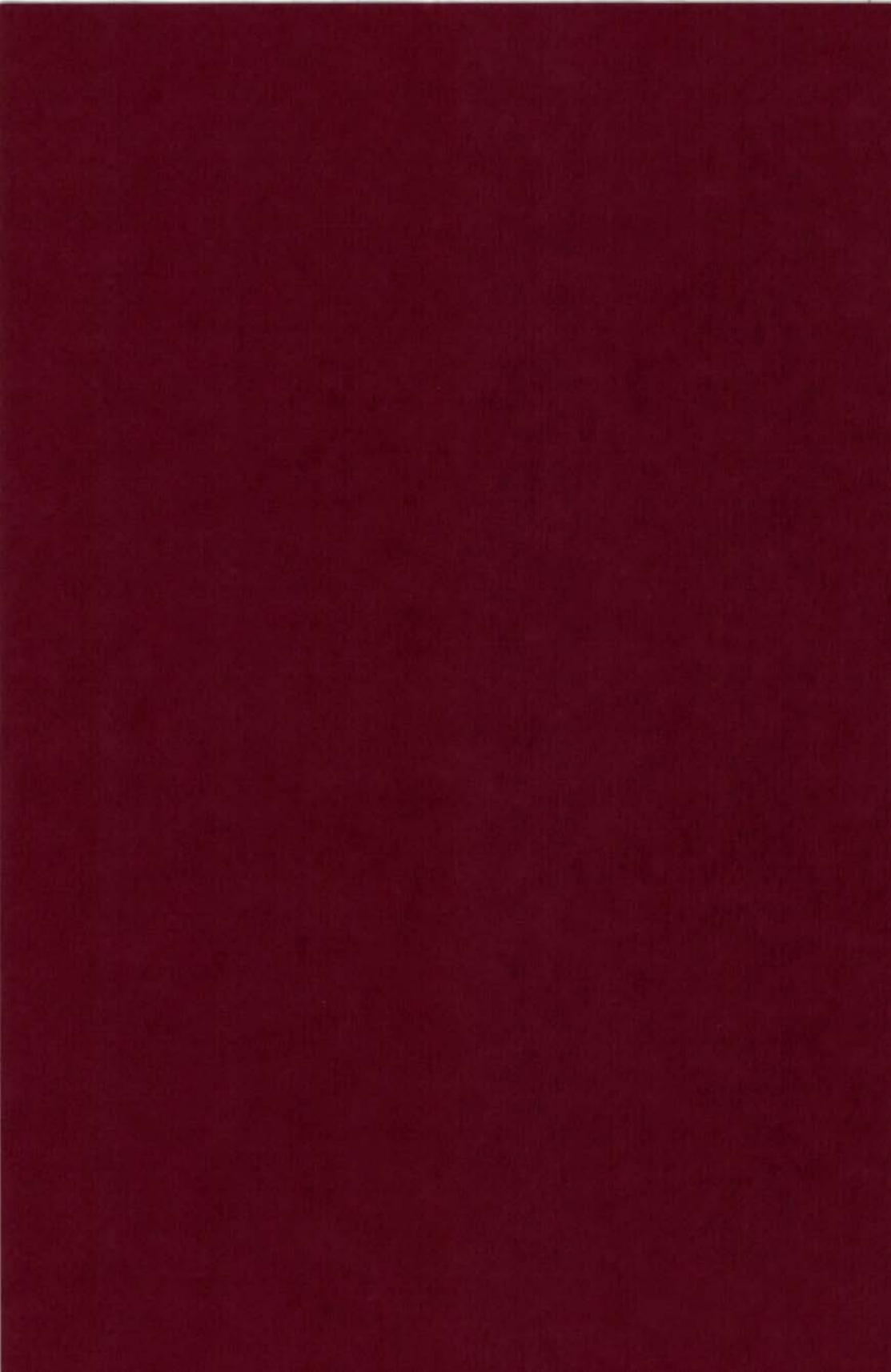


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"Faith Alone In Christ Alone"



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GRACE
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"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"

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

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We Believe In: GOOD WORKS

ARTHUR L. FARSTAD

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, Texas

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

—Ephesians 2:10, emphasis supplied

I. Introduction

"You Protestants," said the pious and elderly lady standing at the back of St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, D.C. to the teenage art school student (who was there for strictly aesthetic reasons), "don't believe in good works." Of course, she was wrong. What she should have said was "You Protestants don't believe in good works *for salvation*." Bible-believing Protestants do indeed believe in good works as a normal *fruit* of salvation, but grace alone as the *root*. The Reformers were clear on this, even if their descendants are not always so. In taking a firm stand against Rome's salvation by faith plus works (their seven-fold sacramental system) Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and the English Reformers were crystal-clear on this very important topic. Would that it were still true in most "Protestant" quarters. Even the conservative remnants of the so-called mainline denominations and the generally smaller, but typically more biblical, groups seem to have drifted from *sola gratia*.

If salvation were by grace through faith *plus* a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or a gift of \$50 to the Church, we would be saying through all eternity, "Am I glad I made that pilgrimage (or gave that gift)!" We would share the glory of our salvation. And God does not wish to share His glory with anyone—even with us!

In stressing the grace-alone aspect of salvation we are always in danger of becoming (or at least appearing) uninterested in good works. Our lead verse shows that we were specifically *created* for good works. Hence they must be important. Before examining what good works are, who

does them, and with what result, for newer readers of our Journal we would like to underscore one of our strongest emphases, *the finished work of Christ*.

II. The Greatest Good Work

The only reason a Christian can do any work that can be considered *good* in God's eyes is because he or she is building on the foundation of the once-for-all good work of Christ.

In John 6:28, after Jesus fed the 5,000 with the five loaves and two fishes, the Jews asked Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" A very good question deserving a clear, concise answer! If ever there was an opportunity for our Lord to stress the necessity for keeping the *law* (or part of the law) or availing oneself of the grace said to come through *baptism* (or *holy communion*, etc.) or total submission to His *Lordship*, or *character-building*, or ten or fifteen other "faith plus" systems that Christendom has devised—this was it!

But note carefully His response: "Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the *work* of God, that you *believe* in Him whom He sent [emphasis supplied].'"

Believing in the One whom God the Father sent is the only "work" He gives them! How can this be? It can be because, when He dares to predicate acceptance with God upon belief in Himself, He knows what He will shortly do to accomplish the "greatest work" of all—redemption at Calvary.

And that "work" *has been* accomplished. Thus, when Jesus cried out on the Cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30) the perfect tense of the Greek verb (*tetelestai*) implied a completed deed with lasting results. He wasn't merely saying that His life was over! He had finished the work of redemption. The Book of Hebrews stresses the same truth—the "once-and-for-all" character of the work of our Lord at Calvary (Heb 7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:10, 12). For us to add our poor efforts to that infinite sacrifice—however well-meant they might be—is a great insult to God. To show His acceptance of Christ's work God raised Him from the dead on the third day.

Because Christ has paid it all and done it all for our salvation, through faith in Him we are enabled to do the good works for which He has created us.

III. The Nature of Good Works

Exactly what constitutes *good* works from a biblical standpoint? How can we define our subject? A good work is one done by one of God's people, for God's sake, and in God's will. A "good work" is a "God work." The classic French *Dictionnaire Larousse* has an old motto that is helpful: A definition "without examples is a skeleton."¹

Assuming that every Christian reader of this article wants to actually *do* good works, let us try to flesh out this skeleton outline with some biblical examples of good works.

Our Lord's Example

"[He] went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). When threatened by His enemies with stoning, Jesus said, "For which of these good works do you stone Me?" (John 10:32). What good works did He mean? He *fed the hungry* in the feeding of both the 5,000 and the 4,000, and He *healed the sick*. We cannot do either in the same way He did, but nevertheless we can provide food for the hungry. Traditionally Christian missions have also supplied doctors and nurses to undeveloped areas. In fact, hospitals and orphanages are both byproducts of Christianity. They did not exist before the days of the Church.

Jesus Himself appreciates the good works we do for the poor—and gives credit as if it were done directly to Him.

In the famous Parable of the Sheep and the Goats Jesus tells the sheep why He wanted to reward them:

"... for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."

(Matt 26:35-40)

¹ "Un dictionnaire sans exemples est un squelette" refers to the entire body of definitions, but it is equally true of individual words.

Early Christian Examples

Feeding the Hungry

In Acts 6 the destitute widows in the Church at Jerusalem were fed by the generosity of the congregation. Generally speaking, the Church has been active in feeding the hungry through all her long history, a fact which is often overlooked by her many critics.

Clothing the Poor

In Acts 9:36-42 we have the account of a woman named Tabitha or Dorcas (Aramaic and Greek for *gazelle*) who “was full of good works and charitable deeds” (v 36). The good work for which she has been remembered is clothing the poor widows: “And all the widows stood by him [Peter] weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them” (v 39).

My mother, who was a typical old-fashioned European in her skill with the needle, belonged for years to the “Dorcas Sewing Circle” in our congregation. Untold millions of believing women (and men!) have been and are active in clothing the world’s underprivileged, at home and abroad. The King takes notice.

Prison Ministries

“Remember the prisoners,” writes the author of Hebrews, “as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also” (Heb 13:3). There have been prisons since earliest history. Christians themselves have often been prisoners for their faith (as in Hebrews), but Christians in countries with freedom of religion have been in the vanguard of trying to reach and help people behind bars.

Various prison ministries spread the Gospel and Bible studies among prisoners and they thus alleviate the root causes for which people are behind bars in the first place. Many who wouldn’t go near a church while on the outside have received a fresh beginning in life through accepting salvation in prison.

Hospitality

Taking people into your home is a good work that demands patience and kindness and a willingness to put up with inconvenience.

Elders are to be hospitable men (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8), but all Christians who are able should practice this good work (1 Pet 1:9). Military personnel away from home, students (especially internationals), traveling

Christians—all need to find a hospitable reception in Christian homes. In early Church days the inns were often virtually brothels, and so itinerant preachers, prophets, and ordinary believers, would be put up in Christian homes.

At least one denomination (the Mennonites) has a good reputation for practicing this even in today's culture of clean motels and hotels. They have this idiom: "Mennoniting it across the country." I have seen similar hospitality among the Brethren Assemblies and other biblically-oriented fellowships.

Sharing

"Do not forget," writes the author of Hebrews, "to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13:16).

Sharing takes in an enormous spectrum of good deeds! A person with a Christlike heart is ready for new and creative good deeds—or, more often, variations on an ancient theme by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since space forbids detailing more good works than these, we close this section with some good words from that great Germanic giant of God, Martin Luther. Luther maintained that the "noblest of all good works is to believe in Christ."² All other good works flow from this. The Reformer protested against limiting good works to "praying in church, fasting, and giving alms," and held that these could also include "laboring at one's trade, coming and going, eating, drinking, and sleeping, and all the other acts that help nourish the body or are generally useful." Anything that the believer does to the glory of God is a good work.

The Importance of Good Works

In the "Letters of our Lord" (Revelation 2, 3), Jesus again and again writes, "I know your works." Even corrupt Thyatira had many good works. Ephesus had maintained her good works but cooled in her ardor for the Lord. This is always a danger—getting so caught up in charities that the supreme *charitas*, love for Christ, is dimmed in the daily grind of duties. To be put on the "dole," Christian widows had to have a reputation for good works (1 Tim 5:10).

As is well known, the Pastoral Epistles are especially rich in exhortations to good works. Consider, for example, the following verses,

² This and the following quotations are from Luther's tract entitled "Sermon on Good Works."

which we have boldfaced in places to emphasize our theme: "Let them do good, that they be **rich in good works**, ready to give, willing to share" (1 Tim 6:18). Titus is told by senior missionary Paul to show himself "to be a **pattern of good works**" (Titus 2:7).

The very purpose of Christ's redemption, as we saw in this article's theme verse, was to create a people to be like Him, going about doing good. Paul expresses this in Titus 2:14: "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works**."

An occasional good deed is not enough. Neither is starting out well and then letting our good deeds slide and gradually forgetting to do them.

We must "consider one another in order to **stir up love and good works**" (Heb 10:24). In the last chapter of Titus Paul says twice within a few verses that "our people" have to keep at it:

This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to **maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable to men And let our people also learn to **maintain good works**, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful (3:8, 14).

Using our Lord's examples, illustrations from the early Christians, and NT exhortations, we have tried to put some meat on the bare bones of a purely verbal definition. This material is merely suggestive.

Eternity alone will be "time" enough to recount the untold billions of good deeds—ordinary, creative, and occasionally unique—that God's people have done.

IV. The Good Worker

Many of the things encouraged in our previous discussion have been and are practiced by people who are clearly not believers in the biblical sense or even professing Christians at all. Jews, Muslims, and even humanists can do many nice things. The same outward act can be done by a believer and an unbeliever, yet only one deed will be counted as a good work in God's eyes because it springs from His Spirit. What Shakespeare calls "the milk of human kindness" is an observable trait. Sometimes unbelievers are more active in doing nice deeds than Christians, and people judge accordingly. However, the comparison should not be between the best that a refined or religious unbeliever can do versus what a lazy, immature, or carnal believer is doing, but what would be the difference *in the same person* before and after salvation and sanctification. This is hard to gauge, but many Christians struggling

with a bad temper, lust, sharp tongue, or selfishness, are quick to point out how completely hopeless they were before their conversion!

Some people by nature seem endowed with the milk of human kindness and actually enjoy helping others, often with mixed motives, however. But when a basically selfish person does good works for Christ's sake, he is "doing what comes supernaturally."³

The goals to which a practitioner of good works should strive are amply presented and elaborated in the NT, especially, as we have noted, in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Again and again in these three short books Christians are commanded or encouraged to maintain good works.

Trained by Saving Grace

A passage that succinctly and beautifully summarizes the kind of person who should be doing good works is Titus 2:11-12. The paragraph heading for Titus 2:11-15 in *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, "Trained by Saving Grace," nicely sets the tone:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.

Our English word *pedagogy* comes from the verb translated "teaching" here. It is teaching, training, or discipline. Some contexts suggest self-denial ("just say no!"). Good works are hard to do. By nature we would much rather cushion our lives with all the creature-comforts we can afford (or *can't* afford in this age of plastic money!).

The Selfward Lifestyle

The first adverb that Paul uses describes the selfward attitude of one who wishes to be a good worker for God: *soberly* (*sōphronōs*). This word suggests a serious (not morbid), sound-minded manner of life with deep consideration of eternal values. Our present conduct will greatly affect our future rewards and position in God's kingdom. As someone has well said, "Time is the embryo of eternity."

The Manward Lifestyle

The word *righteously* (*dikaiōs*) stresses how we are to deal with our

³The phrase is from a book title by Dr. Frye, former pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas.

fellow men—both saved and unsaved. Our relationship with others should always be fair and just, which is at least part of the somewhat theological word “righteous.” Righteous living is a positive necessity if we are to treat others as we would like to be treated. We should not be satisfied with a legal fulfillment of the minimum requirements of fair play. We should be actively doing “good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10).

If we don’t strive to do right by ourselves we will not treat other people properly either. Actually our personal lives stem from our condition in God’s sight, which is the third aspect in an ascending scale of life values for the doer of good works.

The Godward Lifestyle

Paul uses the word *godly* (*eusebōs*) for the third and most important part of a Christian’s doings. The word may be translated “piously” or “devoutly,” and comes from roots meaning “good” (*eu-*) and “worship” (*seb-*). The idea is that we do good works for God’s sake, being inspired by His promptings.

If we are well-adjusted to God’s will we will be doing good works whether they are visible or known to others or not. We should never “advertise” our good works. As our Lord said regarding giving, “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matt 6:3). This command has been honored largely in the breach. Much of Christendom encourages giving with outward recognition: “To the glory of God AND_____.” Furthermore, the “AND” part (glory to the giver) is generally what people notice.

To help us maintain our good works when all around seem bent on self-aggrandizement and pampering self (for, after all, “You deserve it,” say the TV commercials), an incentive is given in v 13: “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Good Works Observed

I hope I will be forgiven two anecdotes about a good worker to whom I had the good fortune of being related. Of my late Uncle George it was said, “He went about doing good.” He was a bachelor who lived in a brownstone house in the Bronx with his sister, Anna.

Uncle George worked very hard all week as a gifted mason (he helped build St. Patrick’s Cathedral and the United Nations Building). On Saturdays, instead of taking it easy, he would buy fruit and coffee cake

and visit elderly shut-in folks from the old country (in this case Norway) and also, from time to time, elderly *Swedish*⁴ folk as well.

Two incidents stand out from my boyhood out East. Once a Danish sailor named Magnus, who knew no English, got his leg caught in between a subway train and the platform. It was so badly mangled that the doctor said it would almost certainly have to be amputated. Uncle George took Magnus into his brownstone, gave him *his* room, and said, “*Nei, da!*” (Nothing doing!). Through care and mostly prayer, Magnus’s leg was saved. After a long recovery he went back to his wife and family in Denmark.

One blustery winter day, wearing his new, expensive overcoat (\$40 was a lot in those days!), Uncle George was accosted by a shivering tramp on the windy streets of the Big Apple. Yes, you guessed it. He took off his coat, gave it to a man most people would call a “bum,” and went home shivering himself. “Tante” Anna was scandalized. “And your new coat, too, George!” But I’m sure Uncle George is glad now.

I think Uncle George would have liked the following motto by John Wesley. It deserves to be lettered in calligraphy and put up in every Christian home:

DO ALL THE GOOD YOU CAN,
IN ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN,
TO ALL THE PEOPLE YOU CAN,
AS LONG AS EVER YOU CAN.

When Christ comes, all of these good works will be duly rewarded. It will be worth it all then.

V. Rewards for Good Works

To be rewarded, our works don’t have to be big, impressive, or cause great expense.

Listen to Jesus: “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward” (Matt 10:42). A cup of cold water! Not a hard thing to do. But notice it is *cold* water, not lukewarm—a beautiful little touch.

First Corinthians 3 is the central passage for rewarding a believer’s good works:

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the

⁴ Scandinavians will be aware of the rivalry here!

Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (vv 12-15).

Some of our works are showy and to be seen by others. Some are done for the wrong reason. God knows our hearts. I believe each believer will receive some reward. Even death-bed converts, like the thief on the cross, have the fruits of their dying confession.

Years ago a seminary student had the following dream which was related to the class by our Greek professor:

The young man was being "graded" at the Judgment Seat of Christ (the *Bēma*). When his turn to be reviewed came up, an angel wheeled out something resembling a booth at a county fair bedecked with fruits, flowers, and ribbons. This represented his good works, and the young man was pleased because it looked quite impressive. Then the angel put a match to it, and to the seminary student's dismay, the whole thing went up in smoke! Soon it was just a little pile of charred embers and ashes. Crestfallen, the student was about to despair, when the angel pulled out a little rake and started to sift through the ashes. From the charred remains he retrieved several lovely precious jewels—those works which had withstood the fire.

Only a dream. Yet it has a good lesson for all Christians. Do practice good works—but do so out of love for Christ, your fellow-men, and especially your fellow-Christians: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10).

VI. Conclusion

Yes, we who believe in salvation by faith alone do also believe in good works. But we are careful to maintain the great gap between the finished work of Christ and the good works for which we have been created. His work is the basis for our salvation by faith apart from works. It is also the basis for good works after our conversion.

One of the evangelical stalwarts of the last generation, Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas, shared the following little poem on faith and works with his daughter Winifred:

I will not work my soul to save,
For that my Lord has done;
But I will work like any slave
For love of God's dear Son!"

REPENTANCE AND SALVATION

Part 3:

New Testament Repentance: Lexical Considerations

ROBERT N. WILKIN

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I. Introduction

There he was again. I'd seen him on telecasts of baseball and football games. Now here he was on a PGA golf tournament telecast somehow repeatedly getting on camera with his rainbow Afro wig and his evangelistic T-shirt.

What did he mean with his one word message, REPENT? What did he hope that some of the millions of TV viewers would do?

What does the term *repent* mean according to the NT? Does it refer to *turning* from one's sins? If so, are all sins or only major sins in view? Or, does it mean a *willingness* to forsake one's sins—or even something else again?

Sincere Christians are sharply divided on this question. However, surprisingly very little has been written about NT repentance. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on this subject partly because it is a crucial and rather overlooked issue.

The NT Words in Question

There are two NT Greek words which are translated *repentance* in modern English translations: *metanoia* (and its verbal counterpart *metanoēō*) and *metamelomai*. The former term is so translated fifty-eight times in the NT; the latter only six times. The much wider use of *metanoia* has led me to give it greater attention in this article.

The Pre-Christian Meaning of Metanoia

In Classical Greek *metanoia* meant changing one's mind about someone or something. For example, Thucydides used the term when writing about the response of the Athenian council to a revolt. The council

decided that all of the men of the city of Mytilene were to be put to death—not merely those who participated in the revolt. However, “on the next day a *change of heart* came over them.”¹ The Athenian council changed its mind. It decided that only those who participated in the rebellion should be put to death.

Another example is found in Xenophon’s use of our term. He wrote:

We were inclined to conclude that for man, as he is constituted, it is easier to rule over any and all other creatures than to rule over men. But when we reflected that there was one Cyrus, the Persian, who reduced to obedience a vast number of men and cities and nations, we were then compelled to *change our opinions* and decide that to rule men might be a task neither impossible nor even difficult, if one should only go about it in an intelligent manner.²

During the pre- and early Christian period of Koiné Greek (ca. 300 BC–100 AD) *metanoia* continued to carry the sense of a change of mind about someone or something. For example, Polybius (ca. 208–126 B.C.) used *metanoia* to refer to the Dardani, a people who had decided to attack Macedonia while Philip was away with his army. However, Philip caught wind of it and returned quickly. Even though the Dardani were close to Macedonia, when they heard that Philip was coming, *they changed their minds*. They broke off the attack before it even began.³

Similarly, Plutarch, who lived and wrote in the late first and early second century A.D., wrote:

Cypselus, the father of Periander . . . when he was a new-born babe, smiled at the men who had been sent to make away with him, and they turned away. And when again *they changed their minds*, they sought for him and found him not, for he had been put away in a chest by his mother.⁴

Notice that in all of the cases cited the individual or people in view had thought one thing or made one decision and then, based on further evidence or input, changed their minds.

Thompson suggests that two other nuances emerge during this period:

¹ Thucydides, *Thucydides* 3. 36. 4. Compare 3. 37. 1. Author’s translation, emphasis supplied.

² Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1. 1. 3. Translation by Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library, emphasis supplied.

³ Polybius, *The Histories* 4. 66. 7.

⁴ Plutarch, *Moralia* 163 F. Translated by Frank Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library, emphasis supplied.

change of purpose and *regret*.⁵ However, the evidence does not substantiate her claim. On both counts she is guilty of "illegitimate totality transfer," that is, the unwarranted transfer of the meaning of a phrase containing a given word to that word when it stands alone. She fails to show any examples where either *metanoia* or its verbal counterpart was used absolutely in the senses which she suggests. Rather, it is *other words in the context* which indicate that the change of mind in question concerned sinful practices or was accompanied by grief or sorrow.

Metanoia and *metanoëō* occur twenty times in the canonical books of the Greek OT (Septuagint) and seven times in the apocryphal books. They retain the meaning of *a change of mind about someone or something* in the LXX.⁶ The following examples are representative.

