Journal of the GRACE Evangelical Society

"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"

Journal of the
GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY
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VOLUME 5, No. 1 **SPRING 1992**

Journal of the
GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY
Published Semiannually by GES

Manuscripts and communications should be addressed to Robert N. Wilkin, Associate Editor (P.O. Box 1800, Roanoke, TX 76262-1800).

Periodical reviews and book reviews should be sent to the Review Editor, Charles Bing (524 Jayellen, Burleson, TX 76028). Books to be reviewed should be sent to the Editor, Arthur L. Farstad (6218 Prospect Ave., Dallas, TX 75214).

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: single copy, $7.50 (U.S.); 1 year, $15.00; 2 years, $28.00; 3 years, $39.00; 4 years, $48.00. Members of GES receive the Journal at no additional charge beyond the yearly membership dues of $15.00 ($10.00 for student members).

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

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

We Believe In:

THE CHURCH

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Dallas, Texas

I. Introduction

We of the Grace Evangelical Society—the national board, the boards of the Journal and of the GES Newsletter, as well as members in general—believe in the Church.

GES is what is popularly known as a "parachurch" organization, that is, we parallel the Church in interest and activity and work alongside her, trying to build her up.[1] Some parachurch societies seem to be almost "contrachurch" in their attitude, rather than loving and striving to help her to be what the NT says she is meant to be. Perhaps, if the Church was united, sound in doctrine on all fronts, and fervently active to promote both evangelism and local church life, there might be no need for parachurch organizations. But the truth is, Christianity today is not in very good shape. Even evangelicalism, the wing of professing Christendom that is supposed to be clear on the Gospel, contains large forces teaching, writing, and preaching "a *different* gospel which is not *another*" (Gal 1:6-7 NKJV, emphasis supplied).[2]

II. The Importance of the Church

Some Christians who are active in evangelism do not seem to feel that the Church is important.[3] This was not the Apostle Paul's approach. People who are keen on Eph 2:8-9 should also consider the twofold

[1] Since the NT itself presents Christ's Church under the figure of a bride and uses feminine pronouns to refer to her (see Greek or NKJV of Eph 5:25-27), we trust no one will take exception to all the feminine pronouns in our article.

[2] The apostle uses two near synonyms to show that if it's not the same as the Gospel of Grace that he and the other apostles taught, it's a heterodox "gospel": "*heteron euangelion* [a different gospel] which is not *allon* [another of the same kind]."

[3] Others find the Church all important and don't seem to have much interest in the Gospel or evangelism.

thrust of Eph *3*:8-9. Here we clearly see the twofold thrust of the Apostle Paul's ministry:

1. "To preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (the Gospel).

2. "To make all see what is the fellowship ["stewardship" in most manuscripts] of the mystery." (The "mystery" in this context is the truth of the Christian Church in its unique role in God's current dealings with humanity.)

III. Definition

Our English word *church*, unfortunately, is neither a translation of the Greek word *ekklēsia*, nor a modified transliteration.[4] If it were the former, we would probably use *assembly*, congregation,[5] or *meeting*. If the latter, *ecclesia* or *ekklesia*, both of which occasionally do appear, would have caught on.

The Greek word comes from the verb *ekkaleō*, "call out" or simply "call" in Koinē usage.[6]

In the famous text in Matt 16:18 our Lord promises to build His Church, suggesting that it is a departure from things as they were in the nation of Israel. This is strengthened by Eph 3:4-5, where Paul calls the Church a "mystery (. . . of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit."

In Acts 5:11 it is clear that the Church has already begun. The major event signalling the fulfillment of Christ's promise that lies between Matthew 16 and Acts 5 is the disciples' being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Most Christians see Pentecost, at least in some sense, as the birthday of the Christian Church.

IV. Pictures of the Church

A mere verbal definition of important words seldom satisfies most people. God has graciously given His people illustrations of what the Church is as well:

The Body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23).

Christ is the Head, the Church is His body. The term "the Christ"

[4] We find the latter (by way of Latin) in Italian *chiesa*, Spanish *iglesia*, Portuguese *igreja*, and French *église*, for example.

[5] This was used by William Tyndale in 1525/26 in the first *printed* English NT.

[6] Prefixes on verbs in *koinē* Greek do not always alter the meaning. However, it is true that the Church *is* a body *called out* of the world by God, so perhaps it does hold its force in this instance.

(with the definite article) can speak of both together. Amazing thought! Believers complete the Christ! Just as our physical bodies are the means by which we express ourselves to others—how we dress, speak, walk, act—so Christ expresses His will through the Church, His people!

The Bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27).

This picture stresses love, intimacy, and the need for the Church to be holy in order to be a suitable bride.

A Flock (John 10:16).

The fold in this verse is Israel, which will one day join the flock, the sheep who have accepted Christ, and live under His pastoral guidance.

The Temple of God (1 Cor 3:16).

It is amazing that the word for *temple* here is *naos*, not the outer temple complex (*hieron*), but the inner shrine where the Deity dwells. This picture of the Church stresses worship.

God's Building (1 Cor 3:9).

This image pictures a construction job in progress. Christ is building His Church.

God's Field (1 Cor 3:9).

The Church is a garden in which God is cultivating fruits for His own purposes and glory.

God's Household (1 Tim 3:15).

This is an image similar to that of a building, but stresses the Church's organization, order, and discipline (1 Pet 4:17).

The Pillar and Ground of the Truth (1 Tim 3:15).

Another building motif, this metaphor stresses that the Church supports and proclaims God's truth. (Pillars were used as ancient noticeboards, much as some people use telephone poles to advertise garage sales and neighborhood events and services.)

A Dwelling Place of God (Eph 2:22).

In the OT a literal, physical building was the dwelling place of God; in the NT it is people, living saints, that He indwells.

A New Man (Eph 2:15).

The old enmity between Jew and Gentile is broken down when sinners from both camps are saved and merged into one "new man."[7]

[7] I am heavily indebted to my mentor in ecclesiology, William MacDonald, for this section of our study. See his *Christ Loved the Church* (Kansas City, KS: Walterick Publishers, 1973), 6-7.

V. Christianity and Christendom

In spite of all the outward divisions among the wheat and tares of Christendom,[8] there is an "inner church" of born-again men, women, boys, and girls who constitute His body. This is the Church that shall prevail, even though it often seems that the elements of Christendom most dedicated to a works-oriented salvation are the biggest, richest, and most visible in the world's media. It's not easy to be a "minority group," especially when you know that what you have is superior to what the masses are touting as the truth.

To those friends who fear aligning themselves with a local congregation, movement, society, fellowship, or denomination that is not in the so-called "mainstream," the words of our Lord in Luke 12:32 should be encouraging: "Do not fear, *little flock*, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (emphasis added).

VI. The Churches on Main Street

If the whole Church can be pictured as one large "pearl[9] of great price" (Matt 13:45-46), each local church can be seen as a miniature pearl. Each little pearl should try to be all that the NT teaches that the Church as a whole should be: united, holy, obedient to her Head, growing in both size and spiritual stature, and concerned for others who are outside the fold.

