

Journal of the
GRACE
Evangelical Society

"Faith Alone In Christ Alone"

Journal of the GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY

"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"

VOLUME 4, No. 1

SPRING 1991

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Journal of the GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY

Published Semiannually by GES

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

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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."

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

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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We Believe In: THE LORD'S SUPPER

ARTHUR L. FARSTAD
Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, Texas

I. Introduction

Several years ago I was invited to a Saturday dinner that ended in a doctrinal debate. I have never liked religious arguments or debates, and I feared that the *dramatis personae* of this dinner—four members of our church and two active ultra-dispensationalist gentlemen¹—could only lead to our locking horns. The hostess was the author of the “Song of Grace” article in this issue of the Journal, her husband was the host, and the guests were the two men mentioned, a classical “disc jockey” noted for his ability to debate issues (now a missionary in Austria), and myself.

After a very good dinner the persons of our little doctrinal drama took their positions and we went at it till the wee hours of the morning.

I do not remember much about the arguments or discussion, except that the main topic was whether we should celebrate the Lord's Supper today or whether it was just a rite for the “Jewish Church” in the early part of Acts. Being raised by a father who took me to communion every Sunday and early taught me its great importance for spiritual growth, I had to get into this fray whether I wanted to or not!²

Though we did outnumber our ultra-dispensationalist brothers at the “dinner-debate,” they were obviously very well-trained in debating the issue at hand. The main argument for our belief that the Lord's Supper is for today rested on the words in 1 Cor 11:25-26: “‘This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.”

¹ Ultra-dispensationalists take dispensational divisions much farther than classical Scofield-type dispensationalism. Ultra-dispensationalism believes that the church started *after* Pentecost and it rejects either water baptism or the Lord's Supper—or both—for the present age. See “We Believe: In Water Baptism,” *JOTGES* 3 (Spring 1990): 5-6 for further details.

² One of your editor's earliest recollections was as a little boy looking on with awe as the elements passed me by in the pew (I was not yet a believer).

Our argument: "till He comes"—*He hasn't come yet*, so we should keep on remembering Him in His own appointed way until then. As far as we were concerned, no argument could shake those verses.

An illustration that may help us is that the Lord's Supper is similar to a photograph of the Lord that we can keep near us to look at frequently to remind us of Him. *When He comes* we will *then* indeed no longer need the picture (the elements) since we will have Him in person.

I can remember the Lord's Supper meeting the next day after our dinner/doctrinal debate. We who had countered a verbal attack on the Supper as a carnal "Jewish" rite (I believe we were even said to be "sinning" by observing it!) enjoyed the service all the more for our experience. We even felt sorry for any Christians who could not share in the joy of this NT worship service.

We know there are good people, who believe in the doctrines of grace who are in the conservative elements of the Society of Friends (Quakers), or in ultra-dispensationalism, where communion is not observed. We embrace these as brothers and sisters in Christ. However, nearly all of the members of the Grace Evangelical Society would feel, I'm sure, that these believers are missing a great deal by not obeying our Lord's command given on the night on which He was betrayed.

For this reason we have published this article in our series: "We Believe: In the Lord's Supper."

II. The Hebrew Heritage of the Lord's Supper

It was at the Jewish Passover Seder (Service) that the Lord's Supper was instituted. In Exodus 12 God commanded the perpetual keeping of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover. Even though later Judaism added extra-biblical traditions and practices, the essential elements of the service were still kept in the time of the NT (and are still observed today). It will be helpful here to list the borrowings or adaptations from the Passover to be found in the Lord's Supper.

1. Both services are "permanent" memorials:

"And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever" (Exod 12:24).

"This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes (1 Cor 11:25b, 26).

2. Both services involve bread:

"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening" (Exod 12:18).

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matt 26:26, and parallels).

Our Lord took one of the main elements of the Passover meal and invested it with a new meaning, namely, a direct call to remembrance of Himself.³

3. Both involve blood:

"And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it" (Exod 12:7).

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt 26:28).

In one the blood is literal, in the other, the red Passover wine⁴ is used to stand for blood. Both are tokens of redemption. It may be significant that the blood on the sides and top of the door would form a cross, the instrument of torture on which Christ died.

4. Both involve communal fellowship:

There was to be one lamb per household, and if one household was too small it was to meet with the neighbors.

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart (Acts 2:46).

Here is also a noteworthy *difference* between Passover and Lord's Supper: a lamb was needed for the former; an all-sufficient Lamb for all time (and eternity) obviates any physical lamb in the latter. With the Lamb of God in the midst, none other was needed. (*Historically*, the disciples no doubt had a lamb on the night of "the Last Supper," but the fact that it is not mentioned is significant.)

³J. J. Petuchowski points out that for the leader of the Seder to make a special memorial, such as to the famous Rabbi Hillel, was not unique, though the parallel between Hillel in Judaism and Jesus in Christianity is not great. See "Do This in Remembrance of Me," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76 (October, 1957), 293-98.

⁴Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. by Norman Perrin (3d ed.; London: SCM Press Ltd., 1966), 53. *Red* wine was traditional, even binding (cf. blood).

5. Both commemorate redemption:

"And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.'" So the people bowed their heads and worshiped (Exod 12:26, 27).

The *Haggadah*, or ritual account of the meaning of the Seder, was similar to Christian explanations and devotions based on the meaning of Christ's death. Examples are in 1 Corinthians 5: "Christ our Passover" (v 7) and the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (v 8).

III. Establishing the Lord's Supper

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives (Mark 14:22-26).

Taking this account in Mark 14 and its parallel in Matthew 26 as historical and complementary rather than contradictory, we can glean the following facts:

1. The contexts make clear that this was an evening meal (Matt 26:20; Mark 14:17).
2. Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to His disciples, and told them to take and eat it; it was His body.
3. Next He took a cup, gave thanks, gave it to them, told them to drink (Matthew), and they did so (Mark). Evidently a common cup was used at this time.
4. He explained the cup as being His blood of the covenant which was to be shed for many. Matthew adds the reason: for forgiveness of sins.
5. Jesus made a solemn prediction or vow (Mark notes that He said "assuredly") (*amēn*). He vowed never to drink from the fruit of the vine till the coming of the kingdom. This may be why He refused the wine on the Cross. Matthew notes the personal desire of the Savior to drink it with His disciples.
6. They sang hymns (literally, "having hymned") and then went to Olivet. The KJ translation, "a hymn," is too weak. Many scholars believe that the four psalms called the great Hallel (115-118) are referred

to.⁵ Swete notes that some believe that Psalm 137 is meant.⁶ Kelly comments on the blessedness of the scene,⁷ evidently referring to the poignancy of Jesus singing the ancient Psalms of David right before His betrayal.

IV. New Testament Teaching and Practice

An English-born preacher⁸ taught this writer years ago that to be a valid ordinance of the Christian church, an observance had to be three things:

1. *Instituted by Christ Himself.* (Three of the four Gospels record His instituting this rite.)
2. *Practiced in the Acts of the Apostles.* (There are several references to the Supper in Acts.)
3. *Explained in the Epistles of the NT.* (The fullest account is in 1 Corinthians 11, though there are other briefer references.)

Only two ordinances meet these three criteria: baptism⁹ and the Lord's Supper.

Although I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the meetings of the early Christians¹⁰ and read countless tomes and articles on early Christianity, I never found anything to shake my acceptance of this three-fold test.

If one believes in the "development" theory of the Church, namely, that ecclesiastical officials can add to, delete, or change Christ's teachings—this little test will seem naive in the extreme. But I expect most Bible Christians¹¹ will appreciate its simple truth.

In the earliest days of the Church, when believers were all together in Jerusalem, the disciples apparently broke bread every day (although some of these events may have been ordinary meals).

⁵ Cf. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1913), 337.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 338.

⁷ William Kelly, *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers Bible Truth Depot, n.d.), 491.

⁸ The preacher was Edwin Fesche, now of Baltimore, who preached the sermon that led this editor to believe the Gospel.

⁹ See *JOTGES*, Spring 1990, for a discussion of this doctrine.

¹⁰ Arthur L. Farstad, "Historical and Exegetical Consideration of New Testament Church Meetings," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972. 397 pp.

¹¹ A Roman Catholic priest on a nationwide TV program referred to our type of believers as "Bible Christians." It is a good term for those whose whole faith and practice are built on God's Word.

By the time the Church had progressed in its spread across the Roman Empire to many Gentile areas, the frequency of celebration would seem to have become weekly: "the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:6).

Perhaps in reaction to the high-church notion that communion can help save one's soul, Protestants have generally cut down on the weekly (or daily communion) to a monthly, or even a quarterly communion (a few just yearly). Many ultra-dispensationalists, as we have seen, totally reject the Supper for this age, along with most Quakers and the Salvation Army.

Several devout church leaders, such as John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, George Müller, and Charles H. Spurgeon,¹² have encouraged weekly communion, and several groups in Christendom who hold biblical views on the ordinance follow the practice of the early Church in this.

The practice of the NT Church shows that the Christians gathered around the table of the Lord to worship the Lord by reading the Scriptures, praying, singing hymns, sharing, preaching, and taking part in the elements of Christ's passion. First Corinthians 16:1-2 also shows that at least on occasion a collection was taken.

All of these features were clearly carried on in the early centuries of the Church, as the literature gives evidence. However, as Christianity became bigger, richer, and especially when it received the favor of the emperor (fourth century¹³ and following), the primitive worship with active participation by a priesthood of believers gradually evolved into a formal liturgy with a strict division of clergy versus laity.

One fears that what was gained in beautiful architecture, music, and vestments, was largely lost in the areas of spiritual reality and biblical truth.

V. Terminology

All subjects are known and understood by their terminology. The vocabulary of Christendom is varied as to what the Lord's Supper is called. Again, a rite that is meant to unite, has been used—including

¹² Müller and Spurgeon both practiced weekly communion, the former at Bethesda Chapel, Bristol (Brethren), and the latter at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London (Baptist).

¹³ Constantine made Christianity a legal religion (*religio licita*); only later did it become the *official* religion of the empire.

verbally—to divide Christians. Most of the following terms are quite acceptable to biblical Christians.¹⁴

The Breaking of Bread

The earliest and most primitive expression refers to the fact that the Lord's Supper is a *meal*, though not one at which one is to expect to be filled. (First Corinthians 11:34 says to eat at home if you are hungry!) In several passages in Acts it is not certain if the Lord's Supper, the "love feast" (*agapē*), or an ordinary meal among Christians is meant.

The Communion

This word represents the Greek for "having things in common," or "sharing" (*koinōnia*). The expression "receive communion" tends to obscure the fact that believers share or commune both with other members and with Christ the Head; they do not "receive" a miraculous element from a priestly "celebrant"!

The Lord's Table

This phrase reminds us of Psalm 23, of the ancient Near East's well-known code of hospitality, and of being part of God's family. It is the *Lord's* Table, not our table, and it should be open to the Lord's people (and none other). Exact reception policies of different churches vary, but we believe that local church discipline should keep out those living in known sin (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5) or holding heretical doctrines (e.g., 3 John 9-11).

The Eucharist

This is the anglicized form of the Greek word for thanksgiving (*eucharistia*). Many Bible Christians avoid this term because it is usually associated with so-called "high church" bodies. However, if we use it in its original meaning as a giving of thanks for the finished work of Christ, it can add something to our Christian vocabulary.

¹⁴The term "mass" (Latin *missa*, French *messe*) is used chiefly by Roman Catholics and very "high-church" groups. The term is derived from the words of the priest telling those not yet fully members (catechumens) to leave: "Ite, missa est." It is related to our word *dismiss*. The word *mass* is also used for musical compositions based on the words of the Roman liturgy (though J. S. Bach, a devout Lutheran, composed "The Mass in B Minor" as a goodwill gesture, and Leonard Bernstein, who was Jewish, produced his own version of the mass).

The Lord's Supper

Most evangelicals like this term best of all, though it is worth noting that it only occurs once in the NT, and then in a negative use. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their rather carnal observance of the feast of remembrance as *not* being the *Lord's Supper* (1 Cor 11:20), but their own!

VI. Meaning and Modes of Observance

There is considerable variety of faith and practice in Christendom, not only as to terminology, but also as to *what* the Lord's Supper really means, and *how* the rite should be conducted.

The Meaning of the Supper

Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of Me," and Paul wrote, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor 11:26). In light of these words, this much should be clear to all Bible Christians: The Lord's Supper is a rite of remembrance of our Lord, and, in light of the elements representing His body and blood, a memorial of His work on the Cross. The fact that the elements are separated¹⁵ shows forth His death, a death that was violent and accompanied by bloodshed. Those who say that Christ could have been killed by a means other than crucifixion ignore OT prophecies, the sacrificial system of Leviticus, and all Christian teaching.

The evolution from the simple breaking of bread in Acts to an ornate ritual is one of the tragedies of Christendom. What was meant to remind us of the *finished* work of Christ became a "continuous Calvary," the "unbloody sacrifice of the mass."

The Roman Catholic dogma of *transubstantiation*—that when the priest says the words, "This is My body," the wafer actually turns into "the body, soul, and divinity" of our Lord—was not made an official teaching of the Church of Rome until the year that King John of England signed the Magna Charta (1215). Of course, many *believed* in the doctrine long before that, but there were no penalties for *not* believing it until it was made official.

Luther's doctrine is called *consubstantiation*, the teaching that Christ is literally present *with* (con-) the substance of the bread and wine. Calvin

¹⁵ Some Orthodox bodies actually soak bread in wine and spoon-feed it to infants, thus marring the symbolism.

taught the spiritual presence of Christ when the Supper is observed.

Zwingli taught that the service was a simple memorial to Christ in His death. Most evangelicals would agree with Calvin or Zwingli (or sometimes both).

The fact that the communion is generally observed on Sundays, the day Christ rose, reminds us of His bodily resurrection.

The fact that it is only "till He comes" reminds us to look forward to His coming again for His Church.

The Modes of Observance

Some Christians receive the elements sitting, some standing, and some kneeling. It is interesting that at the first Lord's Supper the disciples were *reclining*, the favored position for an important meal such as the Passover, at which festival the communion was instituted.

Disputes over whether the bread has to be without leaven (like *matzohs*) or can be ordinary bread, and over whether the "fruit of the vine" (biblical wording) must be fermented like Jewish passover wine, or can be unfermented due to the strong objection of many Christians to any alcohol, have merely divided churches needlessly.

Since Christianity was meant to be a universal faith, no demands are made in the NT that every congregation must have the exact same elements as the first disciples. In chapel, church, or cathedral, on the South Sea Islands, in concentration camps, even *on the moon*,¹⁶ the communion elements have been received with thanks, even if not always exactly the *kosher* elements of the *first* Christian breaking of bread.

I believe that Christ is satisfied if the *heart* is right.

VII. Conclusion

Even though the doctrine and practice of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper has often tended to divide rather than to unite major blocs of Christians of differing viewpoints, its importance and great significance should not be ignored or diminished. Also, it has been a very *uniting* force on a local level, and sometimes in denominational and inter-denominational gatherings as well.

While a student at Seminary many years ago, I wrote a hymn that tried to tie together some of the varying traditions of believing Christianity

¹⁶ One of the American astronauts took a communion wafer with him to eat on the moon.

by devoting one stanza each to five different terms for this ancient rite. I called it simply "Communion Hymn."¹⁷

Communion Hymn

- 1 We obey You, Jesus, Master,
In this rite which You first led;
We obey You with this chalice
And as now we *Break the Bread*.

- 2 We implore You now, Christ Jesus,
Through Your Holy Spirit, keep
Our weak wand'ring hearts from straying
From this blest *Communion* deep.

- 3 We do praise You, Holy Savior,
For these simple symbols clear,
Which recall to us Your suffering
As *Your Table* we draw near.

- 4 We adore You, blessed Jesus,
In this hour by Heaven kissed:
Singing, praying, meditating,
We express our *Eucharist*.

- 5 Give us, Lord, a parting blessing,
As we rise to go our ways,
Looking for that great *Lord's Supper*
We shall share in Kingdom days!

¹⁷ We have sung it from time to time at our congregation in Dallas, both to the original melody written by our first pianist, Rodger D. Turley, and also with a second tune by Frances A. Mosher (see "A Song of Grace" in this issue for a brief but creative article by her). If anyone would like a copy of the music in order to introduce this hymn to your church feel free to write to the editor at the address on p. 2.

REPENTANCE AND SALVATION

Part 6:

How to Communicate the Doctrine of Repentance Clearly

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I. Introduction

This is the final installment in a series on repentance and salvation. It has been a great challenge for me to write these six articles.¹

The doctrine of repentance is a difficult subject.

It is not that it is so hard to show what repentance is *not*; that is fairly easy. What is more difficult to show is what it *is*—particularly in a few problem texts.

How does one go about teaching the doctrine of repentance clearly?

II. Be Humble

One wag suggested that preachers must be taught in school that when they get on thin ice and aren't quite sure what they are saying, that is the time to raise their voice, pound the pulpit, and at least *act* as if they know what they are talking about. The rule seems to be: when in doubt, shout!

We must take great care to avoid this. If we are not persuaded of the correct interpretation of a given text, we should say so. While it is desirable to be confident of the correct interpretation of the passages which we are teaching or preaching, practically speaking it may not always be possible—especially when we are presenting a topical message.

I would encourage all who preach or teach on repentance to begin with a confession. Confess that you find this to be a difficult subject and that, while you have some vital information to share, you don't know everything there is to know about the subject.

¹ While I spent a year and a half studying and writing on this subject for my doctoral dissertation (Robert Nicholas Wilkin, "Repentance as a Condition for Salvation in the New Testament," Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985), each of the articles has involved major rewriting of my previous work.

This will help relax your audience. They won't be as much on their guard.

III. Be Well Prepared

Anyone can confess to limitations. However, if what follows in your presentation is not well thought out, compelling, and persuasive, the confession will have served only to "turn off" the audience.

If after confessing your limitations you bring forth well reasoned and well delivered arguments in favor of your thesis about repentance, people will most likely be favorably influenced.

This is *not* a message (or series) which you should prepare the night before! (Are there any?) This topic especially demands serious preparation. I would suggest that a person spend at least three to four weeks in preparation. Even if one can only spend a limited amount of time each day, the cumulative effect of such study over a period of time will prove powerful.

To be well prepared I suggest that one study the five previous articles in this series, Zane Hodges's chapter on repentance in *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation*,² Charles Ryrie's discussion of repentance in *So Great Salvation*,³ John MacArthur's treatment of the subject in *The Gospel According to Jesus*,⁴ as well as, of course, the key NT passages on repentance (e.g., Matt 3:1ff; 4:17; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:17-18; 17:30; 1 Thess 1:9). Several readings of the only book in the Bible primarily devoted to evangelism, the Gospel of John, would be wise as well. Discover what, if anything, John tells us about the role of repentance in salvation.

IV. The Role of Repentance in Eternal Salvation

The first and foremost question in the minds of most people concerns salvation. People naturally want to make sure that they have met the

² *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Dallas and Grand Rapids: Redención Viva and Zondervan Publishing House, 1989). Hodges adopts the harmonious relationship view of repentance. That is, he suggests that repentance is never given anywhere in Scripture as a condition for eternal salvation.

³ *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989). Ryrie holds the change-of-mind view. That is, he teaches that saving repentance is a change of mind about the person and work of Christ—not a turning from one's sins.

⁴ *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988). MacArthur argues for the "turn from sins for salvation" view of repentance. That is, he believes that one must turn from his or her sins in order to obtain eternal life. And, he says that if one is "truly saved" he or she will keep on turning from sins as ongoing proof that his or her life has been indeed transformed.

biblical condition(s) for eternal salvation. And they want to make sure that they are accurately sharing the same with others.

A. The “Turn from Sins for Salvation” View⁵

Most people today think that in order to reach heaven they must turn from their sinful ways. Thus our first goal in teaching about repentance is correcting this erroneous idea, which essentially amounts to salvation by works.

This can be done in a number of ways.

First, the “turn from sins for salvation” view is contradicted by the Gospel of John. The Greek term normally translated *repentance* is *metanoia*. The verb form is *metanoeō*. How frequently do they occur? Actually neither the noun nor the verb occurs even once in the Gospel of John, which is the only book of the Bible whose primary purpose is to show people how they may obtain eternal life (John 20:31).

While arguments from silence are weaker than direct statements, this particular argument is very strong.

Not only is there no direct mention of repentance in the Gospel of John, but nowhere in the book is the concept of turning from sins given as a condition for obtaining eternal life.

Jesus did not tell Nicodemus that he had to turn from his sins in order to be born again (John 3). Nor did He tell the woman at the well that she had to turn from her sins to obtain eternal life (John 4). The same is true with the man born blind (John 9), and Martha (John 11). And, tellingly, the book’s statement of purpose (John 20:31) does not mention turning from sins as a condition for eternal life.