When the Lord decided to take the kingdom from King Saul He instructed Samuel to say, "He will not turn nor *change His mind*, for He is not as a man that He should *change His mind*" (1 Sam [1 Kingdoms in the Septuagint] 15:29; translation mine).

Likewise, Prov 20:25 speaks of how foolish it is for a man to rashly promise to give something to the Lord, because after such a hasty vow the man may come to *change his mind*.

Similarly, the Ninevites believed in the Lord and turned from their sinful ways in the hopes that the Lord might *change His mind* and not destroy them and their city (Jonah 3:9-10). From a human perspective God did indeed change His mind and withhold the judgment He had planned.⁷

Behm disagrees. He argues that *metanoëō* in the Greek OT

⁵ Effie Freeman Thompson, 'METANOEO' and 'METAMELEI' in Greek Literature Until 100 A.D., Including a Discussion of Their Hebrew Equivalents (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 14.

⁶ Cf. 1 Sam 15:29; Prov 14:15; 20:25 (19); 24:24 (29:27), 47 (32); Isa 46:8; Jer 4:28; 8:6; 18:8; Joel 2:13, 14; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:9, 10; 4:2; Zech 8:14.

⁷ In a number of OT passages God is said to have changed His mind, relented, or repented of calamities which He had planned to send. The Hebrew word used is *nāham*. In each of these cases God did not actually change His mind, relent, or repent. God is omniscient and thus nothing which happens ever takes Him by surprise. The so-called "repentance of God" is actually a figure of speech known as an *anthropomorphism*. At times the Scriptures speak to us as though God were a man. For example, we read of His strong arm (Exod 6:6; Ps 77:15; Jer 21:5), His hand (John 10:28-29), and the like, as figures of His might and ability to deliver us from difficulty and protect us. So, too, from a *human* perspective it appears at times that God *has* changed His mind. In reality, He knew all along what the final outcome would be. The change of mind is apparent, not actual. For further discussion of this subject see H. Van Parunak, "The Repentance of God in the Old Testament," unpublished Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975, and "A Semantic Survey of NHM," *Biblica* 56 (1975): 512-32.

“approximates” *shûb* of the Hebrew OT.⁸ However, I believe he fails to prove his point. The term *shûb* was used 1,056 times in the Hebrew text. None of those occurrences is translated by *metanoëō* in the Greek OT. Not one. This is inexplicable if the translators of the LXX felt that *metanoëō* was a good translation of *shûb*. Rather, the translators routinely used *strephō* and its various compound forms to translate *shûb*.

In the OT pseudepigrapha *metanoia* and *metanoëō* nearly always occur in contexts dealing with the need to abandon sinful practices in order to escape God’s judgment. Behm concludes from this that *metanoia* had thus come to refer to turning from sins. He too, however, is guilty of illegitimate totality transfer. *Metanoia* did not come, by itself, to refer to a turning from one’s sins. Rather, words in the context inform the reader that the change of mind in view would include a resolution to cease the sinful practices mentioned.

In summary, the pre-Christian meaning of *metanoia* was a change of mind about someone or something. When the context specifically mentions sinful practices about which one was changing his or her mind, the translation “repentance” is acceptable.

The History of NT Translations of *Metanoia*

The Old Latin

The Latin Fathers translated *metanoia* as *paenitentia*, which came to mean “penance” or “acts of penance.” They felt that in order to obtain eternal salvation men had to perform righteous acts of penance as prescribed by one’s confessor priest.

The Latin Vulgate

Jerome established this Old Latin translation as authoritative when he retained *paenitentia* as the translation of *metanoia*. The system of penance became an established pathway whereby one hoped to obtain grace.

Early English Versions

John Wycliffe, “the Morning Star of the Reformation,” pioneered the first complete English Bible in the late 1300’s. Unfortunately his work was not based on the original Greek and Hebrew, but was a very literal translation of the Vulgate. Hence we should not be surprised that he

⁸ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “*metanoëō, metanoia*,” by J. Behm, 4 (1967): 989-90.

translated the Latin *agite paenitentiam* as “do penance.” This was adopted in 1609–1610 in the Roman Catholic Douay Version.

William Tyndale produced the first *printed* English NT in 1526. He used *repent* and *repentance* for *metanoia* and *metanoieō*, a great improvement over “do penance,” but still misleading in many contexts.

Later English versions, including the Authorized or King James Version of 1611, were deeply indebted to Tyndale’s phraseology, including his *repent* and *repentance*.

Repentance as a translation seems to keep the idea that one must turn from his sinful deeds to obtain God’s favor. However, it eliminates the notion that, in addition, one must confess his sins to a priest and do prescribed good works before he can obtain (or regain) grace.

Modern Translations

Modern translators also generally translate *metanoia* as *repentance*. While this is an improvement over the Latin translation “penance,” it is in most cases, as we shall now see, a poor reflection of its meaning in the NT.

II. Meaning of *Metanoia* in the NT

Basic Sense: Change of Mind

The pre-Christian meaning of *metanoia* as a change of mind is its basic NT sense as well. This can readily be seen in Heb 12:17 which reads: “For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit a blessing, he [Esau] was rejected, for he found no place for *metanoia*, though he sought it diligently with tears.” What was it that Esau could not find? It was not a turning from sinful behavior. It was not penance. What he could not find was a way to *change his father’s mind*. The matter was settled. No matter how much he pleaded, he couldn’t change Isaac’s mind.

All NT uses include the sense of a change of mind present. However, if the context clearly indicates what one is changing his mind about, it could be that a more polished English translation can be found. For instance, if one is to change his mind about his sinful deeds, the term *repentance* conveys that thought nicely.

There are four specialized types of uses of *metanoia* in the NT. We will now consider these.

A Synonym for Eternal Salvation

In a few passages *metanoia* is used via metonymy as a synonym for eternal salvation. These cases involve a metonymy of cause for the effect. The cause is a change of mind about Christ and His Gospel. The effect is eternal salvation. Thus when we read in 2 Pet 3:9, "The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to *metanoia*," the idea is the same as 1 Tim 2:4, "[God] desires all men to be saved."

Luke 5:32 illustrates this same usage: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to *metanoia*." That is, Jesus is affirming that He didn't come to call those who think that they are righteous, but those who know themselves to be sinners, to salvation. *Metanoia* is used as a synonym for eternal salvation.

A Change of Mind Regarding Sinful Behavior = Repentance

On some occasions *metanoia* is used in contexts where the change of mind in view is clearly indicated as having to do with one's sinful practices. For example, in Luke 17:3-4 Jesus taught the disciples that they were to forgive all who sinned against them if they came and indicated that *they had changed their minds* regarding their sin. In this case and others like it "repentance" would be a good translation choice. We are to forgive anyone who sins against us and then repents.

It is important to note, as shall be brought out further in future articles, that eternal salvation is never conditioned upon changing one's mind about (i.e., repenting concerning) his sinful practices.

A Change of Mind Regarding Self and Christ

Many NT passages use *metanoia* in contexts where what one is to change his mind about is himself and Christ. For example, in Acts 2:38, after having indicted his Jewish audience for crucifying their Messiah and in response to their question "What shall we do?" Peter called them to change their minds about Jesus Christ. They had rejected Him. Now they could accept Him. They were to believe that He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world. Such a mindset includes a recognition that one is a sinner in need of the Savior. Self-righteousness is clearly antithetical to faith (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

In this use *metanoia* occurs as a virtual synonym for *pistis* (faith).

A Change of Mind Regarding Idols and God

In one passage the object of *metanoia* is stated as idols and God (Acts 17:29-31). Paul told the Athenian philosophers that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and that He would be coming back to earth as Judge. He told his listeners that in order to escape eternal condemnation they had to change their minds about their idols and about God and the Man whom He had sent and would send again. They had to transfer their faith from their idols to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Summary

Metanoia is used in the NT in a number of different ways, all of which have the idea of a change of mind at the root. In a few contexts it is used via metonymy as a synonym for eternal salvation. When it is used in contexts dealing with temporal salvation from life's difficulties, a change of mind about one's sinful ways (i.e., repentance) is given as the condition. However, when used in contexts dealing with eternal salvation from hell, a change of mind about oneself and Christ (or, in one passage, regarding idols and God) is given as the condition. In such contexts *metanoia* is used as a synonym for faith.

III. Meaning of *Metamelomai*

The basic meaning of *metamelomai* is "to feel regret." In 2 Cor 7:9 Paul indicates that *he no longer regretted* sending them a letter which made them sorry, though at first *he did regret* sending it.

Regret usually carries with it the idea of a change of mind. In Matt 21:29 Jesus told the Parable of the Two Sons. Both were told to go work in the vineyard. One said he would not, but later changed his mind (or regretted his decision) and went. The other said that he would go, but did not.

After betraying Christ, Judas regretted what he had done, gave back his blood money, and hanged himself (Matt 27:3). Judas "repented" *in this sense*; or more precisely, he "was remorseful" (NKJV). Yet he did not come to faith in Christ. He never changed his mind about Christ being His Savior. He rejected Him to his death.

While it is *commonly* translated in that way, there are no uses of *metamelomai* in the NT where "repentance" is a *good* translation. It always refers to regret, remorse, or to a change of mind. It never refers to turning from one's sins.

IV. Meaning of *Strephō* Compounds

While they are never translated as “repentance,” the compounds of *strephō* in some contexts carry the idea of turning from sins. The basic sense of these compounds is turning from or to someone or something. These compounds are the true corresponding terms to the OT word *shûb*.

“Turning to the Lord” is used in the NT, as it was in the OT, as an expression for faith and conversion.⁹ When Paul reported in Acts 15:3 that Gentiles were turning to the Lord, he was simply saying that Gentiles were coming to faith in Christ, were being saved.

Nowhere in the NT are these verbs used to indicate that one must turn from his sins to obtain eternal salvation.

V. Conclusion

I’m still not sure what the man at the athletic events meant by his one-word message on his T-shirt. The word *repent* has a well-defined meaning in English. However, not all who use it mean the normal dictionary definition. Some mean merely a recognition of one’s sinfulness. Others mean a change of thinking about Jesus Christ. Still others mean turning from one’s sins, a willingness to do so, or a sense of remorse over one’s sins.

I wish we could retranslate the NT. It would make teaching and preaching passages using *metanoia* simpler. It would eliminate the confusion many have when they read their Bibles and see the word *repent*. However, this is not likely to happen. It seems that “repentance” as a translation for *metanoia* (and *metamelomai*) will probably be with us for a long time.

In most cases when the English word *repent* occurs in the NT it is translating *metanoia*. *Metanoia* is not the equivalent of the OT term *shûb*. It certainly does not mean “penance.” Nor does it normally mean “repentance.” Rather, in the NT it retains its pre-Christian meaning of a change of mind. The English reader thus generally needs to read “change of mind”—not turn from sins—when he sees the word “repent” in the NT. The context must be consulted to determine the object of a person’s change of mind.

The only times *repent* is actually a good English translation is when the object of *metanoia* is sinful deeds. A change of mind about sinful behavior is equivalent to repentance.

⁹ E.g., Matt 13:15; Mark 4:12; Luke 1:16; John 12:40; Acts 9:35; 15:3; 28:27; 1 Pet 2:25.

Nearly a century ago, in *The Great Meaning of Metanoia*, Treadwell Walden decried the Latin and English translations of *metanoia* as being “extraordinary mistranslations.”¹⁰ I would agree.¹¹

¹⁰ Walden, *The Great Meaning of Metanoia* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1896), p. 24.

¹¹ Upcoming articles in this series will deal with “Repentance in the Gospels and Acts,” “Repentance in the Epistles and Revelation,” and “Suggestions on the Practical Preaching of Repentance.”

AN EVALUATION OF SOME EVIDENCES FOR “LORDSHIP SALVATION”

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I. Introduction

The observations in this article are primarily philosophical. The point is not to overturn the conclusions of those holding Lordship Salvation,¹ but to examine certain of the more popular evidences offered in support of these conclusions. While it is true that the issue properly conceived comes down to biblical interpretation, it has been my experience that the following less substantial, primarily rhetorical strategies have a great deal of influence—at all levels of the discussion. Of course, if they are valid, those who use them should expand them into full-blown arguments. If, however, they are invalid, then they have no place in the literature at all, not even as popular asides.

II. Intellectual Assent and Personal Commitment

Saving faith is not mere intellectual assent; it is (therefore) personal commitment.

This abbreviated syllogism² (enthymeme) is frequently employed in support of Lordship Salvation:

Faith is not the nod of a head to a series of facts. It is following Jesus.³

All offers of salvation in the NT are directed to the will to make the choice of surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus. One does

¹ In defining “Lordship Salvation” I follow Charles Ryrie, who uses the term to refer to all claims that there must be “a commitment to Christ as Lord of one’s life” in order to be saved. (*Balancing the Christian Life* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1969], 169.)

² For those readers who may be rusty on their logic, a syllogism is “a form of reasoning in which a conclusion is reached from two statements, as in “All men must die; I am a man, therefore I must die” (*Oxford American Dictionary*, New York: Oxford University Press). Ed.

³ Walter Chantry, *Today’s Gospel* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 61.

not become a Christian by intellectually comprehending the historical facts about Jesus . . . [or] by grasping the theological implications of his death and resurrection.⁴

Simple assent to the gospel, divorced from a transforming commitment to the living Christ, is by biblical standards less than faith, and less than saving. . . .⁵

By separating faith from faithfulness, it leaves the impression that intellectual assent is as valid as wholehearted obedience to the truth.⁶

Merely knowing and affirming facts apart from obedience to the truth is not believing in the biblical sense.⁷

Examples could be multiplied. In each instance the suggestion is that all positions other than faith as personal commitment reduce to faith as intellectual assent, and that since faith is clearly not to be understood as intellectual assent, it must be commitment. Of course, it may in fact be true that biblical faith *is* commitment (though I personally do not think so), or for that matter, that it is intellectual assent (though those who hold this position would probably want to replace "intellectual" with "personal" or some other similar term). But these are exegetical conclusions. The question here, rather, is a logical one: Does it follow from the assertion that faith is not "merely knowing and affirming facts" that it is therefore personal commitment?⁸

⁴ Ray Stedman, *Authentic Christianity* (Waco, TX: Word, 1975), 12. Strictly speaking Stedman is not here denying faith as assent but faith as comprehension: "comprehending," "grasping."

⁵ J. I. Packer, Preface to *The Gospel According to Jesus* by John MacArthur (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), ix.

⁶ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 16.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁸ It might be objected that Lordship Salvation is not redefining faith as commitment, but simply saying that a changed life is evidence of regeneration and that when such a change is not present it is a sign that regeneration has not taken place. Now there is, to be sure, such a position on regeneration and the changed life. It is commonly called "the perseverance of the saints," and it states that true believers visibly persevere in the changed life of faith. But surely this is not what the authors quoted above are saying. When Chantry writes that "[f]aith is not the nod of a head . . . it is following Jesus," he is saying that "following Jesus" is part of "faith." And when Packer says that "[s]imple assent to the gospel, divorced from transforming commitment . . . is less than saving," he is saying that "transforming commitment" is part of "saving" faith. And when Ray Stedman writes that "[a]ll offers of salvation in the New Testament are directed to the will to make the choice of surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus," he is saying that "surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus" is part of the "New Testament" faith. Likewise, when MacArthur says that "[m]erely knowing and affirming facts apart from obedience to the truth is not believing

An enthymeme is an abbreviated syllogism in which either the conclusion or one of the premises is not expressed. Thus, for example, "Socrates is a man, and all men are mortal" is an enthymeme suppressing the conclusion: "Therefore, Socrates is mortal." Whereas "Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal" is an enthymeme suppressing the major premise "All men are mortal." In the case in point the suppressed premise is, "Faith can only be understood in one of two ways: either as mere intellectual assent or as commitment," and the complete syllogism is:

- 1 Faith is not to be understood as mere intellectual assent.
- 2 But faith can only be understood in one of two ways: either as mere intellectual assent or as commitment.
- 3 Therefore (since it is not mere intellectual assent), faith must be understood as commitment.

But 2 is a false disjunction.⁹ For there is a third position frequently found in the literature that must be included: faith as trust or personal

in the biblical sense," he is saying that "obedience to the truth" is part of "believing in the biblical sense." Thus associated with faith, "following Jesus," "transforming commitment," "surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus," and "obedience to the truth," become not the *consequences* of salvation but the *conditions* for it. To put it another way, these are not merely offered as descriptions of how Christians persevere, but of how one becomes a Christian in the first place.

For a different view, see Darrell Bock's recent review of MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus* in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (January-March 1989), 21-40. Bock argues that there is a "difference between MacArthur's [polemical] rhetoric and his actual position," which position is found not in the text as such but in "disclaimers every 10 pages or so, sometimes in footnotes." In other words, while MacArthur seems to say one thing in the text (viz., that good works or a commitment to good works are a part of saving faith), in the footnotes he makes it clear that this is not his position (viz., that good works or a commitment to good works are rather evidence of salvation). Bock's effort to give a sympathetic reading to MacArthur is commendable, and his thesis is suggestive. My sense of the book, however, is that it does not simply reflect MacArthur's "rhetorical" style (a style, by the way, not found in his other polemical book, *The Charismatics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978]), but what amounts to a dialectical quality in his thought—a quality that in my opinion is symptomatic of the Lordship Salvation position as such (where, for example, statements like "salvation is free but costs you everything" abound).

⁹ I do not mean to suggest that proponents of Lordship Salvation see commitment as not including intellectual assent. The point is only that they have identified two positions—faith understood as mere intellectual assent, and faith understood as commitment (which commitment obviously entails assent). What is more they seem to be saying that these are the *only* two positions. The disjunction, then, is not predicated upon assent and commitment being unrelated concepts, but upon their being distinct positions regarding the definition of faith.

dependence.¹⁰ The suppressed premise should therefore read: "Faith can be understood in one of at least three ways: mere intellectual assent, commitment, or trust" and the correct syllogism:

- 1 Faith is not to be understood as mere intellectual assent.
- 4 But faith can be understood in one of at least three ways: mere intellectual assent, commitment, or trust.
- 5 Therefore, faith can be understood in one of at least two ways: commitment or trust.

Thus the assertion that saving faith is not mere intellectual assent cannot be used to establish the claim that faith is commitment, for it is consistent with (at least) two positions: faith understood as commitment and faith understood as trust.¹¹

However, the recognition of a third candidate for the definition of faith not only invalidates the original disjunctive syllogism offered in support of faith as commitment, but it presents the proponent of Lordship Salvation with a sobering, if not frightening, possibility. For if it turns out that trust and commitment are two separate acts, in the

¹⁰ Actually, the position most frequently offered in place of faith as commitment is *faith as trust*, making faith as mere intellectual assent into something of a straw man. However, at least one author has argued that faith be understood as trust taken as a certain kind of intellectual assent: namely, assent to a proposition of the form "So and so can be relied upon for this." (See Gordon Clark, *Faith and Saving Faith* [Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1983], especially 106-107.) Of course, "trust" can be used in this way: "So and so can be relied upon for this" = "I trust so and so" (said in the appropriate context). But there still seems to be a real difference between *believing that* someone can be relied upon and actually *relying upon* that person. It is one thing to believe that someone can be trusted; it is another thing (related, to be sure, but distinct) to actually trust him. Simply consider the following statement: "Mr. Smith can most certainly be relied upon for this, but I refuse to be indebted to him, and so I personally will never do so." The individual uttering these words clearly trusts Mr. Smith in the sense of believing him to be reliable, but just as clearly refuses to trust him in the sense of actually relying upon him.

¹¹ Of course, the fact that many of the proponents of Lordship Salvation are guilty of this piece of fallacious reasoning, does not mean that all are—or, for that matter, that those who employ it in one place may not manage to avoid it at another. Thus Elmer Enlow ("Eternal Life: On What Conditions?" *Alliance Witness* [January 19, 1972], 3) acknowledges up front the possible definition of faith as trust and simply denies it: "To 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ' involves more than knowledge, assent, and *trust* (reliance). . . . It means to receive Christ as one's own Lord, the ruler of one's own life. (emphasis mine)" And J. I. Packer (*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961], 89) asks: "Will it [i.e., our presentation of the Gospel] leave them supposing that all they have to do is to *trust* Christ as a sin-bearer, not realizing that they must also deny themselves and enthrone Him as their Lord . . . ? (emphasis mine)."

sense that commitment does not entail trust, then it is possible that one could make a sincere and lasting personal commitment to Christ as Lord and yet never trust Him as Savior.¹² Moreover, the emphasis on lordship found in some Gospel presentations would make the possibility of someone personally committing themselves to obey Christ without trusting Him as their Sin-bearer not only a possibility, but a likelihood. Consider the following attempt by a well-known evangelical to define saving faith, in which he moves directly from intellectual assent to commitment with no mention of trust:

Saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is inseparable from repentance, surrender and a supernatural eagerness to obey.¹³

The question, then, is whether trust and commitment are separate acts—whether commitment somehow entails trust—so that to make a commitment is *de facto* to exercise trust. While at first glance it might seem that this is the case, several examples will suffice to show that it is not. Take, for instance, the career Air Force mechanic, a sincerely patriotic individual personally committed to the airplanes he services as an essential link in the nation's defense, but who nonetheless refuses to fly in them. This would seem to be a case of commitment (lifelong commitment, in fact) without personal trust. Or consider the nurse whose commitment to the surgeon who employs her is unswerving, but who personally refuses a needed surgical procedure. Again, this would be commitment (this time to a person) without trust. Finally, consider Martin Luther prior to his "Turmerlebnis": undoubtedly committed to Christ as Lord (he later wrote of this period of his life: "If ever a monk got to heaven by monkery, I would have gotten there") but because of

¹² As indicated in note 9, even if the positions of certain theologians on the notion of saving faith are distinct, the concepts by which they articulate their positions may be related. The case in point having been that while *faith* understood as "assent" and *faith* understood as "commitment" are distinct positions, commitment normally presupposes assent. The question now is regarding the relationship of trust to commitment. Even if faith understood as trust is something other than faith understood as commitment, might it be that commitment presupposes or includes trust as it seems to presuppose or include assent? If it does, then to be committed is *de facto* to trust (so that to call for commitment is at the same time to call for trust). If it does not, then one may be committed and yet not trust (so that to call for commitment is not necessarily to call for trust).

¹³ MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 31. My point here is not to say that MacArthur would not include trust in his notion of saving faith if he were questioned on it, but simply that he has here, in a strategic attempt to clarify the nature of saving faith, clearly omitted it. Even if those who preach the Gospel intend trust as part of saving faith, those who hear them may well not hear trust preached if it is omitted or hidden in terms like "surrender."

his misunderstanding of the Gospel,¹⁴ thinking that more was required, never having looked to Him in simple trust for salvation. Disturbing though the consequences may be, it would seem that the possibility of being personally committed to Jesus Christ as Lord without trusting Him for salvation is real.

One of the chief concerns voiced by virtually all proponents of Lordship Salvation is that those who preach less than personal commitment to Christ as Lord give many converts false assurance of salvation.¹⁵ Ironically, if the above distinction obtains, many converted under a Lordship gospel may also have been assured wrongly.

III. Jesus: Savior and Lord

Jesus is both Savior and Lord; to receive Him at all is (therefore) to receive Him as both.