VII. The Gospel and the Church

As we have seen, the two most important thrusts of the NT that Christians should be concerned with are *the Gospel* and *the Church*. The NT gives great leeway in presenting the Gospel so that *by all means* we may win some. Preaching, teaching, writing (the NT itself is written ministry), singing, and personal witness, are all techniques or means used by the earliest believers. Modern means such as printed books, tracts, records, radio, films, television, videotapes, cassette tapes, schools, and

[8] One is reminded of Charles Wesley's hymn:

> Though in the outward Church below
> Both wheat and tares together grow,
> Ere long shall Jesus reap the crop,
> And pluck the tares in anger up!

[9] The parallels between how a pearl is formed (through the oyster's "suffering" from a grain of sand and constantly "building it up" by accretion) and the Church are at the very least interesting, if not planned by God.

societies carry on the tradition into our electronic age. However, none of these can ever replace the living, spoken word, whether from a pulpit, school desk, or personal encounter.

The leaders of the Grace Evangelical Society fervently desire to see all churches that believe the Gospel growing more and more like the ideal Church portrayed in the NT. Not that the churches of the first century ever achieved it either! The notion that "the NT Church" went around in white robes, carrying palm fronds, and living perfect Christian lives is easy to explode. Read 1 Corinthians or Revelation 2-3 for a start!

VIII. The Gospel in the Churches

Regarding the Gospel it seems to the writer that there are three main approaches in contemporary congregations in Christendom.

Faith Plus Works Churches

Sadly, much of organized Christianity is officially and dogmatically dedicated to teaching salvation by faith PLUS. Whether that "plus" is baptism, the sacraments,[10] good works, perseverance, or character-building, something is always added to the finished work of Christ.

Free Grace Churches

On the other side of the spectrum are those congregations[11] completely (or at least in leadership and informed membership) dedicated to proclaiming a free Gospel of salvation by grace through faith plus nothing. These are the churches which GES salutes as brothers and sisters in a special way.

Mixed Churches

But there is a third fairly large group which, speaking colloquially, many would call "a mixed bag." These are churches, usually with a grace-oriented background in membership, and/or leadership that

[10] We at GES also believe in the ordinances instituted by our Lord, of course. See previous articles in this series: "We Believe in: Water Baptism," *JOTGES* 3 (Spring 1990), 3-9; and "We Believe in: The Lord's Supper," *JOTGES* 4 (Spring 1991), 3-12.

[11] Thank God there are also some schools, denominations, associations, fellowships, mission boards, societies, and publishing houses in the *sola gratia* camp.

sometimes teach or preach a less-than-clear presentation of grace. Some Sunday school teachers will be teaching a clear Gospel, others not. The pulpit may—or may not—be responsive to grace alone. Often denominational politics will determine what is emphasized. Many who are *themselves* sound are afraid to "rock the boat" by coming out for a clear-cut grace message when it is currently so controversial.

Well, it was controversial in the sixteenth century too! When Luther preached that the just shall live by faith (Rom 1:17)[12] and Calvin taught that assurance of salvation is of the essence of believing the Gospel (1 John 5:13),[13] the works-oriented state religion was furious.

IX. GES in the Real Church World

We of the Grace Evangelical Society not only *believe* in the Church—we *love* her! MacDonald starts his book on the Church with this exhortation:

> "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for her" (Eph 5:25). We, too, should love the Church and, in a sense, should give ourselves in loving, glad service—sacrificially and devotedly—in order that the Church on earth might progress and prosper and triumph.[14]

We of GES want to do all we can to encourage the biblical truths that bring salvation to individual sinners and build up local congregations.

GES and the Works-Oriented Churches

The primary ministry of GES to these churches and their leaders is one of *witness*. The *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* is found in seminaries and libraries all over the country. *New Testament Abstracts* and other scholarly works give brief but *accurate* abstracts of our leading articles. Many of these articles, or at least the abstracts, are read by scholars and students of Roman Catholic, Orthodox, liturgical, evangelical, and even liberal Protestant camps. They can investigate the grace teaching in the privacy of their favorite library or their home. Also our Newsletter—which is free of charge—reaches not only supporters,

[12] See, for example, Luther's famous *Commentary on Galatians*, *passim*.

[13] For an important discussion of this aspect of Calvin's theology, see R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: University Press, 1979), 13-21. See also M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985), 22-26, 28-29. The references in Calvin himself may be tracked through these two sources.

[14] MacDonald, *Christ Loved the Church*, 5.

but some opponents of Free Grace (an estimated 5-10% of our readership). Cassette-taped sermons and studies are also available to these people. In the future, *Deo volente*, the *Grace New Testament Commentary*, now in early stages of preparation, will be used as a tool by thousands of Bible students, ministers, and others.

Free Grace Churches

Probably the greatest value of GES as an organization is building up those church leaders and congregations that are already sound and clear (and giving a clear sound!) on the Gospel. Through the Newsletter, the Journal, tapes, seminars, and placement service for pastors, GES goes forward in faith. It also provides general *encouragement* that there are people who are willing to take the flack with which the enemies of Free Grace constantly bombard us. We are not large, endowed with money or goods, or prestigious in the eyes of the world or the world church; but we do love the Lord, we love His Church, and we love the Gospel of grace.

Mixed Churches

Some believe that our greatest ministry is to those congregations that are mixed. Which way should they turn—to the Lordship Salvation so widely taught today, or to the old path of grace which many of our spiritual ancestors trod?

If many professing Christians are confused in the "mixed" churches (not to say mixed-up!), who can blame them? These are difficult issues, and sincere and dedicated preachers, teachers, missionaries, and informed church members line up on both sides of the grace issue. This makes it difficult for average Christians to know what the truth is. Our spiritual ancestors faced the same decisions at the time of the Reformation. A main argument against the Gospel then (as now) was that it was a "new" teaching, that it had not been widely taught during long periods and in most places of Christendom. Sadly true, but truth is truth, no matter how *few* believe it. And error is error no matter how *many* believe it!

That's what GES is all about: To see that fewer and fewer people and places have been left out when the simple Gospel of Grace is presented: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

X. Conclusion

The well-known Gospel verse quoted above goes on to add "and your household." Indeed the household, that is, the *family*, is the very germ of the *Church*. The early churches[15] were house-churches, overgrown families—the household of faith. In the West we have freedom to have large, medium, or small public places of worship. These are not "churches," but church *buildings*. We, the *people*, are the Church. And we love it—and *her!*

I love Your Church, O God,
The house of Your abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood.

I love Your Church, O God;
Her walls before You stand,
Dear as the apple of Your eye,
And graven on Your hand.[16]

[15] Special buildings for church meetings didn't begin until the end of the third century. An apartment in a building complex in Rome was set aside exclusively for church services, and as far as we know, this was the first church building.

[16] Written in 1800 by Timothy Dwight, the hymn has been slightly updated in language by this editor (chiefly archaic pronouns).

A CALL TO THE WEDDING CELEBRATION:

An Exposition of Matthew 22:1-14

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I. Introduction

This article is an exposition of Matt 22:1-14, commonly referred to as the parable of the wedding celebration.[1] It is one of twelve parables in Matthew concerning "the kingdom of heaven" and one of three which speak of "the darkness outside." The prevailing interpretation of the passage is that it concerns the loss of eternal salvation. But a close analysis of the details of the parable yields some problems with this position.