Turning from sins *cannot* be a condition for eternal life, since it is inconceivable that the Gospel of John would fail to mention it if it were.

Second, the “turn from sins for salvation” view does not harmonize with Romans and Galatians—the two NT epistles which are designed in great part to instruct believers about the Gospel.

The NT terms for *repent* and *repentance* are not found in the Book of Galatians. Certainly if repentance is a condition of salvation separate from faith, Paul would have reminded the Galatians of that fact.

The evidence from Romans is similar. The verb form (*metanoeō*) does not occur at all. The noun form (*metanoia*) is found only once (2:4). Certainly if repentance is another condition for eternal life (with faith being the other), Paul would have stressed this fact in Romans—just as

⁵ This has sometimes colloquially been called the “turn or burn” view.

he repeatedly stressed faith.

In addition, the solitary reference to repentance in Romans (2:4) merely says that God's kindness is designed to lead men to repentance. That is hardly an unequivocal statement showing that turning from sins is a condition for eternal life. Indeed, the entire context in which that verse appears requires close study and attention. One should not rush to conclusions about Rom 2:4. If Paul had meant to say that one must turn from his sins to gain eternal salvation, he could and would have said so clearly and unequivocally.

Romans and Galatians both show that the sole condition of eternal life is trusting in Christ alone. Both letters show that eternal life is a free gift. Nowhere in either epistle is turning from sins mentioned as a condition for eternal life.

Third, the Scriptures are clear that eternal salvation is *wholly apart from* human works (e.g., Eph 2:9). Yet if the "turn from sins for salvation" view were true, salvation would be by faith *plus* a commitment to works. If a person must reform his or her life to be eternally saved, salvation would be at least partly payment for work done. It would *not* be the reception of a free gift.

Let's suppose that a very rich man needed monthly blood transfusions to survive. This man has a very rare blood type—so rare, in fact, that you are the only known person who has it. He offers you \$1,000,000 a year if you will donate your blood each month.

Would the million dollars be a free gift? Of course not. If you had to give something up to get it, then it would be something you earned. While the pay would be great, there would be a definite cost to be paid to get the desired benefits.

A good rule of thumb to use when salesmen offer you "free" gifts is this: if you must pay something, in time, money, or effort, then it really isn't a free gift. It may or may not be a *good* deal; however, it is only *free* if there is *absolutely no cost to you*.

Thus the "turn from sins for salvation" view is also contradicted by the fact that eternal life is not a result of works.

Fourth, we know from Scripture that some people *do* obtain eternal life. While the way is narrow and few find it, few is considerably more than *none*. However, if the "turn from sins for salvation" view is carried to its logical conclusion, then *no one* would have eternal life. Salvation would be impossible, because no one ever fully turns from his sins!

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). If a sinner cuts down on his sinning, he does not cease to be a sinner. He

still falls short of the glory of God. Even if a sinner could stop sinning altogether (which no one can) he would still remain a sinner, since, biblically speaking, it takes only one transgression at any point in a person's life to make him a sinner (Jas 2:10).

Our only hope of deliverance is the blood of Christ. If the blood of Christ is *not* sufficient to cover all of our sins—past, present, and future—then no one can be saved. If His blood *is* sufficient, then once we meet the sole biblical requirement for salvation, faith in Christ alone, we have eternal life.

The “turn from sins for salvation” view is terribly dangerous. Instead of pointing people to the Cross and to faith in Christ alone, it points much of their attention to their own efforts at self-reformation. Sadly many, if not most, people hearing this distorted message fail to trust in Christ alone.

As we shall discuss in more detail below, in addition to distorting the Gospel, the “turn from sins for salvation” view also undermines assurance. For if a person must turn from his sins to be saved, one could legitimately wonder for the rest of his life if he had turned from a sufficient number of sins, and if he been sorry enough for his sins—to mention just two resultant fears. Since God's holiness is absolute, these fears would have no resolution.

Having shown the bankruptcy of the “turn from sins for salvation” view, the next step is to discuss the merits of a second view, the change-of-mind view.

B. The Change-of-Mind View

As mentioned above, the normal NT word for repentance is *metanoia* (and its verbal form *metanoēō*). The Latin Vulgate translated *metanoia* as *poenitentia* (“penance”), which is an unfortunate rendering that helped to promote a works-salvation theology. The King James translators rendered *metanoia* as “repentance,” a word which in English can refer either to turning from one's sins or to changing one's mind about someone or something. This translation choice has become so fixed in people's minds that modern translations have not changed the rendering, even though a better alternative is often available.

According to this view, the Greek word *metanoia* (similar in origin to our “after thought” or “second thoughts”) means *a changing of one's mind about someone or something*. Support for this understanding is found in its classical usage, its pre-Christian usage, and its usage in the NT. (The reader is encouraged to see the third article in this series for

further details.⁶)

There are many NT examples which show that "change of mind" is the preferred translation. Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, Acts 11:18, Heb 6:1, 12:17, and 2 Pet 3:9 are good places to demonstrate this point.

For example, in Heb 12:17 we read that Esau found no opportunity to change his father's mind (*metanoia*) after he sold his birthright, although he sought for such a change of mind through tears.

According to this view, it is thus essential whenever we see the word *repent* in the NT to ask what one is being called to change his or her mind about.

To receive eternal salvation one must change his or her mind about the Lord Jesus Christ. One must come to see Him as the One who takes away all his sins and guarantees him eternal life (cf. Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, and Acts 11:17-18).

For example, in Acts 11:17-18 repentance (*metanoia*) is seen as being synonymous with faith (*pistis*). Peter, in recounting the salvation and subsequent baptism of Cornelius and his household, pointed out that he could hardly refuse baptism to people who *by faith* had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then the Jewish believers to whom Peter was speaking said, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles *repentance* to life." Cornelius and his household placed their faith in Christ alone (Acts 10:43-44). At the precise moment when Peter called them to believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit fell upon them (Acts 10:43-44). All they did to gain eternal life was to trust in Christ. Peter never mentioned anything about turning from sins.

Another way of saying that individuals have come to faith in Christ is to say that they have changed their thinking about Him.⁷ To believe in Christ is to come to see Him as the One who guarantees eternal life to all who trust in Him.

⁶ See Robert N. Wilkin, "Repentance and Salvation Part 3: New Testament Repentance: Lexical Considerations," *JOTGES* 2 (Autumn 1989): 13-21.

⁷ I have sometimes been questioned if this is true of children. I have been asked: Do small children really need to change their thinking about Christ? My response is two-fold. In the first place, I believe that children, even those who grow up in dynamic Christian homes, do indeed need to change their earliest thinking about what they must do to obtain eternal life. I believe that as a result of the fall all people have a natural inclination to works-salvation thinking. However, let's assume that this is not so. Let's assume that once children can understand abstract thought their minds are a *tabula rasa*, a blank sheet. Then it would be true that children do not need to change their minds about anything to be saved. However, that would not prove that *no one* needs to change his mind to be saved. Only very small children would be exempt from the need to change their thinking. Since all of the NT verses dealing with repentance are addressed to adults, this objection, even if it is true, would have no bearing on those verses.

There are passages in which *metanoia* has sinful behavior as its object. That is, there are texts in which a change of thinking *about one's sinful behavior* is being called for. And, a call to change one's mind about sinful behavior is a call to turn from it. However, such calls always deal with the condition for escaping *temporal* difficulties and for pleasing God, not for escaping eternal death. We will discuss this point more fully below.

While I feel that there are a few passages in which repentance (i.e., changing one's mind about Christ) is a condition for eternal salvation, there is another Free Grace view which suggests that repentance is never found to be a condition of eternal life. I have labeled that view the harmonious relationship view for reasons which will soon be apparent.

C. The Harmonious Relationship View

According to this view, NT repentance (*metanoia*) is a decision to get right with God. This includes a decision to turn from one's sins. However, this view suggests that this decision to get right with God and turn from one's sins is always given in the NT as a condition for coming into a harmonious relationship with God, not for obtaining eternal life.⁸

One who repents, who decides to get right with God, will come to faith in Christ if he follows through with his decision. This is guaranteed because God promises that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). However, the decision to get right with God and turn from one's sins is not a condition of eternal life. The sole condition of eternal life is placing one's faith in Christ alone.

Thus, according to this view, in agreement with the change of mind view, the sole condition of eternal life is placing one's faith in Christ alone.

This view is different from the change of mind view in two key points. One, this view defines repentance differently. Rather than seeing repentance as a change of mind, it views repentance as a decision to get right with God and turn from one's sins. Two, this view always sees the goal of NT repentance as coming into a harmonious relationship with God and never as obtaining eternal life.⁹

⁸For further details regarding this view see Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, 143-63.

⁹The change of mind view does *sometimes* see the goal of repentance as being fellowship with God (e.g., 2 Cor 7:9-10). However, it also sees the goal of repentance in some passages as being the appropriation of eternal life (e.g., Acts 2:38; 2 Pet 3:9). By contrast the harmonious relationship view sees the goal of repentance as *always* being a harmonious relationship with God.

While this view works well in most NT passages, in my estimation it is somewhat strained in passages such as Luke 15:7, 10; Acts 2:38; 11:17-18; and 2 Pet 3:9.¹⁰

D. Summary

Turning from sins is not a condition of eternal salvation.

Is repentance in some sense a condition of eternal salvation? I believe that it is, but only in a few NT passages. In those texts a change of mind about Jesus Christ is given as a condition for eternal life. Changing one's mind about Christ is another way of speaking about believing in Him. Repentance is not a second condition for eternal salvation. It is another way of talking about faith in Christ.

V. The Role of Repentance in Assurance of Salvation

If repentance were a condition of eternal salvation, one must know that he has repented in order to have *assurance* of salvation.

If turning from sins were a condition of eternal salvation, one could never be sure he was saved. One would always be unsure if he had turned from enough sins to be saved.¹¹

If, however, saving repentance is synonymous with saving faith, then a person can indeed be sure of his salvation. All one need do is to ask himself if he believes that Jesus Christ guarantees eternal life to all who trust in Him. If he does believe, then he is sure that he has eternal life.

The fact that the Scriptures teach that believers can and should be absolutely sure of their salvation (e.g., 1 John 5:13a) gives additional evidence that the "turn from sins for salvation" view of repentance is not right. Any view of repentance which eliminates assurance is a faulty view.

The issue of repentance is thus not only an issue in evangelism, as important as evangelism is. It is also a key issue in discipleship. How

¹⁰The reader is encouraged to consult previous articles in this series for details.

¹¹There is an interesting section in *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (71-73) in which the author, J. I. Packer, an advocate of the "turn from sins for salvation" view, argues that one must be careful when sharing the Gospel to make sure to list everything a person must give up to become a Christian, or else the person may well end up remaining unsaved due to a failure to give up everything the Lord requires. In reading those remarks I was struck by how subjective and difficult it would be to share such a "gospel," by how impractical and impossible such a gospel is for sinful people, and by how such a message leaves no real room for assurance.

we share assurance of salvation—or more accurately, *if* we share assurance of salvation—is dependent on our view of repentance.

VI. The Role of Repentance in Sanctification

If we are not careful, it is possible to give the false impression that turning from sins is not commanded in the Scriptures. While it is true that turning from sins is never given as a condition of eternal salvation, *it is commanded* repeatedly in the Scriptures.

Repentance has a definite role in progressive sanctification. Believers must turn from their sins in order to please God.

While a host of passages could be selected to show this, Eph 4:17-31 is an excellent representative text. Believers are called upon to put off their former sinful conduct (v 22), lying (v 25), stealing (v 28), bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking (v 31).

Sin has its passing pleasures, to be sure (Heb 11:25). However, the passing pleasures it offers are not worth the lingering pain which are its long-term consequences (Heb 12:3-11; Jas 1:15). As believers we need to tell ourselves repeatedly that sin never pays. The pain far outweighs the fleeting pleasure.

Not only does sin have painful consequences now, but sin jeopardizes the quality of our eternal experience. The believer whose life is characterized by sin and disobedience will not have treasure in heaven or an abundant eternal experience (Matt 6:19-21; 1 Cor 9:24-27). While all believers will have joy forever, only faithful believers will have *fullness of joy*.

All three views of repentance agree that the repentance which is a part of sanctification is a turning from sins (or a change of mind about one's sinful behavior). Throughout our lives we as believers are to turn from our sins and to do those things which God commands. Of course, we never complete this process until we go to be with Lord. There are always sins to be confessed and abandoned.

There are some passages in which it is hard to decide if eternal salvation or sanctification is in view. For example, when John the Baptist and Jesus said, "Repent [or, change your mind] for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (e.g., Matt 3:1; 4:17) did they mean, "Change your mind *about Christ* in order to get into the kingdom"? or did they mean, "Change your mind *about your sinful ways* in order to be properly prepared for

(i.e., in order to be in a position to have honor and treasure in) the coming kingdom"? It is hard to say. Either view is possible.¹²

VII. Conclusion

More than one preacher has charged that if a person doesn't preach repentance, then he hasn't proclaimed the authentic Gospel.¹³

If that is so, then the Gospel of John doesn't present the authentic Gospel! Perhaps it needs to be cut out of the Bible! The Gospel of John does not even once use the NT word for repentance. That surely means that we can proclaim the Gospel clearly today without even mentioning repentance.

When I share the Gospel I like to tell people both what they need to do to be saved (trust in Christ alone) and what they need to avoid doing (trusting in their own good works, baptism, their turning from their sins, church attendance, etc.). As Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was so fond of saying, saving faith is *giving up every other confidence* and placing one's confidence solely in Jesus Christ.¹⁴

In order to proclaim the Gospel clearly, we must be exceedingly careful what we say, if anything, about repentance. The simplest course would be to say nothing about repentance. After all, that is what John did in his Gospel!

If we do touch on repentance in our evangelistic efforts, we must be careful to point out that turning from sins is *not* a condition of eternal life. If repentance is a condition, then it must be synonymous with saving faith (i.e., a change of mind about the person and work of Christ is equal to coming to faith in Him).

Let us remember that the cry of the Reformation (in concert with John) was "Sola Fide"—"By Faith Alone"!

¹² See the fourth article in this series (*JOTGES* 3 [Spring 1990]) for further details.

¹³ See, for example, Packer, *Evangelism*, 71-73, and MacArthur, *Gospel*, 65-66, 84, 88, 159-68. For example, MacArthur writes, "No evangelism that omits the message of repentance can properly be called the gospel, for sinners cannot come to Jesus Christ apart from a radical change of heart, mind, and will. That demands a spiritual crisis leading to a complete turnaround and ultimately a wholesale transformation. It is the only kind of conversion Scripture recognizes" (167).

¹⁴ See Lewis Sperry Chafer, "The Terms of Salvation," *JOTGES* 1 (Autumn 1988): 42, 57.

THE GOSPEL AND WATER BAPTISM: A STUDY OF ACTS 22:16

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Prologue

To best introduce the study of Acts 22:16, let me relate the following story.

When I was in the Churches of Christ, I was told—and through experience was tempted to believe—that “evangelical Christians” would deny the necessity of baptism for salvation, even when they could not explain those passages which teach it; that the average Baptist or Bible Church preacher could not “get around” the obvious and natural meaning of such passages as Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and 1 Pet 3:21. They were, I was told, like the Jews in the first century, in that even with a plain message of Scripture before them, they would deliberately shut their eyes to the truth and refuse to believe it and be saved.

Do you believe this was unfair?

With that as a background, let me share with you one of the most amazing confessions I have ever heard.

One day I was sitting in the office of a president of a Baptist college. The man had an earned Ph.D. in theology and is someone for whom I have a deep respect. No doubt he made this confession to me because he did not perceive me as an “enemy” from the Churches of Christ.

He told me that he had publicly debated with Churches of Christ preachers. He respected their general “fundamentalism,” but in matters of salvation he abhorred their theology. He believed and defended the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone. However, he was not totally satisfied with his own interpretation of Acts 22:16 and 1 Pet 3:21. Acts 2:38, another Churches of Christ fortress, he could easily handle. However, Acts 22:16 was “very difficult” and 1 Pet 3:21 was,

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quoting Winston Churchill, a "mystery wrapped in a riddle and shrouded in an enigma."

This confession still shocks me—especially coming as it did from a man of great learning and deep piety.

Was it confirmation of what I had always been told? Was this respected president a perfect example of someone holding to a doctrine in spite of the clear teaching of the Word of God? Was the Churches of Christ position the correct one after all?

It is because of such experiences that this article is written. Therefore, in order to present what I believe to be an adequate and satisfying interpretation of Acts 22:16, this article will state and evaluate the various exegetical options of this verse as found within the commentary tradition. It should be pointed out, however, that the commentary tradition, unlike its treatment of Acts 2:38, is not very extensive on Acts 22:16. There are, no doubt, many reasons for this. For one, it is a difficult text (commentators are notorious for commenting on the obvious and saying little on those passages where the problems exist!). Another reason is because this is the second of three times in Acts where Paul's conversion experience is related, and most of the material—except this verse, which does not occur in the other accounts!—is treated elsewhere in the commentaries.

The context of Acts 22:16 finds Paul relating his testimony. He was going to Damascus to persecute believers when the Lord appeared to him. Blinded by the light, he was led into town to wait for someone to come to him. In Acts 22:16 Paul relates what Ananias, a believer commissioned by the Lord to go to Paul, said. It reads:

"And now why are you [Paul] waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."¹

¹ The Scripture is quoted from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982). *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2nd edition, 1985) has *to onoma tou Kyriou* (the name of the Lord), while the text of the *United Bible Societies*, 3rd edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1986) has *to onoma autou* (His name). The difference between these two is slight and does not appear to affect the meaning of the passage. It is also of some interest to note that the structure of the verse in Greek suggests a chiasm:

[Gk.]	[Eng.]
A Anastas	A Rising
B baptisai	B be baptized
B kai apolousai tas hamartias sou	B and wash away your sins
A epikalesamenos to onoma tou Kyriou.	A calling on the name of the Lord

Thus, the two participles are parallel to each other and the two imperatives are parallel to each other. In this analysis it would be difficult to separate the idea of baptism from a washing away of sins.

I. The Sacramentarian View

Definition

The Sacramentarian view of this passage is quite straightforward: one washes away his sins *at the time of* (not necessarily *by*) his water baptism. Baptism, the biblically demanded act designed to manifest true faith, is *necessary* for the forgiveness of sins. Paul was not saved (i.e., regenerated) on the Damascus Road, but later in the city when Ananias had ministered to him.

Defenders

This view, while held by others, is best defended by apologists of the Churches of Christ.²

Defense

The defense of this position, like the sacramentarian defense of Acts 2:38, rests upon a straightforward, *prima facie* reading of the text. A few quotations from Churches of Christ commentators present this view with pointed force.

J. W. McGarvey, in an extended treatment of the conversion of Paul, makes this defense:

Such is the baleful influence of this gross departure from the word of God, that men who are under its influence are constantly denouncing as *heretics* those who venture to follow the example of Ananias. He finds the man to whom he is sent, praying to the Lord Jesus; but, instead of commanding him to pray on, and praying with him, he says to him, "Why do you tarry? Arise, and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" . . .

It is high time that people were won back from such delusions, and made to feel the necessity of following the word of God. Ananias was guided by the apostolic commission. Seeing there were three conditions of pardon, faith, repentance, and immersion, and that Saul had already complied with the first two, he does not tantalize him by telling him to believe or urging him to repent, but commands him to do the one thing which he had not yet done, "Arise, and be immersed." He instantly obeyed; and then, for the first time since he saw the vision by the way, he was sufficiently composed to take food and drink . . .

²For further information about those holding this view please see the author's previous article "The Gospel and Water Baptism: A Study in Acts 2:38," *JOTGES* 3 (Spring 1990): 27-52.

Like the eunuch, it was *after* he came up out of the water that he rejoiced.

His composure and peace of mind, after being immersed, was the proper result of intelligent obedience in that institution. If he had not already learned its design, by what he knew of apostolic preaching, the words of Ananias conveyed it without ambiguity. To a sinner mourning over his guilt, seeking pardon, and knowing that the Lord alone could forgive sins, the command to be immersed and wash away his sins could convey the one idea, that upon the washing of water over the body in immersion, the Lord would remove his sins by forgiving them. That such was the idea intended in the metaphorical expression, "wash away," would need no argument, if it had not suited the theories of modern sectaries to call it in question. It is a common assumption that Saul's sins had been *really* forgiven before his immersion, and Ananias required him only to *formally* wash them away. But this is a mere combination of words to hide the absence of an idea. How can a man *formally* do a thing which has been *really* done, unless it be by going through a *form* which is empty and deceptive? If Saul's sins were already washed away, then he *did not* wash them away in immersion, and the language of Ananias was deceptive. But it is an indisputable fact, that at the time Ananias gave him this command he was still unhappy, and, therefore, unforgiven. Immediately after he was immersed, he was happy; and the change took place in the meantime, which connects it with his immersion. In precise accordance, therefore, with the commission, his sins were forgiven when he was immersed.³ (Emphasis is McGarvey's.)

Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) was not only one of the prime movers behind the "Restoration Movement" which produced both the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ, but a genius by almost any standard.⁴ Campbell, in his classic work *Christian Baptism*,

³ J. W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co, 1892), 122-23.

⁴ For more information about Alexander Campbell, please see my former article previously mentioned. Campbell is a fascinating person and I wholeheartedly recommend the reading of his life story. Everett Ferguson, Professor of Church History at Abilene Christian University (with an earned Ph.D. from Harvard) commented in an article about Campbell in *The Restoration Principle being the Abilene Christian College Annual Bible Lectures, 1962* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian College Student Exchange, 1962), 315-28, that the "Restoration Movement" failed to have leaders of Campbell's mental caliber in later generations. This downward trend, I hasten to add, has been more than arrested. Not only have people of the academic standing of Ferguson strengthened the Churches of Christ (cf. the recently published *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* [New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990] which he edited), but the popular appeal is strengthened with such books as *The Applause of Heaven*, by Max Lucado, a Churches of Christ preacher in San Antonio, Texas. Not only is Lucado's book published by the solidly

observes that the phrase “wash away your sins” is:

A most unguarded and unjustified form of address, under the sanction of a divine mission, if baptism had not for its design the formal and definite remission of sin, according to the Pentecostian address.⁵

Also, in his Greek commentary on the Book of Acts, Campbell writes:

Kai apolousai tas hamartias sou, and wash away your sins. This clause states a result of the immersion, in language derived from the nature of the ordinance. It answers to *eis aphesin hamartiōn*, in ch. 2:38. Immersion is represented as having this importance of efficacy because it is the sign of the repentance and faith which are the conditions of salvation. *Epikalesamenos to onoma autou* supplies, essentially, the place of *epi tō onomati Iēsou Christou*, in 2:38.

Prof. Hackett [and here Campbell is quoting from H. H. Hackett, an outstanding Baptist scholar who wrote a commentary on the Greek text of Acts] sustains the com. ver. of this verse. His words are: “This clause states a result of baptism in language derived from the nature of that ordinance. It answers to *eis aphesin hamartiōn*, in Acts 2:38, i.e., submit to the rite in order to be forgiven. In both passages baptism is represented as having this importance or efficacy, because it is the sign of the repentance and faith, which are the conditions of this salvation.” See Hackett, 22:10.⁶

Regarding the phrase “calling on the name of the Lord,” this view would understand it to mean “to obey God by being baptized.” James D. Bales, a Professor of Christian Doctrine at Harding University (a Churches of Christ school) writes on the occurrence of this same phrase in Acts 2:21. Much of what he says about Acts 2:21 fits his interpretation of this phrase in 22:16:

A Christian, in invoking Christ, may call by praying. Stephen did so . . . The Christians were known as those “who call upon thy name” (Acts 9:14; 1 Cor. 1:2).

How do we know that Acts 2:21 does not mean that the alien sinner must pray through for salvation? The people there assembled did not understand it to mean that, nor did Peter explain it to mean that one

evangelical Multnomah Press, but recently Dallas Theological Seminary sent a copy of his book to those who contributed to the Seminary—a Seminary in which Lucado himself could not enroll since he disagrees with the Seminary’s Doctrinal Statement in matters pertaining to salvation and eschatology. In all fairness to both Multnomah Press and Dallas Seminary, it should be stated that while the book jacket declares Lucado’s denominational standing there is probably nothing in his well-written book which is unorthodox.

⁵ Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptism* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1951), 207.

⁶ Alexander Campbell, *Acts of the Apostles* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation, 1964), 149.

must pray through. The passage does not say so. When they asked what they must do (Acts 2:37) it indicated that they did not understand Acts 2:21 to mean that they could be saved through praying through at a mourner's bench. When Peter told them what to do he did not say "You already know what to do, for I have already told you you can be saved by calling upon the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21). He had to explain to them what it meant to call on the Lord. Instead of repeating verse 21, Peter told them to repent and be baptized in order to be forgiven. This makes it evident that calling on the name of the Lord meant to appeal to God, to depend on God, by submitting to His way of salvation. To call on the name of the Lord was equal to obeying the gospel . . . 2:21 is more general, while 2:38 is more specific as to what one must do in calling on the name of the Lord—for calling on His name was necessary to salvation. The alien sinner invokes the aid of Christ. Verse 38 explains how the calling is done.⁷

Thus, the Sacramentarian View, and many in the Churches of Christ, would argue that one is *not* saved by, or at the moment of, faith and praying the sinner's prayer. "Calling on the name of the Lord" was something done in baptism. Acts 22:16 and Acts 2:38 are interrelated.

The Churches of Christ emphasis upon the necessity for water baptism should not be understood to mean that the death of Christ was unimportant or unnecessary. George W. DeHoff tries to establish a relationship between Acts 22:16 and Rev 1:5 ("To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"). DeHoff writes:

All people who believe the Bible must believe that our sins are washed away by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. His blood was shed for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28). We have redemption through the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). There is no remission apart from the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22) . . . This raises the question "how are we washed in the blood of Christ?" To answer this question we need to find out what people did in the New Testament times in order to be washed in His blood. Saul of Tarsus was told to "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). From this verse we conclude that the sins of an alien sinner are washed away when he is baptized. One could not believe the Bible without believing this truth. This verse does not teach that water washes away sins. It merely says that sins are washed away when the person is baptized. It does not say what washes these sins away. It merely tells us when these sins are washed away—when we are baptized.

⁷James D. Bales, *The Hub of the Bible* (Rosemead, CA: Old Paths Book Club, 1960), 78, 88.

"Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). This verse answers for us the question of what washes away these sins—the blood of Christ. It does not state when the blood of Christ washes away sins. This is answered for us in Acts 22:16—our sins are washed away when we are scripturally baptized. Revelation 1:5 tells us what washes away our sins and Acts 22:16 tells us when.⁸

Thus, the forgiveness of sins, according to DeHoff, is the result of both the human and the divine. God washes away sins by the blood of Christ (the divine work) when one is water baptized (the human work).

Defense

There are several strengths to this position. First, its proponents accept a natural and straightforward reading of the passage. Here it may be difficult to fault them. This reading of the text is strengthened by their equally natural reading of Acts 2:38 and 1 Pet 3:21, passages which place baptism in a close relationship with forgiveness of sins and salvation.

Secondly, this position is probably correct in assuming that, in spite of the Damascus Road experience, Saul had yet to call upon the Lord and wash away his sins.

Thirdly, this position is also correct to see "calling on the name of the Lord" as something done at baptism. In this there is some agreement among evangelical scholars. For example F. F. Bruce interprets the act of "calling on the name of the Lord" as "being baptized 'in the name' (or 'with the name') of Jesus in the sense of 2:38; 10:48."⁹ George Raymond Beasley-Murray, a Baptist, in his *magnum opus*, *Baptism in the New Testament*, writes:

The name of the Lord Jesus is *confessed* by the baptismal candidate and is *invoked* by him. Just as baptism is an occasion of confessing faith in Christ and is itself confession, so it is the occasion of prayer by the baptizand and is itself an act of prayer. . . . He that in baptism "calls on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16) undergoes baptism in a prayerful spirit; it becomes the supreme occasion and even vehicle of his yielding to the Lord Christ. Here is an aspect of baptism to which justice has not been done in the Church since its early days; baptism as a means

⁸ George W. DeHoff, "The Washing Away of Sins," *Firm Foundation* (June 19, 1984): 10.

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 418.

of prayer for acceptance with God and for full salvation from God, an "instrument of surrender" of a man formerly at enmity with God but who has learned of the great Reconciliation, lays down his arms in total capitulation and enters into peace.¹⁰ (Emphasis is Beasley-Murray's.)

Rudolf Stier, a commentator of a former generation, stated: "All three expressions, baptism, washing away, calling, denote one and together the same thing."¹¹

Deficiencies

This position, however, also has some serious weaknesses.

First, this position teaches a regeneration by faith and works. This is a contradiction to the Gospel of John, which proclaims faith as the sole prerequisite to receiving eternal life. Ephesians 2:8-9 also prohibits a salvation of faith *and* works. Therefore, while this position does have strong grammatical support for its interpretation of 22:16, it has weak theological support.

Secondly, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Paul was regenerated on the Damascus Road. Stanley Toussaint presents several factors which suggest that Paul was regenerated there:

(1) The Gospel was presented to him directly by Christ (Gal. 1:11-12), not later by Ananias. (2) Already (Acts 22:10) Paul said he had submitted in faith to Christ. (3) Paul was filled with the Spirit *before* his baptism with water (9:17-18).¹²

Given the unusual circumstances of the Damascus Road experience, it is difficult to reject the idea that Paul did believe then, and, therefore, did receive eternal life (as per the Gospel of John). While Toussaint holds that Paul was filled with the Spirit before he was baptized with water, one should note that 9:17-18 does not explicitly say so. It could be that, like the crowd at Pentecost, Saul did not receive the Holy Spirit until he was baptized. An instance like this should not be considered unlikely, given the transition between the two dispensations in the beginning of Acts and the case of OT saints who were also regenerated without possessing the Holy Spirit (cf. John 7:37-39). Thus, Saul's reception of

¹⁰ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 101-102.

¹¹ Rudolf Stier, *The Words of the Apostles* (Reprint [Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers Inc., 1981]), 380.

¹² Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, NT Edition, ed. by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 418.

the Spirit and the forgiveness of his sins would occur at his baptism and in accordance with Acts 2:38, even though he was regenerated on the Damascus Road.

Thirdly, this position fails to notice the unique setting of Acts 22:16. Luke records the conversion account of Saul three times in Acts (Acts 9, 22, 26). However, only once did Luke relate Ananias's demand for baptism with the washing away of sins. It is significant that the single occurrence was before a *Jewish* crowd in the Temple area in Jerusalem. Accordingly, the same general audience which heard Acts 2:38 also heard Acts 22:16. This writer failed to find a single defender of this view who produced a passage in Acts which addresses Gentiles with a demand to be baptized with the specific purpose of receiving the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Gentile Cornelius, in Acts 10, is promised the forgiveness of sins upon *believing*, and receives the Holy Spirit *before* he was baptized. There is nothing in Acts to contradict this as a pattern for Gentiles.¹³ Neither Acts 2:38 nor 22:16 is binding today. They are unique to the first century Palestinian. Only in this way can we take 2:38 and 22:16 at face value and yet avoid contradicting the Gospel of justification by grace through faith alone.

II. The Grammatical View

Definition

A second option for Acts 22:16 may be called "The Grammatical View." This view holds that Ananias's command to Saul to wash away his sins is not grammatically related to the command to be baptized. Thus the actual washing away of Saul's sins came the moment he called in faith upon the Lord's name. This position sees baptism as a symbolic act, which depicts the cleansing. The calling upon the name, not the baptism, effected the washing away of Saul's sins.

¹³ At first glance the case of the Ephesian believers in Acts 19:1-7 appears to be a problem. However, considering the following, it appears to fit the distinction between Palestinians and Gentiles quite well: (1) Paul assumes that, being far from Palestine in the Gentile metropolis of Ephesus, these disciples would fit the pattern of Cornelius; i.e., they should have received regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith. (2) The fact that they did not know anything about the Spirit causes Paul to probe more deeply, only to learn that these disciples had been exposed to the ministry of John the Baptist and thus come under the conditions of Acts 2:38. (3) Upon baptizing them again, Paul lays his hands upon them and they receive the Holy Spirit. (4) The Jewishness of this group is not lost on Luke, who points out that there were in all about twelve men, a number significant for Israel. This is not a contradiction of Paul's terms for salvation to the Gentiles.

Defenders

This view is held by such Bible scholars as James D. G. Dunn, Fritz Rienecker, and Stanley D. Toussaint.¹⁴

Defense

The argument that one is saved by “calling on the name of the Lord” rather than by water baptism is based primarily upon a grammatical argument—that the usual usage of an aorist participle indicates action preceding that of the main verb.¹⁵ In this case, the aorist participle “calling” (*epikalesamenos*) would be translated “having called upon the name of the Lord, wash away your sins.” Thus, one’s sins are washed away, not by water baptism, but by the act of calling on the name of the Lord, an act usually interpreted to mean the believing or praying of the sinner for salvation. Dunn presents his evidence for this position with close attention to the grammar:

The *epikalesamenos to onoma autou* goes principally with the *apolousai tas hamartias sou*, as the balance of the sentence also suggests—*anastas . . . baptisai, apolousai, epikalesamenos*. Acts 22:16 shows that *baptizein* and *apolouein* are not synonyms. Nor is there any requirement in the text itself to take the two actions described by these verbs as causally related = be baptized and (in and by that action) have your sins washed away. They are coordinate actions, related through

¹⁴James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 97–98; Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 2 volumes (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 1:324; see Toussaint, “Acts,” 418.

In studying the various translations of Acts 22:16, I was surprised to find William Barclay rearranging the wording of the passage so that a grammatical interpretation was impossible: “‘And now, why delay? Up! Call on his name, be baptized, and wash away your sins!’” William Barclay, *The New Testament: A New Translation*, volume one (New York: Collins, 1968), 244.

¹⁵See Toussaint “Acts,” 418. Eugene Van Ness Goetchius (*The Language of the New Testament* [New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1965], 188–90) points out that there are three usages of the aorist participle. It may refer to (1) action antecedent to that of the main verb; (2) action simultaneous to the main verb; and (3) action subsequent to that of the main verb. The position is, therefore, based upon a valid option. One question which has been asked concerns how this participle is related to the two main verbs. In *A Translator’s Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: United Bible Society, 1972), Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida write of Acts 22:16: “The participle *by calling on his name* is an aorist participle and must be taken as action prior to the main verb or verbs with which it is connected. In the present context it is difficult to know if this participle is connected with both verbs, *be baptized* and *have your sins washed away*, or only with the latter of the two. Most translations are about as ambiguous as the Greek here” (425–26).

the *epikalesamenos ktl* [etc.]. In fact, we have once again the three elements of conversion-initiation—water-baptism, the Spirit's cleansing, and the individual's appeal of faith.¹⁶

Deficiencies

A number of remarks may be made about Dunn's defense. First, his statement that *baptizein* and *apolouein* are not causally related may be debated. It appears natural, when dealing with two imperatives, to take the second one as subordinate to the first. For example, Nathanael responds to Philip's prejudice with "Come and see" (John 1:46). Likewise, *apolousai* is subordinate to *baptisai*, and not independent.

Secondly, it would be natural to see a relationship between "be baptized" and "wash away" in that both imply the use of water. Moreover, baptism, as a cleansing act, does have some historical support. Averbeck observes:

Jdt [Judith] 12:7 and Sir [Sirach, i.e. Ecclesiasticus] 31 (34):25 are interesting in that *baptizō* is used in reference to cleansing from levitical impurity. . . . Therefore, though *baptizō* is not used in the canonical OT for cleansing from levitical impurity, it seems clear from these two texts that such was not the case later on. The association of this verb with this type of impurity may well have made itself felt in certain passages in the NT (for example, Acts 22:16).

The story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 is well-known. V 14 reads: "So he went down and *dipped* (*ebaptisato*) himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. . . ." The implications of this text for the issue of mode are obvious. However, there is another important point here. The verb *tābēr*, "to be clean," is regularly used to describe levitical purity and purification (see Lev. 14:20 and many other examples there and elsewhere). In fact, there is no instance where the Qal stem of this verb is used in the sense of physical cleanliness. Thus, it seems that its use in 2 Kgs. 5:14 must indicate some kind of socio-religious purity. Again, the significance of such an observation can only be appreciated when the NT text is approached with this in mind.¹⁷

One should note that "ritual cleansing" may not be identical with "symbolic cleansing." The priests did not wash because they were clean, but became clean because of the washing (Lev 8:6; 16:4; etc., see also Ezek

¹⁶ See Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 98.

¹⁷ Richard E. Averbeck, "The Focus of Baptism in the New Testament," *Grace Theological Journal* (Fall 1981): 271-72. The Greek and Hebrew words have been transliterated. Ed.

36:25). The same could be true of Saul. His sins were washed away (i.e., he was cleansed) at his water baptism. In light of Averbeck's statement, it is also possible to understand the purpose of Saul's baptism to be for fellowship with God rather than for salvation (cf. John 13:10; 1 John 1:9).

Thirdly, Dunn's interpretation leaves the command for baptism unexplained. By separating the two imperatives *baptisai* and *apolousai*, Saul is told to be baptized, but he is not told why. It would seem natural to understand "washing" as the reason for and significance of the demand for water baptism.

Fourthly, Toussaint, taking a slightly different approach to 22:16 than does Dunn, sees Saul as coming to salvation on the Damascus Road (where he calls on the name of the Lord), while his baptism symbolically shows that his sins had been washed away.¹⁸ However, the text does not indicate that baptism is a "symbol." Evangelical scholar G. R. Beasley-Murray declares:

In the light of this apostolic teaching, modern confessional watchwords about baptism like "declarative," "symbolic," "self-operative," etc., are inadequate. In Acts and the epistles baptism appears as a divine-human event, even as the "turning" to God, with which it is invariably associated, is a divine-human event.¹⁹

The "Grammatical View" is theologically correct in separating baptism from regeneration. However, it is weak in its treatment of the text of Acts 22:16. The "washing away" of sins cannot be separated from water baptism.

III. The Ultra-Dispensational View

Definition

The ultra-dispensational view understands Acts 22:16 as having no relationship or bearing whatever on today's practices of water baptism. The Church was not even in existence at the start of the Book of Acts and did not come into existence until, *at least*, the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10 (an event that occurred after the conversion of Saul).

¹⁸ See Toussaint, "Acts," 418.

¹⁹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Baptizō," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 1:148.

Defenders

This view has been defended by men like Charles F. Baker, E. W. Bullinger, A. E. Knoch, and Charles Welch.²⁰

Defense

Regarding Acts 22:16, the ultra-dispensationalists are usually silent or repeat their comments on Acts 2:38. Charles F. Baker writes:

As soon as Ananias had laid his hands on Saul, scales or incrustations fell from his eyes and he received his sight. Saul was then baptized. Although Saul's conversion was not the result of human preaching, but of divine intervention, it is evident that he was saved under the prevailing Kingdom program of baptism for the remission of sins. Ananias told him, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). He told Saul what he would have told any other Jew. Baptism under the Kingdom gospel was a washing or cleansing ceremony, the same as the many baptisms of the Old Testament (Heb 9:10). But we never read of Paul telling his Gentile converts to be baptized in order to wash away their sins, even while he was practicing baptism during the Transition period. Baptism was not a part of his commission (1 Cor. 1:17). After the Transition, Paul recognized only one baptism, that done by the Spirit (Eph. 4:5; 1 Cor. 12:13).²¹

Deficiencies

As attractive as this view may at first appear to some, it requires two different ways for regeneration—one for the Jew and another for the Gentile. The Gospel of John and Paul in Romans 4 show that regeneration and justification always occurred at the moment of faith. The "ultra-dispensational" view also believes that the Church, which is the body of Christ, is not found in Acts. Arguments against this position were stated in my previous article on Acts 2:38 and are clearly articulated

²⁰ Charles F. Baker, *Understanding the Books of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College Publications, 1981); E. W. Bullinger, *How to Enjoy the Bible* (London: The Lamp Press, n.d.); A. E. Knoch, *On Baptism* (Los Angeles: Concordant Publishing Concern, n.d.); and *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament* (Saugus, CA: Concordant Publishing Concern, 1968); Charles H. Welch, *An Alphabetical Analysis* (Surrey, England: Berean Publications Trust, 1955), 1:102-109.

²¹ Charles F. Baker, *Understanding the Book of Acts*, (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College Publications, 1981), 53. Baker is a graduate of Dallas Seminary, class of 1933. He was deeply influenced by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, although he went further than Chafer on this issue.

in Charles C. Ryrie's excellent book on the subject, *Dispensationalism Today*.²²

The "ultra-dispensational" view, therefore, is not without serious theological problems.

IV. The Transitional View

Definition

Those who hold this view believe that the Church, the Body of Christ, was established on the day of Pentecost (unlike the ultra-dispensational view) and that regeneration occurs at the moment of faith (as per the Gospel of John). However, for certain Palestinian Jews, exposed to the ministry of John the Baptist and also having an extra degree of guilt for actually consenting to the murder of our Lord, the extra measure of public identification with the Lord in water baptism was the condition upon which they received the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Defenders

This view has been espoused by S. Craig Glickman and Zane C. Hodges.²³

Defense

Although not widely known, this interpretation offers some interesting insights concerning our passage.