¹⁴The example of Luther is particularly relevant, because to many Christians, Lordship Salvation appears to be teaching salvation by works. Aware of this, one author attempts to ward off such a criticism in a prefatory comment: "... someone will accuse me of teaching salvation by works. Let me say as clearly as possible right now that salvation is by God's sovereign grace and grace alone. Nothing a lost, degenerate, spiritually dead sinner can do will in any way contribute to salvation. Saving faith, repentance, commitment, and obedience are all divine works, wrought by the Holy Spirit . . ." But this betrays a general misunderstanding of the issues at stake. To be sure such a statement distances him from Pelagianism (salvation as a human work) and from classical semi-Pelagianism (salvation as a divinely assisted human work) and thus, strictly speaking, from "teaching salvation by works." But what may come as a surprise is that it does not succeed in drawing a line with so-called scholastic "semi-Pelagianism" (better classified as semi-Augustinianism, because the debate had by that time moved from the divine versus human basis of salvation to the subjective means of appropriating that grace, e.g., baptism, faith, sacraments, etc.), for Thomas Aquinas can write the same thing. In *Summa Theologica* I-II, 111.2, ad 2, Aquinas responds to an objection to the notion of "sovereign grace" (*gratia simpliciter operans*). The objection takes its lead from a statement by Augustine that "He who created you without yourself (*sine te*) will not justify you without yourself (*sine te*)." Aquinas agrees that "God does not justify us without ourselves (*sine nobis*), for by a movement of our free will, while we are being justified, we consent to God's justice." "However," he continues, "this movement [of our will] is not the cause of grace, but its effect; thus the whole operation belongs to grace (*Ille tamen motus non est causa gratiae, sed effectus. Unde tota operatio pertinet ad gratiam*)." Philip Schaff is absolutely correct when he writes that "if we reduce the doctrine of justification by faith to the more general term of salvation by free grace" we fail to grasp the real issue of the Reformation. For "the question between the Roman church and Luther turned on the *subjective appropriation* of the righteousness of Christ which is [for all parties involved] the *objective ground* of justification and salvation; while faith is the *subjective condition* (*History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 7:123, n. 1; emphases original)." In a nutshell, the question is not "teaching salvation by works"—a question that in most theological circles is 1,300 years passé—but salvation by grace *through faith*. It is a question of the appropriation of grace and of the nature of faith.

¹⁵ Cf. W. Chantry, *Today's Gospel*, 14; J. Boice, in MacArthur, *The Gospel*, xi; MacArthur, *ibid.*, 16; Packer, *Evangelism*, 73.

This is another enthymeme that is frequently found in the literature:

You cannot believe in a half-Christ. We take Him for what He is—the anointed Saviour and Lord who is King of kings and Lord of lords.¹⁶

Spurious believers want Christ only as a Priest to procure pardon and peace, but not as Prophet to instruct them or as a King to rule over them. We are not saved, however, by one of the offices of Christ, but by *Him* (emphasis original).¹⁷

Evangelism also means summoning men to receive Christ Jesus as all that He is—Lord as well as Savior—and therefore to *serve Him as their King* (emphasis original). . . .¹⁸

He [Jesus] does not become anyone's Savior until that one receives him for who he is—Lord of all.¹⁹

In each instance (and again examples could be multiplied) the point of departure is the person of Christ: "We take Him for what He is," "We are not saved . . . by one of the offices of Christ, but by *Him*," "summoning men to receive Christ Jesus as all that He is," "until one receives Him for who He is." The conclusion drawn is that somehow because Christ is both Savior and Lord, we cannot trust Him as Savior without submitting to Him as Lord. Such statements are not essentially exegetical conclusions, but rather they are philosophical arguments to the effect that to come to someone with multiple offices with regard for one office only is in and of itself impossible and produces, in the present instance, such absurdities as coming to a "half-Christ" for salvation, or seeking salvation from "one of the offices of Christ" and not from Him. Once more the question is not exegetical but logical: not whether in fact one must respond to Christ's lordship in an act of personal submission in order to be saved, but whether somehow our Lord's multiple offices entail this.

In this enthymeme the suppressed premise is something like: "One cannot relate to a person with multiple offices in regard to one office only." The complete syllogism is:

¹⁶ A. W. Tozer, *I Call It Heresy* (Harrisburg: PA: Christian Publications, 1974), 18-19, quoted with approval in MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 29.

¹⁷ Ernest Reisinger, *Today's Evangelism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Craig Press, 1982), 154-55.

¹⁸ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 39.

¹⁹ MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 29.

- 6 Jesus is a Person with multiple offices, two of which are Lord and Savior.
- 7 Now one cannot relate to a person with multiple offices in regard to one office only (for to do so is either not to relate to the person at all, but to an office, or to relate to only a "half-person").
- 8 Therefore, those who would relate to Jesus in His office as Savior (i.e., be saved) must also relate to Him in His office as Lord (i.e., submit to Him).

But do we want to grant this premise?

If all number 7 is intended to mean is that we cannot benefit from a person in regard to only one of his or her offices, then it is patently wrong. And two examples will suffice to show this. (1) To be a mother is to be many things: protector, disciplinarian, teacher, and so on. As such, a mother has many offices, none of which are accidental to her being a mother. But surely a young child in need of protection, however rebellious or unwilling to submit to discipline, may call on its mother for help. Here the child clearly benefits from the mother's office as protector without submitting to her other office as disciplinarian. Likewise, (2) to be a husband is to be many things: provider, leader, lover. But surely a wife who rejects her husband's leadership may still receive his love. Actually, this is a particularly interesting case because here most pastors (even of the "Lordship" variety) not only separate the offices of lover and leader, but counsel the husband to continue to give his love even though his leadership is spurned—counsel not completely dissimilar to that given Hosea. But it is likely that number 7 means something more than this.

When we read above that "We are not saved . . . by one of the offices of Christ, but by *Him*,"²⁰ it is clear that the question is not one of simply benefiting from a person with multiple offices, but of establishing a personal relationship with such a One. The contention is that we are saved by a personal relationship with Christ (John 1:12, for example, says that we are to "receive Him"²¹), and that to come to Him for less

²⁰ Tozer, see note 16 above. Tozer also wrote: "To urge men and women to believe in a divided Christ is bad teaching for no one can receive half of Christ, or a third of Christ, or a quarter of the Person of Christ! We are not saved by believing in an office" (*Heresy!*, 10-11); again, quoted in MacArthur, *The Gospel* (210), with approval.

²¹ Though this is a verse quoted frequently by Lordship authors, the substantial qualification placed on "received Him" at the end of the verse—"even to them that believed on His name"—is not to my knowledge ever mentioned. However, when this is taken into account, even if it is admitted that to "receive Him" means trust Him for salvation

than all He is—i.e., to come to Him simply in light of one of His offices (namely Savior)—is not to establish a personal relationship. Rather, such a relationship is significantly less than personal (being a relationship with a “half-Christ”); in fact, it is merely “official” (being a relationship with “one of the offices of Christ”). This is a much more substantial objection, but it is equally problematic.

Now I would certainly agree that we are not saved “by one of the offices of Christ, but by *Him*.” I would be quick to add, however, that just as it is not a single office of the Lord’s that saves us, neither is it the whole ensemble of His offices—it being the Lord Himself who saves us, as He relates to us *through* one or more of His offices. The real question, then, is of the relationship between “person” and office, and whether office can in fact mediate “person.” If, as some seem to be arguing, “person” is not mediated through one office, the question remains as to how it can be mediated through many. To put it another way, if “person” cannot manifest itself through a single office, how does the mere multiplication of offices help? If coming to Jesus as Savior is looking to an office, not a person, for salvation, then why is not coming to Jesus as Savior and Lord simply looking to two offices? What is needed is not the multiplication of offices, but the “transparency” of office. But that is precisely what we have, whether we are speaking of one office or many. For when we come to Jesus as Savior, we come to *Jesus* as Savior. We come to the Person. Just as when we receive a missionary into our home precisely because he or she is an emissary of Christ (cf. Mark 9:37, 41), we receive a person and not—as some would be forced to say—a half-person or an office.

On a somewhat related theme, it is often argued that the term “Lord” in the title “Lord Jesus Christ,” means “Master” or “Sovereign” and that this implies submission on the part of the one who comes to him for salvation. Critics of the Lordship position²² have countered that “Lord” actually means “God” and points rather to Christ’s deity. But it has been rejoined that deity most certainly entails sovereign lordship, that to be God is *a fortiori* to be Master.²³ Of course, the rejoinder is correct; if

and submit to His lordship—though my present aim is to show that such a reading is not required—the case can be made that to “receive Him” for all that He is (both Lord and Savior) is sufficient for salvation precisely because to receive Him simply as Savior is itself sufficient. The point is: “those who received Him” were given eternal life, because even those who just “believed on His name” were given it.

²² Ryrie, *Balancing*, 173-77; G. Michael Cocoris, *Lordship Salvation: Is It Biblical?* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1983), 13-15.

²³ MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 29, 208-209.

Jesus Christ is anything, He is our Sovereign Master. At the same time, however, it seems to me that the whole discussion is somewhat sidetracked. The point of contention is not who Jesus is—if anything that is the point of agreement—but rather what we must do to receive His salvation. To be sure, Jesus is divine and thus King of kings and Lord of lords, and to be sure, *if we are to be consistent with this truth*, we must without reserve submit ourselves to His rightful and complete lordship over our lives. But the most that can be concluded from this is that Jesus therefore has the right to require personal submission from those who would be saved. In no way does it show that He actually does require such submission, or that He does not save those whose commitments are inconsistent with His divine lordship.²⁴

IV. “Cheap Grace” and “Easy Believism”

Grace that requires no change in life is “cheap grace”; faith that requires no change in life is “easy believism.”

As far as I can tell, the term “cheap grace” was first used by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, but it has since become a commonplace in the debate over the terms of salvation. A leader in the Lordship movement acknowledges its general usage when he writes of “the invasion of it [the Church] by *what has become known as ‘easy believism’ or ‘cheap grace’* (emphasis added).”²⁵ And he does not hesitate to use the term himself, defining it as “[t]he promise of eternal life without surrender to divine authority.”²⁶ There is no question that this is a powerful rhetorical device.

While it might conceivably (though I think wrongly) be argued that a grace that *produces* no change in this present life is “cheap grace,”²⁷ it simply cannot be maintained that a grace that *requires* no change in this life is “cheap.” This is a category mistake. Simply put, *cheap* refers to value, not cost.²⁸ Now the fact that a gift requires nothing of its recipient

²⁴ On an exegetical note, Jesus’ words to the woman in John 4:10 seem to support this. She must *know* (1) the gift of God (eternal life) and (2) with whom she is speaking (Jesus, the Divine Savior, cf. John 8:24), but all she must *do* in response to this knowledge is ask Him for His gift. Of course, to be consistent with her knowledge of the One with whom she is speaking she must do many other things. But to receive the gift she must only ask.

²⁵ John MacArthur, *Kingdom Living Here and Now* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 5.

²⁶ MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 16. Elsewhere he writes: “The message of Jesus cannot be made to accommodate any kind of cheap grace or easy believism. The kingdom is not for people who want Jesus without any change in their living.” (Ibid., 183)

²⁷ An argument that loses its force, however, if *real* change is not *equated* with visible change, and/or if change is not limited to the present life.

²⁸ I do not mean to suggest by this that *cheap* is univocal. Nor do I mean to suggest that the semantic fields of *cheap* and *free* do not overlap some. But only that *cheap* carries with

says nothing about its value. Rather, that a gift requires nothing of its recipient says something about its cost (to the recipient)—namely, that it is free. Thus, properly conceived (though less potently formulated) grace that requires nothing of its recipient is not “cheap grace,” but (redundantly) “free grace.”

That there is significant confusion in the literature on this relatively simple matter is evinced when one Lordship author attempts to draw the same distinction himself, only to further obscure the point. Confronted with the notion of freeness from Rev 22:17 (“let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost”) he writes: “While it is free, it is not cheap; the Savior Himself paid the ultimate price. . . .”²⁹ But even the fact that Jesus “paid the ultimate price” for sin (unless we want to add “and Jesus got His money’s worth”!) does not touch on the issue of value, but only on the cost to Him. What he should have said is: “While it is free to us, it was not free to Him. . . .”

Finally, as the initial quotation in this section also makes plain, “easy believism” is another term that is paying frequent dividends to the proponents of Lordship Salvation. Interestingly, some have felt it necessary to respond that trust in the unseen Christ is not all that easy.³⁰ But the term *easy* should not be offensive to either side in the discussion. Since all parties emphatically affirm unmerited favor, what possible gain can there be in conversion being conceived of as “difficult”? The only thing I can see that makes the term “easy believism” opprobrious (besides the “-ism” itself), is that it capitalizes on the commonsensical (hence dubious) assumption that something as tremendous as eternal salvation cannot be easy.³¹

V. Conclusion

Contemporary studies in communication have made it clear that there is a rhetorical aspect to all human discourse. We all seek to persuade.

it the notion of inferior quality or value and that it is this notion that makes the term “cheap grace” pejorative. If this were not the case, and if *cheap* simply meant “inexpensive,” then the term “free grace” would be more offensive, since *free* does not mean “inexpensive” but “of no expense at all.”

²⁹ MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 58.

³⁰ Ryrie, *Balancing*, 179-81.

³¹ The sense that salvation should somehow be difficult, while theologically unjustified, is nonetheless psychologically satisfying, in that it mitigates the scandal of an ostensibly arbitrary election. A historian of ideas might be tempted to see lurking behind it the scholastic notion of “merit of congruity” (*meritum de congruo*) in which salvation is not strictly deserved (*meritum de condigno*; “merit of condignity”) but in which the bestowing of salvation is at least made appropriate or fitting.

This is neither to be denied in ourselves nor despised in others. But Aristotle's distinction between good rhetoric and bad rhetoric still applies. One student of the classical tradition, Charles Baldwin, has helpfully described good rhetoric as the "energizing of knowledge and the humanizing of truth."³² As for bad rhetoric, Aristotle's own description is best: "reasoning that has only the appearance of validity."^{33, 34}

³² Charles Baldwin, *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1924), 247.

³³ *Sophistical Refutations*, I, 1.

³⁴ I would like to thank Tim Deibler for his very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Dr. Deibler and I disagreed on several points, but he nonetheless was kind enough to make available to me his philosophical expertise, which surpasses my own.

A Voice from the Past:

ASSURANCE OF FAITH AND POSSESSION OF SALVATION

CÉSAR MALAN*

What we need to possess, above every other good, is *peace of mind, contentment of heart*.

In whatever condition man may be, from the monarch to the peasant, he seeks this happiness, and as long as he is deprived of it he is not at rest.

And yet man never attains it as long as he believes that *contentment of heart* is the result of any earthly good, of the satisfaction gained by worldly success, prosperity or renown, or by wealth and its luxuries.

Hence everywhere—in the palace as well as in the cottage—complaints are heard of the insufficiency, the emptiness, and the deceitfulness of what once had been considered as able to satisfy the soul; until by God's mercy the heart sees and feels that indeed, as the Scripture† says, "the world is vanity; that it is passing away with its lusts; that it is a vapor;

*César Henri Abraham Malan, D.D. (1787–1864) was an eminent Swiss Reformed pastor of the nineteenth century. On account of his conservative stands on original sin, the effects of grace in the regenerate, the dual nature of the Person of Christ, and predestination, he was deposed from his state church ministry in 1828. Malan's views of faith and assurance often came under the censure of his Reformed colleagues, both in America and abroad. After his deposition from the state church, he began an independent chapel in his Genevan residence which later grew into a church of significant proportion, L'Église du Témoignage. Malan traveled extensively throughout Europe and Great Britain as an itinerant preacher. He also penned a number of theological treatises, tracts, and popular hymns. The English translation of this article was published as a pamphlet in New York City in 1856 by the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, now the Reformed Church in America.

Dr. Malan wrote this article in French. The translation was rather stilted in style and archaic in vocabulary. For the sake of greater usefulness to today's readers I have taken the liberty of updating, but not condensing, the text. The content and meaning are not changed in any way. Ed.

†The author frequently paraphrased his Scripture quotations in this article, apparently from a French version. The English translation generally made these conform more or less to the King James Version. In modernizing these quotations I have retained Malan's paraphrases, but have updated the language, often making it conform to the wording of the New King James Version. Ed.

that riches take to themselves wings; that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses; and that he will be forever miserable if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul."

But when a man is so happy as to see and feel this—when he looks to God, and no longer to the world for *true happiness*—immediately everything is changed in his view. This life and its concerns appear in their true light—subordinate, finite, and transient, while the unseen life—a future, infinite, eternal existence—is to him the *true good*, sure and perfect.

This peace of mind and contentment of heart everyone knows and possesses who receives them from God by the power of the Holy Spirit and the word of truth, and who finds them by faith in the treasure of treasures: "in Him whose name is above every name—in Jesus Christ, the well-beloved Son of the Father, the Prince of peace, Eternal Life."

So that to be truly "a disciple of Jesus Christ," or "a Christian," is to know and possess this *peace of mind*, which he justly values more than every other good.

But however sure may be this new life imparted to everyone whom the Holy Spirit unites to Jesus by faith, and however real the peace of mind resulting from it, this should always be perfect, never mingled with doubt, discouragement, or fear.

Yet it is not uncommon to meet Christians who, while professing to believe in perfect justification and peace imparted by faith in the Son of God, are *not sure of their own salvation*, and who even regard such assurance as presumption—as a dangerous illusion! "How," they say, "can a man be sure of being saved, while he is here below, where he cannot be satisfied with the obedience he renders to God; nor that he lives the Christian life, which alone proves his belief unto salvation—his union with Jesus?"

But this very complaint, well-founded as it may be, implies faith in the Lord Jesus, for it is the sighing of a soul conscious of not being wholly submissive to the Savior.

I say, then, sincere faith in the Son of God being the essential mark of the Christian, the *assurance of faith*, or the *full certainty of being now one of God's elect* is the completion or perfection of this faith. However, this *assurance* is not essential to faith, and often many doubts and struggles occur before it is established in the heart of the child of God.

I repeat, this complaint of lack of assurance shows a desire for sanctification. Though those who make the complaint do not understand that sanctification does not begin in a soul until, after having believed in the Father's love toward it, this soul possesses by the Spirit of adoption

that peace imparted by the grace of God; and that in proportion as this person is sure of being a child of God, does he exercise that filial obedience which the Gospel requires, the Word of God guiding him, and the Holy Spirit enabling him to fulfill its requirements.

The truth of this remark will appear in the following authentic narrative*:

On a visit to Scotland, (says a minister of the Gospel,) I called on an elderly woman in the neighborhood, confined for several years to her bed with dropsy. I was accompanied to her house by a lady whose servant she had been, and who told me that this poor woman was troubled by doubts of her salvation—that she did not have *peace of mind*.

I was affected on seeing the poor woman oppressed with pain, and her emaciated face told that her sufferings had continued for a long time.

After some consolatory words, I asked her if she dreaded the coming of the Lord, who seemed to be fast approaching and to be already summoning her to leave this world.

"I shouldn't dread His coming," she replied calmly, "since I hope that He will receive me to His rest, because He is a merciful God."

I asked her why she said that she *hoped to be* received, instead of saying simply that she *would be* received.

"Ah!" she replied modestly, "it isn't fitting for a poor sinner like me to have such confidence. Though I am sure that Jesus Christ is the Savior, yet I wouldn't dare to say that I'm now saved, and His salvation is mine."

"Why?" I said to her. "Would you doubt God's veracity?"

"I don't doubt it," she said eagerly. "God forbid! But how can such a miserable sinner, whose heart is so corrupt, dare thus declare that she is saved? Is there anyone on earth that believes himself so pure that he could present himself fearlessly before the Holy of holies? Ah, sir! Far from me be such pride!"

I perceived that she did not view the Savior's sacrifice in its fullness, but that she regarded redemption as *conditional* and not as the *full and free gift* of God.

Then I tried to direct her faith to the Savior's death, and to show her that since Jesus is a perfect Savior, He has accomplished in Himself the complete salvation of His Church; and that consequently the Church

*If the dialogue recorded here appears contrived and not representative of current Reformed thought, it needs to be remembered that the account was written against the backdrop of the covenantal scheme of Scottish Federalist theology. For further discussion, see M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance*, Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985. Ed.

has nothing to do *in order to save herself*, though she has much to do, *because she is saved*.

But I will relate our conversation. And may God bless it to the good of any who are similarly situated!

"Do you think," I said, "that there is any presumption or pride in being sure of being saved?"

Woman. "Yes, because every man, however religious he may be, is guilty of some sin every day. How then can he think himself worthy of heaven?"

Minister. "But since you have submitted to the Savior, don't you believe that the Lord Jesus *bore our sins in His own body on the tree*; that He was *'wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities,'* that *'the chastisement for our peace was upon Him,'* and that *'by His stripes we are healed'*? (1 Pet 2:24; Isa 53:5)."

Woman. "Yes indeed! I believe all this, because it is written in the Bible."

Minister. "Well, this same Bible says: *'for the transgressions of My people He was stricken'* (Isa 53:8), and that Jesus thus, *'by the offering He made of Himself, has perfected forever those who are being sanctified,'* and *has redeemed from the curse of the law His Church, for whom He was offered a propitiatory sacrifice* (Heb 9:28; 10:14; Gal 3:13; Rom 8:3)."

The sick woman appeared surprised. After reflecting for some moments in silence, she said to me: "Will you repeat the passage which speaks of the offering which the Son of God made of Himself? There is something in it I don't understand."

I repeated it, pointing her to the forcible expression "*Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many*" (Heb 9:28). I dwelt on the word *once* to make her feel that by this single offering of the Son of God, the Church has been wholly redeemed; the penalty His people would have suffered in hell being placed entirely on the Savior "*as [on] a lamb without blemish and without spot, . . . foreordained before the foundation of the world* (1 Pet 1:19-20)."

The woman was still more surprised, and said to me, hesitatingly: "Isn't this the reason why the Apostle Paul says, *'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus'*? (Rom 8:1)."

I was glad to hear her quote such a pertinent text. Continuing my explanation of this fundamental truth, that Jesus has truly by Himself saved His Church, and is therefore called *Savior*, I said to her: "The Church's salvation has been effected and finished once for all by our kind and almighty Savior. Recollect what is said of this Church, that

'Jesus . . . became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor 1:30), that is to say, our whole salvation. We must, then, believe what the Bible says about Him, namely, that He is 'Chief or Head of His Church, which is His body'; that in Him this Church has eternal redemption—entire and perfect salvation."

Woman. "Does this mean that the Son of God has achieved, alone and by Himself, the whole redemption of all sinners, and that thus no sinner has anything to do to be saved?"

Here had been the great error of this weak believer.* She didn't reject the Savior's righteousness or *merits*, but she didn't comprehend the power, or especially the extent of this righteousness. Then I quoted to her the passages where it says that Jesus offered Himself a ransom *for His people*; that He was a priest and victim; that He bore the wrath and curse of God *in place of His people*; and that thus He acquired, forever, by Himself, salvation and eternal life for "*as many whom the Father has given Him* (John 17:1-2)."

The woman listened attentively. This word of truth pleased her; and she said to me, with tears in her eyes: "The Savior has done more for us than I had believed! I thought that His death had only partly redeemed us; as if, for example, we were thereby freed from the bondage of sin and put in a state to *gain* our salvation."

"If that were so," I replied, "His death would have been either useless or unjust. If the Savior had died only as a martyr to attest the truth of His doctrine—"

"Stop!" said the sick woman, reaching out her hand, "I was once misled by that falsehood, but I have rejected it. Jesus died *for us*, and not for *Himself*."