The goal of the article is to give an exposition that fits the details and imagery of the parable, and which is in harmony with the context of Matthew and the teaching of the NT.

II. Exposition

1. The Setting of Matt 22:1-14

The Context of the Parable

Matthew's parable occurs in the midst of great conflict between Jesus and the Jewish religious authorities. The Lord has made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (21:1-11) and has vented His indignation on the moneychangers, buyers, and sellers in the temple (21:12-17). Following the incident of Jesus cursing the fig tree in 21:18-22, the chief priests and elders confront Jesus with a question concerning His authority (21:23). After confounding them with a question of His own (21:24-27), Jesus responds with three parables.

The first parable, in 21:28-32, condemns the leaders for not heeding the message of John the Baptist. In the second parable, 21:33-44, Jesus compares the authorities to some wicked vinedressers who kill the son of the owner of the vineyard. The final parable of this trilogy—our passage here—is the parable of the wedding celebration. What follows

[1]This article is an abridged rewriting of the author's thesis, "An Interpretation of Matthew 22:1-14" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1991).

through 22:40 are the efforts of the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees to trap Jesus with difficult questions so as to find some charge against Him. Knowing their intentions, Jesus skillfully answers each one and then follows with a question of His own concerning the identity of the Son of David (22:41-45). According to Matt 22:46, no one was able to come up with an answer nor was anyone willing to question Jesus any more. Indeed, this is the last confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish authorities until His arrest in Gethsemane (Matt 26:47-56).

The Introduction of the Parable

The parable opens in a typical way: "And Jesus answered and spoke again to them by parables, saying" (22:1).[2] Parables were the means by which Jesus often chose to teach people. A parable is simply a pictorial story drawn from everyday life that is designed to teach important spiritual truths. It can function like a metaphor or simile or just simply as an example.

The recipients of the parable are identified by the pronoun "them" (*autois*). This refers back to "the multitudes" of 21:46.[3]

According to Matt 21:46, the crowd considered Jesus to be a prophet. Previously, at the triumphal entry, the crowds *called* Jesus a prophet (Matt 21:1) and proclaimed Him as the Son of David (21:9). This directly ties back to the testimony in 20:30-31 of the two blind men on the road out of Jericho: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David." This entire episode is full of messianic implications.[4]

[2] Unless otherwise noted, the translations are those of the author.

[3] That a crowd was present in the temple is indicated in 21:26. The authorities feared their reaction if they said that John the Baptist was sent from men. There are three reasons why "them" refers to the multitudes: (1) The nearest grammatical antecedent to "them" in 22:1 is "the multitudes" of 21:46. Greek pronouns agree with their antecedents in gender and number. *Autois* is masculine and plural. The nearest masculine plural antecedent is "the multitudes" (*tous ochlous*) in 21:46. (2) Matt 21:45 specifically states that the chief priests and Pharisees heard the previous parables and knew that they were directed at them. It does *not* say that the following parable in 22:1-14 was directed to them as well. (3) According to the parallel account in Mark, the chief priests and Pharisees leave Jesus when He finishes the parable of the vineyard owner. In 12:12 Mark writes, "And they sought to lay hold of Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. And they left Him and went away" (NKJV; cf. Matt 21:45-46).

[4] Gerhard Friedrich, "*prophētēs*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 6:846. The recognition by the crowd that Jesus was a prophet probably alludes to the

Therefore it seems most reasonable to see the parable of the wedding celebration as being addressed, not to the religious authorities, but to a crowd of people, many of whom believed Jesus to be the promised Messiah. We would thus expect the lesson of the story to be primarily directed to those who believe in Christ.

2. The First Call of the King (22:2-3)

The Setting of the Story

The parable proper begins in v 2: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man, that is, a king, who gave a wedding celebration for his son." The setting of the parable is a royal wedding party and it is compared to "the kingdom of heaven."

The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of God. "The kingdom of heaven" (*hē basileia tōn ouranōn*) occurs thirty-two times in Matthew and is unique to his Gospel. That the kingdom of heaven is equivalent to the kingdom of God[5] is first of all borne out in parallel passages in

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prophet to come of Deut 18:15-19. See also R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 300.

[5] The term "kingdom of heaven" originated in Rabbinic Judaism as an alternative to "the kingdom of YHWH" and most commentators believe that *tōn ouranōn* (lit. "of the heavens") is a periphrasis or circumlocution for *tou Theou* ("of God"). Matthew, writing predominantly to Jewish Christians, deferred to them in the avoidance of the use of the name of God. See Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed., trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, rev. and augmented F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. "*basileia*," 135 (hereafter referred to as BAGD); Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 33; D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 8:100; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1988), 1:390; France, *Matthew*, 46; David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 301; Bertold Klappert, "King, Kingdom," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 2:376; Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Robert Scott Roxburghe House, Paternoster Row, E. C., 1909), 25; R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), 50-51; Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), 67.

the other Synoptic Gospels where Mark and Luke use "the kingdom of God." An example of this is found in Matt 11:11 and Luke 7:28. In Matthew Jesus says, "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (NKJV). Luke reads, "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (NKJV).[6]

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for equating the two terms is found in Matt 19:23-24: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter *the kingdom of heaven*. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter *the kingdom of God*'" (NKJV, emphasis supplied). From this passage, the two terms are clearly synonymous.

The meaning of the kingdom of God is approached differently by different commentators. All would agree that it involves the rule of God. Some stress *the activity* of the rule of God,[7] some *the sphere* of His rule,[8] and others *a combination* of the two.[9] Some believe the *present* aspect of

[6]This type of correspondence between "the kingdom of heaven" in Matthew and "the kingdom of God" in Mark and Luke also occurs in Matt 4:17/Mark 1:15; Matt 5:3/Luke 6:20; Matt 13:11/Mark 4:11/Luke 8:10; Matt 13:31/Mark 4:30/Luke 13:18; Matt 13:33/Luke 13:20; Matt 19:14/Mark 10:14/Luke 18:16; and Matt 19:23/Mark 10:23/Luke 18:24.

[7]Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:389; Floyd V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1960), 64; France, *Matthew*, 45-46; Hill, *Matthew*, 301; Plummer, *Matthew*, 25; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930), vol. 1, pt. 2, "The Gospel According to Matthew," 24-25; Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "*basileia*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 1:582; Tasker, *Matthew*, 51.

[8]Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, rev. Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 1:19; Alexander Balmain Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1900-1910; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 1:80; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 68; Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Kingdom and Matthew's Gospel," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, ed. Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 20.

[9]Beare, *Matthew*, 35, 37; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 95; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990), 12-19.

the kingdom predominates,[10] while others think the primary emphasis is *eschatological.*[11] As before, some expositors combine the two.[12] To some extent the kingdom of God is all of the above. As will be shown, the reference to the kingdom in our parable is an eschatological one.

The predominant significance of a "wedding celebration" (*gamos*) in the NT is eschatological. The Jews generally associated the concept of the wedding feast with the future reign of the Messiah (see below). The kingdom of God is the future, eternal, and righteous reign of the triune God, manifested by the incarnate Son of God, over the creation and the earth.

