precedent appropriation of the hymn's message by each individual heart that makes its

congregational singing worthwhile" (p. vii).

The hymns are divided into four categories: God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, and Christian Life. These in turn have subdivisions. There is also an "Index of Authors, Translators, and Sources" and an "Index of First Lines and Titles."

The hymns range from the early Christian centuries to the 1990s, and represent many traditions of Christianity. The book is rich in well-written, biblically sound hymns that can stand alone without music to put them across.

As in any hymnary, there are bound to be a few selections that some of us won't like. However, this book is well worth adding to your daily devotions.

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, TX

Blessed Calvary: A Full Color Visual Presentation of Salvation Invitations. Streamwood, IL: AWANA Clubs International, n.d. 23-minute video. \$14.95.

Dave Breese, head of Christian Destiny, Inc., narrates this excellent training video. It is used by AWANA Youth Ministries to train those who work with children and young people in how to share the Gospel clearly. (AWANA is a Free Grace ministry which currently ministers to 450,000 youth in the United States and thousands more in 71 foreign countries.)

The video discusses 16 common Gospel invitations today. Examples of invitations which are found to be *misleading* are: "Will you give your heart to Christ?" "Will you surrender your life to Christ?" "Are you willing to forsake all your sins to obtain salvation?" and "Right now ask Jesus to come into your heart."

Examples of *clear* invitations are: "Will you accept the Lord Jesus and trust Him as your own personal Savior?" "Will you believe that Jesus took your place on the cross?" "Christ died for your sins. Believe and trust Him personally, and you will be saved," and "Right now believe that Christ paid the price in full for your past, present, and future sins."

An explanation is given as to why each of the misleading appeals is wrong. The appeal, "Will you surrender your life to Christ?" draws this

criticism on the video: "Surrender implies 'giving everything' to the Lord, while salvation is accepting the work of Christ on our behalf as a free gift. This invitation is the reverse of scriptural teaching. We are saved by receiving rather than by giving (John 1:12). The appeal of surrender is fitting only for a believer to yield his life to obedient service to the Lord. Such an appeal cannot be used for salvation. The expression 'yield' in Romans 6 and 'present' in Romans 12, both of which apply to believers, are calls to obedience and the need for dedicating one's life to God's will. Do not confuse these expressions and concepts with accepting and believing for salvation."

This video is powerful. It is not only an excellent training tool for Christian workers. It is also a fine evangelistic tool for the religious unbeliever.

While there may be a few fine points with which some of our readers will take exception (e.g., faith as accepting the facts of the Gospel *plus* trusting in Christ), *JOTGES* readers will very much appreciate this video.

Robert N. Wilkin

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

PERIODICAL REVIEWS

“Evangelical Antinomianism: The Theology of Zane Hodges and Joseph Dillow and the Grace Evangelical Society,” George Zeller, Middletown [CT] Bible Church, n.d., pp. 1-41.

Recently I received a call from a *JOTGES* subscriber who was upset by a paper given out at her church by a visiting speaker. The paper was a two-page summary of this 41-page document.

As the subtitle suggests, Zeller’s paper is, in a sense, an attack on Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, and the Grace Evangelical Society. It is not, however, a frontal assault. Rather, it is a blindside attack somewhat like the time a backup quarterback for the Cowboys sneaked up behind Roger Staubach and hit him from behind.

It’s a bit hard to follow the organizational structure of the paper. There are 35 first level headings in 41 pages, an enormous amount of parallel information. Here are some of the first level headings: Background, *The Gospel Under Siege*, *The Hungry Inherit*, Heirs of the Kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-11), The Overcomers in Revelation Chapters 2-3, Can a Saved Person Totally Abandon the Faith? (Heb 10:39), Can a Good Tree Bring Forth Bad Fruit? (Matt 7:15-16, 18), Can a Saved Person Have a Dead Faith? (Jas 2:14-26), The Relationship Between Good Works and Salvation, Can a Saved Person Deny Christ? (Matt 10:32-33; 2 Tim 2:12-13), Can a Saved Person Be Characterized as an Evil Doer? (3 John 11; John 5:29; Rom 2:6-10), Can a True Believer Continue in Sin and Persist in Sin? (1 John 3:9-10; 5:18), “Those Who Have Part in the First Resurrection”—Is This an Exclusive Group of Saved People? (Rev 20:6; Phil 3:11), Saved But Not Led (Rom 8:14), “Salvation Ready to Be Revealed” (But Only for the Spiritual Few!) (1 Pet 1:5), Assurance of Salvation and Continuance in the Faith, Did Paul Always Assume His Readers Were Saved?, Security Without Purity?, Should Personal Wickedness Hinder One’s Assurance of Salvation?, This We Believe (The IFCA doctrinal booklet’s statement on assurance is quoted and commented on here), and, The Position of Early Dispensationalists.