Minister. "Well said. Therefore whatever benefit results from His death must be ours. God did not strike Jesus unjustly, but justly."

Woman. "I don't understand you. Could Jesus have died unjustly?"

Minister. "He did so die as regards men, but not as regards God. He would have died unjustly, and especially He would have been *cursed* unjustly (Gal 3:13; Isaiah 53), if there had not been laid on Him the *just cause* of such a fearful penalty."

Woman. "But didn't He take our sins on Himself? Because it says that He '*was delivered up because of our offenses*' (Rom 4:25)."

Minister. "True, and I wish you to see it clearly. The Lord Jesus was loaded down with the griefs and sorrows which the Church would have

*She may have been a confused believer (one who came to faith and then became confused), or an unbeliever who never had understood the finished work of Christ. The latter seems more likely in light of the ensuing story (see, for example, pp. 43-44). Ed.

had to bear, because God '*made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us*' (2 Cor 5:21)."

At this last expression the sick woman said to me with surprise: "What! Was Jesus made sin?"

"So the Scripture says," I replied. And I showed her the text. "It is also said that Jesus '*was manifested to take away our sins*' (1 John 3:5). Having taken them upon Himself, His soul bearing the burden of them, as if the sins were His own, He has abolished them justly, that is to say, by bearing the punishment due to these sins."

"If so," said the sick woman, "this good Savior has truly done all for His Church, and has redeemed it by Himself alone—by that great sacrifice which He offered on the Cross!"

Minister. "Do you think, if it were not so, that the Savior would have exclaimed on the Cross: '*It is finished*'?"

Woman. "Then has this good Savior really achieved, by Himself, the whole salvation of His Church?"

Minister. "So this text, addressed to the Church, declares: '*You are bought at a price*' (1 Cor 6:20); and this other, in which the Apostle reminds the Church that '*they were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, but with the blood of the Lamb*' (1 Pet 1:18–19). Do you understand these words?"

Woman. "Yes, I think I understand them. They mean that when the Savior bore the curse on the Cross, He bore it for His Church; and that He removed it wholly from His people in taking it completely upon Himself."

Minister. "Then tell me how many curses this Church of the Savior's ought to bear for her sins?"

The sick person was surprised at my question, and answered: "Should she bear more than one? And is not this curse hell—the pains of damnation which the Savior calls *everlasting fire*? There is but one hell, I think. There can't be two or more hells."

Minister. "No, and I ask you this question, so that you may tell me where you think is now the curse deserved by this Church, for whom the Son of God was offered up!"

The sick woman took long looking for an answer. At last she said: "If the Savior indeed took upon Himself the curse which His Church should have borne, it is plain that this Church has been delivered from it. Otherwise the Savior has died in vain, and the Church still has to save herself from the curse."

Minister. "You can now understand why the Church continually exults in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, as you see in the Prophets, and

as is related in the Revelation of St. John. The Church attributes to Jesus her entire exemption from the curse which she would have had to bear, and which He took upon His body and His soul. Therefore she rejoices."

Woman. "She has great reason to rejoice, because it is an eternal salvation."

I was now about to propose the most delicate question, one which would touch the sick woman's conscience, and I was anxious to see the effect of it. "You don't think, then," I said, "that the Church regards herself as achieving her own salvation, when she thus rejoices?"

"Not at all!" she replied, with an earnestness that gave me pleasure. "The Church receives everything from God. She well knows that *she hasn't* procured this great salvation, but that her Savior has done it Himself *entirely*. She rejoices as a person rejoices in a gift received, and not as in a reward which has been earned. Here all the glory is the Savior's, and to the Church belongs only the bliss of being thus redeemed by Him."

I was happy to see the truth penetrating the soul of this very ill woman, which was so soon to take possession of this eternal salvation. To what she had said I added: "So, you believe that if the Church should not rejoice—if she should doubt this blessing bestowed upon her, or should think she had no right to claim it, but must first deserve it by her obedience and holiness—"

Woman. [Interrupting me] "That would betray infidelity or pride. Since the Savior of the Church was offered up for her, and has redeemed her from condemnation, by taking her condemnation upon Himself, the Church, if she believes Him, must rejoice. Also, the more firmly she believes, the more she will rejoice and give praise to the Lord Jesus. Yes, as a prisoner rejoices before the benefactor who has paid his ransom."

Minister. "Then you compare the Church to prisoners whose ransom has been wholly paid?"

Woman. "So do the Prophets, I think, and particularly in a passage which our good Savior quotes; namely, that *God sent Him to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.*"

Minister. "This is in Isaiah chapter 61:1; and in chapter 35:10, it is said that He (the Lord), having paid the ransom, the freed captives return, and *come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy.*"

Woman. "It couldn't be otherwise. Every prisoner thus redeemed from slavery, that is to say, every soul saved—every child of God—must leap for joy before his Savior!"

Minister. "Why so, I ask you?"

Woman. "Because he is redeemed, ransomed from this slavery, by the Savior's sacrifice. Why shouldn't he rejoice? No cause of joy can be compared to this."

Minister. "But might not the captive be accused of pride and presumption, if he boasted thus of being no longer in slavery?"

Woman. "No, because the captive does not boast of having redeemed himself. On the contrary, he attributes all to the Redeemer who has paid the ransom for him."

Minister. "Then what would you think of one of these captives who, while saying, 'I believe that our king has himself paid my ransom,' would not be sure that he is redeemed, and who should say, 'I am not yet thankful enough to dare to be sure that my ransom is paid?'"

At this question, which was a direct appeal to her conscience, the ill woman put her face in both hands, and remained silent for some time. I thought she had begun to see her error, but I didn't know how far she saw it. Also, I was preparing to question her further, when she said with emotion and surprise: "Have I mistaken till this day what the Lord Jesus has done for my soul? Is it possible that I have so poorly understood the sacrifice of this loving Savior, and that I have fancied I saw pride and presumption where there was only the deepest humility, and where the glory belongs wholly to the Lord? I feel indeed reproached!"

Minister. "What do you mean, if you please?"

Woman. "When I told you just now that I regarded it as evidence of pride for a person to believe himself now saved, and that for myself I couldn't say it, not being holy enough, I plainly forgot, or rather was ignorant, that salvation has been procured by the Savior, and that those who have received it must rejoice. Because (how new this is to me!) if they do not rejoice, it is because either they do not *believe* it, or they think that they must procure it *themselves*."

Minister.* "The Word of God says repeatedly, that the captives thus freed, that is to say, the children of God—the disciples of Christ—ought to *rejoice* and glory in their Savior. The Lord Jesus calls this joy *perfect* or *full*, and the Apostle Peter calls it inexpressible and full of glory (John 15:11; 16:24; 1 Pet 1:8). But who possesses this joy, the timid child or the child who believes and confides in his father's word?"

The woman was more and more affected, and said: "I'm afraid I have been in error till this day."

"How?" I asked her.

*The translated pamphlet labels this paragraph "S." for "Sick Woman," but this is evidently a typographical error. The text and context indicate the Minister. Ed.

Woman. "I'll tell you. I believed indeed that salvation is by grace—is the gift of God, and not given in reward for our works of righteousness. I also believed that Jesus has redeemed us by shedding His blood. But I'm afraid I mingled my works or feelings with the grace of God, because I viewed this redemption only as a means to testify to my faith, and induce me to apply the Savior's merits to myself. It seemed to me that I couldn't appropriate to myself the gift of salvation which is in Jesus Christ, until I had more self-renunciation, more humility and holiness, more consecration to the Lord."

Minister. "Shouldn't we have this holiness?"

Woman. "Certainly we should. But I didn't place it right. I can't express what I mean, but I'm sure my mind was confused on this subject. And when I said that I believed that Jesus Christ has redeemed us from the curse, I didn't really believe it, because the thought was constantly in my mind that I ought to conduct myself so as to gain salvation, or to avoid final condemnation."

Minister. "That isn't your thought now?"

Woman. "No, indeed! It seems to me that I perceive a new hope not known to me before, and that God offers me a finished salvation, of which I had no idea before."

She then explained the notion she had up till now formed of the salvation obtained for us by the Savior, the purport of her words being this: That Jesus had merited our salvation, without actually accomplishing it by Himself. This salvation had seemed to her to be only a privilege procured by the Savior for men, and of which a man must make himself worthy by his good conduct; so that the sinner who didn't fulfill the conditions of this *bargain* between God and man couldn't partake in the joy of the privilege.

This was a great error, for she thus denied that the Savior suffered the wrath of God in place of His beloved Church. Also, she took away from the death of the Son of God its expiatory character. Hence, pious as she otherwise was, she viewed with a sort of horror the expression of their faith and joy made by enlightened and humble Christians professing to be redeemed from the curse by the propitiatory Victim who so loved them as to offer Himself up for them; thus giving the glory of their salvation to the One who has really achieved it all. Such joy might appear arrogant and boastful to her while she fancied that she must only *hope* for this salvation, and that none but glorified saints rejoice in it.

I wished to know on what Bible texts she had relied to support these errors. She replied that all the Gospels and the Epistles inculcated the

necessity of good works of sanctification, in order to *acquire* salvation.

I showed her that these exhortations to holiness were addressed to the *children of God*, to those who, *knowing that they belonged to Jesus, who has redeemed them by His blood*, should from then on, from gratitude and love, live devoted to Him who loved them. I showed her that all these commands to be holy are founded on this motive: *the love of Christ, the mercy of God in Christ, the price of their redemption*, the gift bestowed on them of reconciliation with God their Father, etc.

I quoted some striking passages. For example, I said to her: "When a Christian prays, it is to *his Father* he says, '*Our Father in heaven.*' He does not address a judge whom he *hopes* one day will be his father; nor to one who, *perhaps*, is his father; but to Him whom the Spirit of adoption teaches him to call by the endearing name of "Father." And to Him he says, like a child, '*Forgive me my trespasses,*' thus asking to be treated, not like a condemned criminal, nor even like a stranger, but like a reconciled and adopted *child*, a beloved *son* or *daughter* in Jesus, and that God would act towards him as a good father towards his wayward child."

This remark on the Lord's Prayer affected the ill woman, who said to me: "I hadn't thought that this petition of the Lord's Prayer was to be offered with such a feeling of peace and love. I had supposed that it related to punishment in the world to come, and that the Christian was asking for forgiveness so that he might not be finally lost."

Minister. "Then you hadn't observed that the prayer is addressed, as I told you, to a *Father* and not to a *Judge*?"

Woman. "I see it now, and I feel an indescribable joy! . . . But the Savior says: 'If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you.' It's possible, therefore, that they may not be forgiven, and so may not be redeemed."

Minister. "Here you are confounding the *forgiveness of sin in a child* of God with the *salvation of a sinner* still far from Jesus. You also forget that a father may punish his beloved child, and still not cease to be his father. He doesn't disown him as his son, although he does punish him."

Woman. "I understand. It's the sins of his household which are meant here."

Minister. "Yes, the sins of the household, not of strangers or servants. Hence the Apostles of the Lord Jesus, addressing the brethren of this *Elder Brother* on the subject of sanctification, implore them, as the *beloved of God*, to behave themselves reverently, as children towards their father, not with a servile fear, but with a respectful confidence towards a Benefactor who is exalted, indeed, above them in rank, and

yet is their Friend (Eph 5:1)."

Woman. "Sweet thought! What a difference it makes in all our conduct! Because it's no longer from fear of punishment that a child of God acts, but from filial fear—from apprehension of displeasing his *Father*, his loving *Savior*."

Minister. "So the Apostle Peter expresses himself when speaking to believers: 'Since you are regenerated, and by faith are now already saved, so that you call God your Father, be *obedient* children. Forsake the world and its lusts. And as God, though a Father to us, is also a Judge in His house and punishes His own children, pass the time of your stay here in fear; for you have been bought with a price, namely, the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot' (1 Pet 1:13–23). This is the beautiful and comforting language of the Apostle."

Woman. "You remind me of a passage of Paul's which seems to me to have the same meaning and which has caused me much pain, for it is this which kept me in bondage. He tells Christians *that they must work out their own salvation with fear and trembling* (Phil 2:12). Doesn't he mean that they must beware of being assured of their salvation?"

Minister. "Not at all; for notice, first of all, that Paul is addressing *saints in Christ* (Phil 1:1) of whom the Apostle is persuaded that they possess the favor and peace of God, who will complete His good work in them (vv 2–6). So then, he isn't talking to unbelievers still outside of salvation, but to those who possess it already, and who, because they are *Christ's and bought at a price*, must *glorify this beloved Savior in their bodies and in their spirits, which are God's* (1 Cor 6:20).

"But these believers, these redeemed, these persons received into favor, these children of God, are still carnal, having disputes, quarrels, and contentions among themselves. The Apostle says to them: 'I implore you, by the consolations which are in Christ, that you be like-minded. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, instead of pleasing Himself, humbled Himself. Imitate Him, you His beloved; not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out this salvation which is given you, not proudly and presumptuously, but with a humble distrust of yourselves. Because it is not you who work, but *God your Father, who according to His good pleasure works in you to will and to do. Therefore, let all things be done among you without complaining and disputing, that you may be the children of God without rebuke*' (Phil 2:2–15)."

Woman. "This meaning is clear, but how different from what I had thought! The Apostle speaks here only of the humble diligence with which a child of God should serve his Father. How easy it is to make

the Scriptures say precisely the opposite of what they intend!"

Minister. "The Apostle's reasoning is easy to follow: Since God works in you, His children, to will and to do every good work, you ought not to be proud, but, on the contrary, to do the works which belong to your salvation, with fear and trembling as regards yourselves, since you are only feebleness."

Woman. "I understand. And yet, I ask you, why was Paul, though he was certainly a child of God, afraid of being a castaway* in the end? Because he does say so somewhere."

Minister. "Not so! Never could this Paul, to whom God *had shown mercy*, and who knew and believed that the *Son of God had loved him and given Himself for him* (1 Tim 1:16; Gal 2:20), never could this believer even think *that height or depth, things present or things to come, could separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus* (Rom 8:38). But Paul, though assured *that the crown of righteousness was laid up for him by the righteous Judge* (2 Tim 4:8), knew also that the child of God must be holy, and especially that every minister of the Word must exemplify in his life the virtues he prescribed to his brethren. And such is the meaning of the passage in question. It is found in 1 Corinthians 9, one of the most affecting portions of all Paul's Epistles. The Apostle earnestly expresses the condescension he had used towards the churches. He reminds the Corinthians that *to the weak he became as weak, to the Jews as a Jew, and all things to all men, that he might gain some*. Then comparing the labors he must endure in exercising this love, to the austerities and hardships to which wrestlers in the public games are subjected, who are not admitted to contend unless they are properly trained, he declares that he imitates these men, that he also disciplines *his body and brings it into subjection*; that he may also share the rewards of victory in this evangelical combat; and that thus his work be not confined to preaching, which would be fruitless, and would expose him to the censure of his brethren, if his preaching were not followed by practice. He says to the Church: "See and imitate what I do. I subject myself to self-denials. I strive against the flesh, that it may not be said of me that *I lay burdens upon others which I would not move with one of my fingers* (Matt 23:4), and that thus I be *disqualified* and rejected by you as a false disciple who says to others, '*Be sober and watchful*,' but who neglects to do so himself."

*The KJ translation "castaway" in 1 Cor 9:27 is most unfortunate. Apparently the old French version was similar. The Greek word *adokimos* means "disqualified," as for an athletic prize, as the context suggests. Rewards, not salvation, are in view. Ed.

Woman. "I thank you; and I bless the Lord for showing me now what I never saw before, namely, that it is in the peace of adoption that the Christian aims to be holy. Oh, how I have misunderstood the Gospel up to now! How far I have been from seeing that the obedience of a true disciple of the Savior is produced in him by the Spirit of grace, by whom he is sealed!"

Minister. "How simple and natural it is will appear if you consider the difference between a filial and a servile disposition. I am a father. But suppose I have brought up one of my sons as a servant, thinking this a wise step to humble the haughty heart of the child. He doesn't know that he is my son, and he serves me as a domestic serves a good master. When he commits a fault he is afraid of being punished and dreads me as a judge. Suppose I tell him this very morning (for he couldn't know it on his own) that he is my son, and I show him the affection of a father. The result is a great change in his feelings, his present relation to me being so different from what it was before. Now he feels a reverential love, a confidence and intimacy. He feels peace, joy, tenderness, a sincere desire to submit to my commands. And if he forgets them (because he won't willfully *transgress* them any more), his repentance is *filial*, his tears are those of a *son*, and it is from his *father*, and not from his *master*, that he asks forgiveness. But tell me, first, could this child serve me as a son before he knew that he was one? And secondly, when he found this out, could he respect me and seek to please me only as his master?"

Woman. "No, indeed! A child's heart is not that of a hired hand. Oh, I repeat it, I have understood the Gospel very little! How little I have understood and known what the *adoption of the children of God* is."

Minister. "You have not understood what is said of *not grieving or quenching* the Spirit either (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19)."

Woman. "I think I have *not*, because I've regarded these new acts of disobedience only as provoking God's wrath and curse anew."

Minister. "God doesn't curse anyone *He has sealed with His Spirit*. *There is no more condemnation to those who are justified by faith* (Rom 5:1; 8:1). But just as in a family a child grieves a good father when he doubts his love or despises his counsel, and as by such hardness of heart he incurs the father's displeasure, so the child of God can't resist the influences of the Spirit of adoption by which he is sealed. Nor can he act contrary to these influences without feeling shame and self-reproach, which are the marks of his heavenly Father's displeasure, whose kindness he has abused."

I added to this interpretation that of some other similar passages. And

by the grace of God the Christian woman to whom I thus spoke received the truth as a humble servant of Christ and assured me that I had given her great consolation, removing as I had by the Word of God the false notions she had entertained of salvation.

I didn't leave her till she expressed to me her sincere faith in God's testimony, which she desired might be increased.

Her words were these: "Now I can depart in peace, because my soul has seen God's salvation. I confess in His holy presence that I sincerely believe in Jesus His Son, *who has Himself purged the sins of His Church*. Also, I believe that I am part of this Church, since God says that every sinner who sincerely believes in Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior, is one of His sheep, and has eternal life (John 3:36; 10:28; 1 John 5:1, 12). Jesus alone has Himself fully paid the ransom of every soul whom He has loved, so that I am sure He has given Himself for me. I know that He has given Himself for me because God says that those who believe on Him have Him for their Savior.

"So then I no longer think that there is pride in believing what God has said concerning His Son and the perfect salvation of those who sincerely believe in His name. I think, on the contrary, that there is pride in doubting it. Because thus a person shows that he is not looking to Him nor to His blood shed for the forgiveness of sins, but has regard for his own worthiness or unworthiness.

"If I live, then, it will be by the grace of my Savior, and by His efficacious Spirit in me, to consecrate myself to Him who loved me first. Or if I die, it will be to go to Him who has redeemed me forever for Himself, and by whose Spirit I am sealed. Whether I live or die, I belong to Jesus, who has saved me; and of this I am sure, because God has said it."

Thus did God bless this conversation, which, though abridged, is here faithfully reported.

It took place in the month of August, 1826. Two years later I saw this servant of the Lord again, and I found "*the grain of mustard seed had become a great tree* (Matt 13:32)."

Two long years of suffering and conflict had elapsed, during which her faith had been proved; and I was anxious to observe in her the faithfulness of the Lord, who "*does not forsake the works of His hands* (Ps 90:17)."

She was in the same room and afflicted with the same disease as when I saw her before. But how different her spiritual condition! The light, whose dawn on her path I had hailed, "*was shining ever brighter unto the perfect day* (Prov 4:18)."

"Come," she said to me, "give thanks with me to our heavenly Father, *'who has done great things for His servant.'* Oh! how good, how merciful, how faithful, ever since that happy day when He sent you to me with His message of peace! Let my soul praise Him, and you rejoice with me!

"My soul," she said with emotion, "has been guarded as by a wall and bulwark, behind which I have been secure from the attacks of the enemy, though *'the roaring lion has prowled about it.'* Yes, I say it adoringly, *I have abided under the shadow of the Almighty;* and in the midst of my affliction [for her pains of body were great] *when the drought has come,* I have found *'the Lord a stronghold in the day of trouble, a shade in the daytime from the heat, a shelter from storm and rain'* (Isa 26:1; Ps 91:1; Nah 1:7; Isa 4:6)."

Minister. "Your foot has not slipped in this new path? You have never doubted that the Lord loved you nor that you were His child?"

Woman. "Ah! sir, *the Lord has held me by my right hand; He has guided me with His counsel, and I have been continually with Him* (Ps 73:23-24). I have had no doubts, and my consolation has been strong, because the promise and the oath of God cannot fail (Heb 6:17-20). Every day the Lord seems to say to me, as formerly to Gideon: *'I am with you. Go in the strength which you have.'*" And she added with a smile: "I have also built under the oak of promise an altar *to the God of peace* (Judg 6:24)."

Thus did this simple Christian, relying on the "testimony of God," magnify the Lord's faithfulness, and show that indeed the Comforter is sent to the one who *believes the promise of God in Jesus*, and that He impresses more and more deeply on the heart an assurance of the peace of God and of salvation."

"Sometimes," she added, "I have said in my sufferings, *the Lord has 'wounded me with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one'* (Jer 30:14), but He has also spoken to me these comforting words: *'Whom I love I chasten, and I scourge every son whom I receive'* (Heb 12:6). Oh, how His goodness has helped me, and what assurance He has imparted to my soul!"

"And I think," I said, "that in thus assuring you of your election and of the impossibility of your being lost He has made you desire to love this faithful Savior and to serve Him more and more earnestly."

"Ah!" she replied devoutly, "the only wish of my heart is to be daily less conformed to this world and more like Him who loved me and gave Himself for me! My soul, which He has justified—as I know full well—desires no other life than that of her Savior. *'Let my soul live, and it shall*

praise You; and let Your judgments help me' (Ps 119:175)."

So spoke she who before she was *assured* of her salvation was bowed down and went groaning under the heavy yoke of the law. But *after believing God* and receiving the seal of the promise, she had learned that there was now no condemnation for her, and that it was impossible to *snatch her out of her Shepherd's hand* (John 10:29), *because He who had graciously called her to the fellowship of Jesus was faithful and would confirm her to the end, that she might be blameless in the day of Christ* (1 Cor 1:8, 9). She had seen at once both her assured part in the incorruptible inheritance and also that the Spirit of adoption *unites the heart of the redeemed sinner to fear the name of the Lord, and to the commandments of the Son of God* (Ps 86:11; John 14:21).

"No," she told me, "I can't agree with those who are afraid that a person may be *too* assured of his salvation—'lest,' they say, 'he should become remiss in his obedience!' It must be that those Christians have *never tasted how good the Lord is*, nor known the joy of the Spirit of adoption. Because if they had felt, even for an hour, what it is to possess this peace of God, and to be able to thank Him for His salvation, they would have no fear lest this unspeakable joy and this deep gratitude should be turned into revolt and contempt of the commands of Jesus. No, such disciples have never believed with all their heart in the grace of God; and I may tell them so, because such was my own sad experience."

"But," I said, wishing to ascertain her views more fully, "they will tell you that they believe, perhaps, but that they are not sure; and that their doubts about the nature of their faith lead them to fear that they may backslide."