The first characters of the parable are "the king" and "his son." The imagery of "the king" here refers to God the Father with Christ being "his son."[13] That this is so can be shown from the identical terminology of Matt 18:23. This is the only other time the expression "a man, that is, a king" (*anthrōpō basilei*) is used in the NT and it is explicitly identified by Jesus as God the Father (18:35).

The term "wedding celebration" (*gamos*) occurs sixteen times in the NT[14] with the unambiguous meaning of "wedding" or "wedding

[10] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:19; France, *Matthew*, 45-46; Hill, *Matthew*, 301.

[11] Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1912), lxvii, lxix; BAGD, s.v. *"basileia,"* 135; Beare, *Matthew*, 35, 37; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:389; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 68; Toussaint, "The Kingdom and Matthew's Gospel," 20.

[12] Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 122; Carson, "Matthew," 8:100; Plummer, *Matthew*, 25-26.

[13] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:219; Beare, *Matthew*, 435; Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 314-15; Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, 6th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1895), 465; Carson, "Matthew," 8:456; Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 2:428; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 433; H. A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1948), 281; G. H. Lang, *The Parabolic Teaching of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 301, 304; Lenski, *Matthew*, 848; Ethelbert Stauffer, *"gameō, gamos,"* in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Limited, 1964), 1:648-57; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 254.

[14] The passages are Matt 22:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 25:10; Luke 12:36; 14:8; John 2:1, 2; Heb 13:4; Rev 19:7, 9.

celebration." It occurs most often in an eschatological setting, the best example of this being the description of the marriage of the Lamb in Rev 19:7, 9. Here, the faithful saints are symbolically bound together in marriage to their Lord.

The wedding celebration had great eschatological symbolism for devout Jews.[15] The marriage of God and Israel is illustrated in OT passages like Isa 62:4-5, Jer 2:2, 31:2, Ezek 16:32, and Hos 2:2. In Isa 25:6-9, 65:8-16, and Ps 22:26-29, the messianic reign is compared to a feast or banquet.

In addition to the OT, this eschatological banquet imagery appears in Near Eastern and rabbinic literature, Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and the Qumran literature.[16]

In Jewish eschatological expectation God is the One who renews the marriage bond with His people. In the NT Christ takes the place of God as the heavenly bridegroom.[17]

Thus, the introduction to the parable in the first two verses establishes the eschatological setting of the parable. This is due to the imagery associated with the wedding celebration. Whatever the parable is about, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to it.

[15] Paul H. Ballard, "Reasons for Refusing the Great Supper," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 23 (October 1972): 347; Blomberg, *Parables*, 233-34; J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Limited, 1970), 134; Edersheim, *Life and Times*, 1:549; John Navone, "The Parable of the Banquet," *The Bible Today* 14 (November 1964): 926; Richard Chenevix Trench, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1847), 181.

[16] Stauffer summarizes: "In the world of Israel and Judah, too, there is reference to the marriage between God and the land or people of Israel . . . Wholly along the lines of the OT the Rabbis extolled the conclusion of the covenant at Sinai as the marriage of Yahweh with Israel . . . But the final renewal of the covenant between God and the people, intimated by the prophets, was expected by the Rabbis in the days of the Messiah. Thus we often find the view that in these days there will take place the true marriage feast . . . Jesus moves wholly within the circle of ideas of His contemporaries when He expresses the meaning and glory of the Messianic period in the images of the wedding and the wedding feast."

For Qumran, see for example, Midrash Rabbah Exodus 18:10; 2 Esdras 2:34-48; 1QSamuel 2:11-22. For other examples from extrabiblical literature see Robert Wayne Oliver, "The Concept of the Messianic Banquet in the Teachings of Jesus" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984), 14-24.

[17] Stauffer, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "*gameō, gamos,*" 1:653-55.

The Invitation (22:3a)

The time had come for the wedding celebration to begin. Therefore, it is also time for the people who had been invited to come: "And he sent his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding celebration" (22:3a).

In accordance with Jewish marriage customs of the day, the king sends "his servants" to contact those who had previously been invited and to advise them to come to the wedding celebration. Typically, at some time prior to the banquet, invitations were sent. Then, when the time for the celebration itself arrived, the servants were sent to advise that everything was ready and it was time to come.[18]

The previous unrecorded invitation represents the general call by God to the messianic banquet made through the OT prophets.[19] The recorded invitation by the servants in v 3 is best interpreted as the invitation to the wedding banquet for Christ, in the coming kingdom, by John the Baptist, the twelve apostles, and other early pre-Pentecost witnesses.[20]

The Response (22:3b)

Those initially invited reject the offer: "they did not wish to come"

[18] Edersheim notes that in the Midrash on Lam 4:2, it is mentioned that none of the inhabitants of Jerusalem went to a feast until the invitation had been given and repeated. See Edersheim, *Life and Times*, 2:427.

[19] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:218; Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 465-66; Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:270; Lenski, *Matthew*, 848; Alan Hugh M'Neile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan & Company Limited, 1915), 314; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 1:173; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 254.

[20] Bruce, Robertson, and Toussaint believe these servants refer to John the Baptist and Jesus. See Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:270; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 1:173; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 254. Others think these represent John the Baptist, Jesus, the twelve apostles, and the seventy. See Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:218 (does not include Jesus); Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 466 (does not include John the Baptist); Lang, *Parabolic Teaching*, 303 (does not include John the Baptist); Trench, *Parables*, 182 (does not include Jesus or the seventy); M'Neile, *Matthew*, 314 (does not include the seventy). Lenski says the reference is to the post-resurrection apostles only. See Lenski, *Matthew*, 848. Gundry maintains the reference is to the OT prophets who brought the message of God to Israel. See Gundry, *Matthew*, 434. It should be noted that some of the commentators consider Jesus Himself to be in this group of servants. But this seems inconsistent since Jesus is the "son" of the parable. He would not likely be one of the servants as well.

(22:3b). They were expected to attend the royal function but refused to do so.[21] To decline an invitation by a commoner without a legitimate excuse would be insulting. But to do this to a monarch would be even more so. This repudiation of the king sets the stage for the second call to the wedding celebration.

3. The Second Call of the King (22:4-6)

The Second Invitation (22:4)

The king now issues a second invitation (v 4): "Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Say to those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my noon meal,[22] my oxen and fattened cattle are slaughtered, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding celebration."'"

The king sends more servants to the same group of people. The message is more specific than before, possibly to provide added incentive for them to come.[23] The first part of the message concerns the nature of the wedding banquet. This meal is now ready and waiting. The king has already prepared everything in advance, anticipating the acceptance of his invitation to the banquet.

The menu of "oxen and fattened cattle" indicates a feast of great magnitude.[24] Also, since the animals had already been slaughtered, they must be eaten without delay.[25] There is, therefore, a sense of urgency in the message.

The message is summarized in the phrase, "all things are ready." The king has gone to great lengths to prepare the banquet for the people. On the basis of their expected acceptance of his invitation, he has made everything ready.

The invitation ends with a final plea: "Come to the wedding celebration." The king earnestly desires the presence of the people he had invited to the wedding celebration. He has expended much effort in preparing the feast and has overlooked their first rejection.