First, this view understands Saul's experience to have some parallel to the experience of the Pentecostal audience of Acts 2. Both were regenerated by faith alone before they were baptized. The Pentecostal audience indicated their faith by their question in 2:37 ("What shall we do?"),²⁴ and Saul believed on the Damascus Road. However, both were,

²² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965). This is a classic and a must for those who are dispensational. I encourage everyone to read it.

²³ Steven Craig Glickman, unpublished class notes in 903 Soteriology and Evangelism (Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall, 1982); Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1981); and unpublished class notes for "Acts of the Apostles," NT 227 (Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall, 1984).

²⁴ In my previous article, on Acts 2:38, I commented that one of the criticisms directed at the Transitional View is the assumption that the question of 2:37 indicates that faith was already present in some of Peter's audience. Since writing that article I found these words from the pen of, in my opinion, the prince of all theologians. Commenting on Rom 10:17 ("So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"), Dr. Lewis

in spite of their faith and regeneration, unforgiven! For this reason they both needed to be water baptized. Hodges comments:

Paul, of course, had come to faith on the Damascus road and had then and there received the gift of life that is promised to faith (John 3:16 and many others). But forgiveness—i.e., the cleansing which makes intimate relations with God a moral possibility—was withheld from him until he was baptized. This is as clear as it could be from this verse, taken at face value. Moreover, it is precisely in line with the natural interpretation of Acts 2:38. From which it is necessary to conclude that those partaking of Jerusalem's and the nation's guilt in the rejection of Christ could not enter into an acceptable communion with the One they had rejected, until they acknowledged Him in the act of baptism.²⁵

Secondly, this view sees the act of "calling on the name of the Lord" as a post-regeneration experience. This is based on Rom 10:13-15 which indicates that the act of calling on the name of the Lord occurs *after* faith. If the order of the events in Romans 10 is reversed into chronological order this becomes evident:

- (1) Sending of the preacher (v 15b)
- (2) Preaching (v 15a)
- (3) Hearing (v 14b)
- (4) Believing (v 14a)
- (5) Calling on the name of the Lord (v 13).²⁶

Accordingly, to "call on the name of the Lord" is not the same as believing or praying for salvation, but it is something done after regenerating faith. The act of "calling on the name of the Lord" has an interesting history and, according to Hodges, is something characteristic of believers:

Paul before Festus "appealed to Caesar" (Acts 25: 11). The verb is the same as here, *epikaleomai*. (The underlying Hebrew verb *qārā'* also had a courtroom usage, cf. Isa. 59:4 and see *BDB*, 895.) Paul thus "called

Sperry Chafer writes: "As certainly as this is true, it is the preacher's part to expect that souls will be saved *while* he is preaching, rather than after he has concluded his message and given the unsaved something to do that they may be saved. There is a public testimony on the part of those who are saved; but this should not be confused with the simple requirement that the lost may be saved by personal faith in Christ as Savior." (*Systematic Theology*, [Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1948], 3:224). (The emphasis is Chafer's.)

²⁵ Hodges, "Acts," 141.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

upon" Caesar. This was a privilege granted to citizens of Rome, but not to mere provincials. Christians became known as those who "called upon" the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 9:14, 21; 1 Cor. 1:2). Christians recognized a higher authority than Caesar and a greater throne than his. They were citizens of a heavenly city; and just as the Roman citizen appealed over the head of subordinate judges, so Christians appealed over the head of every earthly judge to the Judge of all. Their Lord and Savior sat on the right hand of the majesty on high. (Likewise, we, in time of need, can appeal above earthly justice, or above the circumstances of life; we call on the name of the Lord.) Stephen (Acts 7:59) is the first illustration of this privilege. Condemned and executed by a court of earth, he appealed for acceptance in the presence of a higher Judge. . . Thus, "calling on the name of the Lord" is viewed in the relevant passages in Acts as a characteristic activity of believers, perhaps beginning at baptism (cf. 22:16). It is people who do this that will be "saved" from the impending catastrophes.²⁷

Therefore, to call upon the name of the Lord may be a prayer which one makes after regeneration or even at the time of one's baptism. To call on the name of the Lord is not the act that makes one born again. Faith, not calling, is needed for regeneration.

Thirdly, this view understands 22:16 in light of 2:38. As stated earlier in this article, the conversion of Saul is recorded by Luke on three occasions (Acts 9, 22, and 26). However, only once, in 22:16, do we learn of the command to be baptized and wash away sins. It is perhaps due to Luke's artistry as a writer that he waited until this context to include that command in the narrative. If Acts 2:38 has special relevance to those in Palestine, then it is not surprising that such terms are not mentioned on any of Paul's missionary journeys. In fact, no Gentile is ever explicitly told to be baptized for the remission of sins.²⁸ However, when Paul is back in Jerusalem, addressing the same general crowd who received the Pentecostal commands of 2:38, he repeats the same terms. This fits the pattern of the Transitional View that Palestinians shared in a special guilt for having crucified their Messiah and needed to change their behavior (i.e., repent and be baptized) in order to receive both the forgiveness of

²⁷ Ibid., 10-11.

²⁸ Ibid., 58. Hodges notes: "At Caesarea, the Holy Spirit is bestowed on believing Gentiles, not yet baptized. Cf. 10:44-48. No Gentile exceptions are noted by Luke in the remainder of Acts, so that in Cornelius Luke no doubt sees normative Gentile experience."

their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.²⁹ Thus, 22:16 is consistent with the Palestinian context of Acts 2:38, but not with the Gentile requirement of faith (Acts 10:43; 16:31).

Deficiencies

Since this view has not had a wide reading, its deficiencies are not found in the commentary tradition (but then again, *nothing much* is listed in the commentary tradition on this thorny passage!) Some will object to this view that it should at least be viewed with suspicion, and others will posit that it should be rejected entirely because it is “new.” However, as we have attempted to demonstrate in this article, to reject this view leaves us with an old, unsolved problem. *Any* solution to this verse is going to be new because the old views do not answer this particular problem.

However, the strengths of this position which particularly appeal to me, coming as I do from a Churches of Christ background, are considerable. Like the Sacramentarian View, this view lets the grammar of the verse stand at face value. However, unlike the Sacramentarian View, this view avoids the serious objection that such a reading of the text makes regeneration a matter of faith plus works. By noting that forgiveness of sins is not necessarily a synonym for regeneration or justification, this interpretation is able to maintain consistency with the Gospel of John, Romans 4, and Eph 2:1-10.

Also, this position has additional strength in that it attempts to treat these passages in light of the structure and transitional nature of the entire Book of Acts, with special attention to where these commands are made. In this it shows a consistency in both theological and literary structure.

I have found in fundamentalism/evangelicalism a kind of patchwork consistency in answers treating Acts 2:38, 22:16, and 1 Pet 3:21. One verse is handled one way, a second verse is handled a different way, and a third verse is handled in yet another way. But there is no “lining up the ducks in a row.” In baseball language, I feel that for the most part we in evangelicalism, knowing that we cannot hit a home run—i.e., handle clearly and cleanly the subject of salvation and water baptism as found

²⁹The Churches of Christ assume that Acts 2:38 is *normative* for the entire book of Acts. This misses the transitional nature of Acts. Acts 2 is the pattern for Palestinians to receive the gifts of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. Cornelius (Acts 10) is the pattern for the Gentiles and those living outside the land of Palestine and never exposed to the ministries of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus. For the case of the Ephesian disciples of John, see fn. 13.

in these verses—are content merely to hit foul balls until the conversation moves to a subject we can really talk about! This was frustrating to me as I was sincerely seeking the truth when in the Churches of Christ; it is still frustrating to me after having left. Furthermore, we shouldn't expect people who hold the Churches of Christ view to switch very readily to our view of salvation by grace through faith alone when they can handle these passages in a consistent, straightforward manner, while our interpretations often are in such a state of disarray!

In short, this view has all of the strengths of the Sacramentarian View, yet avoids its weaknesses.

V. Conclusion

In this article we have briefly examined Acts 22:16. While little has been written on this passage within the commentary tradition, it has been possible to examine four basic views.

First, the *Sacramentarian View* was examined. It has some grammatical strength, but a critical theological weakness.

Secondly, the *Grammatical View* was examined. It suffers because it takes the grammar of 22:16 a bit "woodenly," and misunderstands the nature of "calling on the name of the Lord." However, it does attempt to maintain justification by faith.

Thirdly, we examined the *Ultra-Dispensational View*. It has grammatical strength, but a theological weakness, leaving itself open to the charge of teaching two ways of salvation—faith alone for the Gentiles, but faith plus water baptism for the Jews.

Lastly, we examined the position held by this writer, the *Transitional View*. It attempts to take the grammar at face value and maintain justification by faith by recognizing three things:

- (1) That the forgiveness of sins is not in all circumstances a synonym for justification or regeneration.
- (2) That calling on the name of the Lord is something a believer, already regenerated, does.
- (3) That Acts 2:38 and 22:16 are of one cloth, each reflecting a unique situation which is not duplicated today and which does not affect the message which *Paul himself* preached to the Gentiles: that justification is by grace alone through faith alone.

A Voice from the Past:

THE GRACE OF GIVING*

W. H. Griffith Thomas¹

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7).

I. Introduction

What a combination of doctrine and practice there should always be in the life of a Christian! Yet sometimes words and actions do not agree with professed principles. St. Paul soars aloft in his marvelous unfolding of the resurrection doctrine in the fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, and then stoops to "Now concerning the collection for the saints," in the beginning of the sixteenth chapter. And in this ninth

* This article was compiled from the author's sermon notes after his death. It was originally published in *The Evangelical Christian*, a Canadian journal. None of Dr. Thomas's own words have been changed, but the subdivisions with titles have been added for today's visually-oriented readership. Biblical quotations have been updated from the King James to the New King James for today's readers. Since the author's only offspring, Winifred Griffith Thomas Gillespie, worked on the English styling of this version, the editor is sure that her father would not mind this change of versions. As (lucky!) thirteenth proofreader of the first edition of the NKJV NT, she was the only one whose eagle eye noticed that we had capitalized a *He* referring to King Herod! Mrs. Gillespie, who is a member of the Editorial Board of *JOTGES*, also wrote the footnotes to this article to explain British terms to us benighted "Colonials"! Ed.

¹ My father was born in 1861 at Oswestry, Shropshire, in England. He obtained his bachelor's degree from King's College, London, while acting as lay reader before his ordination as a deacon in the Church of England. After a curacy at an Oxford church while working for his master's degree at the University, he was appointed Vicar of St. Paul's Church, Portman Square in London's West End. Here he spent nine years, and then five years more on the faculty of Wycliffe College, Toronto. In 1919 we moved to Philadelphia, whence he carried on an extensive Bible Conference ministry, thus becoming well-known in both the U.S. and Canada. When urged to consider a return to pastoral work in England, my father would often reply with a smile, "But over here a continent is my parish." He was a prime mover in the founding of Dallas Theological Seminary, and was to have been the Professor of Systematic Theology. Death cut short these plans just before the opening of the school in 1924. However, his extensive library became the nucleus of the new institution's library. His writings, some of which I have been privileged to edit since his death, have contributed his insights to Dallas faculty, students, and many other Christians around the world.

I am certain that my father would have felt the warmest sympathy for the great purpose of the Grace Evangelical Society. Indeed, one of his recently republished books bears the word *Grace* in its title (*Grace and Power*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984).

chapter of his Second Epistle we have an amplification of his exhortation to give, which ends with "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

II. Principles of Giving under Grace

Universal Giving

Paul says this giving should be *Universal*—"each one," and so every Christian's purse is involved, not by command of the Apostle but rather by his advice, that genuine love to Christ may be demonstrated and that abundant joy shall produce from the overflowing heart abundant benevolence, as was the case of the poor Macedonians.

Systematic Giving

Then, giving should be *Systematic*, not haphazardly, not impulsively, but according to principle. There is need of calculation and care in one's giving that holiness of life may be expressed in practical conduct. A Scottish congregation whose members were poor, pledged itself to give one penny² a day for missions on six days of the week, and on the remaining day to go without meat and give sixpence,³ thus contributing one shilling⁴ a week to missionary work.

Regular Giving

Giving should also be *Regular*. There must be no forgetting, because to give constantly adds to the value. A member of my congregation in London was in the habit of placing a sovereign⁵ on the offertory plate every Sunday. When unable to be at church through failing health, for she was past ninety years of age, an envelope containing a sovereign was always left in the vestry to be added to the collection. The dependability of the offering enhanced its worth. The Apostle advises—"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper." This is regularity.

Proportionate Giving

Then *Proportionate* giving is advocated. Let there be mathematical calculation. The NT supplies us with three principles:

² A large British copper coin formerly worth two American cents (or "pennies").

³ The sum of six British pennies, sixpence is now an obsolete coin.

⁴ A former coin of the United Kingdom.

⁵ A former British gold coin worth about \$100 in *today's* dollars.

According to Possession

In 2 Cor 8:12, giving is to be according to *Possession*—"what one *has*." If a man has much, he should give plenty and give it gladly and freely. If he has little, there is all the more opportunity for "cheerful" giving.

According to Power

The second principle is according to *Power*, as we see in 2 Cor 8:3, where it is recorded of the poor Macedonian Church that "beyond their ability, they were freely willing."

According to Prosperity

The third principle of giving is to be in accordance with *Prosperity*—"as he may prosper" (1 Cor. 16:2). Therefore, the amount can be variable. Yes, if my prosperity has been greater this year I will gladly give more; if prosperity has passed me by I will sadly lessen my gifts, but, when I do this, let me not forget the widow's mites,⁶ which were "all the livelihood that she had." What did the Jew of old give? He gave a tithe of all, and in addition there were freewill offerings and special gifts. It has been computed that he gave about one-fifth, and frequently one-fourth, out of his prosperity.

Hearty Giving

After considering Universal, Systematic, Regular and Proportionate Giving, we next observe that liberality should be *Hearty*. It must not be of grief or compulsion or, as the Apostle puts it, "grudgingly or of necessity." What dignity is given to benevolence when we remember that He who owns all cares about our gifts! "God *loves* a cheerful giver"! The Greek word⁷ here translated "cheerful" is the one from which our English word "hilarious" is derived, and its use here suggests a spontaneous outburst of sheer joy in the service of giving.

A story is told of a Liverpool merchant upon whom a Christian worker called to solicit money.

Ten shillings was the amount given with the remark, "I am sorry it is so little—I have the heart but not the money."

A year afterwards, hearing that the merchant had fallen heir to half a million, the Christian worker again presented himself to plead for the cause he had in hand. He was met by a refusal to give anything at all,

⁶ A very ancient coin (Gk. *lepton*). The name "mite" is often used in popular speech for a minimal contribution to a cause. N.B.: The widow gave two of them—all she had to live on.

⁷ The Greek word *hilaros* means cheerful, glad, or gracious.

which looked as though the merchant now had the money but not the heart!

Let us each ask himself or herself, "What am I doing to make myself a hearty giver? Am I looking at my accounts to see how much I can give? Still more, am I examining God's Word to see what He expects of me?"

This chapter, a verse of which we have been considering, ends with the words, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift," which reminds us to look at the Cross if we would get even a faint conception of what that "indescribable gift" involved.

"I don't like your way of saying so much about giving," said a member of my congregation to me.

To this I replied, "Why should you be concerned about what I say if you are giving what you ought to give?"

III. Conclusion

In conclusion, let us consider seven ways of giving.

Careless Giving

First, there is the *Careless* way which pays no regard to the why and wherefore.

Impulsive Giving

Then there is the *Impulsive* way which is moved according to feelings, is irregular and uncertain.

Lazy Giving

The *Lazy* way gives because it is less trouble to give to a cause than to think out and explain a reason for not giving.

Self-denying Giving

The *Self-denying* way is good, as it saves the cost of luxuries that can be done without. Doubtless, too, there are those who deny themselves necessities in order to give.

Systematic Giving

The *Systematic* way of giving is excellent. Most Christians who tithe decide that one-tenth is the minimum and often go over this amount in their benefactions. There are those who give to the Lord's work one-fifth or one-third. Perhaps these are the ones who look at their check books with regard to their balance at the bank and who decide that in their cases one-tenth does not equal the giving of their less affluent friends.

Equal Giving

The *Equal* way of giving says, "I will give to God's work as much as I spend on myself." This plan has been carried out by prosperous Christian businessmen.

Heroic Giving

The *Heroic* plan of giving limits expenses to a certain sum and gives the rest to God. "I have put into bonds and securities sufficient to leave my family not penniless," said a certain man noted for his large benevolences, "And now I am going to give to God's work all that is left after expenses."

*"Give, give, be always giving,
Who gives not is not living,
The more we give, the more we live.*

*"Give strength, give thought, give deeds, give pelf,⁸
Give love, give tears and give thyself
The more we give, the more we live."*

⁸ An old English word for money, often used with contempt or, as here, to provide rhyme in verse.

Grace in the Arts:

SHAKESPEARE, THE BIBLE, AND GRACE

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I. Introduction

In college I had a dear, elderly literature teacher who tried to “save” as many of her favorite writers of English and American literature as she could. Since they had nearly all “gone on before,” it was only a salvation in her own mind (and in as many students’ minds as she convinced).

Since the British authors were generally at least nominal members of the Church of England or the Kirk of Scotland, both establishments having orthodox creeds, she did fairly well there. Of course some great writers truly *were* believers (e.g., Bunyan, Donne, Milton, Herbert, Cowper, Elizabeth Barrett Browning).

In America she did well with Hawthorne, Whittier, Bryant, and some others, but gave up on Twain and Hemingway (in spite of their conservative Protestant roots).

But what did she do with the greatest writer in the English language, the one who wrote partly at the same time that the Authorized King James Version was *a-preparing* (1604-1611)? This writer sounds so much like the King James Bible that there used to be a game based on trying to correctly label quotations as either from the Bible or from—you guessed it—William Shakespeare.¹

One can only hope that the Bard was a believer; this article makes no final assessments one way or the other on that question.

What I wish to show is the great influence of the Bible on England’s greatest dramatist, and also the amount of *biblically gracious lines and attitudes* that show up in his work.² To do this I have divided the subject into the three subdivisions suggested by our title.

¹ I do not remember how she handled Shakespeare’s spiritual credentials.

² Having read some of the fascinating theories of those who feel “Shakespeare,” the glover’s son from Stratford-on-Avon, *couldn’t* have written such masterpieces, I must confess that I am just simple enough to believe that he did so.

II. Shakespeare

In a recent New York Times article, "Brush Up Your Shakespeare," Gary Taylor decries the fact that "Shakespeare's own good words are planted in fewer memories than they once were: he has become, like caviar, familiar to the general but arcane in the ranks."³

There was a time when our Anglo-American forebears knew their Shakespeare and were better speakers and writers of our mother tongue for it. Taylor reminds us:

In 1752 William Dodd published the first of many anthologies of "The Beauties of Shakespeare"; for the next century and a half the quoting of Shakespeare was pandemic. The great Romantic essayist William Hazlitt quoted Shakespeare more than 2,400 times in his published prose; William Blake could label an image "Jocund Day" or "Fiery Pegasus" and expect the two words to recall their Shakespearean context. In 1831 Alexis de Tocqueville, visiting America, reported that "there is hardly a pioneer's hut which does not contain a few odd volumes of Shakespeare," and those volumes were obviously read, not just displayed on log coffee tables.⁴

To do our part to bring some of the "caviar"⁵ from the general to the ranks of *JOTGES* readers, in the last section of this article I have chosen quite a few Shakespearean quotations that touch on topics close to most of our readers' hearts. These I have arranged topically.

But before we read those very varied selections, a discussion of the Bard's relationship to the Book that inspired them is in order.

III. The Bible

Books have been written showing that Shakespeare was influenced by several versions of the Bible. As Will was growing up, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, and the Bishops' Bible, would all have been available.

Some of Shakespeare's Bible knowledge no doubt came from *The Book of Common Prayer*, which includes the complete Coverdale Psalter and daily lessons from the Epistles and Gospels.

Since all of these scriptural sources were freely available in Shakespeare's England, to which version or versions did he turn?

³ Gary Taylor, "Brush Up Your Shakespeare," *The New York Times Book Review* (July 22, 1990): 28. The author is the general editor of the Oxford University Press edition of Shakespeare's complete works and the author of "Reinventing Shakespeare."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ I would prefer Yorkshire pudding, thank you very much.

There is a tradition that John Shakespeare, Will's father, was a "recusant," that is, one who refused to go along with the Established (Anglican) Church.