All of those sections deal with assurance of salvation in some way. The paper would have been easier to follow if it limited itself to five or six overarching questions regarding assurance. For example, Zeller could

have classified all of the above under the following major headings: introduction, assurance and good works, assurance and apostasy, assurance and the views of the IFCA and early dispensationalists, and assurance and the doctrine of rewards.

The typeset of Zeller's critique makes it hard to read as well. There is an excessive amount of bold face type and repeated use of obtrusive and distracting large fonts. Beyond these organizational and stylistic matters, there are four major problems with the paper.

First, it is filled with many unfair implications about what Hodges, Dillow, and GES (henceforth referred to as the Free Grace position) believe. It is misleading, to say the least, to assert that the Free Grace position is "a doctrinal position that insists a person can depart from the faith, deny Christ totally, persist in sin, stop being a believer, and yet still be counted among those who are truly saved" (summary paper, p. 1). This implies that the Free Grace position *promotes* apostasy, denial of Christ, and persistence in sin, which is totally untrue. Actually the Free Grace position strongly insists on the need for holiness, orthodox faith, confession, and repentance. It is misleading for Zeller to fail to at least admit that Hodges, Dillow, and GES do call their readers to holiness. Possibly he could explain why such calls are invalid. However, to fail to mention them when they pervade the literature is deceptive.

Second, Zeller's position undercuts grace, yet without doing so openly. If a person can't be saved simply by trusting in Christ and Him alone, then how indeed can he be saved? His answer is that a person can only be saved by trusting in Christ *and by subsequently living a holy life*. Obedience is added as a *de facto* condition of eternal salvation. Failure to live for God disqualifies a believer from eternal salvation. (Zeller says that such a believer is a false professor and that he never *truly* believed in the first place. Yet he acknowledges that such a person was trusting in Christ and Him alone for eternal life. Hence, saving faith is more than trusting in Christ!)

Third, Zeller hides his disbelief in full assurance of salvation. He clearly implies that it's not possible for anyone to be 100% sure of his or her salvation. In Zeller's view, any believer is a possible false professor. A person can't determine if he or she is a true believer by looking at what he or she is trusting in for eternal life. Instead, one must look to one's works to see if they correspond to the marks of a true believer as found in Scripture. However, this can't possibly lead to assurance of salvation. First, one could never be 100% sure that he has the marks of a true believer, whatever those are. Second, even if a person could be sure he had

those marks today, he couldn't be sure that *tomorrow* he might not fall from the faith and prove to be a false professor.

Fourth, Zeller fails to give a fair explanation of the way Hodges, Dillow, and GES deal with problem texts. Where all three give pages of discussion to develop their explanations, Zeller gives a brief synopsis, often of only a few sentences. The reader can't hope to get a good picture of the argument involved.

Zeller tried to cover too much ground in too little space with too little organization and too much typographical "hype."

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
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"Evangelicals and Catholics Together," John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Master's Seminary Journal*, Spring 1995, pp. 7-37.

This journal article is a critique of the doctrinal accord signed by *some* Evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders. It is an excerpt from a book entitled *Reckless Faith: When the Church Loses Its Will to Discern* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994).

Except for a brief section in which Dr. MacArthur labels the Free Grace position as "antinomianism" (pp. 24-25), one reading this review might gain the impression that MacArthur himself holds to the Free Grace position. Only in that section do we find any hint that in order to be saved one must do anything other than trust in Christ alone for eternal life (though on p. 31 he briefly notes that if good works, obedience, and sanctification do not follow justification then the individual was not really justified in the first place). In fact, in the conclusion he speaks of "the One who offers full salvation freely to those who trust Him" and of "the gospel of grace" (p. 36).

Why is MacArthur's Lordship Salvation theology not prominent in this article? The reason may well be that he "softened" his presentation so as to reach more people with his message. Surely he realizes that *most* Free Grace people also oppose the doctrinal accord between Evangelicals and Catholics. While softening one's presentation of the gospel to gain a larger audience is a common practice today, it is uncharacteristic of MacArthur. Normally he emphasizes his view of the gospel.

It is somewhat surprising that MacArthur attacks the Catholic view of the gospel. MacArthur has been publicly charged with holding a view of the gospel which is essentially Roman Catholic. At the 1989 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Diego, California, Dr. Earl Radmacher responded to a paper by MacArthur. In his response, printed in the March 1990 *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, he said, "I fear that some current definitions of faith and repentance are not paving the way back to Wittenburg [the starting point of the Reformation] but, rather, paving the road back to Rome" (p. 40). After commenting on the fallacy of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue of 1983, he concluded that "the statement sounds terribly similar, however, to much that I hear from the advocates of 'lordship salvation.'" (p. 41).