[21] The imperfect tense of "wish" (*thelō*) indicates a persistent and deliberate refusal. See Carson, "Matthew," 8:456; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 1:174; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 255.

[22] The "noon meal" (*ariston*) is literally "breakfast," the first of two meals, and was taken during the mid-morning. It began the festivities. Lenski specifies the time of this meal as about 9 a.m. (*Matthew*, 850).

[23] Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:270; Carson, "Matthew," 8:456.

[24] Bruce, Ibid.; Lenski, *Matthew*, 850.

[25] Bruce, Ibid.

The second group of servants represents the post-Pentecost missionaries for Christ.[26] Through these, God continued to offer to Israel a place at the wedding celebration for His Son. The parable now turns to the second response of the invitees.

The Second Response (22:5-6)

Those invited a second time respond in two ways. Some are apathetic; some are openly antagonistic. The rejection of the first group of people is found in v 5: "But, paying no attention, they went away, the one to his own field, the other to his business." The attitude of these people is one of indifference. They leave the servants and return to their own affairs. The first rejection was very insulting to the king since the invitation to a royal function is both an honor and a command.[27] To do this on the grounds of routine business commitments is even more insulting.[28]

A second group of invitees responds with open rebellion and violence: "But the others, after seizing his servants, mistreated and killed (them)" (22:6).

The word "mistreated" (*hybrisan*) denotes mistreatment which is of a violent nature and may involve both verbal and physical abuse.[29] This

[26] The typical identification of the servants of verse four in the commentaries are the apostles after the Resurrection (Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:218 [apostles and evangelists]; Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 467; Ironside, *Matthew*, 282-84; Lang, *Parabolic Teaching*, 303; Trench, *Parables*, 183 [general post-crucifixion invitation]); John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles (M'Neile, *Matthew*, 314); Jesus and the apostles (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 386]); the apostles with no reference to time (Beare, *Matthew*, 435; Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:270; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, rev. ed., translated by S. H. Hooke [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963], 68); apostles and missionaries (Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 254); successors to the apostles (Lenski, *Matthew*, 850); and, along with the first group of servants, as a general reference to all of the messengers and prophets of God (Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980], 103; B. T. D. Smith, *The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels* [Cambridge: At the University Press, 1937], 204).

[27] Carson, "Matthew," 8:456.

[28] David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 134.

[29] The term is used four other times in the NT: Luke 11:45; Luke 18:32; Acts 14:5; and 1 Thess 2:2. Our word *hubris*, "insolent pride or presumption" (*Oxford American Dictionary*), is derived from this root.

abuse went one step further, because they also *killed* the servants.[30] The violence of the people against the servants is representative of the persecution and martyrdom of the post-resurrection apostles and Christian witnesses by the Jews,[31] most particularly by the religious authorities who are here "the others" (*hoi loipoi*, "the rest").[32]

The second refusal of the king's graciousness now sets the stage for his second response.

4. The First Judgment of the King (22:7)

The king, who had previously responded graciously, now responds in wrath: "And when the king heard (it), he became angry. And by sending his army,[33] he destroyed those murderers and burned their city.[34]

[30]The violence introduced here unsettles many commentators. Tasker believes that vv 5 and 6 were originally *marginal* comments that became assimilated into the text in order to harmonize with the violence of 21:35-36 and to stress the persecutions of the early Christians (*Matthew*, 206). There is *no textual evidence* to support this. Some hold a similar position in relation to vv 6 and 7. See Robert H. Albers, "Perspectives on the Parables—Glimpses of the Kingdom of God," *Word and World* 4 (Fall 1984): 452; Allen, *Matthew*, 234; Benjamin W. Bacon, "Two Parables of Lost Opportunity," *The Hibbert Journal* 21 (January 1923): 345; Hill, *Matthew*, 302; M'Neile, *Matthew*, 315. While it is true that, at this point, the probability of this being a real life occurrence is questionable, it must be remembered that a parable is not a "sober historical narrative" (France, *Matthew*, 312) but a figurative story in which improbabilities may be introduced in order to make the point. See Bruce, "Synoptic Gospels," 1:271. The violence adds great impact and shows the seriousness of rejecting the king's offer.

[31] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:219; Allen, *Matthew*, 234; Beare, *Matthew*, 435; France, *Matthew*, 312; Hill, *Matthew*, 302; Jeremias, *Parables*, 69; Lenski, *Matthew*, 851; M'Neile, *Matthew*, 315.

[32] Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 471; Bruce, "Synoptic Gospels," 1:271.

[33] The Greek plural *strateumata* refers to a single army. See James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3, *Syntax*, by Nigel Turner (Edinburgh: T. &. T. Clark Limited, 1963), 26. The term may refer to a small detachment of soldiers (cf. Luke 23:11; Acts 23:10, 23, 27), a large army (cf. 2 Maccabees 5:24; Rev 9:16), or possibly the bodyguard of the king (Gundry, *Matthew*, 437).

[34] Rather than unwarranted violence Selbie sees vividness and color in the description of the king. He says, "The impulsive and arbitrary action of the king has about it a real touch of Oriental despotism." See W. B. Selbie, "The Parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt. XXII. 1-14)," *The Expository Times* 37 (October 1925–September 1926): 267.

First, those who killed the servants are destroyed. It seems as though the persons of v 5 who were merely apathetic are spared.

The second act of destruction is the burning of the city of the murderers.[35] This verse seems to be a clear reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70.[36] The repeated rejection by Israel of the invitation of God through His servants culminated in the sacking of that nation's capital.

The king has now issued two invitations to those he had invited to the wedding celebration for his son and has twice been refused. The second refusal brought some a deservedly harsh judgment by the king. The verses as a whole concisely depict the sad history of the nation of Israel. God, through His servants, repeatedly offered the people an invitation to attend the wedding celebration for His Son, the Messiah. Their persistent refusal culminated in the Romans destroying Jerusalem.

5. The Third Call of the King (22:8-10)

The New Invitation (22:8-9)

Now the king renews his efforts to reward a select group of people

[35] This is the only occurrence of "burned" (*eneprēse*) in the NT, but it appears 46 times in the LXX. All but twice it refers to the physical destruction of something with fire, most commonly cities.

[36] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:219; Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament ed., ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 71; Beare, *Matthew*, 435; Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 472; Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:271; Edersheim, *Life and Times*, 2:429; France, *Matthew*, 312; Hill, *Matthew*, 302; Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 2nd. ed. (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1987), 87; Ironside, *Matthew*, 284; Jeremias, *Parables*, 33; Lang, *Parabolic Teaching*, 303; Lenski, *Matthew*, 852; M'Neile, *Matthew*, 315; Pentecost, *Parables*, 141; Pentecost, *Words and Works*, 386; Plummer, *Matthew*, 301; Swete, *Parables*, 77; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 254; Trench, *Parables*, 186; John F. Walvoord, *Matthew* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 165; Wenham, *Parables*, 135. For objections to this position see Blomberg, *Parables*, 120-21; Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:271; Carson, "Matthew," 8:457; France, *Matthew*, 312; Eduard Lohse, "*Siōn, Ierousalēm, Ierosolyma, Ierosolymitēs,*" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 7:331; Bo Reicke, "Synoptic Prophecies on the Destruction of Jerusalem," in *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, ed. David Edward Aune (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 123; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 20; Tasker, *Matthew*, 207.

with the honor of attending the wedding celebration of his son. He sends out his servants with new instructions. But first, an explanation is in order: "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding celebration is ready, but those who had been invited were not worthy'" (22:8). The king did not deem the ones he had originally invited as deserving of a place at the banquet.