Some say he was a Puritan,⁶ and in support of this is the fact that Puritan influences prevailed later in the Shakespeare family. If this is true it would explain Shakespeare's background. Above all else, the Puritans taught their children to read and love God's Word.

Another tradition was that John was "a Roman recusant."⁷ Support for this is the fact that the Arden family was Roman Catholic (Mary, Will's mother, was an Arden). If, however, the poet's family had been Roman Catholic it is most unlikely that Will would have had much Bible background. In those days the Bible in the language of the people was viewed by Rome with great suspicion as the chief cause of the Reformation, which, quite frankly, it was.

Against the theory that Will was raised a Roman Catholic is his ignorance of the Latin Vulgate, the official version of Rome:

Unlike Bacon, who quoted the Vulgate frequently, sometimes inaccurately, Shakespeare did not use the Vulgate and in *King Henry V.* he showed that he was ignorant of one of its most elementary features.⁸

The official Catholic version in *English*,⁹ prepared in France by exiled Jesuit scholars, does not seem to have been used by Will either:

There is nothing in his words to show that he had any acquaintance with the authorized Roman Catholic versions, viz. the Rheims New Testament of 1582, and the Douay of 1609-10.¹⁰

Concerning Shakespeare's knowledge of the Authorized Version, this version appeared very late in his life. He was already forty-six years old

⁶ Maintained by Dr. Carter (*Shakespeare: Puritan and Recusant*).

⁷ Maintained by Dr. Smart (*Shakespeare: Truth and Tradition*). Noble says that "neither Dr. Smart nor Dr. Carter can be said to have established his case with any degree of conclusiveness" (Richard Noble, *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge* [Reprint. New York: Octagon Books, 1970], 49).

⁸ Noble, *Biblical Knowledge*, 87.

⁹ The Roman Catholic hierarchy commissioned an *English* Catholic Bible to counteract the popularity of the Geneva Bible (with its very Protestant footnotes) even among Catholics. The NT came out in 1582, fifty-seven years after the first printed Protestant NT (Tyndale, 1525/26). It is a very latinized version, made from the Vulgate, and generally not very acceptable in style. For example, the literal rendering "The Lord is my shepherd" comes out "The Lord rules me" (cf. Lat. *Dominus regit me*). Later editions of the Douay-Rheims were highly edited toward the Authorized Version.

¹⁰ Ronald Bayne, "Religion," in *Shakespeare's England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 1:74, n. 1.

when the Authorized, or King James Version of the Bible was first published (February of 1611).¹¹ Since he only lived five years after 1611 it cannot be that he consciously imbibed the style of the Authorized Version.

Interestingly enough, it now appears that some of *Shakespeare's style* may have influenced at least the King James translation of the Psalms. Shakespeare was recognized as an outstanding poet and dramatist in his own lifetime, and rightly so.

A few years ago the British Broadcasting Corporation aired a fascinating story that may confirm a Shakespearean contribution. To show their appreciation for the Bard's alleged contribution to the English style of the AV, some of the translators (and/or editors) built in a little linguistic honorarium for England's greatest poet.

If you turn to Psalm 46 in the King James Version¹² and count down forty-six words, you will find that the forty-sixth word is *shake*:

- GOD is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore will not we fear,
Though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into
the midst of the sea;
- 3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains **shake** with the swelling thereof.

Now, count up from the end of the psalm and you will see that the forty-sixth word is *spear*. Doubtless the word that could be so rendered had to be roughly in that general vicinity to make it work out. The Hebrew word for *shake* (*rā'ash*) could have been rendered variously.¹³

Consider: This is the *forty-sixth psalm*, Shakespeare was *forty-six years old* when the AV was first published, *shake* is *forty-six words down* from the start of the psalm, and *spear* is *forty-six words up* from the bottom—*four forty-sixes*. The probability of that happening by chance is extremely slight.¹⁴

¹¹ Shakespeare turned forty-seven in April of 1611.

¹² The NKJV kept the same structure in updating the text, although the earliest printings ruined it by one word.

¹³ E.g., NASB and NIV, "quake"; Living Bible, "tremble"; Jerusalem Bible, "tottering."

¹⁴ Noble, however, presents these same facts as one of the "coincidences in Elizabethan writings" that "may amuse a number of people." Gerald Balfour, later Lord Balfour, once "mentioned that some industrious student" had made this "extraordinary discovery" (*Biblical Knowledge*, 56-57).

All of the translators of the Authorized Version were members of the Established Church. If Shakespeare was asked to do some "English styling" on this masterpiece, that would clinch it that he was not a Roman Catholic. Ronald Bayne, himself an English clergyman, in his chapter on "Religion" in *Shakespeare's England*, maintains that Shakespeare was not really a "party man" at all, but viewed religion independently.¹⁵

He does note, however, that much Christian thinking permeated his writings:

But while the bulk of his work is pervaded by an atmosphere of natural religion which cuts him off from the orthodoxies of his day, yet in several places he quite naturally employs the language of orthodox Christian piety. It is likely that he employed heartily and sincerely such language as King Henry's, when he speaks of

those holy fields
Over whose acres walk'd those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail'd
For our advantage on the bitter cross;
(*I Hen. IV*, I. i. 24-7)

...

or Edward's, when he refers to a murderer as one who has

defaced
The precious image of our dear Redeemer;
(*Rich. III*, II. i. 123-4)

or Clarence's, when he charges his murderers,

as you hope to have redemption
By Christ's dear blood shed for our grievous sins.
(*Rich. III*, I. iv. 198-9)¹⁶

Interestingly, even in works that take place in non-Christian times or places, Shakespeare *bewrays* his Christian roots:

¹⁵ Bayne felt that Shakespeare's "attitude to the Bible was in no sense professional or theological. We cannot prove from his vocabulary that he shared the passion for Bible-reading which was so important a result of the Reformation movement. His religion was the religion of a man who stood outside all parties of the day without despising any of them. His religion, in short, is an aspect or part of his general attitude to life and humanity" (Bayne, "Religion," 1:76).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:76-77.

And in plays of which the tone and setting are either worldly or definitely pagan we find the poet's *anima naturaliter Christiana*¹⁷ strangely and obviously present. Polixenes forgets that he is a Pagan as he denies the accusation brought against him; if it be so, 'O then,' he says, may

My name
Be yok'd with his that did betray the Best.
(*Wint. Tale*, I. ii. 418-19)¹⁸

All in all, Shakespeare's knowledge of the Bible was very good. He did not merely quote, but made allusions that showed a deeper knowledge and understanding of the scriptural passages to which he alluded.

He did make mistakes, however (what *preacher* or even seminary professor can escape the same charge?).¹⁹

IV. Grace

While we would like to believe that Shakespeare was a real believer, the evidence for this is not forthcoming. How much of all the above quotations and those to follow the Bard himself actually believed and how much he merely put in his characters' mouths, who can say? Let the reader judge, but by all means—*enjoy*. At any rate, biblical grace and graciousness have nicely colored many of the Bard's beautiful lines. We present some of these here,²⁰ classifying them under various categories of Christian doctrine.

Man

What a piece of work is a man!
How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty!
In form and moving, how express and admirable!
In action, how like an angel!

¹⁷ I.e., his naturally Christian soul. Ed.

¹⁸ Bayne, "Religion," 1:77.

¹⁹ See the short chapter entitled "Defects in Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge" in Noble (Chap. VI). For a 300-page analysis of the complete subject of the Bible and Shakespeare that is scholarly, detailed, and interesting, see Noble's 1935 book, reprinted in 1970 by Octagon Books of New York (cf. fn. 7).

²⁰ Most of these selections were carefully culled from over five hundred quotations in an antique book called *Through the Year with Shakespeare* (no city, no date) that I was fortunate enough to pick up in a Dallas yard sale.

In apprehension, how like a god!
The beauty of the world!
The paragon of animals!

Hamlet, Act II, Scene 2.

Good Angels

The air of Paradise did fan the house,
And angels officed all.

All's Well that Ends Well, Act III, Scene 2.

Sleep in peace and wake in joy;
Good angels guard thee.

Richard III, Act V, Scene 3.

Her that loves him with that excellence
That angels love good men with.

Henry VIII, Act II, Scene 2.

Satan and Fallen Angels

Angels are bright still,
Though the brightest fell.

Macbeth, Act IV, Scene 3.

By that sin fell the angels;
How can man, then, the image of his Maker,
Hope to win by it?

Henry VIII, Act III, Scene 2.

Sin and Judgment

Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all.

Second Part of Henry IV, Act III, Scene 3.

But we all are men, in our own natures frail,
And capable of our flesh; few are angels.

Henry VIII, Act V, Scene 3.

Then God forgive the sin of all those souls
That to their everlasting residence,
Before the dew of evening fall, shall fleet.

King John, Act II, Scene 1.

Salvation

Alas, alas! Why, all the souls
That were were forfeit once;
And He that might the vantage best
Have took found out the remedy.

Measure for Measure, Act II, Scene 2.

Repentance

God amend us, God amend!
We are much out o' the way.

Love's Labour's Lost, Act IV, Scene 3.

I never did repent for doing good.
Nor shall not now.

Merchant of Venice, Act III, Scene 4.

And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above:
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence. What then? what rests?
Try what repentance can.

Hamlet, Act III, Scene 3.

Divine Providence

And He that doth the ravens feed,
Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,
Be comfort to my age!

As You Like It, Act II, Scene 3.

Divine Guidance

But He, that hath the steerage of my course, direct my sail!
Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Scene 4.

I commit you to the tuition of God.
Tempest, Act I, Scene 2.

God shall be my hope,
My stay, my guide and lantern to my feet.
Second Part of Henry VI, Act I, Scene 3.

Divine Protection

In the great hand of God I stand.
Macbeth, Act II, Scene 3.

Remember this,
God and our good cause fight upon our side.
Richard III, Act V, Scene 3.

Take my blessing: God protect thee!
Into whose hand I give thy life.
Henry VIII, Act V, Scene 5.

The Will of God

The means that Heaven yields
Must be embraced, and not neglected;
Else, if Heaven would and we will not,
Heaven's offer we refuse,
The proffered means of succour and redress.
Richard II, Act III, Scene 2.

But Heaven hath a hand in these events,
To whose high will we bound our calm contents.
Richard II, Act V, Scene 2.

The will of Heaven be done in this and all things!
Henry VIII, Act I, Scene 1.

But this lies within the will of God,
To whom I do appeal.
Henry V, Act I, Scene 2.

We are in God's hand, brother.
Henry V, Act III, Scene 6.

Christian Virtues

Love

He hath a tear for pity, and a hand
Open as day for melting charity.
Second Part of Henry IV, Act IV, Scene 4.

'Tis death to me to be at enmity;
I hate it, and desire all good men's love.
Richard III, Act II, Scene 1.

Gentleness

Let gentleness my strong enforcement be.
As You Like It, Act II, Scene 7.

He hath a stern look, but a gentle heart.
King John, Act IV, Scene 1.

Kindness

He is as full of valour as of kindness.
Henry V, Act IV, Scene 3.

Obedience

It is religion that doth make vows kept.
King John, Act III, Scene 1.

I hourly learn a doctrine of obedience.
Antony and Cleopatra, Act V, Scene 2.

What's brave, what's noble, let's do it.
Antony and Cleopatra, Act IV, Scene 15.

Truth

For truth is truth, to the end of the reckoning.
Measure for Measure, Act V, Scene 1.

O, while you live, tell truth and shame the devil.
First Part of Henry IV, Act III, Scene 1.

Honesty

No legacy is so rich as honesty.
All's Well that Ends Well, Act III, Scene 5.

Control of Tongue

Men of few words are the best men.
Henry V, Act III, Scene 2.

For I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,

And weigh'st thy words before thou givest them breath.
Othello, Act III, Scene 3.

Purity

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?
Second Part of Henry VI, Act III, Scene 2.

A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.
Second Part of Henry VI, Act III, Scene 1.

Holiness

What thou wouldst highly,
 That wouldst thou holily;
 Wouldst not play false.
Macbeth, Act I, Scene 5.

Sincerity

I think there's never a man in Christendom
 That can less hide his love or hate than he;
 For by his face straight shall you know his heart.
Richard III, Act III, Scene 4.

Men should be what they seem.
Othello, Act III, Scene 3.

Grace and Mercy

So grace and mercy at your most need help you.
Hamlet, Act I, Scene 5.

We do pray for mercy;
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
 The deeds of mercy.
Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1.

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
 Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
 The throned monarch better than his crown;
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,

The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1.

A double blessing is a double grace.
Hamlet, Act I, Scene 3.

Peace

If we do now make our atonement well our peace will,
Like a broken limb united, grow stronger for the breaking.
Second Part of Henry IV, Act IV, Scene 1.

Forgiveness

Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil;
With them forgive yourself.
Winter's Tale, Act V, Scene 1.

Meekness

God bless thee; and put meekness in thy mind,
Love, charity, obedience, and true duty!
Richard III, Act II, Scene 2.

Highmindedness

Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's: then if thou fall'st . . .
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr!
Henry VIII, Act III, Scene 2.

Integrity

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles,
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate,
His tears pure messengers sent from his heart,
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.
Two Gentlemen of Verona, Act II, Scene 7.

I'll take thy word for faith, not ask thine oath:
Who shuns not to break one will sure crack both.
Pericles, Act I, Scene 2.

Righteousness

However God or fortune cast my lot,
There lives or dies a loyal, just, and upright gentleman.
Richard II, Act I, Scene 3.

Prayer

Chiefly that I might set it in my prayers
—What is your name?
Tempest, Act III, Scene 1.

He has my heart yet, and shall have my prayers
While I shall have my life.
Henry VIII, Act III, Scene 1.

Down on your knees, and thank Heaven,
Fasting, for a good man's love.
As You Like It, Act III, Scene 5.

He is no hypocrite, but prays from his heart.
Much Ado about Nothing, Act I, Scene 1.

But my prayers forever and forever shall be yours.
Henry VIII, Act III, Scene 2.

A virtuous and a Christian-like conclusion,
To pray for them that have done scathe to us.
Richard III, Acts I, Scene 3.

My ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
Tempest, Epilogue.

Ah, countrymen! if when you make your
prayers
God should be so obdurate as yourselves,
How would it fare with your departed souls?
Second Part of Henry VI, Act IV, Scene 7.

To Thee I do commend my watchful soul,
 Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes:
 Sleeping and waking, O defend me still!
Richard III, Act V, Scene 3.

Praise

God be praised, that to believing souls
 Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair!
Second Part of Henry VI, Act II, Scene 1.

To see what this child does, and praise my Maker.
Henry VIII, Act V, Scene 5.

Sir, I praise the Lord for you
 And so may my parishioners.
Love's Labour's Lost, Act IV, Scene 2.

Thankfulness

Then, Heaven, set ope thy everlasting gates,
 To entertain my vows of thanks and praise!
Second Part of Henry VI, Acts IV, Scene 9.

God's goodness hath been great to thee;
 Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,
 But still remember what the Lord hath done.
Second Part of Henry VI, Act II, Scene 1.

The help of Heaven.
All's Well that Ends Well, Act II, Scene 1.

It is not so with Him that all things knows,
 As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows;
 But most it is presumption in us when
 The help of Heaven we count the act of men.
All's Well that Ends Well, Act II, Scene 1.

O Lord, that lends me life,
 Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness!
Second Part of Henry VI, Act I, Scene 1.

Suffering Hardship

He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer.
Timon of Athens, Act III, Scene 5.

Graciousness to Others

God prosper your affairs! God send us peace!
Second Part of Henry VI, Act III, Scene 2.

The God of heaven both now and ever bless her!
Henry VIII, Act V, Scene 1.

God's benison go with you:
And with those that would make good of bad,
And friends of foes!
Macbeth, Act II, Scene 4.

God in heaven bless thee!
Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene 4.

God give you quiet rest to-night!
Richard III, Act V, Scene 3.

The Lord in heaven bless thee!
Henry V, Act IV, Scene 1.

God bless thee!
Twelfth Night, Act I, Scene 5.

God send every one their heart's desire.
Much Ado about Nothing, Act III, Scene 4.

Heaven give your spirits comfort.
Measure for Measure, Act IV, Scene 2.

The dews of heaven
Fall thick in blessings on her!
Henry VIII, Act IV, Scene 2.

God comfort him in this necessity!
First Part of Henry VI, Act IV, Scene 3.

God in thy good cause make thee prosperous!
Richard II, Act I, Scene 3.

God be with you all!
Henry V, Act IV, Scene 3.

Outreach to Others

Win straying souls
Cast none away.

Henry VIII, Act V, Scene 3.

Service for Christ

And there at Venice gave his body
To that pleasant country's earth,
And his pure soul unto his Captain Christ,
Under whose colours he had fought so long.

Richard II, Act IV, Scene 1.

A Good Name

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

Othello, Act III, Scene 3.

God hath blessed you with a good name.

Much Ado about Nothing, Act III, Scene 3.

Holy Matrimony

God, the best maker of all marriages,
Combine your hearts in one.

Henry V, Act V, Scene 2.

Miracles

They say miracles are past;
And we have our philosophical persons,
To make modern and familiar things
Supernatural and causeless.

All's Well that Ends Well, Act II, Scene 3.

The Nativity of Our Lord

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes,
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,

The bird of dawning singeth all night long,
And then they say no spirit stirs abroad.

Hamlet, Act I, Scene 1.

Heaven

Hereafter in a better world than this,
I shall desire more love
And knowledge of you.

As You Like It, Act I, Scene 2.

He gave his honours to the world again,
His blessed part to Heaven,
And slept in peace.

Henry VIII, Act IV, Scene 2.

V. Conclusion

It has not been the purpose of this article to prove that William Shakespeare, had he been living today, would have subscribed to the credo of the Grace Evangelical Society.

In fact, it is difficult to make out a case for his being a Christian in the biblical sense of that term. For those who believe in Lordship Salvation or who believe that only those who persevere in a clear-cut testimony and lifestyle to the very end of life will make it, it is truly a lost cause. For those of us who believe that once drinking from the water of life (John 4:14) a soul is permanently safe, there is hope for Shakespeare. The Bard's Bible background is apparent in the many quotations we have selected. (Some may have been mediated through the *Book of Common Prayer*, as we noted, since that famous Anglican work is replete with long Bible selections.)

We can at least hope that sometime before *shuffling off his mortal coil* Shakespeare accepted Christ as his Savior.

We close with a salutation, rather reminiscent of Paul, that should please most of our gracious readers:

Grace and Remembrance be to you . . .

Winter's Tale, Act IV, Scene 1.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Grace Awakening. By Charles R. Swindoll. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990. 311 pp. Cloth, \$15.99.

One of the primary frustrations of the Free Grace Movement has been the popularization of Lordship Salvation over the past decade. Though many high-profile evangelical leaders have voiced their personal concerns privately, none has been willing to risk alienating his audience by standing up for the pure Gospel of Grace. Until now.

Charles Swindoll has stepped forward in his newest book, *The Grace Awakening*, with a bold presentation of the uncomplicated and uncompromised grace of God and a call to the glorious freedom this grace offers to every believer. This is not the usual plea for dialogue and understanding which fails to confront the real issues. At the outset Swindoll refuses to treat grace as simply another “theological football kicked from one end of the field to the other” (p. 4). This is a hard-hitting exposé of the “grace killers” among us and a compelling argument to break away from their legalistic chains. “Enough of this,” he cries. “It’s time for grace to be awakened and released, not denied . . . to be enjoyed and freely given, not debated” (p. 4).

The following is an overview of Swindoll’s presentation of the grace which awakens freedom in Christ.

Chapters 1-4 rightly concentrate on the primary problem—a heretical “gospel,” which is not really *good* news. Weaving support from Romans 4, 5, and 6 into his definition of the Gospel, Swindoll concludes that God gives the free gift of salvation to all who believe in His Son (p. 26). Discerning readers will be delighted by his simple and straightforward definitions and clarifications: *Grace* is “absolutely and totally free . . . grace comes to us free and clear, no strings attached. We should not even try to repay it; to do so is insulting [to God]” (p. 9). *Justification* is “the sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner—while he is still in a sinning state” (p. 24). And *repentance* is “a change of mind toward Christ” (p. 42). Swindoll clearly distinguishes justification (“ . . . [having] simply taken the gift of eternal life”) from sanctification (“ . . . the process of growth toward maturity,” p. 42). And he states the doctrine of eternal security in unqualified terms: “When we do the things we should not, He may administer discipline,

sometimes quite severely, but He never turns His back . . . He doesn't send His child to hell! Neither do we fall from grace and get slammed behind the bars of the Law. He deals with His own in grace . . . beautiful, charming, unmerited favor. It is really amazing!" (p. 12).