"Well!" replied this happy Christian woman, "let these disciples know that they are not true to the Lord—that they are neither humble nor upright, perhaps; but they retain some secret idol in their hearts, some passion, some sin which leads them captive. For the 'testimony of God' is so simple that we can easily know whether we believe it or not. Whoever renounces his own righteousness knows that he renounces it; and if he believes that salvation is the free gift of God in His Son, he knows, too, that he believes it, and that he is at peace. And then he will as plainly know *that he loves Him by whom he has been loved first*, and that *to love Him is to keep His commandments*. So at least He has told me, and so I believe in my heart, and hence I am *at once happy* and desirous to be more obedient."

Persons honestly intent on their eternal interests may see here that their doubts concerning their possession of salvation spring from unbelief of heart. For instead of believing what God says of the propitiation made by Jesus for the sins of the Church, they regard the death of the Savior as only a first step, and as made in vain, if the sinner does not render himself worthy of salvation by his own holiness. Let me add another remark, to which I invite your attention, dear reader. Some pious people, not discriminating between *justification* and *sanctification*, place the last first, and so expect to bear abundant fruit, before having planted the tree! Let me explain:

The more I am assured that God is appeased towards me—that He has received me into His favor, and adopted me as His child in Christ—the more also the love of God, poured out in my heart by the Holy Spirit, will urge me to love this God and Savior and to consecrate myself to Him, whom *I will love because He loved me first*. If, then, I am sure that I am now justified before God, I am at peace (Rom 5:1), and in this peace I work out, as a child sealed by the Spirit of adoption and under the guidance of this powerful Spirit, the work of sanctification laid upon me by my heavenly Father.

If, on the contrary, I doubt whether I am now received into favor, and if I think that a proper humility requires me to remain in this doubt, not only do *I make God a liar*, which is a great sin (1 John 5:10), but, further, I immediately take away all motives to filial obedience and leave only the motives to servile obedience—that is to say, I prevent all sanctification, because sanctification works only *by love*, and not *by fear* (1 John 4:18).

Also, dear reader, notice what is said in the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6–9). This tree had produced no fruit for three years, and the owner of the vineyard ordered it to be cut down. But the dresser of the vineyard, who wished to preserve the tree, asked for delay. And then wisely judging that the tree failed to have fruit because it lacked sap, he didn't busy himself with the branches, but with the root. "I will dig around it and fertilize it, and if it bears fruit, well." And we can believe that the branches, receiving sap from a well-cultivated trunk, bore that fruit which their former dryness could not produce.

So is it with the soul of man. First let faith abound in it by the word and the unction of the Holy Spirit, and this soul will produce fruits of holiness. But let the Christian begin by *increase of faith*, and not by *more fruit*, by *more holiness*, since these are only the *product* and *consequence* of living faith.

Strange that it should be so difficult to make these simple elements of faith understood by those who profess to be Christians, and that thus, on the one hand, truly pious persons try in vain to produce fruits of holiness, because they lack simple and sincere faith in the promises of God in Jesus; and that on the other hand, some persons, equally serious, accuse of presumption and pride the simple and humble children of God who *rejoice in Him their Savior*.

Suppose two unhappy criminals are being led out to punishment. Their king proclaims their pardon. One of the criminals *believes* his declaration, and makes known his joy. The other, on the contrary, doubting the truth of the message, remains trembling and afraid, reproaching his companion for being too glad. And yet the one who believes and is glad is the truly humble criminal. The happier he is, the more he honors the king who pardoned him and the messenger who brought him the pardon. At the same time the one who doubts insults them both and suppresses the gratitude which he would have felt if he had simply and freely believed his sovereign's word.

Grace in the Arts:

THE CORONATION OF THE KING

An Annotated Work of Fiction

Part 1

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

—Daniel 12:11-12

The past forty-four days had been some of the most momentous in history. After seven years of unprecedented worldwide cataclysm,² King Jesus had returned from heaven, conquered the assembled armies of the nations, and established His kingdom on earth. Accompanied by tens of thousands of His saints,³ the King had entered earth's atmosphere riding a white horse,⁴ and touched down at Mount Olivet near Jerusalem.⁵ The world dictator, known as the Beast, and his false prophet had been summarily sentenced to imprisonment and exile in the fearful Lake of Fire—the magmatic depths of Earth's eternally benighted core.⁶

Immediately after arriving from outer space, vast troops of these windborne saints, now the ruling aristocracy of a vanquished planet, had taken flight across the globe like snow-white doves. Some aristocrats now ruled as kings or queens over entire nations, others as governors over states, still others as mayors—some over ten cities, some over five, and some, alas, standing by idly and bitterly, while a few ruled over eleven

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

*cities.*⁷

At last, the forty-fifth day had dawned. Today, millions of human beings would be judged to determine their qualifications to enter this kingdom.⁸ This day would also see the official inaugurations of the aristocracy who would co-reign with the King for the next one thousand years.⁹ Finally, this would be the day of the public coronation of King Jesus as Sovereign over the Kingdom of God ruling all nations of Earth for the coming Millennium.¹⁰

Rudy left his mansion early this morning, washed in the River of Life, grabbed a piece of fruit from the Tree of Life, and was flying from the New Jerusalem for his last day of inspections when he heard the call for help. Once it would have been called a distress signal. Believers called it prayer. Unlike the old days, Rudy could help answer this prayer request.

The scene was a familiar one over this past month and a half: a city reduced to rubble by nuclear and extraterrestrial blasts during the war, people trapped beneath some ruined edifice (gone forever were the Eiffel Tower, the Sears Tower, the Taj Mahal, the Palacio de Bellas Artes, St. Peter's, and the Capitol in Washington¹¹). Also, as usual, a member of the aristocracy was ready to rescue.

Rudy was the nobleman nearest to the site, so he immediately headed in that direction. When he arrived, he found that a lady of the aristocracy was on her knees finishing the prayer he'd heard just moments before. After he touched down, Rudy helped her stand up.

"Thanks for coming," she said, as she brushed the ashes and dust from her white robe. "Hello. I'm Sarah. This was more than I could handle alone."

"Hi, I'm Rudy. What can I do to help you get them out?"

"Well, from what I can tell with my new ability to see and hear through solid objects, there's a little girl down there, and about five cubits away is a man. They're both injured quite badly. The only reason they survived at all is because of an airspace under this area here." Sarah pointed.

Rudy surveyed the remains of the highrise hotel much as a three-year-old might look at a pile of building blocks. "How deep are they buried?"

"I'm not sure, but I estimate about fifty cubits. That's why I wouldn't proceed alone. I was afraid the lower section might cave in on top of their airspace while I was excavating the upper section."

Rudy smiled to himself at what would have once been his macho attitude to such a feminine display of know-how. Then he decided to go one step further than merely recognizing her ability. He'd give her a compliment. "Excellent precaution, Sarah. Where did you learn that

principle, engineering in the old days?"

"No," she replied tersely. "Just common sense."

Rudy smiled at his own attitude, but then grew more serious. After he'd studied the situation a moment more, Rudy spoke. "Let's work together. I'll clear the debris, while you support the airspace underneath so it doesn't collapse."

"Excellent solution," she replied. "Did you learn that in engineering?" Rudy threw up his hands in mock surrender, realizing she'd been reading his mind all along. He really must get used to this mind-reading thing. She'd read that thought too. They burst out laughing together.

Then, moments later they both dropped to their knees and began to pray. Using only his mind, a mind which not much more than seven years before had only an average IQ, Rudy prayed in faith, believing.

A half-ton section of flooring levitated slowly, clumsily into the air, kicking up a gray cloud of ashes and concrete dust. The piece of concrete, steel, and carpeting wobbled through the air—Rudy hadn't quite perfected this new art form—and then suddenly crashed it to the ground a safe distance away as gravity took over after prayer.

"If I practice long enough, I might just be able to move a mountain!"

"Me too!" Sarah laughed, but not in unbelief like her Old Testament namesake, nor as she herself would have once laughed at the thought of lifting ten tons by prayer alone.

When half the rubble had been cleared to one side, Rudy turned to Sarah. "How much farther are they?"

"I think about twenty cubits. Just keep going. I've got their crawlspace protected. You won't injure them."

When the last slab of concrete that had buried the pair was out of the way, Sarah was the first to fly down into the pit where the little girl and the man were lying. Rudy followed immediately.

Seeing the condition of the girl and then the man, Sarah instantly knelt down again to pray. Just as she heard two pairs of feet touch down in the pit behind her, Sarah cried out, "Dear Lord Jesus, send us medics fast."

She turned around and to her stunned surprise, there were Dr. Luke and Dr. De Haan,¹² still practicing medicine in their glorified state. They had appeared out of thin air one second before her prayer."¹³

Dr. De Haan walked quickly to the little girl and knelt beside her. Dr. Luke did the same with the man. Both patients were as limp as ragdolls, their bodies covered with horrible radiation burns and their clothes badly soiled with blood and filth.

"How bad?" asked Rudy.

Luke was inspecting the forehead and hand of the man, leaving De Haan to answer. "Bad, but no longer incurable."

"Thank You, Lord," breathed Sarah.

De Haan continued. "Do you realize what has happened to these people? The nuclear radiation that bombarded their bodies after the blasts is the molecular equivalent of a bull in a china shop. Without the healing power of the Lord, these people are doomed to death or permanent disability. They've had their bodies' cells ripped apart from the inside."¹⁴

Luke stood up, his face ashen. "We need higher assistance before we can treat this man." Looking up, Luke said aloud. "Lord, send one of your angels from Heaven."

In a moment—a moment noticeably slower than that required to bring the doctors—an angel appeared, nine feet tall and more muscular than any NFL linebacker Rudy had ever seen a decade before when Monday nights were devoted to one god only—football.

The angel took one look at the man and seemed to understand. He took one step back and waited for the others to do their part before his part was necessary.

The two doctors invited Rudy and Sarah to join them in prayer. De Haan and Sarah knelt by the girl, taking her little hands. Rudy and Luke did the same with the man a short space away.

When the four saints opened their eyes, the little girl opened hers. Her body was completely restored, every trace of the horrible disfigurement caused by the radiation was gone, every cell in her body restored to its pre-tribulation normality.

Sarah picked up the child in her arms, holding the living ragdoll close to her heart. "I'll take her to the refugee camp myself, if it's okay."

De Haan nodded. "Take her by the hospital first. The Lord won't mind if we double-check His handiwork."

Turning to Rudy, Sarah smiled. "Thank you for helping."

Rudy tipped an imaginary hat. "My privilege entirely."

The man who had been healed opened his eyes just as Sarah flew away with the girl in her arms. Rudy felt a chill in the air as Luke put a gentle hand on his shoulder and pulled him away from the patient. De Haan, Luke, and Rudy all stepped back in disgust at what they saw. The angel walked forward to take over.

The man who had been burned was looking up at them. His face and hands were restored to normal. There on his forehead and on his right hand were laser-tattooed the telltale, inverted triangle with the Roman numeral six on each point.¹⁵

The angel spoke to the three men in white, his voice like the sound of a thundering waterfall: "Leave this place and don't look back. Whatever you do, don't look back!"

Immediately Rudy and the two doctors flew up out of the pit and said their farewells. As Rudy sped away through the air to his original destination, he thought how such a command would have affected him just a few years back. No longer did he even have a desire to disobey.

The words of the King came quickly to his mind. "Remember Lot's wife!" Rudy thought for a moment about all the blessings that could have been his all those years if he'd only practiced simple, instant obedience!

The angel looked at the man with eyes as pure and piercing as bronze that had turned mirror-like in a blast furnace. "Do you repent of your fornications, idolatries, and scorceries?"

The man with 666 on his forehead and wrist at first looked up at the angel with an expression of absolute terror, but that expression changed to one of cynical defiance, as if someone had turned a switch. The angel read the Beast-worshiper's mind even before the obscenity could reach the man's lips.

Instantaneously the man's eyes began to melt in their sockets; his tongue began to shrivel in his mouth; his skin began to dissolve on his body; and in seconds, there was a bright burst of flame; then it was over. Like the empire of the Beast, only ashes remained.¹⁶

Having completed his part of the rescue, Rudy was about to resume his last day's inspections when he remembered his promise to Joe. It wasn't really what you'd call a promise. It was one of those passing remarks that he'd made a thousand times in the old life, just a casual, "noncommittal commitment," in this case, a promise to take Joe with him for a day's inspection. But when he thought of Joe sitting down there in the Zone of Darkness, and when he thought of their friendship in the old days, he changed his mind. These days, Rudy was taking his own words much more seriously than he ever had before.

Instead of flying up to the Moon as planned—actually, it was out to the Moon from the earth—Rudy hung a midair U-turn and headed south where dense cloud-cover enshrouded the entire South Pole in thick darkness. For now, this was Joe's home, what the Bible called, "the Outer Darkness."¹⁷

Rudy flew over what had once been called South America, the whole

continent now moved and rehooked, puzzle-like, onto its original spot next to Africa. Totally out of curiosity, Rudy took a quick nose-dive to see if the reports he'd heard were really true. Cruising low over Texas-sized sections of rain forest that had been burned or blown apart, he finally climbed in altitude up to the escarpment where the discoveries had been made.

After circling in the air for a couple of minutes, he spied first one species of dinosaur and then another, playing and splashing atop the giant escarpment as though the time of Jacob's trouble, indeed, as though time itself, had never happened. Sure enough, Job's behemoth and leviathan still existed!¹⁸

After this harmless diversion, Rudy resumed his journey south. The bright millennial-blue skies grew darker with each passing furlong. As the skies turned to night, Rudy began to hear the most unhappy sounds outside of Gehenna.

When he arrived, Rudy was startled by the bleak, vegetationless landscape of Antarctica minus its ice and snow. The horizon was dotted here and there with Christians mourning their loss of rewards.

It took a few minutes of searching through the darkness to find his friend. He walked up to the lonely figure curled up on the ground. Rudy deliberately tried to sound cheerful. "I came back like I said I would."

Joe didn't even acknowledge him. Rudy repeated what he'd said and stooped down to take Joe's hand. Joe flinched and pulled away.

Rudy still tried to sound upbeat. "Come on, Joe. I told you I'd take you with me on the inspection tour someday. I have some extra time today and some fascinating places to visit. Thought you might like to come along."

At last, Joe looked up at Rudy with the eyes of a frightened child, half pleading that the invitation was not a lie. Understanding even what Joe was thinking, Rudy gently but firmly lifted Joe to his feet. "Look, I want you to come with me right now. I won't accept no for an answer."

Finally, Joe spoke, faltering as if it had been years since he'd last spoken. "But . . . but what about . . ."

Rudy smiled, reading Joe's mind easily. "There's no law that says you can't come with me on an inspection tour. Now let's get going. I don't have all day."

Joe looked around absent-mindedly, as though he had forgotten something. "I guess I'm ready . . . but you may have to help me a little. I don't do much flying . . . and well, I need a lot more practice . . ."

Rudy smiled. "So do I, brother."

After a couple of failed takeoff attempts, Rudy finally grabbed Joe by

the hand and they took off together. As they flew north out of the Zone of Darkness, Joe slowly began to act and talk more like himself. After a little while Rudy let him fly solo.

But soon Joe began to fall behind. Rudy looked over his shoulder and saw Joe wobbling in midair. He called out. "Are you okay?"

Joe had difficulty talking and flying at the same time. "Yes . . . I still haven't . . . got the hang of it."

Rudy slowed down and allowed Joe to catch up. When they were side by side again, Rudy reached out his hand. "Here, let me help for a while. Besides, I know where we're going."

"Where did you say we're going?"

Rudy smiled. "I didn't say, but we're going to the Moon."

Joe didn't smile. "I was afraid you'd say something like that."

The inspection of the Moon took only long enough for Rudy to scan a couple of reports. Rudy had done none of the work on these inspections; his job was to make sure others had done their work. Joe preferred not to land on the lunar surface, but wait out in a protective, stationary orbit.

Rudy returned jubilantly. "Joe, I tell you, in a few hundred years no one is going to recognize this place with the addition of a blue-green atmosphere and white clouds, clear rivers and sparkling lakes, tall trees and green grass, even tawny cats and black-and-white dogs! And the Lunar University is going to be unrivaled in educating a generation of millennial college kids. Imagine having the Prophets teaching the Old Testament and the Apostles the New; Anselm, Augustine, and Aquinas doing seminars in theology proper; Luther and Calvin lecturing on soteriology; not to mention Edwards, Scofield, and Chafer—what a faculty!"

As they began the journey back to earth, Joe glanced back at the lunar surface and sighed. "I'm glad they've mopped up the blood from all the battles that were fought up here."

Rudy ignored Joe's depressing tone. "Actually, most of the red color¹⁹ will go away when earth's atmosphere is fully cleansed of all the dirt and poisons suspended in the air from all the explosions. In fact, that's our next stop."

"What is?"

"Mid-air—you know, the atmospheric teams. They're about to knock off for the holiday."

"Right."

The atmospheric cleaning crews turned in their reports to Rudy after he and Joe had taken a brief tour of the skies above Europe, one of the areas hardest hit during the war. As they were about to leave, Joe asked his first question of substance. "What exactly have they been doing?"

Rudy was encouraged by what seemed to be his poor friend's interest. "It's an enormous project, Joe. Not only does the entire atmosphere have to be filtered and cleaned of smoke, carbon dioxide, poison gas, brimstone, and radioactive fallout,²⁰ but in conjunction with the ocean-cleansing projects and the melting of the polar ice caps, the entire hydro-vapor canopy is gradually being restored to its pre-Flood state. It will take several generations to balance the world's climate, temperature, hydro- and bio-cycles.

"Once the new systems are in place, I guess the earth will become a very beautiful place."

"Like the world before the Flood.²¹ We have to wait another thousand years to turn the clock back to Eden. We're the overseers of this reconstruction project. God Himself will be the Architect of the New Earth."

"What about the Zones of Darkness at the North and South Poles? Will they clear up any during the next few years or will it always be so dark?"

"Joe, I really don't know. I don't know how much those areas will be changed. I know there won't be any more pollution left anywhere on Earth. But how much light there'll be or other changes, I just can't say."

"Is there someone you can ask? Would that be too much trouble?"

"No trouble, Joe, but I can't promise you anything. Guess where we're going next?"

"Where?"

"We're going to visit one of the most exciting of all the projects, the ocean-cleansing units."

"Let's go." There was almost eagerness in Joe's voice. At last, thought Rudy, at last.

At the Pacific Ocean Project—the only real ocean left in the world since the repair of the Atlantic-Ocean-sized rift between North America and Europe and between South America and Africa—Joe and Rudy witnessed the tail end of what had been an amazing operation. Aided by millions of members of the aristocracy, the entire ocean had been skimmed and scanned in a matter of a few weeks. Trapped or

shipwrecked crews had been rescued. Whales, sharks (now as harmless as goldfish), and other sea creatures that were injured or dying had been captured, healed, and then turned loose in cleaner waters.

Most dramatic of all, huge cleanup units had been working night and day to filter out blood, wormwood, toxins, and other poisons,²² and even reducing the high degree of salt in the ocean while at the same time evaporating tons of water from the melting polar ice caps. The water vapor collecting in the atmosphere began to disperse worldwide, recreating the canopy that had enveloped the earth in the days of Noah and Enoch.

After looking over the reports, Rudy called out to one of the teams that was working with a group of dolphins, a species particularly hard hit during the judgments of the last seven years. "You've all done a splendid job!"

One of the team members called back. "We've only just started. It's going to take three or four generations to clean up the whole thing."

At that moment, a final group of hundreds of dolphins was released from their hospital holding-tanks to return to the sea. "Ee-ee-ee-ee, Ee-ee!" they cried in chorus, which was now perfectly understandable in dolphin language as "Thank you!"

"You're welcome!" called most of the team members.

Rudy laughed. "They've always been talking to us and we were too selfish to listen and too dumb to answer back."

Joe twisted his mouth and looked away. "There are more important things in life"

Rudy shook his head, more than slightly perturbed. "Come on, Joe. Can't even a talking dolphin make you smile?"

"Would you smile if you were in my shoes?"

"Joe, I don't understand. You're seeing all these wonderful things and they don't even faze you! I thought it would be encouraging for you to come along, and you seem to dislike it at every stop!"

"What encouragement is it to know all this? Here you are gallivanting around the globe, while I'm doomed to sit in a dark corner thousands of miles from everything."

"But that's why I invited you."

"To show me what can't be mine?"

"No. Don't be ridiculous! Are you crazy? I want to share it with you."

"Share it? None of this belongs to me."

"But Joe, it doesn't belong to me either. The earth is the Lord's"

"Don't you know how it tears me to pieces to see what I'm missing out on?"

Rudy should be feeling anger or hurt, but now he had an infinitely stronger and finer fabric of self-control woven within. "Are you sorry I invited you?"

"No." Joe hung his head. "No . . . I'd hoped you'd remember your promise."

"I remembered. Come on. We have a few more stops before we arrive in the Holy Land. I know these will make you feel better."

The Himalayas were still the tallest mountains on earth, shoved skyward into even more jagged spires by the buckling of the crust and the tremendous tectonic forces unleashed before Armageddon. Rudy's inspection took longer than he'd anticipated and the work was made even more tedious because of his growing concern that it was a mistake to have ever brought Joe along.

This feeling was confirmed when Rudy returned to find Joe, Ancient-Mariner-like, stooped and staring forlornly at what had once been the tallest mountain in the world. Rudy had hoped the grandeur of Everest might inspire his old friend.

But when he returned, Joe's greeting was: "What great earth-shattering report do you have to 'share' this time?"

"Did you ever see photos of these mountains before the Tribulation, back when we were living in the United States?"

"Sure. What about them?"

"Look at the mountains now. What's different about them?"

"Is this supposed to be an elementary school exam? I guess the obvious answer is that they're taller."

"Right. What else is different?"

"I don't know. I can't read your mind as easily as you obviously can read mine. You'll have to stoop to my level and tell me."

"Look!"

Joe looked, but he didn't see.

At last, Rudy answered. "Where's the snow? The ice? You know, the white stuff?"

Joe looked down. "Not much of it left . . . like the South Pole."

"With the Earth's temperature so much hotter, the ice and snow are disappearing, but they're leaving behind a wonderful bonus. Thousands of new streams and rivers are springing up all over this part of the world that we once called Asia. The water is washing the land, picking up tons of garbage and pollution left from the wars. It's all being carried out to

sea.”

“So?”

“Do you remember the Levitical ceremonies in the Old Testament with running water and scarlet and wool and hyssop? The cleansing of the lepers?²³ Don’t you see it? Even the earth is purifying itself from the cancer of the past decade and the natural elements are cooperating. For the first time in history since Eden, the Earth is responding in the way it was *created* to respond. It’s washing up, sprucing up to get ready for the King!”

Joe looked at the mountains a long time before he spoke. “I’ve heard that Pilate still looks for water to wash his hands with in Hell . . . Some things can never be washed away . . .”

After a long silence, Rudy spoke abruptly. “Are you ready to go?”

Joe looked a last time at the Himalayas and nodded.

Rudy finished his next assignment quickly to make up for lost time. The Sahara had bitten the dust forever and what was once called North Africa was blooming.²⁴ The irrigated life that had once been the sole domain of the Nile was now continent wide. But roses in the desert brought no cheer to Joe.

Rudy had to almost drag Joe through the air to his last stop on the inspection: Israel. Rudy stopped first at the refugee camp near Tel Aviv to check on the little girl he’d helped rescue that morning. She had been released from the hospital and was playing with a number of other children. These children were without families to take care of them, but would be adopted by families entering the Kingdom following today’s judgment.