The new orders for the servants involve an expansion of the invitation. Verse 9 says, "Go, therefore, to the streets,[37] and whoever you should find, invite to the wedding celebration." The imagery depicts the extension of the invitation to the banquet to all people, including the Gentiles.[38] This echoes what Jesus had just told the authorities in 21:43: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (NKJV).

The Response (22:10)

The obedience and success of the servants is reflected in v 10a: "And when those servants went out to the streets, they gathered all whom they found, bad and good." The servants obeyed their king and went out and amassed a new collection of people to attend the banquet. Although the text does not explicitly state that an invitation was issued, it must be inferred that one was given and that these people responded affirmatively.

The people are described as "bad and good." This signifies the varying moral states of those who accepted the invitation to the banquet. The servants did not discriminate as to whom they invited.[39] All who were

[37] The phrase *tas diexodous tōn hodōn* is literally something like "the streets of the ways." Bruce comments: "It is impossible to determine with certainty what is meant by the expression in the text. It may either signify the roads leading out from the town into the country, or the crossings of such, or the streets leading into open places and squares in the town. The general idea is: places where men are likely to be found, whether in town or in country." See Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 459-60. It is expressed nicely in Franklin Mason North's hymn "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life."

[38] This is the traditional view of the commentators. See Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:271; Gundry, *Matthew*, 437-38; Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 87; Ironside, *Matthew*, 285; Lang, *Parabolic Teaching*, 303; Lenski, *Matthew*, 853-54; Plummer, *Matthew*, 301; Selbie, "Parable," 268; Swete, *Parables*, 79; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 254; Trench, *Parables*, 187; Wenham, *Parables*, 135.

[39] Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 475-76; Hill, *Matthew*, 302; Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 87.

willing to come were welcome. Hodges provides an example:

> The two named converts of the Evangelist Philip—Simon Magus and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:9-40)—were opposites of the kind suggested in this parable. One was steeped in sorcery, the other was steeped in Scripture. But both, on Scriptural testimony, became Christians (8:13, 38). The "bad" and the "good" were gathered in.[40]

The results of the expanded offer are expressed in v 10b: "And the wedding celebration was filled with guests."[41] The desire of the king to have many people in attendance at the wedding celebration for his son is finally realized.

6. The Second Judgment of the King (22:11-14)

The Evaluation of the Guests (22:11-12)

The scene now shifts to the banquet itself (v 11): "But when the king went in to see the guests, he saw a man there who was not clothed in a wedding garment.[42] The wedding party is now in progress and the king enters the palace to observe the guests.[43] He immediately notices a man dressed unsuitably for a wedding. It was customary for each person who would attend such an affair to clothe himself appropriately before going. The man obviously did not prepare himself in a fitting way for a royal banquet.[44]

The "wedding garment" is best interpreted as being a picture of good

[40] Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 87. For arguments supporting Simon's being a believer, see James Inglis, "Simon Magus" (*JOTGES* 2 [Spring 1989], 45-54).

[41] "Guests" is literally "those who are reclining" (*tōn anakeimenōn*). This reflects the position people took around a banquet table. See also 22:11.

[42] Some commentators see 22:1-10 as one parable and 22:11-14 as another parable conflated to 1-10. Albers thinks this is because only one man is pictured as not having a garment. See Albers, "Perspectives," 452. Others think the verses are inappropriate because the guests could hardly have been expected to provide suitable garments for themselves. See Allen, *Matthew*, 234; M'Neile, *Matthew*, 316; Tasker, *Matthew*, 207. Some hold this position because of the use of *diakonos* ("servant") in verse 13 and *doulos* ("servant") in 1-10. See E. H. Merriman, "Matthew XXII. 1-14," *The Expository Times* 66 (October 1954–September 1955): 61. Beare and Plummer express this view but give no reason for it. See Beare, *Matthew*, 436; Plummer, *Matthew*, 303.

[43] It was apparently customary for the host not to partake of the meal with the guests. See Jeremias, *Parables*, 187.

[44] This one man is representative of a class of people. He illustrates the principle. See Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 477; Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:272; M'Neile, *Matthew*, 316.

works. This is most clearly seen in the description of the marriage of the Lamb in Rev 19:7-9. As noted earlier, the setting for both Rev 19:7-9 and Matt 22:1-14 is an eschatological banquet (*gamos*, cf. Matt 22:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; Rev 19:7, 9). The banquet of Rev 19:7-9 is also the only other eschatological wedding celebration in the NT where the clothing worn by the participants is mentioned. The wedding clothes of Matt 22:11 correspond to the clothes worn by the bride at the wedding of the Lamb in Rev 19:8. She is said to be clothed in "fine linen, clean and bright" (NKJV). Further, this fine linen is described as "the righteous acts of the saints" (NKJV). And in the previous verse, it states that she "has made herself ready" (NKJV). This is in definite contrast to the man *without* the garment in Matt 22:13, who did *not* make himself ready.

There are two main views found in the commentaries concerning the identity and meaning of the wedding garment. First, the wedding garment could be symbolic of *the positional righteousness* imputed by Christ when a person believes.[45] The guest without the wedding garment, therefore, would be an unbeliever. This is thought to be demonstrated by a Jewish custom in which the host provided his guests with the proper attire.[46] But the evidence for this view is inadequate and, as most of the commentators would agree, irrelevant to the story.[47] If the man in question were an unbeliever then it seems that he would not be present at the banquet in the first place.

The second position relates the wedding garment to *the righteous lifestyle* which can be expected of true believers.[48] The improperly

[45] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:220; Barbieri, "Matthew," 71; Ironside, *Matthew*, 287; Lenski, *Matthew*, 857; Wil Poteate, Jr., "Matthew and Luke's Use of *ho klauthmos kai ho brygmos tōn odontōn*" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1989), 66, 69; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 256.

[46] Barbieri, "Matthew," 71; Ironside, *Matthew*, 286; Kistemaker, *Parables*, 104-105; Lenski, *Matthew*, 856; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 256.

[47] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:220; Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 479-80; Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:272; Carson, "Matthew," 8:457; Edersheim, *Life and Times*, 2:429; France, *Matthew*, 313; Tasker, *Matthew*, 207. Plummer makes an analogy to the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1-13) and notes that the bridegroom did not provide the oil for the lamps; they had to provide their own. See Plummer, *Matthew*, 303. Jeremias seems to be inconsistent here. On the one hand he believes that the provision of appropriate clothing for the guests of the banquet by the king was not the custom of the time. Yet he also says, "God clothes the redeemed with the wedding-garment of salvation." See Jeremias, *Parables*, 65, 188-89.