What sets Swindoll's discussion of the Gospel apart from the others is his courageous honesty to his critics and unequivocal application to his readers. He faces the inevitable objection, "Isn't grace risky?", with clarity. He not only admits that grace is sometimes abused but presents "the fact that some take it to an unwise extreme" as "proof that a minister is indeed preaching the true grace of God" (p. 39). Caring more for his readers than for his reputation in a market dominated by those who attack the Free Grace Gospel, he erases all doubt concerning the free gift of eternal life. "You will be granted entrance [to heaven] because you accepted the free gift of eternal life—nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. There is one and only one password for entering heaven: Grace" (p. 33). All this is written from the perspective of a battle-worn veteran who leaves himself personally vulnerable for the sake of his cause. He accurately calculates that his defense of the free gift of salvation will bring "grace abusers as well as grace killers out from under the rocks!" But, he explains, "that is a chance I'm willing to take by holding back nothing in order that the full message of grace be set forth" (p. 41).

Chapter 5, "Squaring Off Against Legalism," is a call to arms. The freedom resulting from this Gospel of Grace so precisely defined in chapters 1-4 will be attacked, he warns. Swindoll, in one of the most accurate and forthright syntheses of Galatians in print, reminds us that "liberty is always worth fighting for" (p. 75). Appalled by the Christian community's passivity in the face of legalism (pp. 76-77) and quoting Gal 5:1 as his battle cry, he contrasts liberty to legalism (pp. 78-84) and exposes the three tools of legalism: *heresy*, *harassment*, and *hypocrisy* (pp. 85-96). When Swindoll challenges us to defend our freedom he pulls no punches. "Please allow me to be absolutely straight with you: Stop tolerating the heretical gospel of works! It is legalism. Wake up to the fact that it will put you into a bondage syndrome that won't end. The true gospel of grace, however, will set you free. Free forever" (p. 87). "Killers cannot be mildly or kindly tolerated. You can no more allow legalism to continue than you could permit a rattlesnake to slip into your house and hide. Before long somebody is going to get hurt" (p. 98). Some will object to the strong words of this chapter, but those who have fought for grace will recognize the realistic passion of a man familiar with the tactics of the grace-attackers.

Having *defined* grace in chapters 1-4 and *defended* grace in chapter 5, Swindoll dedicates the rest of his book to *describing* how this grace should work into a Christian's life. Though the readers of this Journal are primarily concerned with the purity and propagation of the Gospel of Grace they would do well to read on. Indeed, to those already convinced that salvation is by grace through faith plus nothing, chapters 6-14 present a most important challenge: If you believe in grace, then live it!

Focusing on Romans 6, Swindoll urges Christians to allow the doctrine of grace to permeate their lives. "What I'm urging," he writes, "is not just taking grace into our vocabulary, but cultivating it in each other . . . encouraging a mental framework of grace in one another. My plea is for the body of Christ to have a grace state of mind" (p. 142). He views this "grace state of mind" as the key to a healthy spiritual life. A thorough application of grace is a must, he believes, if believers are to conquer the power of sin (chapter 6), courageously guide others to freedom (chapter 7), confidently allow others to "be whomever and whatever God is leading them to be" (p. 152, chapter 8), and consistently press on in spite of disagreement (chapter 9). The potential of grace-living is followed immediately with some key indicators of progress, both personally (chapter 10) and in ministry (chapter 11). So, in chapters 6-11, the believer in grace not only sees what is possible when grace is applied, but also sees blind spots of personal legalism exposed.

In three of the most convicting chapters a grace-oriented believer will ever read, Swindoll closes with an invitation to examine the relationship between our commitment to grace and three critical areas of life: *marriage, giving, and personal commitment*. A full appreciation of grace, he argues in chapters 12-14, is the essential ingredient leading to loving marriages, generous giving, and grateful humility.

In a volume so courageously and so carefully written, there is little to criticize. Informed readers may well find Swindoll's few comments by Martyn Lloyd-Jones (former pastor of Westminster Chapel, London) in support of his argument unfortunate at best (p. 39). It is strange that Dr. Swindoll would seek validation from a theologian who adamantly disagreed with his definition of repentance (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959], 2:248) and Swindoll's definite distinction between justification and sanctification (see *Romans: The New Man* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974], p. 190).

Though this reviewer appreciated the simple style of the volume, those looking for detailed or analytical exegetical support for conclusions will

have to adjust to Swindoll's more synthetic approach.

This work, perhaps the best from Swindoll's very talented pen, makes it a must for every Christian library. Vivid stories from history, contemporary news, and the author's personal experiences illustrate vital theological issues so plainly that the reader will thirst for the liberating power of grace. Swindoll has masterfully presented the truth of the Gospel without identifying with either "camp" of the current Lordship versus Free Grace conflict. Though Lordship advocates will reject his words and Free Grace champions will rejoice, neither will find the usual array of antagonists. Since Swindoll supports his argument from a different and diverse body of writers and thinkers, the endnotes (pp. 305-311) become an invaluable resource to reach those who feel the Free Grace Movement is comprised only of a narrow group of theologians. This positive presentation of grace, refusing to attack or defend personalities, is refreshing.

The purpose of this volume, to infect believers with the liberating grace of God, makes it one of the most effective weapons available to combat the bondage of legalism that the Grace Evangelical Society was founded to arrest. In the short time since its publishing, this reviewer has witnessed the phenomenal potential of this book: A local pastor has gained the courage to stand for grace by preaching an extended series on this book. A parachurch leader has given copies to his board, telling these influential people, "This is the most freeing, exciting book I have ever read. It brought me back to the simple yet majestic basics of my faith." And the leader of a worldwide missions organization has ordered thousands of copies for his partners on the field.

Dr. Swindoll has drawn his line in the theological sand. He stands for radical, NT grace, and has joined the fight for the liberty that this grace brings. Those who remain on the fence in this fight for freedom should consider his challenge: "If fighting for liberty sounds too aggressive to you, perhaps too selfish, then think of it as fighting so others can be set free—so others can be awakened to the joys and privileges of personal freedom. Those who do so on real battlefields are called patriots or heroes. With all my heart, I believe those who square off against legalism should be considered the same" (p. 99).

We agree. And one of the first heroes we would name? Thank you, Chuck Swindoll.

Ed Underwood

GES Board Member

Pastor, North Umpqua Bible Fellowship
Glide, OR

Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure? By Charles Stanley. Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1990. 195 pp. Cloth, \$14.95.

The year 1990 was a vintage literary year for the Free Grace Movement!

In the previous review, Pastor Ed Underwood justly praises Dr. Charles Swindoll for the clear stand he has taken in *The Grace Awakening*. But equally commendable for his forthright commitment to grace is the author of this book, Dr. Charles Stanley. Both books appeared in 1990.

Like Swindoll, Stanley is a high-profile Christian leader. Currently, Dr. Stanley serves as the senior pastor of the 12,000-member First Baptist Church of Atlanta. He is also a past President of the Southern Baptist Convention and a nationally known TV and radio speaker. His courage in writing this book must be commended most highly.

No one who reads *Eternal Security* can doubt for a moment the writer's deep conviction that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. For example, Stanley writes: "Look at that verse [John 3:18] and answer this question: According to Jesus, what must a person do to keep from being judged for sin? Must he stop doing something? Must he promise to stop doing something? Must he have never done something? The answer is so simple that many stumble all over it without ever seeing it. All Jesus requires is that the individual 'believe in' Him" (p. 67). It would be hard to put it more plainly than that!

It is clear from the statement quoted above that Stanley is as far from Lordship Salvation as it is possible to get. Many, many other comments in this book show the same thing. Yet as far as this reviewer has noticed, Stanley refers to Lordship Salvation directly only once. This occurs in a footnote on p. 111, where a view that the author has rejected in his text is linked with "some who hold to . . . *Lordship salvation*." Stanley's minimal reference to this issue is a prudent choice since his book has a much larger question in mind: *eternal security itself*. But no Lordship theologian will find even a trace of comfort in this author's theology.

Among the most impressive sections in the book is the chapter entitled, "For Those Who Stop Believing" (chapter 8). Here Stanley clearly says some things which should have often been said before. For example, he writes: "The Bible clearly teaches that God's love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand" (p. 74). This is beautifully put. Equally lucid is this striking paragraph: "Faith is simply the way we say yes to God's free gift of eternal life. Faith and salvation are not one and the same anymore than a gift and the hand that receives it are

the same. Salvation or justification or adoption—whatever you wish to call it—stands independently of faith. Consequently, God does not require a *constant attitude* of faith in order to be saved—only an *act* of faith” (p. 80). A little later, Stanley also writes: “You and I are not saved because we have an enduring faith. We are saved because at a moment in time we expressed faith in our enduring Lord” (p. 80).

This is critical and important truth that Stanley is stating. If only it were proclaimed more widely, many believers would be delivered from their distressing absorption as to whether or not they have an “enduring faith.” It is *Christ* who endures, not necessarily our faith, as Stanley points out so clearly. “If we are faithless,” wrote the Apostle Paul, “He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13).

But just as this author is unmistakably clear in his doctrine of salvation, he is equally clear in another widely neglected area: the doctrine of *rewards*! Few (if any!) contemporary writers are more insistent on the role that this doctrine should play as a motivation for godly Christian living. This reviewer particularly enjoyed this crisp paragraph: “Does our behavior matter once we are assured of our salvation? You bet it does. Are there any eternal consequences when a believer sins? Absolutely. Will eternity be the same for those who follow Christ faithfully and those who live for themselves? Not a chance” (p. 118). Shortly afterwards, he states: “Keep in mind we are not talking about heaven and hell. That is a different issue altogether. Our works have nothing to do with *where* we spend eternity. But they have a lot to do with what we can expect once we get there” (p. 118). The GES reader is urged to study Dr. Stanley’s entire discussion of this subject in chapters 12–14. These chapters are an effective response to the tired old argument that if we are secure, we no longer have reasons for living a godly life.

A forthright author like this will not be expected to dodge any of the tough questions. Dr. Stanley does not. For example, he faces the problems for security which are often surfaced from the Epistle to the Hebrews. In fact, five consecutive chapters (17–21) are given to a discussion of the issues raised from that book. His solution is utterly satisfactory to grace-oriented people. Applying the warnings of Hebrews to believers, he frankly states about Heb 6:4–6: “It seems to me . . . the writer bends over backward to make sure the reader understands that the persons he is describing are genuine, born-again believers” (p. 163). For this author, the bottom line in Hebrews is its warning to believers today. Hebrews can teach us that “every moment and every decision count. Nothing goes unnoticed. And for those who think that they are getting by with something, recall these words: ‘It is a terrifying thing to

fall into the hands of the living God” (pp. 176-77).

But the Book of Hebrews is not the only nettlesome issue that is squarely faced by this author. He also confronts the unpardonable sin (it cannot be committed today: p. 132); Rev 3:5 (God does not have an eraser!, see pp. 178-83); and even the question of “the outer darkness.” On this latter issue, Stanley states: “To be in the ‘outer darkness’ is to be in the kingdom of God but outside the circle of men and women whose faithfulness on this earth earned them a special rank or position of authority” (p. 126; italics in the original). Thus, for Stanley, “the outer darkness” is not a literal place, but a metaphor. In this reviewer’s judgment, the words quoted above are the very best definition of that metaphor in print today!

Dr. Stanley opens his final chapter (“Conclusion”) with the words: “I have never met a Christian who had lost his salvation. However, I have met plenty who have lost their assurance” (p. 192). But the likely result of this excellent volume is that many who have lost that assurance will regain it when confronted with the biblical testimony to their security in Christ. It has given this reviewer great pleasure to note that *Eternal Security* has found its way onto the *Bookstore Journal*’s list of Christian hardback best sellers. As this review is being written, Dr. Stanley’s book stands ninth on the March list of the twenty top clothbound volumes.

No matter how many people read this book, however, it will not be enough. Its message is crisp, clear, and uncompromisingly scriptural. It is precisely such a book as is urgently needed in our day and time.

This reviewer is aware that GES readers are among the most theologically discriminating readers anywhere. That is why it is unthinkable that any of them should fail to read this volume. To this readership, the reviewer can only say:

Read and enjoy!

Zane C. Hodges

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Mesquite, TX

Sanctity of Life: The Inescapable Issue. By Charles R. Swindoll. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990. 103 pp. Paper, \$6.95.

Written by one of the most popular and prolific preachers and writers in evangelicalism today, this little book is really a tract for one of the

most crucial social issues of our time. As a pastor for thirty years, Chuck Swindoll has experienced firsthand most of the tensions surrounding abortion. He has waited a long time—some might say too long—to speak out publicly and in print on this divisive issue.

Sanctity of Life is a bold, but simple pastoral plea “from his heart to ours.” The author asks us to take a stand on the abortion issue no matter where we are on the spectrum, from active protesters, to those who have yet to get involved, to those who are not sure that abortion is totally wrong.

Swindoll is neither technical nor exhaustive, although he bolsters his arguments with his usual plethora of quotations and statistics. He brings all his powers of persuasion to bear, using his distinctive tones and his practical, biblical, and highly illustrative writing style.

Using the Scriptures and a simple syllogism, Swindoll establishes in chapter 1 the biblical basis for the sacredness of human life. He states rightly that the Bible is the only foundation upon which legal, ethical, or moral anti-abortion arguments can be built.

The second chapter speaks directly to those who have been involved in abortion. Once again, this is a pastor graciously counseling the biblical path of repentance and restoration. Not only does he address those who have had an abortion, but also those who have performed or recommended one.

Chapter 3 is a call for personal purity. It is based on a pastor’s long experience that the best defense against any spiritual disease is preventive medicine and the best way to attack abortion is to prevent the rampant immorality that causes much of it.

The last chapter is a clarion call, stirring the slumbering troops in evangelicalism to action and encouraging war-weary veterans who have spent years fighting alone on the front lines.

This book may surprise some people. Its emphasis is not really on abortion at all. The author doesn’t cry out for the storming of the Bastille either—more conservative Supreme Court justices or constitutional amendments will never win the spiritual battle.

Instead, Swindoll pleads for revival, lifetime morality, and godly living. The greatest weapon he recommends against abortion is not electing a new legislature, but rebuilding Christian character.

Swindoll’s typical appeals for unity and balance within the Christian community give the book a broad application. He asks each Christian to pray and act, but without judging others for not having the same convictions or the same degree of involvement. *Sanctity of Life* ultimately

argues that to restore human life to its proper place, spiritual life must be exalted to its rightful place.

This is perhaps Swindoll's best written and most important work to date (equal in every way to *The Grace Awakening*, also reviewed in this issue) and one that deserves to be widely read and used.

Frank D. Carmical

Evangelist

Harvester Ministries, Inc.

Dallas, TX

The NIV Reconsidered: A Fresh Look at a Popular Translation. Earl Radmacher and Zane C. Hodges. Dallas: Redención Viva, 1990. 155 pp. Paper, \$8.95.

This is an important book on a major topic for English-speaking Christians. It is also long overdue. First of all this is neither a "chain saw" review nor a nit-picking one. It is a detailed and scholarly (but easy-to-read) book. It is well-organized, clearly expressed, and well-supported with illustrative material.

Many of the readers of *JOTGES* probably have experienced similar reactions to the NIV as has this reviewer. Initial enthusiasm and hopes that finally we had an English version that would prove accurate, beautifully styled, and capable of being the new standard to replace the ever more archaic King James Bible we have loved so long perished with the using. From personal conversation with the writer of the foreword, Dr. Curtis Vaughan, Professor of Greek at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, I know that his initial favorable impression of the NIV (the NT, at least), faded as he continued to use it in the light of the original Greek.

This was also the experience of Hodges, and I believe Radmacher as well. In chapter 1, "Needed: A Standard Bible for Everybody," I see the clear hand of Dr. Radmacher, since I heard most of his content given orally at the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy at San Diego some years ago. The thrust of this chapter is that never have there been more Bible versions in English—and never as much biblical illiteracy and lack of memorizing of God's Word. Allowing for personal preference in study and private devotions, churches need to present a united front with the same Bible in pulpit and pew, the authors maintain.

Is the NIV the answer to this need, as its gigantic advertising campaign would have it, or is it not?

Chapters 2 through 7 handle the general topics of making the NIV (chap. 2), how literal it is or isn't (chap. 3); its general accuracy (chap. 4), crucial prophetic passages (chap. 5), significant NT texts (chap. 6), and the NIV's style (chap. 7).

The authors give high marks to the NIV translation team for effort, expenditure of time and money, sincerity, and general smoothness of English. Two or three of the translators of the NIV have privately told this reviewer that their scripts turned in to the editors and stylists were much more accurate and careful with such details as the short connectives that start most sentences in the NT than what appeared in the final product.

A common criticism of the NIV by those with a precise knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew texts is that it is not close enough to the originals to be a *standard Bible* for all purposes. Regarding *general* accuracy our authors write: "Repeatedly, the NIV indulges in changes from the familiar translations of previous years without any appreciable gain to the reader at all. What is more, these changes often leave the reader worse off than he was before. Weighed in the scales of general accuracy and reliability, much too often the NIV is found wanting" (p. 47).

Chapter 5, "Crucial Prophetic Passages," proved somewhat alarming to this reviewer. Hearing that all of the NIV translators signed statements maintaining their belief in inerrancy (as the NASB and NKJV translators did), some disturbing trends are made to surface in the NIV text, and sometimes even more clearly, in the *NIV Study Bible* notes. Lately there has been a defection of some leading (chiefly British) evangelical leaders from the orthodox Christian doctrine of eternal punishment. Also, prominent on both sides of the Atlantic has been an erosion of faith in the accuracy of the NT's usage of Messianic passages from the OT. This book reveals that both trends can be seen to some extent in the NIV, especially in the *NIV Study Bible* notes.

On the change from "hell" and "Sheol" to "grave" in the NIV, Ps 16:10 is chosen as an important example: "Thus the NIV handling of Psalm 16:10 sets up a needless tension between the Old Testament and the New. It plays directly into the hands of those who deny explicit Messianic prophecy and thus also deny the New Testament's claims for that.

"Clearly, Psalm 16:10 in both the NIV text and note leads to an evangelical debacle" (p. 52).

What messianic verse could be more important than Isa 7:14, the very first OT text quoted in the NT (Matt 1:23)? Radmacher and Hodges

write: "In the NIV, '*the* virgin' apparently *is* intended to refer to a specific individual who, though not previously named, is very much a part of the larger context of this announcement. To put it briefly, '*the* virgin' refers to '*the* woman' Isaiah is about to marry. Only if the prediction is viewed typologically, so we are told, can one find any validity to Matthew's use of this text in reference to the Virgin Mary.

"Despite the finely honed statements of the NIV study note, what the note really means is this: Isaiah 7:14 is not a direct prophecy about the virgin birth at all. Indeed, the woman to whom it *did* really apply gave birth in a perfectly normal way! But nobody could deduce such a conclusion from Matthew's use of the text.

"At least the liberal critics have the candor to tell us that Matthew misread Isaiah. It remains for contemporary evangelicals to fudge the issue" (p. 54).

For those who do not get to read this book, let me point out that there is no suggestion here that the NIV team denies either eternal punishment, the virgin birth, or other basic Bible doctrine. Rather in an effort (one suspects) to be considered up-to-date in the scholarly world, some of the translation and some *Study Bible* notes are very carefully worded so as not to appear too "fundamentalist" to the mediating critics.

Since picking and choosing verses hither and yon can be carefully manipulated to prove all sorts of things, the authors were wise to give two analyses of two extended passages.

The OT passage chosen, 1 Sam 25:1-44, is long. It was picked because it had "no weighty matters of doctrine" at issue. The NIV's performance here is not reassuring: "On the contrary, the NIV seems to be qualitatively erratic. One is continually surprised to find cropping up in the 1 Samuel narrative various alterations, large and small, that represent either a deficient treatment of the original text or an unsure grasp of English idiom and style."

The Romans 8 passage (1-17) is, of course, theologically "pivotal," to use the authors' word. A detailed study of the accuracy and style of the NIV here surfaces some nice choices of wording (e.g., "co-heirs" rather than "joint-heirs"), but by and large a generally negative critique is the result of the authors' detailed investigations: "It is unfortunate enough that options which the translators ought to have left open are closed to the reader. But it is even more serious that, due to the translators' tendency toward loose, interpretive paraphrase, the Apostle Paul's actual thoughts at various critical points are hidden from the reader.

"It follows that the user of the NIV New Testament, especially in

sensitive sections like this one, would be well-advised to keep a Greek text handy and to refer to it repeatedly as he studies his NIV.

"If he cannot do this, he would be better off with another version" (p. 130).

The book ends with an Epilogue, an Appendix, helpful notes, and a Bibliography.