There are, of course, areas of disagreement between Reformed Lordship Salvation and Roman Catholic Lordship Salvation (e.g., baptismal regeneration). However, some of MacArthur's criticisms of the Catholic view of the gospel can and have been used against him, even by other Reformed theologians.

For example, MacArthur criticizes Rome for denying justification by faith alone. He charges (rightly) that Rome teaches justification by faith plus works. Yet MacArthur does the same thing by arguing that saving faith includes obedience. Reformed theologian Michael Horton criticized MacArthur on exactly this point. He wrote: "To suggest that faith is obedience is to confuse justification with sanctification" and "Is there really any difference between saying that one is justified by faith plus works (that is, obedience) and saying one is justified by faith alone, but faith includes works (obedience) in its definition, and until one's faith is obedient, it is not justifying? Surely not. If obedience is a work (and who would deny this?), and 'faith is humble, submissive, obedience,' then MacArthur is telling us that faith is works" (*Christ the Lord*, p. 38).

MacArthur is so adamantly against possible abuses of grace (cf. Rom 6:1ff.) that he unwittingly promotes that which he criticizes in this review.

Three parts of the critique were helpful. First, this accord *is* dangerous. If Catholics succeed in getting Protestants to think of them as Christians, then it makes it much easier for Catholics to convert Protestants to their position. Therefore, I am glad that someone else is warning people that the Catholic view of the gospel is unbiblical—even if his own view of the gospel is also unbiblical.

Second, MacArthur wrote to and received replies from many of the Evangelical leaders who signed the accord. In their responses they ex-

plained why they signed it. Their reasons are stated and critiqued by MacArthur (pp. 17-20ff.). This section is outstanding.

Third, Dr. MacArthur is right in saying that the key to this discussion is justification by faith *alone* (pp. 25-31). Most Roman Catholics acknowledge justification by grace through faith. They deny, however, justification by grace through faith *alone*. While MacArthur is guilty of the same error, he rightly points out that this distinction renders the gospel according to Rome a "damning heresy" (p. 25). Too bad he doesn't see that that applies to his own gospel as well.

A well-grounded believer may find some value in this article. It is especially helpful if one reads it with the realization that MacArthur's objections apply well to his own view of the gospel.

Robert N. Wilkin

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

A HYMN OF GRACE

FRANCES A. MOSHER

Pianist

Christ Congregation

Dallas, Texas

ROCK OF AGES

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

Whilst I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyestrings break in death;
When I soar through tracts unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

—Augustus M. Toplady (1740-1778)

The text for "Rock of Ages" first appeared in *The Gospel Magazine*, a British publication, in 1776. It was printed as the climax to an article by its author, Augustus M. Toplady.¹ In the over two hundred years since its introduction it has surely become one of the best known and best loved hymns of the English-speaking church. Its strong declaration of Christ and His work on the cross as man's only hope of salvation from the judgment his sin deserves, earns it a place of honor among hymns of grace.

The analogy of Christ to a rock has its roots in Scripture. Alluding to the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings, Paul writes, "For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:4). Paul is apparently referring to the event recorded in Exod 17:6. Moses, at God's command, struck the rock in Horeb, miraculously bringing forth a needed supply of water for God's people. The physical rock is a picture of Christ being struck to provide the "water" needed to satisfy sinful man's spiritual need. In addition, there are numerous OT references to the Lord as a "Rock" or "Rock of salvation."

The specific picture of Christ as a rock split open (clef) to provide a place of spiritual refuge for sinful people is surely drawn from Moses' experience recorded in Exod 33:20-23. Because Moses, a fallen man, could not see God's face and live, God Himself protected Moses by placing him in the cleft of a rock as He passed by. In like manner, by being hidden in Christ, the Rock cleft on his behalf at the cross, the believer is sheltered from the eternal death he would face when he stands before a holy, righteous God.

Augustus Toplady was saved at the age of sixteen and later became a respected minister in the Anglican Church. While many grace-oriented Christians today have great respect and admiration for John and Charles Wesley, Toplady did not. The article which introduced "Rock of Ages" was written to refute some of the Arminian teachings of the Wesleys, particularly their belief in man's free will. Toplady held to a strong Calvinist view of election. While not all grace-oriented Christians will agree with Toplady's stand on election, all can surely rejoice in this hymn which so effectively states the clear scriptural teaching regarding man's utter inability to in any way offer God anything to earn or merit salvation. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us . . ." (Titus 3:5a).

¹ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace* (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications, 1990), 114.

“Toplady,” the hymn tune most often used today in the United States for singing “Rock of Ages,” was written in 1830 by Dr. Thomas Hastings (1784-1832). Born in Washington, Connecticut, Hastings compiled 53 hymn collections and composed as many as 600 hymns during a lifetime devoted to church music.

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