[48] Albers, "Perspectives," 453; France, *Matthew*, 313; Gundry, *Matthew*, 439; Hill, *Matthew*, 302-303; Lang, *Parabolic Teaching*, 309; Smith, *Parables*, 206; Edmund F. Sutcliffe, "Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 28 (April 1961): 131; Swete, *Parables*, 80-81; Wenham, *Parables*, 136.

clothed man is therefore either an unbeliever or a believer who has lost his salvation. The latter of these two options must be rejected outright. The former is problematic because, as before, the man is already present at the banquet. If he is, in reality, an unbeliever, how was he able to enter the banquet to begin with?[49]

The most reasonable conclusion is that the wedding garment is a figure for righteous living.[50] Therefore, this man did not faithfully perform the good works that are necessary to be present at the wedding banquet. This also leads to the conclusion that eternal salvation is not an issue in this passage. This is because of the clear testimony of the NT that salvation in the eternal sense is by faith alone. Good works have absolutely nothing to do with securing eternal life. But according to this parable, they have much to do with presence at the wedding celebration.[51] Hodges concludes:

> But it is to the wedding itself, and not merely to the Kingdom as such, that the call is extended. That certainly implies a saving belief in the message about the King's Son. But it involves more than that. It involves also a willingness to be His disciple, to love righteousness and hate wickedness as He did, to take up our own cross as He took up His.
>
> In short, it involves a willingness to enter the Kingdom prepared for its special privileges. It means coming to the wedding properly dressed![52]

[49] Carson apparently senses this tension when he notes that the righteous acts represented by the wedding garment are essential, not to *enter* the banquet, but to *remain* there. See Carson, "Matthew," 8:457.

[50] In the Pauline system, the wedding garment of good works is expressed in a passage like Eph 4:22-24. There Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to put off the corrupt old man, be renewed, and "put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness" (v 24). The Greek verb for "put on" is *endyō*, which is the same word here in v 11 ("clothed").

[51] Many commentators, either implicitly or explicitly, seem to believe that faith is not the *sole* requirement for entrance into the kingdom. Having equated the wedding banquet with the kingdom, they then add obedience to the salvation formula. The words of Senior are representative of this position: "The 'Church' according to Matthew is, therefore, the assembly of those who respond in faith and obedience to the invitation of the coming kingdom (22:1-14; 21:33-46)." See Donald Senior, *What Are They Saying About Matthew?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 72. See also the extended discussion in France, *Matthew*, 313.

[52] Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 88. The correspondence between the banquet and the kingdom will be discussed shortly.

The king goes on to question the man: "Friend, how have you entered here not having a wedding garment?" (v 12a). The king has recognized that the man has not adequately prepared himself to come to the royal affair, and so questions him as to why not. But the offender offered no reply (v 12b): "But he was silent." The man had no defense for his negligence.

To summarize, the imagery of this section represents a scene of judgment by God. For many expositors, this is a "final judgment" where the righteous redeemed are separated from the unrighteous lost.[53] But as has been demonstrated, it is a viable, and I believe a better, interpretive option to view the people at the banquet, including the inappropriately clothed man, as believers.[54] Therefore, it is perhaps more natural to see this occasion as depicting the Judgment Seat of Christ where God observes and evaluates the life and works, both good and bad, of believers in order either to recompense or to deny them reward.[55] Participation in the wedding celebration, then, can reasonably be viewed as a reward for good works done in a believer's life.

More specifically, the wedding supper can be construed to relate to a faithful believer's co-reigning with Christ. According to Heb 12:2, "Jesus [is] the author and finisher of our faith who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (NKJV). The reference to "joy" here is most likely a reference to Christ's future joy as King (see Heb 1:8-9), for which He "endured." And Jesus will be pleased to give the joyful privilege of reigning with Him to believers who likewise endure: "To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev 3:21 NKJV). Further, the idea of reigning with Christ seems to be related to dining with Him. In Luke 22:28-30, Jesus spoke to His disciples and said:

[53] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:220; Beare, *Matthew*, 313; Carson, "Matthew," 8:457; France, *Matthew*, 313; Gundry, *Matthew*, 439-40; Dan O. Via, "The Relationship of Form to Content in the Parables: The Wedding Feast," *Interpretation* 25 (April 1971): 178. For the amillennialist, this is the general judgment at the second coming of Christ and before the eternal state. For the premillennialist, it is the judgment which precedes the inauguration of the millennial kingdom. See Barbieri, "Matthew," 50; Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 254. This position seems to be inconsistent since the banquet is clearly set *within the confines of the kingdom*.

[54] This interpretation will be further discussed in the commentary on v 13.

[55] Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 88. Cf. 1 Cor 3:14-15.

"But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (NKJV). Therefore, to be at the wedding banquet, to eat and drink at His table, is to reign with Christ. Lang concludes: "Thus authority in the kingdom, and the honour of sitting at His own, the chief, table in the day of His royal feasting, are plainly promised as superior rewards for superior devotion."[56]

The Consequence of the Evaluation (22:13)

The man is cast into the darkness outside. The king responds to the impropriety of the man in v 13a: "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him foot and hand, take (him) away, and cast (him) out into the darkness outside."

The man is tossed out of the wedding celebration into "the darkness outside" (*to skotos to exōteron*). Wedding celebrations typically lasted long into the night and so, in the imagery of the story, the man is cast into the darkness of night outside the well-lighted banquet hall. It is best to understand "the darkness outside"[57] as a figure for exclusion from the joy of co-reigning with Christ, an exclusion which will produce tears and regret. Since his feet and hands are bound, he is unable to serve in the Lord's government,[58] and so misses out on the joy of the wedding celebration. This is the most fair interpretation for four reasons:

First, there is nothing inherent in the phrase that would automatically make it refer to hell.[59] It is true that the imagery associated with darkness is often that of a place of sorrow reserved for the unrighteous.[60] But there is nothing in the text of Matt 22:13 that indicates that "the darkness outside" is to be associated with the sort of punishment described in

[56] G. H. Lang, *Firstborn Sons*, 2d. ed. (London and Edinburgh: Oliphants, Limited, 1943), 47.

[57] The traditional translation, "*outer* darkness," tends to suggest darkness in *outer* space, a further influence towards the common interpretation. Ed.

[58] Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 89; Lang, *Parabolic Teaching*, 307-308.

[59] Commentators generally relate "outer darkness" to a place of eternal torment away from God which is reserved for the unbeliever. See Allen, *Matthew*, 236; Barbieri, "Matthew," 50; Beare, *Matthew*, 313; Filson, *Matthew*, 233; Ironside, *Matthew*, 290; Lenski, *Matthew*, 858; Poteate, "Matthew and Luke," 67; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 1:65.

[60] See, for example, 1 Sam 2:9: "But the wicked shall be silent in darkness." Jude 13 also describes the false teachers as "wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness is forever kept."