The Appendix, which clearly shows the hand of Hodges, is an irenic but pointed defense of the so-called Majority Text of the Greek NT, a text similar to that of the KJV (and NKJV) except in Revelation, where it is closer to the UBS-type text. It was decided not to base the main argument of the book on a controversial point of textual criticism (probably a wise choice). This reviewer agrees with the Appendix that "it is premature to say that the NIV is translated from the best available Greek New Testament text" (p. 144).

No church seriously considering adopting the NIV as its standard Bible should do so without its leadership reading *The NIV Reconsidered*. Since it is published by a small, fairly new company with (one suspects) a small advertising budget, I felt it would be helpful to list for interested JOTGES readers the address and phone number of Redención Viva:

P.O. Office Box 141167
Dallas, TX 75214
Phone: (214) 821-5357

Arthur L. Farstad

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Dallas, TX

The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times. By Charles H. Dyer with Angela Elwell Hunt. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1991. 236 pp. Paper, \$8.95.

More and more in recent decades the world has been watching the Middle East. The Bible leads us to believe that more and more we will continue to do so. As we do, we will want more information and biblical insight into the key players in that region, both its countries and its leaders.

Charles Dyer, Associate Professor of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, has provided that information on a crucial power that figures in the end times—Babylon. Dyer's book cannot be accused of capitalizing on recent events; Babylon has been a subject of study for him for some time. Besides having written a master's thesis on Babylon in the Book of Revelation, he is one of the few Americans to have visited modern Babylon in Iraq. This uniquely qualified him to write this book and to provide firsthand some very interesting photographs of modern Babylon.

Most of the book traces the beginning, demise, and modern rise of the city of Babylon. Babylon's ancient history is traced through the Bible. Modern history draws on Dyer's experience, news accounts, and the ambitions of dictator Saddam Hussein. The contrast between Babylon and Jerusalem runs throughout the course of history, and Dyer succeeds in convincing the reader that this contrast is a key to understanding the future.

Dyer is balanced and restrained in his interpretation of the prophetic significance of current events. He never stoops to speculations or sensationalism at the expense of sound biblical scholarship. Amidst the barrage of questionable books and fast-talking preachers straining to gain an audience, this book will provide an oasis of sound biblical information.

Whatever the long-term results of the recent conflict between Iraq and the Allied Coalition, this book will be a valuable resource in understanding the role of Babylon in biblical history. If interest in Babylon and Iraq should subside, Dyer's work will remain relevant because of its biblical orientation.

The book is written on the popular level and is very easy to read. Its phenomenal sales have attested to its popularity. I was delighted to see that Dyer concludes with a clear presentation of the Gospel. With time running out for the world, this book can be used as an effective witnessing tool to win people to Jesus Christ and to give them hope.

Charles C. Bing

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Pastor, Burleson Bible Church

Burleson, TX

Evangelical Catholics. By Keith A. Fournier. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990. 223 pp. Cloth, \$15.95.

Two major events in the early 1960's precipitated a large-scale paradigm shift within the Roman Catholic Church in America: the Second Vatican Council and the charismatic revival. As a result of these two historical phenomena, a movement has emerged within Roman Catholicism calling itself "Evangelical Catholicism." Although the author does not document the rise of this growing movement, he devotes the better part of his book to the distinguishing features of "Evangelical Catholicism." In essence, the book is a plea for unity among Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals. In the Foreword Charles Colson writes: "It is high time for all of us who are Christians to come together regardless of the difference of our confessions and our traditions and make common cause to bring Christian values to bear upon our society. When the barbarians are scaling the walls, there is no time for petty quarreling in the camp" (p. vi).

Part I opens with an *apologia* for the designation "Evangelical Catholic." In the chapters that follow, Fournier provides a fascinating testimony of his personal pilgrimage from a nominal Roman Catholic upbringing to his personal encounter with the drug-crazed culture of the 1960's, to his "evangelical moment" of salvation, and ultimately to his appointment as General Counsel and Dean of Evangelism at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. The author's fresh yet simple style of writing in these chapters makes for engaging reading.

Part II is devoted to the fundamentals of Evangelical Catholicism—issues related to salvation and church life.

Part III deals with what Fournier terms "the Great Divorce," the Protestant Reformation, and how children of the "the Divorce" (Roman Catholics and Protestants) have coped with this ecclesiological trauma through the ages. In Part IV the author prescribes the steps for walling the breach between the two groups.

Fournier is to be commended for writing what is clearly a seminal work on the "Evangelical" changes observed within certain Roman Catholic circles in the last three decades. At no point should we question the sincere compassion underlying Fournier's convictions. Yet in the opinion of this reviewer, the very notion of "Evangelical Catholicism" is problematic from the start.

The major question is this: How can a sacramental view of salvation be reconciled with the emphatic Reformation cry of *sola fide*? The Catholic view of the sacraments is that they are God's gracious and

visible means of rewarding individuals with eternal life and its accompanying blessings. Justification and sanctification are clumped into one package; that is, after being baptized and confirmed, and as one is faithful in keeping the sacraments (primarily confession, penance, and communion), one merits salvation *ex opere operato* ("from the work done").

In the same way that doctrinal ambiguities are observed in statements of Vatican II, Fournier at times is unclear in his usage of terms. For example, in quoting from Vatican II, he affirms that, "all those justified by faith through baptism [Spirit or water?] are incorporated into Christ" (p. 16). At other times, the author's doctrinal views are themselves ambiguous. He writes: "Children, even infants, can be baptized into the faith by the community of faith so that they can be nurtured in Christ until they are old enough to trust in Him personally. What a beautiful picture of unmerited divine grace in the salvation process. Salvation is truly of God alone. Infant baptism is evidence of this fact" (p. 103). Elsewhere, standard Roman Catholic soteriology comes out strongly: "I understand evangelization to be a process involving both the proclamation of the faith and the eventual implantation of believers into the church. It is not my intention . . . to explain more fully the Catholic concept of conversion as a continual process that necessarily takes place within the church" (p. 184). Fournier plays down the significant soteriological differences between Roman Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals.

Fournier's plea for ecumenism seems to be dreamily idealistic. Apart from the soteriological rift that exists between Evangelicals and Catholics, experience itself shows that unless evangelistic teams are of one mind doctrinally, potential converts are left confused and misled regarding the Gospel. Likewise, follow-up of converts is another thorny issue; do we plug new converts into a Roman Catholic church? This reviewer believes that there is such a thing as healthy action-oriented ecumenism when countering social evils such as abortion, pornography, and homosexuality. But unified evangelistic efforts among Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals are not likely to meet with success as long as the two groups are divided over what constitutes the Gospel.

There are other problematic areas in this book (e.g., the charismatic underpinnings of Evangelical Catholicism, the way that the author suppresses the role that the Virgin Mary plays in Roman Catholic soteriology, and unguarded statements regarding the orthodoxy of noteworthy Catholic personalities), but space limitations preclude an

adequate response to each. It is sufficient for now to say that Evangelical Catholicism is a curious mixture of Roman Catholic liturgical tradition, Evangelical Protestant doctrine, and charismatic practices. Perhaps it would be best to term Evangelical Catholicism as an ecclesiology of negotiated and inconsistent compromise.

Fournier's book is a good starting point from which Evangelicals can begin to understand this fairly recent movement within Roman Catholicism. However, the author's appeal for evangelistic unity cannot come to fruition as long as *tradition* is viewed on a par with the Word of God. The beckoning call to Roman Catholics is to return to the Scriptures—and to the Scripture alone—as the basis for Christian faith and practice. It is precisely at this point that Fournier's *Evangelical Catholics* falls short.

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

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The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, and Self-Image. By Jay E. Adams. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1986. 143 pp. Paper, \$6.95.

One of the striking things about the self-esteem movement is its tremendous appeal to those both within and without the Church. Like their counterparts in the world, many Christian psychologists (and even many pastors, elders, and theologians) are claiming that a person must first learn to love himself before he can be expected to love others (including God). One minister has even called for a "Second Reformation" in which the non-self-affirming notes struck during the first one (with its "medieval" emphasis on sin) are no longer sounded.

Adams could not disagree more. The turn toward self is not a temporary one in preparation for loving others and God, as self-esteem advocates claim. It is rather a journey into spiritual solipsism that ends in moral heresy and, if taken to its conclusion, suicidal boredom. A voice crying in the wilderness!

With his ax on the root of the problem, Adams argues that it is simply not the case that we "need" all we are told we "need." Actually, only one thing is truly needful, says Adams, quoting Jesus; all else is a matter of "desire." And we most certainly do not "need" first to cultivate a love for ourselves before we can "love our neighbor as ourselves"; for we

already love ourselves, says Adams, this time quoting Paul.

Readers coming from a grace perspective will particularly appreciate Adams's response to the theological and biblical arguments offered in support of self-esteem teaching. It is simply not the case, he writes, that our being created in the image of God teaches inherent self-worth. Quite the contrary; it teaches the worth of Him whose image we are. Adams compares man to a photograph that in itself is just so much paper; but it is valued nonetheless because of the one whose image it bears. Neither is it the case that our value can be deduced from the fact that Christ died for us. Writes Adams: "Among the many other problems in the self-worth movement [this one] stands out for its close affinity with heresy." Christ's death reveals not our worth, but His grace. What took place on Calvary was not a good buy, but a sacrifice offered *sola gratia*, indeed, *sola misericordia*.

In his final chapters Adams makes the case that the Christian life calls for just the opposite of self-affirmation, namely, *self-denial*. He also defends traditional formularies and hymns (like "Amazing Grace") that present a biblical, albeit "unflattering," view of human nature.

Near the end of the book Adams allows himself to be drawn into a particularly revealing exchange with one self-esteem advocate. Observing that the self-image of many Christians is terribly low, this author complains that many "even wonder how God could love such a person as themselves . . . [and are] amazed that God forgave them their sins in the first place." Writes Adams, "I am still amazed; aren't you?"

Absolutely.

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Taking the Guesswork out of Applying the Bible. By Jack Kuhatschek. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990. 163 pp. Paper, \$6.95.

Many evangelical Christians recognize the need for applying the Bible to their daily lives. But until now, guidelines for application have been restricted mostly to the final chapter of books on the subject of personal Bible study. *Applying the Bible* is entirely devoted to this often overlooked aspect of the Bible study process.

The organization and content of this volume are simple and clear. An opening chapter defines the direction of the book. The intended audience

is the layperson. The purpose is to explain the "how to's" of application. And the method is to use passages which seem outdated and irrelevant. In the words of the author, "If we can learn a method for applying the more difficult passages, that same method will work with the easier passages as well" (p. 10).

The rest of the book falls into two parts. The first chapter in Part I discusses the goal and principles of application. Subsequent chapters establish three steps for application: (1) determine the original situation; (2) determine the broader principle the author applied to his specific situation; and (3) apply the broader principle to the specific situation we face. Part II shows how these guidelines can be used for biblical commands, examples, and promises.

The book makes a positive contribution to the field of Bible study methodology. The original setting of a passage is often depicted so as to facilitate proper interpretation. Because of the original setting, the fleece Gideon placed before the Lord is rightly seen to be an example of *unbelief* rather than a pattern for finding God's will (p. 122). For the same reason, to "test the spirits," as 1 John 4:1-3 commands, has nothing to do with determining demon possession (p. 40). While the book is given over to application, it indirectly and repeatedly leads the reader through proper stages of interpretation as well. This gives interpretation its proper place as the forerunner of valid application. One might even argue that the process of finding eternal principles in any passage is more appropriately an aspect of the *interpretation* stage of Bible study rather than the application stage.

There are also some contributions to Free Grace theology. For one thing, the author is a realist in acknowledging that, according to 1 Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 5, some Christians are "worldly" (carnal). These are viewed as Christians who have never grown spiritually (pp. 19-20). The author also believes that God's love is what motivates us to desire to obey His commands (pp. 91-92). Finally, a direct statement is made that the NT believer is not under the old covenant (p. 94).

Corresponding weaknesses can also be noted. Although free from the Mosaic Law, the reader is instructed to find principles in these laws that can govern daily living. But if we are obligated to keep the *principles* of the Mosaic Code, is not this much like being under the law? While we may not keep the Sabbath (Friday-Saturday) as the Jews were commanded, are we obligated to keep by principle one day a week as a "Sabbath"? Paul implies that there is no obligation in this regard (cf. Rom 14:5). This point deserves more clarification in the book.

A bit more disappointing is the author's implications when discussing

the passage about the rich young ruler (Matt 19:16-22). In finding the principle of the story which applies to us, he states: "What Jesus demands is that we put Him first. If we have made power our god, we must be willing to give up power. If we worship sex or fame, we must be willing to renounce them as well. Nothing must be allowed to usurp Jesus' rightful place as Lord of our lives" (pp. 102-103). Since the young ruler was seeking eternal life, the inference could be made (although it is not directly stated) that renunciation of sin and self are prerequisites to being born again. On the other hand, the author may have merely sought a principle to apply to those who are already saved.

Whatever minor weaknesses this book might have, it is a highly recommended supplement that fills a void left by most books on personal Bible study.

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The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church. By Marvin Rosenthal. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990. 319 pp. Cloth, \$10.95.

Here is yet another book which claims to refute the pre-tribulation Rapture. But in this one there is a new twist. The author is neither mid- nor post-tribulational. Instead, he holds to a new placement of the Rapture which locates it around the middle of the last three and a half years of Daniel's seventieth week. He calls this view the "pre-wrath" Rapture.

Rosenthal is a graduate of Dallas Seminary and is presently the executive director of a faith mission called Zion's Hope. Although he was formerly pre-tribulational in his convictions, Rosenthal tells us that he came painfully to the conclusion that these convictions were wrong. In his book, however, he expresses an almost dogmatic certitude about many of his present persuasions.

This reviewer appreciated the overall tone of the book. Rosenthal is careful to praise his former mentors (men like John F. Walvoord, Charles C. Ryrie, and Dwight D. Pentecost), and there are no harsh personal attacks. At the same time, however, one senses here and there a slight note of condescension toward those who have not noticed the obvious

biblical facts to which Rosenthal directs us. For example, on p. 292, he suggests that nobody would have missed the connection between the seven churches (Revelation 2, 3) and Daniel's seventieth week apart from their preconception that the Church is raptured *before* the seventieth week. This is both unfair and a bit snide. But by and large, Rosenthal handles his polemics rather well.

On balance, however, the book is a serious disappointment. The author's confidence in his new position is not matched by an adequate finesse in exegesis or argumentation. In fact, a book refuting Rosenthal's volume has just appeared, written by a very gifted Dallas graduate, Paul S. Karleen. (See *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church: Is It Biblical?* published, 1991, by BF Press [P.O. Box L-601, Langhorne, PA 19047], 102 pp.) Karleen does an excellent job in exposing the weaknesses in Rosenthal's conclusions.

Within the short scope of a review, we can only discuss a few of the numerous places where Rosenthal's exegesis and argumentation seem seriously flawed. Below are given four cases where some of the major premises of this book rest on extremely questionable foundations:

1. Rosenthal claims that the Great Tribulation is shortened to less than three and a half years, while "it is beyond refutation that the seventieth week of Daniel is not shortened" (p. 109). This shortening is indicated in Matt 24:21, 22 and Mark 13:20.

This distinction is crucial to Rosenthal's case since his whole scheme depends on distinguishing the Great Tribulation from the Day of the Lord (which he believes begins around the middle of the last three and a half years).

Rosenthal's argument in no way proves his point. He does not even consider the option that the last three and a half years *are*, in fact, the time frame into which a potentially longer Tribulation will be compressed. After all, the prophecy of Daniel 9 doesn't use the word "years" either, so that it is only by a process of deduction that we can determine the literal length of time. But there is no real reason why this deduction cannot also apply to the Tribulation. It is logically inadmissible to claim that the shortening of the Tribulation *necessarily* results in a shorter time span than three and a half years. To make that claim assumes what remains to be proved.

Rosenthal should also have noticed that Mark 13:20 speaks of this shortening as already an accomplished fact. God has shortened the days *already* so that their length is pre-determined. No text states that this

shortening is to a time span briefer than Daniel's seventieth week, which is equally pre-determined!

2. Rosenthal argues that the Tribulation contains no divine wrath but is "uniquely Jewish." He denies that the statement that "no flesh would be saved" (Matt 24:22) has a universal reference, but instead must mean "in context" "no Jewish [!] flesh" (pp. 174, 206, 304).

This is a forced and impossible exegesis. "No flesh" without qualification is not at all likely to be a reference only to the Jewish race. Such a reference is ruled out, in fact, by the immediately preceding verse, which states that the Great Tribulation is without parallel "since the beginning of the *world*"! This is quite different than the statement (to which Rosenthal appeals) found in Dan 12:1: "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a *nation*." Clearly, while Daniel speaks of the experience of a "nation," our Lord speaks of the experience of *mankind*.

With the collapse of this point, Rosenthal's whole system fails, since Rosenthal must show that the Great Tribulation is merely persecution of the Jews and not a time of God's wrath. But if the extinction of the whole race is threatened by this period, clearly God's wrath will be at work. Thus, on Rosenthal's own premises, a pre-wrath Rapture would have to be at least a pre-Great Tribulation Rapture!

Besides, if the Great Tribulation is the time of Jewish persecution, then Revelation itself shows that this time is three and a half years in duration (see Rev 12:6, 13-14). The flawed exposition and reasoning which Rosenthal displays in Matt 24:21, 22 are distressing.

3. Rosenthal treats the "Day of the Lord" as a fixed and static term. According to him, the definite article used in this phrase by the OT prophets shows that "they knew of only one such event" (p. 129).

Rosenthal makes a false linguistic point. Even *if* the definite article were used with this phrase, it would not prove that there was only one event to which the term could apply. When I say, "*The* dog came into *the* house," I certainly do not imply that there is only one dog or one house. But unfortunately for Rosenthal's case, the Hebrew text does *not* employ the definite article with "day" in this phrase, as Karleen has pointed out (p. 38)!

It is highly unsophisticated to make linguistic points based on faulty

concepts about language. Instead, Rosenthal should have come to grips with the OT data which suggests that the prophets felt free to use the phrase "day of the Lord" to describe the divine judgments in their own time (e.g., Joel in reference to a locust plague: Joel 2:1-11).

Nor does Rosenthal show any awareness of a distinction in the NT use of this phrase which was suggested long ago by J. F. Strombeck in *First the Rapture* (3rd ed., Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1951), 54. On such a view, there would be two NT usages of this term:

- (1) *The Day of the Lord*—A signless eschatological period which overtakes the world suddenly while man's normal life patterns are proceeding as usual (1 Thess 5:2, 3; 2 Pet 3:3, 4, 10; see also Matt 24:36-39).
- (2) *The Great (and Terrible, Notable) Day of the Lord*—An intense period of divine judgment *preceded by signs* (notably cosmic disturbances) and including the appearance of Christ in glory (cf. Joel 2:30, 31 / Acts 2:20; Rev 6:15-17; and see also Matt 24:29-31; Luke 21:25-28). We may call this "the Day of the Lord *par excellence*."

To assume, as Rosenthal does, that the biblical concept of "the day of the Lord" has but a single and fixed significance, is an enormous begging of the question.

4. Rosenthal holds with many others that the three cycles of judgment in Revelation (the seals, trumpets, and bowls) are given according to the chronological order of their fulfillment. Again, this understanding is indispensable to Rosenthal's position.

But he never demonstrates its correctness. The text of Revelation itself by no means connects the three cycles to one another in such a way as to suggest Rosenthal's approach. There is no good reason to extend the content of the seventh seal beyond 8:1. John often begins new units in this book with "and" (cf. the Greek text of 10:1; 11:1; 11:15; etc.), so that the words of 8:2 ("And I saw the seven angels . . .") can be treated as the beginning of a separate unit. Still less is there any reason to connect the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) with the bowl judgments of chapters 15 and 16.

Rosenthal gives no serious attention to the alternative view that the three cycles are to some extent parallel in the periods which they cover, and that all three carry us right up to the end of Daniel's seventieth week

just prior to the glorious appearance of our Lord. On this issue, Rosenthal has not dug deeply enough nor coped adequately with alternative positions.

Although Rosenthal claims that "a logical, unforced, chronological unfolding of Revelation has evaded pretribulationist . . . commentators" (p. 112), we may well ask whether this might not also be said of him. In the pursuit of an "unforced, chronological" understanding of Revelation, Rosenthal ends up stating that "Christ will literally return to assume His kingdom at the seventh trumpet" (p. 146). But this requires him to assign the bowl judgments of Revelation 16 to the thirty-day period mentioned in Daniel 12:11, which *follows* the last three and a half years of the seventieth week. But Revelation is totally silent about the thirty-day period mentioned in Daniel! Moreover, the glorious return of Christ in Revelation (ch. 19) is actually presented *after* the bowl judgments! And where is Armageddon in this scheme, since it too follows the bowl judgments in the text of Revelation? Neither the charts in Rosenthal's book, nor the text, inform us!