Rudy walked past the greenhouses and vegetable gardens as he left the camp: tomatoes were growing the size of watermelons and clusters of grapes were big enough to carry on a pole between two men. Outside the camp, Rudy saw Joe seated by the road at an air bus stop, weeping.

Rudy ran up and put his hand on his friend’s shoulder. “What’s wrong, Joe?”

“I can’t go on any further. I can’t see any more. Take me home.”

“But we’re in Israel now. This is the most exciting part of the inspection. Everything is shaping up just as God said it would in the Prophets.”

“Rudy! I can’t think about Bible prophecies, when *I’m* the fulfillment of one of them! I always thought the Outer Darkness was Hell. I thought

it was for lost people, but it's for me—a Christian!”

“I’m sorry.” Only now was Rudy beginning to see the true anguish in his friend’s soul.

“The worst part is that I deserve it! Do you realize what I did?”

Rudy turned away. He didn’t want to listen to this confession. He didn’t want to hear it all over again. But something inside, something new, gave him the strength to turn around, look into Joe’s tear-drenched eyes, and listen.

“Do you realize what I did? I steered many away from the door of eternal life. I told them that they’d never make it with their simple childlike faith in Christ, and oh . . . I’m the one who barely made it with my self-righteousness! Most of the “easy-believism” converts I mocked really made it. And what is worse, I so clouded the Gospel that many of my congregation, those in my church, my radio listeners, and the readers of my bestselling books—they didn’t make it at all.”

“Don’t be harder on yourself than He is,” Rudy said, with a gentle touch of irony in his voice. “A large number of your converts were saved after all—not by your works-theology, but because God’s grace found a core of true trust buried in their self-reliance. Don’t forget that we were all *sinners* saved by grace.”

“But few sinned as I did.”

“All right. You sinned. So did I. So did Paul. But all our sin was atoned for long ago.”

“But nothing will ever change my failure!”

“Nothing will ever change His grace to you either. Right now, He’s being gracious to you and you can’t see it, just as you couldn’t see it then.”

“Grace? Now? How is He gracious now? I’m not even invited to the coronation of the King! I suppose you’ll quote Job’s comforters and tell me my punishment is less than I deserve.”

“No, Joe. We deserve nothing. Everything is His gift, even our rewards—the public offices to which we are about to be inaugurated. It’s all of His grace.”

“I guess I’m like Esau, begging for a lost blessing. Oh Father, bless me too! Is there not still some grace left for me?”

Rudy thought back to his old days, before glorification, those days of impatience when he would have desired to throttle a guy like this, but now he felt only compassion and patience. Once, his old nature would have desired to gloat over this brother, to boast in having had the true theology and the genuine converts. Now, seeing Joe’s sad state, Rudy could not feel such sentiments; no, he didn’t even *want* to feel such things.

"Joe, He is gracious still, but you can't see it. After seven years of God's wrath turned loose on Earth, His mercy has come to stay for more than a hundred times that long. It took the worst of God's judgment in order for Him to release the floodgates of blessing held back for centuries. He was gracious to millions during the Great Tribulation—millions who wouldn't have been saved any other way.²⁵

"This is a day of grace to the Earth itself and its creatures—their groaning voice has at last been heard and answered. Their travail is over and they're rejoicing in the glorious freedom of the sons of God—our freedom!²⁶

"But most of all, this is a day of grace to His Son. If God could be gracious to us, to the vilest scum, doesn't He now also have a right to be gracious to the One who became our Servant and died in our place?

"We lived in the days of grace to sinners. This is the day of His grace to the sinless Sin-Bearer. Forget yourself and think of Him. Even if you can't be happy for your own situation, be happy for the Lord Jesus. How He suffered for us! How He earned this hour! How He deserves it! This is *His* hour!

"Through His death we were justified. Now is the hour of His justification—not from sin, but because of our sins. Don't you see? The Father's grace to us ruined the reputation of His Son publicly in front of this world and now this is the hour of His public vindication in the same arena in front of all men."²⁷

Almost out of breath, Rudy stopped. In a few minutes Joe spoke. "It's fitting that I'm not invited. I of all people helped to ruin His reputation . . ."

"Joe, you never committed adultery or cheated on your taxes or embezzled the church's money."

"There are worse spots on our love feasts . . . I perverted the most precious thing He ever gave me. I took my most sacred trust and trampled on it. I preached . . . a different gospel."²⁸

Joe broke down into sobs and Rudy started to say more, but he stopped. Yes, he could hear another call for help. This time it was the distinctive call of an angel. Grabbing Joe by the hand, Rudy shot up into the air and flew to the edge of the camp where he'd heard the call.

Even as they approached, Rudy could see the situation. A refugee from the camp had stolen a helicopter and flown it over the wall in a desperate escape attempt. An angelic guard had flown up and grabbed the helicopter, the spinning blades slicing through his angelic body like a food processor dicing a boiled egg. Unharméd, the angel set the copter gently on the ground. The frantic man jumped out of his escape vehicle

and ran for his life into the ruined city beyond, with the angel, Rudy, and a reluctant Joe all flying fast behind him.

*** To Be Concluded in the Next Issue ***

NOTES

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version, Copyright © 1984, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville.

After all the theologians have put forth their best arguments against a literal interpretation of these words in Dan 12:11-12, there is still no grammatical, exegetical, historical, logical, or sensible reason for not taking Daniel's words at face value as forty-five calendar days. (These forty-five days constitute the difference between the 1,290 days of v 11 and the 1,335 days of v 12.) Literal interpretation in no way destroys poetry or symbolic language; on the contrary, behind a poetic image or prophetic symbol lies the most concrete reality. In most prophecies of a person, place, thing, date, or event there is a union of the literal and symbolic. For example, a flag is both a literal object as well as a symbol of a nation, as the 1989 U.S. flag-burning controversies have shown. Likewise, biblical prophecies can all be understood as a union of the symbolic and the literal: a specific number of days or years; a winged, flying angel; a savage, beast-like dictator; or a floating satellite city constructed of clear gold. It is the belief of this writer that most controversies in eschatology could be avoided if this simple principle of the literal/symbolic union were adopted by interpreters. This principle is used consistently (even if sometimes a little too overtly) throughout this short story.

For two good defenses of a premillennial, pre-tribulational approach to the prophetic Scriptures, see Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1953) and *The Meaning of the Millennium*, edited by Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977).

² See Dan 9:24-27.

³ See Zech 14:5; Jude 14-15; Rev 19:14.

⁴ See Rev 19:11.

⁵ See Zech 14:4.

⁶ See Rev 19:20. For a discussion of the exact, geographic location of literal and eternal Hell, see J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co, 1964), 555-561. The location of Hell is presented here fictionally as the interior of the Earth. In defense of this interpretation, the characteristics of Hell (fire [Matt 25:41], worms [Isa 66:22-24; Mark 9:42-48], darkness [2 Pet 2:17; Jude 13], and a Lake of Fire [Rev 20:15]) correspond to the characteristics of Earth's top soil, crust, mantle, magma, and core.

⁷ There is no reason not to take Jesus' parables, such as Luke 19:11-27, as a direct prophecy with a literal fulfillment involving the saints during Christ's reign on Earth.

⁸ See Joel 3:1-2; Matt 25:31-33.

⁹ See Luke 12:32; 1 Cor 6:2, 3; Rev 20:4-6. The use of the terms "ruling aristocracy" or "administrative staff" in reference to the rewarded saints of history is found in Erich Sauer's *From Eternity to Eternity*, trans. by G. H. Lang (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), 72-73.

¹⁰ The public coronation of Christ as King of the nations will involve the literal fulfillment of such poetic prophecies as Psalms 2, 24, 110, and 118.

¹¹ The destruction of the cities of the world is predicted in Rev 16:19.

¹² I wish to acknowledge my deep gratitude to God for Dr. M. R. De Haan, whose writings influenced my early years of studying God's Word. I can think of no higher tribute to one of this century's great Bible teachers than to place him, fictionally, in the company of Dr. Luke and in our Lord's millennial service as a physician.

¹³ This scene is a fictionalization of the millennial promise in Isa 65:23.

¹⁴ For an excellent discussion of these ideas, see "Living With Radiation," Charles E. Cobb, Jr., *National Geographic* (Vol. 175, No. 4, April 1989), 403-37.

¹⁵ See Rev 13:16-18.

¹⁶ See Rev 14:9-11; Zech 14:12.

¹⁷ The term "outer darkness," used in Matt 8:12; 22:13; 23:30, has generally been interpreted as referring to the final place of punishment of unbelievers, also known as the Lake of Fire (for example, see Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 555). However, a minority interpretation refers this term to the state of Christians unrewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom 14:10-12; 1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10). See, e.g., Michael Huber, "The Concept of the 'Outer Darkness' in the Gospel of Matthew," (Th.M. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978), and Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1985), 83-95. Hodges, however, views the "outer darkness" as completely non-literal and as purely a part of the symbolism in the passages where it occurs. The view used in this story is for fictional purposes.

¹⁸ See Job 40:15-41:34. For the interpretation that behemoth and leviathan were dinosaurs still living in patriarchal times, see John C. Whitcomb, *The World That Perished* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), 28-29.

¹⁹ Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20; and Rev 6:12 predict the turning of the moon into blood, which has been interpreted to mean not literal blood, but a blood-like color. This story furnishes a fictional scenario of how literal blood could be referred to as well as a crimson color.

²⁰ Pollution of the atmosphere will be a logical consequence of the judgments described in Joel 2:30; Rev 8:7; 9:18.

²¹ The vapor canopy theory (as described in John C. Whitcomb, Jr. and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* [Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1961]) that explains conditions in the antediluvian world (Genesis 3-8), is taken by many to explain how similar conditions can be restored in the millennial earth (Isa 35:1-10; 65:17-25; Ezek 40:1-48:35; Zech 14:6-21).

²² One of the major tasks early in the millennial reign of Christ, I believe, will be the cleanup of the oceans and the rescue of surviving human and animal life after the tribulation judgments described in Rev 8:8-11 and 16:3-7.

²³ See Leviticus 13-14.

²⁴ See Isa 35:1-7; 51:3.

²⁵ An often overlooked purpose for the seven years of tribulation on Earth is the conversion of millions who would not otherwise be saved (Rev 7:9-17). Thus, even during the greatest outpouring of God's wrath in history there is an equally grand outpouring of His grace!

²⁶ See Rom 8:19-23.

²⁷ A lesser-known argument for a literal Millennium on Earth is that Christ *deserves* it. In the very city in which He was spit upon He will be crowned and will reign in absolute splendor. See Hoyt Chester Woodring, "The Millennial Glory of Christ" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1950).

²⁸ Although it may seem inconceivable to some that the curse of Gal 1:6-9 could fall on a Christian, it is important to note that Paul includes himself in the list of those capable of preaching a "different" (Gk., *heteron*) gospel (v 8).

BOOK REVIEWS

So Great Salvation. By Charles C. Ryrie. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989. 166 pp. Cloth, \$12.95.

If this book had been written only several years ago, it would be hard to imagine a debate over the conditions of salvation such as there is today. For many years Dr. Ryrie has caught the brunt of the attack from Lordship Salvation advocates because of his single chapter in *Balancing the Christian Life* (first published in 1969 by Moody Press). He has not answered in print until now, but the wait has been worth it.

Though the book is more a positive statement about the issues of salvation than an answer to John MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus*, it does answer Dr. MacArthur convincingly and clearly. The reader will quickly see and appreciate the difference between MacArthur's dogmatic rhetoric and Ryrie's reasoned theology.

Ryrie covers all the essential issues in the Lordship debate. There are separate chapters on the four most crucial and controversial issues: the meaning of faith, repentance, Lordship, and discipleship. But he begins where he should, i.e., with the nature of God's grace. At its heart, Lordship Salvation is a subtle perversion of God's grace forcefully argued with slippery semantics. But as Ryrie points out, semantics is the battleground, and clarity in terms and definitions is essential.

Other chapters are welcome, such as the chapter which buries four favorite straw men of Lordship proponents. The reader will also be thankful that a chapter has been devoted to defining the Gospel clearly and simply, especially if he has previously read the cumbersome and confusing presentation in MacArthur's book.

The chapter on Christian fruit-bearing is also very helpful. While advocating that all Christians *will* bear fruit, Ryrie goes on to argue that a weakness of the Lordship argument is the inevitable subjectivity of "fruit inspectors" in determining what is acceptable evidence of genuine salvation. He then gives a biblical study to show that fruit is not always obvious and discernable (for example, one's inner character, praise to God, or giving). Ryrie demonstrates that the subjectivity of the Lordship argument is one of its glaring weaknesses.

The doctrine of justification is too often neglected in the Lordship debate, but Ryrie devotes a good chapter to it. He argues that the biblical

idea of imputation refutes the Lordship argument that justification *makes* one righteous. Again, he also raises the Lordship problem of subjective judgment if justification is determined by analyzing one's works. Though there is a chapter on the doctrine of sanctification, it would have been helpful if Ryrie had said more on the relationship of sanctification to justification.

Ryrie does not handle all of the biblical texts used by Lordship proponents (e.g., Matt 7:21–27; 11:28–30; John 2:23–25; 3:36; Rom 1:5; 16:26; Col 1:23; Heb 3:18–19; 4:6; 5:9) but he does interpret some very important ones (e.g., John 1:12; 15:1–17; Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9–10; Jas 2:14–26). Unfortunately, a discussion of Eph 2:8–9 is lacking. This would have been especially helpful since it is so often used to characterize faith as a divine dynamic. But Ryrie's gift to the evangelical world and to those grappling with the Lordship Salvation issue is his convincing logic and biblical theology communicated with gratifying conciseness. Though every Lordship passage is not answered, he has shown that they all can be; thus his arguments and questions definitely place the ball on the Lordship side of the net.

It is somewhat surprising that Ryrie, a champion of dispensationalism, fails to note many of the dispensational issues involved in the Lordship Salvation debate. Granted, this may have been beyond his design for the book, but MacArthur has challenged dispensationalism and its interpretation of many crucial passages that bear on the Lordship question. Ryrie would certainly have been the one to answer him.

Nevertheless, in my opinion this is the best introduction to the theological issues in the Lordship Salvation debate. It is also a book that demands answers from Lordship advocates. Though not his explicit purpose, Ryrie has taken the offensive in the debate by writing a book that is easy to read and understand.

The Lordship Salvation issue is as important as the Bible's teaching of salvation itself. There is no room for careless handling of the Scriptures or for theology that can't be clearly supported from the Bible. *So Great Salvation* does a careful and responsible job in handling Bible texts and in presenting a consistent theology. It is a book every evangelical should buy and read. In fact, every Christian concerned about the clarity of the Gospel should buy a half dozen copies and pass them around to others.

Charles C. Bing
Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Burleson, TX

Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation. By Zane C. Hodges. Dallas and Grand Rapids: Redención Viva and Zondervan Publishing House, 1989. 238 pp. Cloth, \$14.95.

If salvation is an important subject to Christians (and it is!), this is a very important book. Zondervan was wise to publish both sides of the current controversy over so-called "Lordship Salvation." This volume by my former Greek professor and later co-editor of *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* is a specific answer to *The Gospel According to Jesus* by John MacArthur. *Absolutely Free!* is jointly published by Redención Viva, a Dallas-based publishing house founded by Hodges and his fellow-pastor, Luis Rodriguez. Even the form, trim size, gold lettering, and number of pages are similar (MacArthur is only slightly more prolix than Hodges). These are good-looking, well-bound books.

The author told this reviewer that his primary goal was to write a popular-style, easy-to-read book, and yet, secondly, one with scholarly notes in the back that, while not impeding the progress of the average reader, would satisfy the further demands of the preacher, seminary and Bible College professor, and the more studious person.

Hodges has succeeded admirably on both counts. This is not a dry-as-dust theological tome, but an interesting, practical book. I especially appreciated the full notes, several from Luther and Calvin, showing clearly that it is the "salvation-by-commitment" people, not the *sola gratia* people, who have broken faith with the great Reformers. By now we hope everyone knows that just because a church, preacher, or professor is labeled "Lutheran," "Presbyterian," or "Reformed" does not guarantee that Luther or Calvin would approve of what is being taught from their sacred desks!

Hodges starts his book with a chorus he heard as a teenager in a Baptist Church in Maryland:

Absolutely free!
Yes, it is absolutely free!
For God has given salvation, absolutely free!
Absolutely free!
Yes, it is absolutely free!
For God has given His great salvation,
absolutely free!

—*Author unknown*

In good literary style, Hodges comes full circle and ends his book with the same words.

In between, at least to this (admittedly somewhat friendly) reviewer, the author proves his contention that, indeed, salvation is absolutely free—*sola gratia*, by grace alone.

The main thrust of the book is answering the question: What is saving faith? No one will be surprised that the seven-sacrament system of Rome, the five-step way of salvation of the Churches of Christ, or the “salvation” by character of some liberals are rejected.

But in recent decades many well-meaning evangelical preachers and evangelists, appalled by the lack of commitment of many who profess to be converted, have tried to save the day by making the “entrance requirements” to the kingdom to consist not by grace through faith alone, but in *repentance* (as a separate step), plus *faith*, plus total *submission* to Christ’s Lordship. Another tack is to say, “Yes, we are saved by grace through faith alone,” but then to redefine *believe* and *faith* to include (by implication) repentance, submission, and perseverance in good works (or one or more of these admittedly very good things).

Hodges shows in the middle chapters of *Absolutely Free!* that Dr. MacArthur is wrong to equate salvation with discipleship. Ideally all Christians should submit totally and become dedicated disciples. What’s more, God has made provision for success in discipleship. But to say that there is no chance of failure to a real Christian is to overlook the many NT passages that warn Christians that they *can* fail in the Christian life! Even St. Paul didn’t count himself immune from losing the laurel wreath! (1 Cor 9:27).

If we can’t know whether we are saved till the end of the road then 1 John 5:13 (“that you may *know* that you have eternal life”) and the faith that gave the early Christians and later Reformation martyrs courage to die (often dreadfully cruel deaths) are illusions. As Hodges points out, Calvin himself believed that assurance of salvation is a crucial and integral part of the grace of God. Who can have assurance if final salvation depends on performance?

One of the most unusual chapters in *Absolutely Free!* is Chapter 12, “Repentance.” Between my reading of the typescript of this book and receiving a copy of the finished product, Hodges totally rewrote this chapter.

Zane Hodges respects and recognizes the interpretation that “repentance” means a change of mind, as the word *metanoia* meant in classical Greek—the view of Drs. C. C. Ryrie, G. Michael Cocoris, and

also the Director of the Grace Evangelical Society, Dr. Robert Wilkin. He recognizes it as consonant with the position of salvation by faith alone. However, this author sees repentance as producing a real *change of lifestyle*, but not as being part of *salvation*.

For example, Hodges believes that Cornelius repented before he was actually saved. Also, in Revelation 2 and 3, *Christians* are called upon to repent. Luther is quoted as saying that a Christian's whole life should be one of repentance (p. 143 and see footnote 1 on p. 222).

The favorite passage of the Lordship people is certainly the account of the "Rich Young Ruler," which they try to make into a central passage for salvation! This story is handled in Chapter 14, "Why Do You Call Me Good?"

Nearly all of the main arguments of MacArthur on the Lordship Salvation issue are handled by Hodges, but without animosity, guilt by association, or other common polemical devices. Hodges is always irenic—and a Christian gentleman.

Other pluses in the present reviewer's opinion are the two Forewords, one by Dr. Earl Radmacher, President of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland and one by Luis Rodriguez of Victor St. Bible Chapel, the Scripture Index, and the many quotations from the conservative and quite literal New King James Version of the Bible. My one criticism is that the Subject Index is far too brief (I couldn't find the Luther quotations in it, for example).

No matter where you stand on the issue of salvation, this book is worth reading. If you are in the *sola gratia* camp it is a *must!* Get it. Read it. Share it with those who are still open-minded to the grace way or with those who are tottering on the brink of a works-oriented scheme of salvation.

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, TX

Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments. John S. Feinberg ed., Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988. 410 pp. Paper, \$17.50.

Although escaping the notice of some, it is widely acknowledged that dispensational theology has undergone progressive stages of

development in the last century (see, for example, Craig A. Blaising, "Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalists," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 [July–September, 1988]: 254–80). The same can be said for Reformed theology; it too, as a theological system, is scarcely static and monolithic. In fact, over the course of several decades of careful formulation and refinement, Reformed and dispensational theology have come to a meeting of minds in articulating given points of doctrine. The most recent attestation of this doctrinal convergence between the two systems is *Continuity and Discontinuity*, a compendium of theological essays prepared in honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., former NT Chairman of Dallas Theological Seminary and former Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

In essence, *Continuity and Discontinuity* is an interface between dispensational and Reformed theologians on the long-contested issues of hermeneutics, theological systems, salvation, the Law of God, and Kingdom promises. The title of this book is drawn from the overarching distinctives that are characteristic of the two systems of thought. "Continuity," an emphasis of Reformed theology, argues for the unbroken interrelated connection of the administrations of God. On the other hand, "discontinuity," an emphasis of dispensationalism, speaks of the distinction, cessation, and abrogation of given programmatic outworkings of God. However, as is carefully noted throughout this book, both positions agree to measures of continuity and discontinuity within their systems.

While the bulk of the essays concern the technical issues relative to the differing theological viewpoints, there are pragmatic implications that flow from the conclusions presented. As Saucy notes in "Israel and the Church: A Case for Discontinuity," one's view of "Israel" affects evangelistic attitudes toward the Jew (e.g., if the present state of Israel has been totally removed from the sphere of God's covenantal blessing, should one even concern himself with missionary outreach to Jews in general and the nation of Israel in particular?), and one's view of "the Kingdom" determines the extent of influence the Church is to exert upon society (e.g., if the Church is "the kingdom of God," as suggested by proponents of the Christian Reconstruction Movement, then the present duty of the Church is to transform society into a theocracy [pp. 258–59]). Soteriological views are likewise affected by one's view of the Mosaic Law and salvation in the OT. In this connection, four essays relate directly to *salvation issues*, and as such, summon special attention.

In "Salvation and the Testaments," the Reformed essayist Klooster

and the dispensational essayist Ross are in agreement regarding the method of salvation in the two Testaments: "Salvation has always been by grace through faith" (p. 161; cf. p. 133). Both authors interact with an earlier published essay of John S. Feinberg ("Salvation in the Old Testament," *Tradition and History: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, Moody Press, 1981) and draw the following points of agreement regarding salvation in the OT: "(1) the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is the sole basis or ground of salvation; (2) faith in the living God as He revealed Himself is the sole requirement for salvation in each period of biblical history; and (3) the living God Himself is the ultimate object of faith" (p. 137). Where the two interpreters appear to disagree is: first, "how to understand what is specifically revealed by God in each period of biblical history," and second, "how a believer is to express his or her salvation in that period of biblical history" (p. 137). While Ross and Klooster agree on point (2), even among dispensationalists this point has been subject to differing opinion. Some believe that as early as Genesis, a rudimentary messianic concept of salvation was held by the patriarchs. Others hold that specific messianic concepts of salvation emerge and develop at later junctures in Scripture.

From Ross's essay emerge two salutary, yet often overlooked features of OT salvation. First, "the salvation or deliverance that Israel sought or enjoyed seems mostly concerned with the promises of the Covenant as they related to life in this world as the people of God" (p. 163). Second, law-keeping was not a means of eternal salvation, but instead, as Ross notes, "living under the Law was to the believer the natural response to the gracious covenant God and the means of enjoying continued blessings as the theocratic people" (p. 167).

The essays of Chamblin and Moo evoke interest inasmuch as the issue of law figures heavily in current evangelical discussion of the Gospel. For example, there are a number of evangelicals who believe that the Law of Christ in the NT includes "the moral law" of the OT. Understood accordingly, the essence of *saving faith* is said to be obedience to the moral precepts contained in the NT. Consequently, "the moral law" is that universal aspect of law that is said to have abiding force in both Testaments. Obedience to "the moral law" serves as a condition for salvation in both Reformed and Lordship Salvation theology.

Chamblin argues, in principle at least, for the continuation of the Mosaic Law as a regulatory code for believers in the present age. The Law of Moses is said to have coalesced into the Law of Christ so that

"the law is now *newly administered* and *more deeply expounded* [by Christ] than ever before" (p. 182). Chamblin suggests, "there is indeed discontinuity, but it pertains to the *form* or the *shape* of the law rather than its *being* or *essence*, and it occurs within a framework of continuity" (p. 182). The author is to be applauded for his correct assessment of the "civil, ceremonial, and moral" as "*three dimensions of the one law* [Mosaic] rather than three kinds of law" (p. 183). Typically this qualification safeguards against the widely-circulating belief that Christians are under "the moral law" of the OT. Notwithstanding, there are difficulties with the position that Chamblin advances. First, the author appeals to a theological category of law as the basis of his argument: "In this essay, law denotes the *rule of life* which God gives to His people, that *way* in which they are to walk, those *commandments* which they are to obey" (p. 181). Rather than establishing the meaning of the Mosaic Law exegetically, the author employs a universal application of law as the touchstone for his argument. As a result of employing a methodology that is based upon constructs of systematic theology, the author's argument becomes tediously labored and at times difficult to follow. Second, while Chamblin admits that the moral dimension of the Mosaic Law is not a *kind* of law, it is likewise difficult to distinguish between his proposed model of Mosaic Law, which contains many OT moralistic carry-overs, and traditional Reformed interpretations of "the moral law." To be consistent, Chamblin would have to argue that the moral dimension of the Mosaic Law *becomes* law in *kind* through subsequent administration and explanation of Christ. Third and finally, in order to delimit the use of the Mosaic Law for believers of the present age, Chamblin admits that certain "epochal," "cultural," "hermeneutical," and "personal" factors need to be taken into consideration (pp. 200-201). However, Chamblin's suggested streamlining of the Mosaic Law, to this reviewer at least, is analogous to repairing a dilapidated axe by replacing its head and handle!

Although Chamblin's argument is well-defended, there is an undutiful absence of discussion concerning the Reformed concept of *tertius usus legis* ("the third use of the law," also known as *usus normativus*). In Reformed thought, this third use is generally defined as that function of the Mosaic Law which *instructs* believers how to live in accordance with God's prescriptive will, i.e., "reminding them of their duties, and leading them in the way of life and salvation" (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed., revised and enlarged [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969], 615). In a footnote, the author refers the reader to a number of scholarly works that deal

specifically with this issue (p. 364). However, if substantive dialogue is to occur between Reformed and dispensational theologians, "the third use of the law" and its relationship to salvation *must* be surfaced and robustly discussed at the theological roundtable. For according to Reformed tradition, the purpose of "the third use of the law" is to demonstrate, in conjunction with good works, the genuineness of faith. Needless to say, many dispensationalists would find themselves spiritedly at odds with the Reformed notion of *tertius usus legis*.

A more convincing approach to this complex discussion is that advocated by Moo, namely, that the Mosaic Law *in toto* has ceased as an administrative code for present day believers. Moo elaborates: "Fulfilling" the law in Paul is attached not to the obedience of precepts, but to the attitude of love and the work of the Spirit. For even in Rom 8:4 the meaning is not that the Spirit enables us to do the law, but because we are indwelt by the Spirit, the law has *been fulfilled in us*" (p. 210). While it is agreed that Moo's interpretation of Rom 8:4 is correct, he does not adequately explain the meaning of this text in light of the broader context of Romans. This reviewer suggests that *by virtue of the believer's union with Christ*, Himself the fulfillment and *telos* of the Mosaic Law, the believer *who lives by the Spirit* has, in himself, already fulfilled the Mosaic Law. Moo's explanation of "the Law of Christ" in 1 Cor 9:20-21 is especially appreciated: "What Paul has in mind is his lifestyle, and he makes plain that he is not under obligation to pursue a lifestyle dictated by the precepts of the law" (p. 215). In order to clear himself from the disparaging charge of antinomianism, Moo supplies the following qualifying statement, "... the Christian is bound to 'God's law' (1 Cor 9:20-21; cf. 'God's commands' in 1 Cor 7:19 and 1 John (*passim*). 'God's law' is not, however, the Mosaic Law, but 'Christ's law' (1 Cor 9:20-21; Gal 6:2), because *it is to Christ*, the fulfiller, the *telos* of the law (Rom 10:4) that the Christian is bound" (p. 217). The discontinuity approach outlined in Moo's essay lays to rest the notion that a person is saved by a faith that obeys "the moral law" of the OT. Moreover, this whole discussion of the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ carries decided weight in distinguishing between the positional and experiential aspects of sanctification. In brief, the essays of Chamblin and Moo justly distinguish the intricacies that separate Reformed and dispensational interpretations of the Law.

In the final analysis, *Continuity and Discontinuity* is a repository of theological scholarship that provides ample fuel for future study. This stimulating dialogue between Reformed and dispensational theologians is must reading for those seeking an up-to-date understanding of the

distinguishing features of the two major theological systems that occupy evangelical Christianity. This *Festschrift* also serves as a respectable testimony to the painstaking development of evangelical doctrine. From the reviewer's point of view, the doctrinal developments contained in this book significantly add to the cogency and magnetism of dispensationalism as a competing system of evangelical theology. Finally, the discontinuity essays devoted to salvation-sanctification issues cast penetrating light on the theological fog that has blanketed a significant portion of recent presentations of the Gospel.

Gary L. Nebeker

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

Loneliness. By Elisabeth Elliot. Nashville: Oliver-Nelson, A Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988. 158 pp. Cloth, \$12.95.

When a person reads a number of books by the same author, even if they are works of fiction, such as the mysteries of Agatha Christie or the novels of Georgette Heyer, to a certain extent one gets to know the author as a person. When one knows a writer personally *before* reading her book or books, subtle little turns of phrasing and even tones of voice seem to come through.

In the case of *Loneliness*, subtitled *It can be a wilderness. It can be a pathway to God*, this reviewer is pleased to be in the latter category. To Elisabeth Elliot (née Howard), her sister, and four brothers I have been "Aunt Winnie" for many decades. Mrs. Katharine Howard, Betty's mother, was my best friend.

Betty Elliot is a literary, biblical, and compassionate person, all of which traits surface in her over fifteen books.

Her literary roots are deep. She is from a Christian family with notable writers on both sides. I refer to the Howard-Trumbell connection, associated for many years with *The Sunday School Times*, to which my late father, W.H. Griffith Thomas, was a weekly contributor, and I a very occasional one. My friendship with Betty's family dates back to 1911, my first summer in the United States, which was spent at Northfield, Massachusetts. There I met her father, Philip E. Howard, Jr., a future editor of *The Sunday School Times*.

Elisabeth's fine literary style is shown everywhere in *Loneliness*. The

quotation on the back of the dust jacket gives a taste of the contents as well as the style:

Loneliness comes over us sometimes as a sudden tide. It is one of the terms of our humanness, and, in a sense, therefore, incurable. Yet I have found peace in my loneliest times not only through acceptance of the situation, but through making it an offering to God, who can transfigure it into something for the good of others.

The author's fondness for good writing is shown by her well-chosen quotations from such varied writers as Joseph Conrad, C.S. Lewis, George Herbert, Amy Carmichael, George Matheson, and George MacDonald. Elisabeth's books are all *biblical* in one way or another. She not only quotes the Bible frequently (in several versions, including two that are more literary than theologically sound—the New English Bible and the Jerusalem Bible), but she always seeks to apply Scripture constantly to daily life.

Loneliness gives good examples of the three traits we have mentioned, including *compassion*. From her own suffering and experience Betty seeks to reach out and help others. She shares the very personal experiences of her heart and life, including the loss of two husbands, Jim Elliot, a missionary, and Addison Leitch, a theologian. This book has been a blessing to me in my own widowhood and a recent trial of possible loss and separation.

Some of Mrs. Elliot's chapters are entitled: "Loneliness Is a Wilderness," "The Gift of Widowhood," "A Love Strong Enough to Hurt," "Death Is a New Beginning," "A Share in Christ's Suffering," "Turn Your Solitude into Prayer," and "How Do I Do This Waiting Stuff?" They end in a crescendo of chapters on peace, prayer, and spiritual maturity, climaxed by the transformation of "A Vale of Trouble" into "A Gate of Hope."

This reviewer can indeed recommend so beautiful a volume. If it is applied with a faithful reliance on divine power, it will help turn a wilderness of grief into a veritable pathway to God.

Winifred Griffith Thomas Gillespie
Editorial Board
Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, TX

Temptation. By Charles Stanley. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988. 192 pp. Cloth, \$12.95.

In this book the well-known pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta gives the Christian community helpful teaching on the subject of temptation. He writes in a positive tone, assuring believers of their ability through Christ to resist temptation. At the same time, however, Stanley makes it quite clear that those who seriously wish to overcome sin must stop making excuses when they fail and must stop blaming others, including God and Satan.

Stanley devotes a good deal of space to covering the biblical-historical background behind temptation: the original fall of Lucifer from heaven, his new role as Satan (Adversary, Deceiver) in the world, and the devastating effects of Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden. The seriousness of understanding the full force and danger behind temptation is stated mathematically—but based on Scripture—in the formula: TEMPTATION + SIN = DEATH (Jas 1:14–16). Both spiritual and physical death result from this tragic combination.

With the sentence of spiritual and physical death passed on to the human race, Satan gained temporary dominion over the kingdom of men. God's plan of redemption through Christ is then brought into the picture, showing how God's kingdom has been in opposition to Satan's since the beginning. With all this background in view, Stanley eloquently expresses the universal role of temptation: "All our struggles are spiritual in nature . . . we do not struggle in a vacuum; every temptation is a small part of a universal struggle between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of the living God" (p. 32).

On the positive side, God has promised believers that *no* temptation has presented itself to the believer that cannot be resisted (1 Cor 10:13). Furthermore, the included "escape clause" assures us that God will provide "a way of escape," which, as Stanley points out, is not an escape "from temptation," but rather a means of escaping *sin* in spite of the temptation. God does not remove the temptation from our path, but allows us to go *through* it without being harmed. The escapes are not experienced as all-purpose conveniences, nor are they provided to all customers identically like "assembly line" parts. Rather, as Stanley illustrates, God provides distinctively individual "escapes" to meet the current need of the one being tempted.

In one scenario, for example, a daughter who was constantly tempted to rebel against her overbearing parents said that when she was tempted to blow up, she would stop and think for a minute, and would always

find “*another way* to handle the situation” (p. 80). The particulars are not spelled out in Stanley’s example, but the main idea comes across well.

Stanley goes on to give practical suggestions on how to deal with temptation. After postulating the universality of the fight against sin and temptation, and its persistence to the very end of earthly life, he strongly admonishes the reader never to stop resisting. If we are to have any hope at all of conquering sin, at the very least it requires a struggle that does not give up!

The author presents an interesting method of confronting temptation which is used successfully by himself and those who have followed his example. Based on Eph 6:10–17, the method involves the putting on of one’s spiritual armor each day. Since the armor is spiritual and not physical, it is put on *by faith*. The important thing, says Stanley, is to wear every single piece, since a “soldier would not dream of going into battle without *every* part of his equipment secured and ready for action” (pp. 122–23).

A question is raised in this reviewer’s mind regarding the full suit of armor: Should not “prayer” be considered a weapon, since in the Ephesians 6 passage the Apostle Paul concludes the list of weapons by stressing prayer? The model prayer used by Stanley is a helpful tool for putting on the armor, but here the reviewer refers to everyday prayer “in all things.” For example, Jesus included in His model prayer the phrase, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” No doubt He intended that some portion of our prayer life should include this prayer in order to strengthen us against temptation. Paul urged believers to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). A fuller section on prayer *as a weapon* in resisting temptation would probably have enhanced the section on spiritual armor.

Stanley’s emphasis on the importance of the “Sword” for defeating our Enemy is much appreciated. He points out by way of reminder that the Sword is an *offensive* weapon, used for attack (not like the shield, a defensive weapon). A skillful handling and knowledge of Scripture, Stanley maintains, is important in fighting against temptation. Stanley quotes relevant Scripture texts throughout the book, and very briefly touches on Scripture memorization and meditation.

In the reviewer’s opinion, the book would have been strengthened by a chapter devoted to the memorization and meditation of important Bible passages (e.g., Romans 6 and 8, and key Psalms that deal with temptation and struggle against enemies).

All in all, *Temptation* is practical, easy to read, and gives a broad sampling of various aspects of temptation. Included throughout are

colorful illustrations and story-form examples of actual situations. These help to keep the reader interested while at the same time explaining their relevance to various temptations to commit sins (such as sexual immorality, smoking, gluttony, materialism) which abound in our day-to-day experience.

Mark Farstad

Production Staff

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

All About Repentance. By Richard A. Seymour. Kissimmee, FL: Clarity, 1974. 180 pp. Paper, \$3.50.

Few points of contention in modern Gospel debates have generated more interest lately than the definition of *repentance*. Because of recent publications holding views opposing the "change of mind" position, this 1974 book (originally published by Harvest House Publishers, Hollywood, Florida) is reviewed to direct readers to a refreshingly objective book on the subject. The book is particularly valuable because of its sound interpretive method and the way in which it integrates the concept of repentance into an overall biblical theology.

After noting the importance of properly understanding repentance, Seymour addresses what he feels is the main source of error in modern views held on repentance, namely "faulty logic." He cites examples such as the use of "colored words," appeals to tradition and large numbers, passionate pleas, and ridicule as methods used in lieu of thorough and careful appeal to Bible truth. He emphasizes that if one is to achieve a balanced view of any subject in the Bible, one must avoid these methods and stick to the simple truths of Scripture.

Seymour gives a brief personal testimony to illustrate how destructive the popular view can be which says that repentance is "being sorry for sin and turning from sin." He also points out how joyous it can be when one realizes that eternal life is received the moment one believes (trusts) in Jesus Christ.

The crowning point in the book is made in chapter four, where Seymour states that "a clear and thorough understanding of salvation provides a perfect foundation for a true understanding of repentance." To show the role of repentance in salvation he points to the righteousness of God. He notes that no one can be saved without possessing God's righteousness, and it is obtained only one way: by faith, apart from

works. Since "sorrow for sin" and "turning from sin" are clearly distinct from simple faith, they can bring neither the righteousness of God nor salvation.

Other chapters include a comprehensive look at the usage of *repentance* in both the Old and New Testaments and of man's tradition as a great perpetrator of error, particularly regarding repentance. He also includes suggestions as to how to integrate the true concept of repentance into efforts of evangelism, training of Christians (discipling), and preaching. The book concludes with a personal plea regarding the magnitude of the stakes at issue. Seymour notes that to misunderstand repentance is not only to miss an important theological truth crucial to understanding God's plan of salvation, but is it also to be placed in a position where one may communicate error regarding the Gospel, an error strongly discouraged by Scripture (Gal 1:6, 7).

The book includes a helpful but somewhat dated bibliography for those wishing to read further. Several extended quotations from writers like J. Gresham Machen and Lewis Sperry Chafer offer added insight into the application of repentance to modern evangelism and discipleship. The author's understanding of salvation, repentance, and the grace of God is razor-sharp, and is reflected in Seymour's direct, straightforward presentation of the simple facts of Scripture on the subject. Its thoroughness, consistency, and objectivity are noteworthy. Friends of GES will find this a rewarding study. Critics will find it a challenge.

Raymond M. Isbell

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The New Nature. By Renald Showers. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1986. 182 pp. Hardcover, \$12.95.

My first introduction to Renald Showers's work came as I was rushing down the stairs of a seminary library, researching Paul's "old man/new man" terminology. A friend stopped me, directed me to Showers's doctoral dissertation, and out from the microfilm came pure gold. Thus it was a joy to see his work appear in popularized form. Dr. Showers is certainly competent to have written such a book. Academically qualified and having taught for numerous years, the author reflects constant interaction with the standard questions in this area. It is this which makes

it far more than a book on the new nature. It is really a book that addresses the thorny problems relative to sanctification: Paul's understanding of law and grace, the regeneration of OT saints, the definition of the old and new natures, the spiritual condition of the speaker in Romans 7, and the role of the Holy Spirit, to name a few. To each, standard dispensational answers are clearly and understandably given and explained.

However, the work is not without its weaknesses. For example, its usefulness is limited by Showers's "trial lawyer" defenses; his perspectives are presented unhindered by the arguments and counterarguments of his opposition (cf. pp. 56-57, 65-67, 92-93). His survey of historical theology is extremely limited (pp. 17-18), and his range of possible usages for the Old Man and the New Man does not even consider correlations with Adam and Christ, respectively. His definition of "death" in Romans 6 and 7 as "release" from the power of sin and law comes close to the definition of "separation" preferred by many, but how then is the unbeliever "dead"? Is he released from God? Also, how was Paul alive and in what way did he die in Rom 7:9-11? What of the threat of death for sinning believers in Rom 8:6 and 13 (cf. 1 Tim 5:5-6)? And in spite of being published in 1986, there is no response to Needham, whose view that the believer has but one nature and that the sinful passions arise only from the corporal body threatens Showers's entire construction.

But most disturbing is his handling of 1 John 3:9. After careful and balanced language stating that the believer should (not will) progress in his Christian life (cf. pp. 126-27), he denies that the believer can sin *habitually* (pp. 129-35), seemingly contradicting his earlier statements concerning Romans 6 and 7 (pp. 95-97, 101-103). It is especially surprising that he employs the argument from the present tense, *vis-à-vis* its use in John in general, and Kubo and Marshall's objections to classifying the present tense verbs in 1 John as *habitual* (durative) in particular.

In spite of these observations, the book is a fresh, enjoyable reassertion of "Chaferian" sanctification. Readable, profitable, and well-researched, it is certainly worth the price to have in any Christian's library.

Mark A. Ellis

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Wylie, TX

Election and Perseverance. College Studies Series. By C. Norman Sellers. Miami Springs, FL: Shoettle Publishing Co., 1987. 193 pp. Cloth, \$12.95.

Divine determinism and human free will occupy opposite poles on the theological spectrum. Invariably, whenever one attempts to emphasize one over the other, the balance is disturbed. Robert Shank's doctrines of election and eternal security presented in *Elect in the Son* (Springfield: Westcott Publishers, 1970) and *Life in the Son* (Springfield: Westcott Publishers, 1960) upset that balance since they are based entirely in man's choice. Sellers's *Election and Perseverance* is a response to Shank. His thesis is that Shank's views are unbiblical, noting that the Bible teaches unconditional security and particular election for all believers (p. iv).

According to Shank, election is corporate. By this he means that it is the Body of Christ that is elect as opposed to individual believers. Christ is the only Elect One and His election is the "one electing act of God" (p. 25). Since all believers are "in Christ" (Eph 1:4) and comprise the corporate Body of Christ, their election is only secondary in that they become elect when they believe and are placed in Christ's Body. Therefore, since Shank maintains that a believer's election was not established in eternity but in time, it is an election of the regenerate in time rather than an election of the unregenerate before time. As such, a believer's election is conditional since it is based on man's choice by faith in Christ rather than on God's unconditional choice. Shank believes the Church's election parallels God's corporate election of Israel and that "foreknowledge," a key term in election, means prescience, i.e., seeing what will happen in the future.

In response, Sellers appeals to: (1) a text which questions the inclusiveness of every Israelite in Israel's election (Rom 9:6), (2) passages which support particular election (e.g., Acts 13:48; John 6:37, 65; 2 Tim 1:19), and (3) a lengthy analysis of the term "foreknowledge" (*prognōsis*). Regarding Israel's election, Sellers states that though Israel was God's elect, "they are not all Israel who are descended of Israel" (Rom 9:6). Then, texts which support particular election, he writes, override Shank's doctrine, and "must be reckoned with in the formulation of a truly biblical doctrine of election. Corporate election cannot adequately explain these passages" (p. 47). In opposition to Shank's definition of "foreknowledge" as *prescience*, Sellers defines the term as a pretemporal, intimate, personal knowledge of those whom God has predestined to election (p. 60). In this sense, then, Paul's statement "whom He foreknew, He also predestined" (Rom 8:29), means that God personally

knew those whom He elected in eternity, rather than knowing the identity of those who would believe at a later time.

Sellers's critique of corporate election is followed by his evaluation of Shank's doctrine of conditional security. According to Shank, since the believer's election is based in his faith rather than on God's choice, salvation remains secure. But should he abandon his faith, he may forfeit eternal life. Shank supports his thesis by appealing to Christ's discourses (e.g., Matt 13:1-23; 25:1-13, 14-30) and other passages in the NT which warn of the dangers of sinful living, lack of perseverance, and apostasy (e.g., Acts 5:1-16; 1 Cor 9:24-27; Heb 10:26-31).

Recognizing that warnings imply danger, Shank's concerns are legitimate and he deserves credit for giving diligent attention to scriptural admonitions and warnings. But by failing to take at face value passages which guarantee eternal life to all who believe (e.g. John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47) his interpretations are inadequate to stand up to careful scrutiny.

In his response to Shank's doctrine of conditional security, Sellers fails to improve on Shank's postulations in that he removes the severity of the warnings and admonitions for Christians by means of defective hermeneutics in reading theological assumptions into the texts. This is the major weakness in the book.

Sellers's chief assumption is that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints provides an interpretive panacea for the problem texts mentioned in Shank's doctrine of conditional security. Because "faith that saves is faith that continues" (p. 129), Scriptural injunctions and warnings are only a means to an end, "by which the believer is nurtured and brought more and more into conformity to the image of Christ" (p. 190). In other words, there is really no danger in warnings because the genuineness of faith is seen in perseverance.

This assumption, it seems, leads to three further problems. First, it forces Sellers to equate the term "believing" with "abiding" (p. 95). Secondly, he unjustifiably severs texts to serve his own intent. For example, he asserts that 2 Tim 2:11-12a refers to believers while 12b-13 refers to unbelievers (pp. 139-40) and that the term "believe" (*pisteuō*) in Luke's account of the Sower in 8:5-15, "is used in verse 12 to denote 'actual saving faith.'" (p. 85). Thirdly, the author's view of perseverance leads into a theological dead end. Since Sellers believes that all true believers will continue in faith, he is forced to conclude that apostasy is impossible for believers. Thus, in his discussion of the warnings in Heb 6:4-6 and 10:26-31, which he believes are written to believers, he has no option but to accept a very dubious interpretation of the warnings; namely, that the warnings are hypothetical (he offers no personal opinion

on their correct meaning). In presenting this hypothetical view, Sellers's position on perseverance results in confusion: "Therefore while apostasy for true believers is not possible, the warnings about the consequences of it are used as a means to keep it from happening" (p. 153). This is a contradictory statement because what *cannot* occur (apostasy) cannot be *prevented* from occurring.