Clearly, whatever this system of thought may be, it is not an "unforced, chronological" understanding of the book of Revelation!

Finally, though this reviewer admires what he believes to be an evident sincerity on the part of the author, the publication of this book must still be viewed with reserve. A radical shift of perspective which, the author tells us, began in 1986 should probably not have been rushed into print some four years later. In the complex field of biblical prophecy, there is no substitute for years of reflection and study on the pertinent passages. A change of view in this area ought really to be tested over a considerable period of time before it is submitted to the Christian public for consideration.

The Christian public already has more than enough controversies to engage its attention. All of us who write should keep that in mind.

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PERIODICAL REVIEWS

"The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans. Part I: The Meaning of *hypakoē pisteōs* (Rom 1:5; 16:26)," D. B. Garlington, *Westminster Theological Journal* 52, 1990, pp. 201-24.

This is the first of two articles on the implications of the phrase *hypakoē pisteōs* ("the obedience of faith") in Romans. The article is divided into three main sections. First, the context of Rom 1:5 and 16:26 is rehearsed. The phrase in both verses falls within a discussion of Paul's missionary design. In other words it helps to state the goal of Paul's call as an apostle to the Gentiles. In the second section, the grammatical options are examined. Eight possible nuances are condensed into four grammatical categories and evaluated. The objective genitive ("obedience to the [Christian] faith") is rejected since the Greek definite article is absent, and the word *pistis* ("faith") does not appear elsewhere in Romans in the sense of a body of doctrine. But the subjective genitive ("the obedience which faith produces") handled together with the genitive of source, the genitive of apposition ("the obedience which is faith," i.e., believing the Gospel), and the adjectival genitive ("believing obedience") are all left for further discussion in the last major unit.

It is assumed from the start that Romans has two central purposes. First, Paul writes an apologetic for his Gospel, arguing that Jews are no longer a superior and distinct people, but a part of a new corporate identity with the Gentiles. Second, Paul also writes in order to clarify the nature of faith in his Gospel (pp. 201-202). The Greek phrase, "believing obedience," nicely summarizes these two purposes. By using the word "faith" in the phrase, any Jewish superiority within the new people of God is denied. By stressing the "obedience" (a Jewish covenant word) in that faith, Paul outlines the ethical-social concerns lest Gentiles live without law. So, the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church is illustrated in the inviolable unity of faith and works.

In the final section, the author demonstrates that "the obedience of faith" does include at least the initial act of faith in the Gospel (genitive of apposition). Several parallel texts from Romans are cited which are commonly recognized as identifying faith in Christ as an act of obedience. Of foremost importance are Rom 1:8 ("your *faith* is being proclaimed throughout the whole world") taken with 16:19 ("your

obedience has reached to all”), and 1:5 (“the *obedience of faith* among all the Gentiles”) taken with 15:18 (“resulting in the *obedience* of the Gentiles”). But, for the author, the intent of Paul’s phrase is more comprehensive than initial conversion. Both the idea of the genitive of apposition as well as that of the subjective genitive/genitive of source may be inferred. Support is culled from the role of faith and obedience in the OT, then from contextual clues in Romans. In the latter discussion, a detailed reexamination is undertaken of 1:8/16:19 and 1:5/15:18. The final conclusion is drawn that the adjectival genitive is the best grammatical category to describe Paul’s term. This designation, a purposely ambiguous grammatical structure chosen by Paul, allows for both the obedience which consists in faith (genitive of apposition) and the obedience which is the product of faith (subjective genitive/genitive of source).

The theology that faith and works are always united forms the central subject of the sequel article, but permeates the argument of the present one as well. According to Garlington, the phrase “obedience of faith” “marries faith and Christian obedience. . . . We have consequently in the phrase the key link between present justification by faith alone, on the one hand, and future judgment according to works, on the other. While it is faith which justifies here and now, it is the doer of the law, according to Rom 2:13, who will be justified in eschatological judgment” (pp. 222-23). The author goes on to say, “for Paul the faith which justifies at the present time must inevitably result in an obedience of faith which will justify in the final judgment; or phrased differently, it is by faith’s obedience that the Christian becomes a ‘doer of the law’” (p. 223). With a simple stroke of the pen, Pauline soteriology in Romans is radically altered! What is seriously overlooked in this use of 2:13 is the fact that the verse does *not* occur in Paul’s treatment of justification by faith (3:21-4:25), but in his development of the condemnation of the religious (Jew) who attempts to gain God’s eternal acceptance by means of the works of the law (2:1-29). With a touch of irony, Paul states a hypothetical possibility that destroys Jewish hopes of being justified by law (cf. 10:5-6). Thus, he uses the law according to its rightful purpose, not as a means of justification in any sense (temporal or eschatological), but as a means of the revelation of sin (cf. 3:20, the climax of the unit on man’s condemnation [1:18-3:20] in which 2:13 falls).

If one should object to his theology, it is argued that for Paul “faith alone” does not mean the absence of works altogether, but only the absence of the “Jewish demand for circumcision and commitment to an

unmodified Torah. Hence faith is not antithetical to 'good works' as such but to Jewish distinctives" (p. 223, note 98). In another place, confirmation to this thesis is found in the basic OT word for faith ('*emûnah*). Citing with approval another writer, Garlington concludes that '*emûnah* "comprehends the totality of what we commonly mean in the familiar expression 'faith and works'" (p. 209). This is far removed from the simplicity of the true Pauline Gospel in which all works are decisively excluded from faith! (Cf. Rom 4:5; Titus 3:5; Phil 3:9; Eph 2:8-9.) Subtly redefined, the Gospel becomes tragically a matter of faith plus the good works of keeping a modified Mosaic Law. It is not at all surprising, then, when the author front-loads the Gospel, seeing faith as a "transfer of Lordship" (p. 211). Again, quoting with approval another resource, the author claims that "the gospel contains within itself the resolution to be baptized and become a member of the Christian church" (p. 222).

Much of the article, seeking to prove this faith-works unity, is composed of *non sequitur* reasoning. For example, contrary to the author, the sequence of thought in Romans 1-8 (justification/sanctification) cannot be used to support the "organic relationship between a faith which justifies and a faith which works (cf. Jas 2:21f)" (p. 212). And again, while it is true that "behavior patterns hinge on one's acceptance or rejection of the truth" (pp. 221-22), it can hardly follow that one's acceptance of the Gospel will always result in consistent, practical righteousness (p. 222).

Besides the objections already mentioned, a further problem may be cited against this approach to the phrase: it cannot be established that one of the purposes of Romans is to define the nature of faith. In seeming contradiction to himself, the author states, "One of the most striking phenomena of Paul's letter is that he nowhere debates the definition of faith with his opponents. . . . Paul simply assumes the OT conception [i.e., faith and works are inseparable] as common ground between himself and those with whom he disagrees" (p. 210). It is difficult to see how Paul seeks to define faith and at the same time he assumes what faith is. Indeed, Paul may have assumed a definition of faith from the OT. But faith in the OT was certainly not linked inseparably to works. In Romans 4, where Paul described at length the faith which justifies, he had every opportunity to define it in terms of obedience or works. The OT faith of David and Abraham are his chief examples. But it is precisely at this place that Paul takes great pains to extricate all works from their faith (Rom 4:1-6).

For clarity and simplicity, the genitive of apposition is still the superior choice. To believe the Gospel is certainly an act of obedience (Acts 6:7; 2 Thess 1:8; John 3:36). But it is just as certainly apart from all works.

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"God's Promise Plan and His Gracious Law," Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.
Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 33, 1990, pp. 289-302.

Over the past two decades Walter Kaiser has made a singular and conscientious attempt to reconcile dispensational and Reformed theology by maintaining that God's *promise* is the central organizing theme of Scripture. According to Kaiser, the "promise plan" is God's pledge to do or to be something for OT Israel with blessing that ultimately extends to all nations. Although Kaiser's "promise theology" has come under fire both from dispensational and Reformed theologians, he has remained tenacious in his conviction that *promise* is the central revelatory theme of Scripture.

According to Kaiser, "the moral law" is a theological category that spans both testaments. Kaiser's underlying contention in this article is that, "the law can and must be viewed as being divided into various components with the moral aspect of that one law as being the most basic, enduring, and normative of the various parts" (p. 300). Furthermore, avers Kaiser, "To so emphasize grace to the exclusion of resulting obligation to the moral law of God will land our present-day churches precisely where they find themselves in the current cultural morass" (p. 301). Kaiser believes that "too much confidence has been placed in the hermeneutical judgment that the law is so unified that when Christ fulfilled its ceremonial aspects the whole law ended its claim over today's believers" (p. 301).

Kaiser is to be commended for surfacing the following salutary points: He disavows Reconstruction notions of the enduring validity of the Mosaic Law, that is, he argues that specific sanctions of the OT law are no longer in effect today, such as the death penalty prescribed in the law for kidnapping, adultery, homosexuality, incest, and other offenses (pp. 293, 297); Kaiser likewise acknowledges that the Christian is no longer

under the curse of the law (p. 292); he affirms that OT saints were not saved on account of their obedience to the Mosaic Law, but by their faith in YHWH; the conditionality of such statements as "Do this and you shall live" (Lev 18:15) refers to the quality of life and enjoyment of covenantal blessing (p. 294). Finally, Kaiser is aware of recent scholarship that argues against the three-fold distinction of moral, ceremonial, and civil law, and he brings this information to light in his article.

Despite these few positive features, Kaiser's argument for the enduring validity of "the moral law" is fraught with problems. First of all, the author argues that the "ceremonial" aspects of the law (the tabernacle, the sacrificial system, and the Levitical priesthood) had a built-in obsolescence, that is, OT believers had the understanding that the ceremonial features of the law were only temporary "patterns" of greater redemptive realities yet future. But can this be proven conclusively? This concept of typology seems to give OT saints far more knowledge of NT theology than seems credible. In the opinion of this reviewer, patterns are generally determined by looking from the NT back to the OT and not vice versa.

Second, nowhere in his article does Kaiser provide a definition for *law*. Consequently, there is confusion between the moral will of God (i.e., the timeless ethical demands of God), *tôrâ* (OT law as "instruction" or the Word of God), the law as "promise" (cf. Matt 11:13), and "the moral law" (a construct of systematic theology). To complicate matters even further, Kaiser argues that "the moral law" has always been in existence, both before and after Moses received the tablets on Sinai. Yet, Kaiser would be clearer and more accurate if he maintained that *the moral will of God* has always existed, but administered differently by God at different periods of history. This is not simply a matter of quibbling over terminology, but what is at stake is the technical use of *nomos* in the NT, which in its preponderant usage refers to the Mosaic Law *in toto*, and not to a particular aspect of the law.

Third, Kaiser suggests that Matt 5:17 refers to Christ's perfect obedience ("fulfilling") to the ceremonial aspect of the law. But in this reviewer's judgment, Matt 5:17 teaches that Christ's mission to Israel was not to do away with "the Law and the Prophets" (i.e., the Scriptures), but to bring to pass all that the Scripture had commanded concerning His authoritative teaching. In the context of Matthew 5, it is the authoritative teaching of Christ that authenticates Jesus as *the Tôrâ Incarnate* (cf. Matt 5:21-48). Christ's teaching ("You have heard it said . . . but I say to you"), which evinces an authority above and beyond the

OT law, points to a distinct eschatological-programmatic shift in the ethical demands of God. Kaiser fails to state that it is Christ and His inscripturated teaching ("the law of Christ") that is the ethical norm for obedience in the NT era.

Fourth and finally, Kaiser recognizes the similarities of New Covenant promises (Jer 31:31-33) to Israel and to the Church, but makes no clear-cut distinction between Israel and the Church as the people of God (pp. 298-300). The distinction between these two programmatic entities is crucial for determining whether or not the OT law has binding force for Christians today.

Space limitations preclude a thorough critique of other deficiencies observed in Kaiser's argument. Suffice it to say that Kaiser's interpretations of Rom 2:12-16 and Matt 23:23 do not give careful attention to the textual data; Kaiser squeezes the data of Scripture through his "promise theology" grid and the resultant exegeses appear dubiously forced.

Fortunately, Kaiser does not believe that obedience to "the moral law" is required for salvation. But his three-fold classification of the law is problematic for Christian faith and practice. To continue to argue for the existence of "the moral law" adds confusion to the nature of Christian sanctification and overlooks the discontinuous nature of the law as a temporary means of moral legislation in the progress of revelation.

Gary L. Nebeker

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Dallas, TX

"Lordship Theology: The Current Controversy," Millard J. Erickson, *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 33, Spring 1991, pp. 5-15.

This is the lead article in an issue devoted to the subject of the Lordship of Christ. There are four other articles, two of which are decidedly from the Lordship Salvation position ("The Lordship of Christ: A Biblical Analysis," by Stephen G. Hatfield and "The Lordship of Christ: Implications for Evangelism," by Delos Miles). Erickson's article is an attempt to analyze the Lordship Salvation debate objectively.

Erickson proves to be fairly objective in his evaluation of both the Free

Grace and Lordship Salvation positions. He first states the position of Free Grace, citing mostly Zane Hodges's works as representative (Charles Ryrie, Michael Cocoris, Bob Wilkin, and the Grace Evangelical Society are given credit as contributors in the literature on the debate). Only John MacArthur is cited for the Lordship Salvation view, with other proponents mentioned only by name.

Although his statement of the Free Grace position is basically fair, I found one point of misinformation. He claims that *all* Free Grace proponents hold that saving faith "neither requires nor involves repentance" (p. 6). In reality, the Free Grace position includes differing views on repentance. Some believe that repentance can be viewed as synonymous with faith.

After presenting the views, Erickson attempts analysis. His analysis of three issues in the debate *all conclude in favor of MacArthur's view*. The analysis is helpful for the sake of discussion, but I flatly disagreed at places. For example, Erickson asserts that both Hodges's emphasis on justification and MacArthur's emphasis on regeneration miss the "inclusive concept of salvation." He suggests that concept to be union with Christ, and claims this emphasis favors MacArthur. My first reaction is to reflect on how Paul wrote Romans in order to explain justification (Rom 3:20–5:21) before union (Romans 6–8). The first is the basis of the second. Paul presents justification as the ground of our salvation; union with Christ as the ground of our sanctification.

The contribution of Erickson's article I appreciated most is the conclusion, entitled "Unfinished Agenda." In it he makes three suggestions for further dialogue. First, he maintains the need for a sharpening of logic and definition of terms. I agree. In this debate there is no place for ambiguity, fuzziness, or use of terminology which may have served well in the past, but now begs articulation. Second, he cautions that the divisive tone of the rhetoric be lowered and suggests the use of mediators in the debate. Can either of these things hurt? Third, he asks for "concentration on determining the precise requisites for salvation, and of those, how much must be consciously fulfilled." I agree that both views must better express the implicit implications of what it means to believe in Christ.

The article is well written and, overall, easy to follow. The reader may have to slow down in the section where logical formulas are used (unless, of course, this is a familiar field). I believe it should be read as a helpful introduction to the Lordship Salvation debate, in spite of some of Erickson's conclusions and his occasional misrepresentations of the Free

Grace position.

Charles C. Bing

Editorial Board

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

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“Are You an Overcomer?” James Rosscup, *Masterpiece*, January/February 1991, pp. 11-13.

The title of this article is misleading; it does not really deal with the NT teaching on the overcomer. Revelation 2-3, the key NT section on overcomers, is never even mentioned, much less discussed.

What the article actually discusses is the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. A more accurate title thus would be, “Are You Persevering in the Faith?”

Rosscup’s tone is irenic and his view of perseverance includes several points with which most GES members would agree. For example, Rosscup believes in the possibility of believers backsliding and failing in their Christian experience (p. 12). He refers to 1 Cor 11:30-32 and says that a “true follower” of Christ might be “lax for a time” with the result the “God may take them home to heaven early” (p. 12). And he allows that believers may not outwardly manifest sufficient good works to show others that they are saved (p. 13).

Unfortunately, Rosscup fails to dissociate himself from Lordship Salvation theology. He *implies* that trusting in Christ as one’s Savior is insufficient to save (p. 11). He repeatedly qualifies the words *faith*, *belief*, *saved*, and *salvation* with typical Lordship Salvation modifiers. For example, he refers to people who are “truly saved,” “authentically saved,” “true believers,” “bona-fide Christians,” “true follower[s],” and to those who have “real belief” and “genuine faith.”

Likewise, despite his warning that we must recognize that we may misjudge a person’s standing before God by looking at his or her works, he repeatedly suggests that the ground of personal assurance is one’s works (pp. 11, 12, 13).

I would like to have seen a clear statement somewhere in the article on what one must do to be saved. All we receive here are statements

about what the “truly saved” look like. In light of the title and the thrust of the article, the implication is that one must persevere in the faith to be saved.

Robert N. Wilkin

Associate Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

A SONG OF GRACE

ONCE FOR ALL*

- 1 Free from the law, O happy condition,
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.

Refrain:

Once for all, O sinner, receive it;
Once for all, O brother, believe it;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.

- 2 Now are we free—there's no condemnation,
Jesus provides a perfect salvation;
"Come unto Me," O hear His sweet call,
Come, and He saves us once for all.

- 3 "Children of God," O glorious calling,
Surely His grace will keep us from falling;
Passing from death to life at His call,
Blessed salvation once for all.

—Philip P. Bliss (1838-1876)

"Once for All," by Philip Bliss, is an example of the American "gospel song," which became popular during the nineteenth century. *Gospel Songs*, the title of a collection of Bliss's works, published in 1874, two years before his death, in fact provided the term which has since been used for hymns of this type. With its roots in American folk hymnody,

* In previous issues of *JOTGES* we have had four *hymns* of grace and one *psalm* of grace. With this issue we are happy to have Mrs. Dan Mosher's presentation of our first *spiritual song* of grace (see Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 for the categories, and the autumn of 1990 issue of the Journal for a discussion of them).

Frances is a graduate of the University of North Texas and studied church music at Southwestern Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas. She teaches piano as well as homeschooling her son Daniel. Besides being the pianist at Christ Congregation in Dallas, Frances teaches Sunday School and has been active in Child Evangelism Fellowship. She was also my secretary in the late 1970's, accurately typing and retyping both the text of the New King James NT, and the poetical sections of *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (both Thomas Nelson publications). Ed.

but composed, written down, and published by individuals, the gospel song is to sacred music what the works of Stephen Foster are to secular music.¹ Its simple tune, repeated refrain, and simple harmonic structure with infrequent chord changes make the typical gospel song easy to learn and remember.² This quality made these compositions particularly effective in the evangelistic movements of the late 1800's to early 1900's.

Philip Bliss, a Baptist, was associated with two of the noted evangelists of the period—Dwight L. Moody and Major D. W. Whittle. “The effectiveness of Bliss’s singing . . . first brought to Moody an awareness of the real value of music in his work. At Moody’s insistence, Bliss abandoned his teaching . . . and became song leader for Major D. W. Whittle . . .”³ Bliss was not only a talented singer and song leader, but a gifted and prolific composer and lyricist as well.

A frequent criticism of gospel songs is that they are linguistically trite, doctrinally weak, and musically dull. If such be true, “Once for All” is an outstanding exception! The author has used language skillfully and creatively to communicate profound, scriptural salvation truths. The phrases, “Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,” and, “Grace hath redeemed us” (which have scriptural bases in Gal 3:10, 13; 1 Cor 15:22; and Rom 11:5, 6) remind us of man’s utter powerlessness to save himself. The complete efficacy of Christ’s work on the Cross as the remedy to man’s dilemma is proclaimed in the phrases, “free from the law,” “Jesus hath bled and there is remission,” “Jesus provides a perfect salvation,” and, “cling to the cross.” Scriptural support for these ideas is found in Rom 8:2; Matt 26:28; 1 Pet 1:18, 19; Heb 7:25; 9:11-14; and 1 Cor 1:18. The eternal, unconditional security of the believer is expressed in the words, “now are we free—there’s no condemnation,” “surely His grace will keep us from falling,” and, of course, the triumphant, “once for all,” repeated throughout the song. Numerous Bible passages support the doctrine of eternal security, but Rom 8:1, 2; Jude 24; Rom 6:10; and Heb 10:10 seem to have had particular bearing on Bliss’s choice of words.

The melody, strongly rhythmic, with well-timed rises and falls, is vigorous and assertive. Truly, “Once for All” is a song of grace. “Faith alone in Christ alone” is woven throughout the lyrics and enhanced by a musical setting appropriate for a rousing, enthusiastic heralding of the great message of the Gospel of grace.

¹ William Jensen Reynolds, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), 108.

² *Ibid.*, 107-108.

³ *Ibid.*, 105.

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