Apart from his rebuttal of corporate election, Sellers's work leaves much to be desired. One looming question he has ignored in his book is the problem of sin in the life of the believer. He agrees with the Apostle John that "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). But to what extent may a believer sin? Is there a limit? If so, what is it?

Shank's Arminian solution (conditional security) to the question of sin in the life of the believer lacks an adequate scriptural base, and Sellers's book may be commended for challenging Shank. Unfortunately, Sellers's position of perseverance lacks coherence and creates more problems than it solves.

Hank B. Slikker
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Rebuilding Your Broken World. By Gordon MacDonald. Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Publishers, 1988. 224 pp. Cloth, \$12.95.

Gordon MacDonald's previous major work, *Ordering Your Private World*, presented the idea that each believer has an inner "garden," a relationship with God that must be cultivated daily through devotions and discipline. If this "private world" is not consistently maintained, disaster can result. To those familiar with MacDonald's private life over the past few years, it is apparent that the author did not heed his own warnings.

Now, after confession, church discipline, and restoration, MacDonald has returned with: *Rebuilding Your Broken World*. His new thesis is that the Bible offers Christians who have fallen into major sin a way back to forgiveness and useful service. This road is tough and narrow—and MacDonald has traveled it.

Briefly using David and Peter as examples, MacDonald draws a series of principles from Scripture and common sense about why Christians fail, how to rebuild a life broken by sin, how to help a fellow believer who has fallen, and most useful of all, how to heed the warning signs of defection and never fail to begin with.

As in his earlier work, MacDonald's primary audience is Christian men, specifically Christian leaders. As such, it is valuable to those in ministry, who are especially vulnerable to temptation and public disgrace.

In light of recent overly-publicized evangelical moral scandals, some people might be suspicious or cynical about a book such as this. Why did MacDonald publish so soon after his restoration? Why a book that appears to cash in on his and his family's personal tragedy? Is it even appropriate for such a person to ask for our ear once again or to presume to teach us after such a failure? Unfortunately, MacDonald does not address these kinds of questions.

Granting, however, that the author's motives are sincere, *Rebuilding Your Private World* is probably not penance or profiteering. It is an attempt at a modern-day Psalm 51. At the very least MacDonald is to be commended for not even once titillating our depraved curiosity by giving any specifics of his sin.

Of special interest to readers of *JOTGES*, this is a book about *grace*, God's grace in action, down on the gut/rut level where Christian men and leaders live, stumble, and sometimes fall. It wrestles with things certain Christians don't like to admit, much less talk about openly. To those who *have* fallen, this is a beacon of hope, an affirmation that God's grace *really is* greater than all our sin. Forgiveness and restoration are truly as possible today as they were for David and Peter.

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The Cosmic Center. Revised Edition. By D. Bruce Lockerbie. Portland: Multnomah Press, 1986. 194 pp. Cloth, \$11.95.

The subtitle of this book tells its story: *The Supremacy of Christ in a Secular Wasteland*. Lockerbie does a commendable job of painting the despair, pain, and meaninglessness of philosophies which do not have the Lord Jesus Christ as their center. His discussions of materialism (pp. 34-42), hedonism (pp. 59-71), and nihilism (pp. 71-83) are especially outstanding. Pastors will find in these sections a rich mine of sermon illustrations.

Chapter 4, "The Secret at the Center: A Christian Cosmology," is

powerful. Lockerbie makes a strong argument that only in recognizing the Lordship of Christ can one find peace and joy in the center of the storm which is secularism in its many forms.

Let the reader beware, however, of the closing pages of the book. In the last twenty pages (pp. 169–88) Lockerbie questions whether those who die without ever having heard about Christ will be lost. He suggests that they will not (see, for example, pp. 173–79). He argues from Eph 4:7–10 and 1 Pet 3:19–22 and 4:6 that people will have a chance to trust in Christ after they die (p. 175). Unfortunately he neglects to discuss Luke 16:19–31; John 3:18; 8:24; Heb 9:27; and 1 John 5:10–11. He concludes by saying grudgingly, “We have no alternative, therefore, but to accept the probability—yes, the tragic certainty—that some rebels will go—sullen and cursing, or careless and laughing—their way into eternal damnation” (p. 187). The broad way of Matthew 7 which Jesus said *many* will follow is changed by Lockerbie into a narrow way which only *some* will choose. Lockerbie clearly thinks that only a small percentage of all of humanity will be lost.

This is not a book for new believers or the untaught. However, for those well-grounded in the Scriptures it contains much of value.

Robert N. Wilkin

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

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PERIODICAL REVIEWS

"How Faith Works," S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *Christianity Today*, September 22, 1989, pp. 21-25.

The issue of Lordship Salvation continues to attract attention in a growing debate. To "analyze the issues and give guidance" to their readers *Christianity Today* enlisted the help of scholar S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., a Bible teacher at Believers Chapel in Dallas, Texas and a former professor of both Dallas Theological Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

I think this popular magazine attained its goal only in the slightest measure.

Johnson correctly asserts that the definition of terms is crucial—yet largely neglected. Foremost of these is the nature of saving faith. He also surfaces some other crucial issues, such as the relation of justification to sanctification and the nature of repentance. Commendably, he has fingered the pulse of the debate.

The guidance promised, however, comes through loud and fuzzy. Readers of the Free Grace persuasion will cheer as Johnson moves in the right direction on several views, but sigh when real clarification is elusive or when subsequent statements seem to contradict. For example, to say "MacArthur overdoes the absolute commitment" (p. 25) implies that there is a *degree* of commitment of one's life necessary to salvation.

However, the major flaw of the article lies in Johnson's decision to use the Westminster Confession to evaluate views because he sees it as "a standard of reference that evangelicals as a whole will accept in the main" (p. 21). (Even this general acceptance is doubtful at best.) Further, in the Lordship Salvation debate there is a screaming need for *biblical* clarification and illumination, not dogmatism or theology by majority vote. *The Word of God* is acceptable to *all* evangelicals and remains the only test of theological orthodoxy. It is sadly disappointing that Johnson's article lacks the biblical analysis demanded by the issue.

Another weakness of the article is that the views of both Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges are taken from older works rather than their respective recent books (*So Great Salvation; Absolutely Free!*), whereas Johnson refers to MacArthur's most recent book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*. Both Hodges and Ryrie have done much to clarify their views in their

latest books, written partially in response to MacArthur. Whether this oversight was by Johnson or the editors, it is inexcusable in a debate that has already suffered much from misrepresentation.

A final comment must be made concerning an accompanying inset article by *CT* senior editor, J.I. Packer. In this short piece he informs readers of the questionable beliefs and practices of a mid-eighteenth-century movement led by Robert Sandeman. Why? He is obviously trying to associate non-Lordship proponents with this ill-fated movement by equating the faith-as-trust view with Sandeman's teaching that mere acceptance of the truth about the historical facts of Christ's atonement secures salvation. This is a good example of the tactics that have added heat, and not light, to the Lordship debate. Whatever objectivity *CT* endeavored to promote with Johnson's article is reversed by Packer's misguided history lesson.

Those who follow the Lordship Salvation debate must read Johnson's (and Packer's) article for its relevance. However, for those needing the guidance of Scripture for answers to the tough questions raised in the debate, this article falls short of bringing much real help.

Charles C. Bing
Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Burlleson, TX

"More About Faith: Synopsis of a Discussion Between Daniel D. Arichea and Eugene Botha," Paul Ellingworth, *The Bible Translator*, July 1987, pp. 330-32.

The abundance of NT passages which directly state that the only requirement for salvation is faith alone in the work of Christ alone has led to an intense interest in the ranges of meaning of *pistis* and *pisteuō*. Ellingworth's article is primarily a response to a debate between lexicographers Arichea and Botha, written to caution and guide translators in the nuances assigned to this group of words in their translations.

As noted by Ellingworth, the following nuances are assigned to this word group:

Pisteuō

1. to accept something as correct or true
2. to trust, rely on someone or something

3. to have Christian faith, to believe in a Christian manner
4. to entrust something to the care of someone

Pistis

1. what can be believed, or accepted as true
2. trust and reliance on . . .
3. trustworthiness, the state of being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed
4. Christian faith
5. doctrine, beliefs, the content of what Christians believe
6. promise, a promise or pledge of faithfulness and loyalty (p. 332)

The article is valuable in that it touches on the debate concerning the act of faith in salvation (intuitive vs. volitional; believing of facts vs. trust in facts). Though not long, the article is worth tracking down if one has the time and occasion. Be prepared, though, to read it several times before the full force of the author's statements is understood. For an exhaustive introduction to this word group, however, Becker's article on "Faith" in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* is certainly more useful.

Mark A. Ellis

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
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"The Problem of Apostasy in New Testament Theology," I. Howard Marshall, *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, Winter 1987, pp. 65–80.

Can a believer move so far away from God that He refuses to take him back? Inquiries into this issue often result in tensions between existing theological camps. Such is the case with Dale Moody, the Southern Baptist scholar in whose honor this particular volume is written. His views on apostasy finally led to his removal from the faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville) in 1982. In this article, I. Howard Marshall, Senior Lecturer in New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aberdeen, and a champion of Moody's position, builds on his foundation. Both hold the conviction that a believer *can* lose his salvation.

Marshall develops his thesis from passages in the NT which beckon

the believer to persevere. He argues that if taken literally, these texts make apostasy a very real possibility. The Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:9-15), Acts 20:30, and the five warning passages in Hebrews (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 6:1-20; 10:19-39; 12:1-29), form the locus of his argument since they warn of the danger of falling away from the Faith.

According to Marshall, Calvinist theologians react to this position on two grounds: textually and theologically. Textually, they argue that passages that appear to teach the possibility of apostasy must be interpreted in light of texts that teach eternal security. For example, they say that warnings to Christians to remain on track spiritually do not represent a real danger. The dangers are "hypothetical" (though not all Calvinists hold to this), but "God uses the passages effectively to warn all true believers against the danger of apostasy" (p. 74). Marshall also critiques the long-standing belief among Calvinists which identifies apostates as unbelievers. The persons represented in the passages listed above, according to Calvinist interpretation, were never believers to begin with. Their desertion established their identity as those who never genuinely believed.

Marshall correctly questions the validity of such hermeneutical maneuvering. He writes that neither Luke nor Paul makes any distinction between "true" and "seeming" disciples in Acts 20:30, that the believers in Hebrews were "nominal" is "most unlikely," and that Luke's use of the verb *pisteuō* for those who believed but later fell away (in his account of the Sower in 8:13) leaves Calvinist interpretations unconvincing.

On theological grounds, the Calvinist appeals to the doctrines of predestination and election in reaction to the possibility of apostasy. It is concluded that since the elect are predestined to salvation, they will persevere in good works. But this appeal also has its difficulties. If divine determinism establishes the impossibility of apostasy, Marshall asks, why does it not also establish behavior consistent with godliness? Why do believers still sin? Divine determinism also undermines the ministry of the Word in salvation and sanctification since it eliminates the power of choice in man. It also makes God's character "capricious" in overlooking many for salvation (p. 67). Overall, predestination "contains moral and logical difficulties and leads to antinomies" (p. 70). With respect to "election" passages, Marshall claims that the term "elect" in the NT always refers to those who actually belong to the Church. It is never ascribed to prospective believers (p. 76).

Though Marshall's rebuttals of Calvinist arguments against the possibility of apostasy are strong, his interpretations of key texts that

teach eternal security are found wanting. He, too, must import unnatural meanings into passages that clearly teach eternal security. He mentions Moody's focus on John 3:3–8; 5:24; 6:37, 39; and highlights 10:28: "And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." Marshall asserts that security here is conditional because only those who stay in Jesus' hand are guaranteed eternal life. The sheep who do not resist the Devil will fall away (p. 75). The passages that promise security "are for those who continue to abide in Christ and keep on following the Lord" (p. 68).

The difficulties in reconciling warning passages and texts that teach eternal security force Marshall to express some reservation over their correct meaning. He recognizes the problems inherent in siding with either the Calvinist or the non-Calvinist, but he has "the impression that the Calvinist has the greater set of problems" (p. 70). In the end the issue boils down to "the impossibility of explaining both the mystery of divine causation and the mystery of evil" (p. 80).

Regrettably, Marshall solves no problems. At best, his work demonstrates the poverty of efforts to reconcile texts that urge perseverance with those that teach security; especially when the former are presumed to teach loss of salvation for lack of faithfulness. But what Moody, Marshall, and many Reformed exegetes overlook is a third option that reconciles the above passages, i.e., that the regenerate are susceptible to apostasy, but eternal salvation is not in jeopardy. A convincing case can be made to demonstrate that the warning passages of Hebrews are addressed to believers to urge them not to abandon their faith. Rather than forfeit eternal life, as Marshall believes, those who apostatize come under severe temporal judgment and forfeit eternal *reward*.

This understanding of apostasy is to be viewed in conjunction with the NT doctrine of eschatological accountability, i.e., that each believer must ultimately answer to Christ for his actions (e.g. Matt 18:21–35; 25:14–30; Mark 4:21–25; Rom 14:10–12; 1 Cor 3:10–15; 9:24–27; 2 Cor 5:10). The Apostle Paul could say with certainty that nothing could separate him from God (Rom 8:39), but at the same time, he understood that without constant faithfulness to Christ he could forfeit everlasting reward (1 Cor 9:24–27). Likewise, for the Hebrews to apostatize meant severe retribution. As the author puts it, to do so meant that all that remained for them was a "certain terrifying expectation of judgment," because "the Lord will judge His people" (Heb 10:27, 30).

One cannot fault Marshall for taking the warning passages of Hebrews seriously. But by neglecting to take the Gospel at face value, including

texts that teach eternal security, he equates apostasy with loss of salvation. Nevertheless, Marshall's article has value. His appraisal of Calvinist beliefs related to apostasy is on the mark. This article is beneficial in that it presents the arguments of apostasy from an Arminian perspective that is backed by serious and credible scholarship.

Hank B. Slikker
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"Abiding is Believing: The Analogy of the Vine in John 15:1-6," J. Carl Laney, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January–March 1989, pp. 55-66.

In the contemporary debate among evangelicals over the relationship of faith and works, a passage not infrequently visited by those who argue that saving faith necessarily produces "fruit" is John 15:1-6. With Jesus' well-known analogy of the vine, the central interpretive issue is the identification of the branches that bear no fruit. If the cutting off and burning of the branches represents God's judgment of unbelievers, then a case can be made to demonstrate that a lack of works serves as a sure indicator of absence of saving faith.

Laney's article is a good example of this approach: *airei* (15:2) is translated "He removes" (versus "He lifts up"); *en emoi* ("in Me," 15:2) is read adverbially (and thus translated, "every branch that bears fruit in Me," versus "every branch in Me that bears fruit"); *eblēthē exō* ("is cast out," 15:6) is read in light of *ou mē ekbalō exō* ("I will by no means cast out") of 6:37; appeal is made to the doctrine of progressive belief in John; and "abiding" is equated with "believing."

Now to be sure there are arguments against Laney's approach. For instance, it might be argued that the translation of *airei* as "He removes" is also consistent with opposing interpretations. Also, the evidence offered for "in Me" being adverbial is inconclusive, since it does not distinguish between those instances in John (e.g., 15:4b) in which the phrase is in the apodosis of a conditional sentence, where it precedes the verb it modifies, and those instances in which it is not (four in the immediate context!—e.g., 14:4a, 5, 6, 7), where it typically does not precede the verb it modifies. Furthermore, *eblēthē exō* ("is cast out," 15:6) is neither equivalent to *ou mē ekbalō exō* ("I will by no means cast out," 6:37) nor does it show signs of being a technical term. In addition, a doctrine of progressive belief does not specify the point of saving faith, since belief obviously continues to grow after conversion. Finally,

between "abiding" and "believing" there might be some semantic overlap in John, but not congruity. Yet what this reviewer found most noteworthy about Laney's article is the way in which at a strategic point in the argument his particular formulation of a question predetermined the answer that was given.

In an effort to identify the fruitless branches, Laney asks about their "ultimate fate" (p. 60). Rightly rejecting the view that they are believers who lose their salvation, he considers a second alternative: that they are true believers disciplined by death (symbolized in the removal of the branches) and ultimately by the loss of eternal reward (symbolized in their burning). This too he rejects, however, because in the analogy the "removal of the fruitless branches is a prelude to judgment, not of blessed fellowship with Christ in heaven" (p. 61). He adds that this judgment cannot be the judgment of the believer spoken of in 1 Cor 3:15, as some have suggested, for there it is not the believer that is burned, but his or her works. There is only one possibility left, i.e., these unfruitful branches are not believers at all, but "professing Christians" who are "severed from superficial connection with Christ" (the cutting off) and are eternally damned (the burning) (p. 61).

But it is clear that Laney prejudices the case when he frames the question around the "ultimate fate" of the fruitless branches. Why must the analogy of the vine and the branches regard "ultimate" realities? Why not penultimate ones? That is to say, why not temporal discipline instead of eternal judgment? Laney has simply begged the question. Furthermore, if the analogy is teaching the disciples about temporal discipline, then both of Laney's objections are answered: the cutting off *does* lead to judgment (discipline) and *not* blessed fellowship with Christ in heaven, and the metaphor of burning applied directly to the believer *does* have scriptural precedent (This is, in this reviewer's opinion, the best interpretation of Heb 6:8; 10:27; 12:29; but see also 1 Pet 1:7; 4:12 and Jude 23).

In addition to this, Laney's particular account of progressive belief in John is not without problems. He seems to allow that only "consummated belief" (p. 63) results in salvation, and that for the disciples belief "was consummated by Jesus' resurrection" (p. 62). But this is hard to reconcile with his understanding of 15:3 ("but you are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you") as indicating the disciples' salvation, for this would mean that their faith was saving, and hence "consummated," prior to the resurrection.

Laney is lucid, thorough, and irenic; and despite the methodological

flaw mentioned above—or perhaps because of it—“Abiding is Believing” is a good introduction to the debate over John 15:1-6.

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“Charismatics, Grace and Works,” Bryan D. Gilling, *Evangelical Review of Theology*, April 1989, pp. 125-36.

As claimed in this article, it is often difficult to define the theology of the charismatic movement. However, when one attempts to analyze the movement, as Gilling does, the results can be disturbing for those who are zealous for God's grace.

The author illustrates and argues against the unhealthy anthropocentric focus of the charismatic movement. Gilling does not hesitate to call the movement's theology “Pelagian” because of its sometimes strong emphasis on man's ability to turn to God. Indeed, he does cite enough evidence to demonstrate that this can be an appropriate label. However, considering the charismatic movement's broad spectrum of beliefs, perhaps “Semi-Pelagian” or “Arminian” (which he sometimes uses) would be consistently more appropriate labels.

One weakness of the article is that Gilling chooses to cite those closer to the Pentecostal end of the charismatic spectrum. Though he claims this is done for the sake of simplicity, it avoids answering some of the more sophisticated forms of charismatic theology today.

Still, Gilling's analysis reveals a disturbing man-centered theology of healing, confession, baptism in the Spirit, and justification by faith. Rather than the sovereign bestower of healing, the charismatic's God is often controlled by a human switch which activates an almost impersonal power. Grace is procured by building up one's faith and releasing it; something Gilling calls a work. Also, “human words (of confession) assume a semi-magical power” (p. 127) in building faith for healing.

Gilling also shows clearly that receiving the Holy Spirit and justification by faith cannot be separated. He exposes the deceptive teaching that a life can be made clean or perfectly yielded in order to receive the baptism of the Spirit. “Perfect yielding of the entire being is out of the question until the Parousia” (p. 130).

It is most interesting that Gilling exposes errors in the charismatic movement which also coincidentally characterize Lordship Salvation

theology. This should be no surprise since both systems subvert the grace of God. For example, he quotes a charismatic who insists God's grace has conditions, then answers,

... there *are* conditions to having a full, proper relationship with God. But the gospel is that Christ fulfilled these conditions. ... Humankind is unable to work in any way which can make us acceptable to God (p. 132).

Gilling notes two other weaknesses of the charismatic movement: an erroneous hermeneutic which makes the historical events of the Book of Acts normative for today, and an inadequate view of the Holy Spirit which reduces Him to "a convenient genie activated by human rubbing of the bottle in the right way" (p. 135).

On the whole, Gilling has produced a good analysis of the sort of theology that characterizes much of the charismatic movement. He shows how so much of charismatic doctrine, on account of its anthropocentric focus, is an affront to the grace of God. This article makes for good reading both from the aspect of understanding elusive charismatic theology, and from the aspect of defending the absolute grace of a sovereign God.

Charles C. Bing

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Burleson, TX

A HYMN OF GRACE

Faith's Review and Expectation

(Amazing Grace)

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

—John Newton (1725–1807)

Newton's original title was "Faith's Review and Expectation," but the work is now universally known by its first two words, "Amazing Grace." It is based on David's words in 1 Chron 17:16-17:

Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God.

The first (original) six stanzas are taken completely unaltered from Olney Hymns, 1779.¹ When one considers how even the hymns of such a great poet as Charles Wesley have been altered (and actually improved in many cases), such a phenomenon is amazing. The same six stanzas appear in the Moravian Hymnal, 1789.² The original sixth stanza is rarely seen today, being replaced by the popular last stanza printed here.

All knowledgeable church historians are agreed that "Amazing Grace" accurately reflects John Newton's own experience as a converted "infidel and libertine," to use his own self-evaluation. His marvelous and truly amazing life story is condensed in his epitaph, written by himself. It is incised on a plain marble tablet near the vestry door of his London church:

JOHN NEWTON, Clerk.³
Once an Infidel and Libertine,
A servant of slaves in Africa,
Was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and
Saviour
JESUS CHRIST,
Preserved, restored, pardoned,
And appointed to preach the Faith
He had long laboured to destroy,
Near 16 years at Olney in Bucks
And . . . years in this church.
On Feb. 1, 1750, he married
MARY,

¹ "Amazing Grace" is No. 41 of Book I. See Samuel Willoughby Duffield, *English Hymns: Their Authors and History* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1886), 166.

² Ibid.

³ I.e., cleric or clergyman (pronounced "clark" in the U.K.).

Daughter of the late George Catlett
Of Chatham, Kent.
He resigned her to the Lord who gave her
On 15th of December, 1790.⁴

In the United Kingdom "Amazing Grace" is sung to "Lloyd," by Cuthbert Howard (1856–1927),⁵ as well as to the better-known American melody.

The heart-tugging traditional early American tune, coupled with Newton's superb poetry, have made this one of the best-loved of all evangelical songs. In recent years popular recordings, including a haunting Scottish bagpipe rendition, have spread the hymn's fame far afield. Television newsclips of Roman Catholic masses have frequently featured the congregation singing this quite non-Catholic hymn of grace.

At one point not too long ago even sophisticated European radio stations were featuring Newton's masterpiece (especially the bagpipe rendition) on their popularity charts.

Would that all this fame in Europe, the Americas, and beyond, also included a fascination for the gracious truths expressed in John Newton's great witness to God's "Amazing Grace"!

⁴ Wilbur F. Tillett and Charles S. Nutter, *The Hymns and Hymn Writers of the Church* (Nashville: Smith & Lamar, 1915), 166.

⁵ *Hymns of Faith* (London: Scripture Union, 1983), Hymn No. 50.