2 Thess 1:8-9. There, "flaming fire," "vengeance," and "punishment with everlasting destruction" are the prescribed consequences for the unbeliever. But there is no punishment like this mentioned in Matt 22:13 and to believe it is inherent in the concept of darkness is to import an idea into the text that is not required.[61]

Second, the wedding celebration *is not* the kingdom of God; it is *in* the kingdom of God. Many consider the banquet to be representative of the kingdom, so that when the man is cast out of the banquet, he is cast out of the kingdom.[62] This is problematic because there is nothing in the parable itself that indicates this. In fact, it is more natural from the text to see the banquet hall as being *in* the kingdom, but not the kingdom *itself*. There is every indication that the king is a great king. He had many servants, had the resources to put on a great wedding celebration, and commanded an army. The people he invited lived in a city. It is only reasonable, therefore, to assume that his kingdom must extend beyond the confines of the palace. This man is most assuredly put out of the palace itself. But it is more natural by far to view him as still being in the kingdom.[63]

Third, this position is supported by the other two occurrences of "the darkness outside" in the NT (Matt 8:12; 25:30). In Matthew 8, Jesus

[61] At this point the commentary tradition seems to treat "the darkness outside" as if it were literal. This may be due to nothing more than the preconceived notion that darkness must refer to a literal hell. But it must be remembered that the parable as a whole and in its parts is symbolic. There is no good reason for "the darkness outside" to be literal when the rest of the story is figurative. Indeed, "the darkness outside" is not literal. It is not a place, but is figurative for an experience of lost rank and sadness that is contrasted to an experience of joy and honor, which is represented by the wedding feast. See Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 89; Charles Stanley, *Eternal Security* (Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1990), 126-27.

[62] Pentecost is representative of this view: "Since Christ was using the wedding banquet as a figure of His millennial kingdom, we know this parable teaches the offer of the kingdom." See Pentecost, *Kingdom*, 231.

[63] A second problem with the view that the wedding celebration is synonymous with the kingdom concerns the eternal security of the believer. The man who is not properly clothed is most definitely present at the banquet and in the kingdom. If the banquet represents the kingdom of God, which is entered by faith, then it is plain that, when he is cast out of the banquet, he has lost his salvation. This would of course violate the orthodox doctrine of eternal security. It is more satisfying from a theological perspective to see the wedding banquet as being a part of, or within, the kingdom. (Since parables alone cannot be the basis for the formulation of doctrine, the theology of the interpreter must come to bear on the parable to a certain extent.)

encounters the centurion whose servant was sick. After commending the faith of the man in v 10, Jesus says, "And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down[64] with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 8:11-12, NKJV). The expression "sons of the kingdom" means those who are natural and rightful heirs of the kingdom.[65] The only other time "sons of the kingdom" occurs is in Matt 13:38. There, when explaining the meaning of the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus identifies the good seed as the "sons of the kingdom." Therefore, the sons of the kingdom belong in the kingdom. And yet, because they were not worthy of reclining at the same table as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they were cast into "the darkness outside." From this, it seems reasonable that, from the perspective of Matthew, "the darkness outside" is within the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 25:14-30 records the parable of the talents. The servant who did nothing with what his master gave him has his talent taken away (v 28) and is cast into "the darkness outside" where "there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v 30). Although some consider this third unprofitable servant to be an unbeliever, it is probably better to regard him as an unrewarded believer. Again, it seems as though "the darkness outside" is associated with one who is in the kingdom. Huber supports this position:

> The details of the contexts of both 8:12 and 22:13 set the figure of the wedding feast in the millennium. The context and details of 25:30 argue for all the servants of the parable to represent regenerated men. Thus in all three passages the "outer darkness" may not refer to eternal punishment in hell. A probable alternative is that it refers to the loss of a specific reward in the millennial kingdom. The common denominator in all three passages is that special joy to be inherited by the faithful believer, implied by the wedding feast in 8:12 and 22:13 and specifically mentioned in 25:30. The "outer darkness," then may very likely refer to the loss of this special joy in the millennial kingdom.[66]

[64] This is the Greek word *anaklinō*, which is similar to *anakeimai* in 22:10-11. The idea is to dine at a banquet table, which is the same imagery as in the parable of the wedding celebration.

[65] Allen, *Matthew*, 78; France, *Matthew*, 156.

[66] Michael G. Huber, "The Concept of the 'Outer Darkness' in the Gospel of Matthew" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978), 63-64.

Finally, the term translated "outside" (*exōteros*) appears nowhere else in the NT outside of the three verses mentioned. However, it occurs 23 times in the LXX and always in relation to the tabernacle or temple of God, or the palace of a king.[67] Most significantly, the term is used fifteen times in Ezekiel to describe the outer court of the temple (Ezek 10:5; 40:19, 20; 41:15, 17; 42:1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14; 44:19; 46:20, 21). Once, it describes the outer gate of the temple (Ezek 44:1). It may be noteworthy, considering the eschatological imagery of the subject parable, that the dominant use of the term is in relation to the millennial temple in Ezekiel 40–48. In light of this, it seems reasonable to conclude that the improperly clothed man of Matthew 22 is thrown into the outer court of the palace. But it does not necessarily follow that he is cast out of the kingdom.

To summarize, "the darkness outside" depicts the experience within the kingdom of God of the unfaithful believer. Stanley likewise concludes: "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*" (italics in original).[68]

The darkness outside is characterized by weeping and gnashing of teeth. The experience of the man cast out of the banquet is further described as an experience of sorrow (v 13b): "There will be there weeping and gnashing of teeth." This expression (*ho klauthmos kai ho brygmos tōn odontōn*) occurs six other times in the NT (Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). Like "the darkness outside," the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is unique to the NT.[69]

The occurrence of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" with "the darkness outside" in Matt 8:12 and 25:30 has already been discussed. In Matt 13:42, 50, it is associated with "the furnace of fire." In this context, we clearly have the end of the unbeliever. In 24:51, it occurs where the "hypocrites" are and where the wicked servant of 24:48-50 will be when the Son of Man returns. In Luke 13:27-28, the "workers of iniquity" are not in the kingdom of God. When they see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets in the kingdom of God, "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (13:28, NKJV).

[67] See, for example, Exod 26:4, 1 Kgs 6:29-30; Neh 11:16; Esth 6:4.

[68] Stanley, *Eternal Security*, 126.

[69] Separate references to weeping and to gnashing of teeth are found both in the OT and in the extrabiblical literature. See, for example, Jer 31:15; Lam 2:16; Ps 112:10; 1 Enoch 108:3-6; Sirach 30:10.

From this, it can be concluded that the significance of the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" with regard to eternal judgment depends on the context in which it occurs. There is nothing inherent in the expression itself that automatically associates it with the eternal judgment of the unbeliever.[70] It is clearly related to remorse and sorrow.[71] As with "the darkness outside," nothing in the text of Matt 22:13 indicates that physical punishment is the cause of the weeping and gnashing of teeth. For example, Jesus wept (*edakrysen*, "shed tears") over Lazarus (John 11:35). In Acts 7:54, the accusers of Stephen "gnashed at Him with their teeth" because of his words of condemnation toward them.[72] In neither case is physical punishment being inflicted; likewise, it is not necessary to see punishment in Matt 22:13. Hodges comments:

> We do not need to embellish the parable with the lurid colors of eternal damnation. There is no fire and brimstone on the king's handsome estate, no worms of corruption creeping out from under the boulders of his well-kept grounds. This is what has been read into the story. But it isn't there. A parable, after all, has its natural limits and these we must be careful not to breach.[73]

In conclusion, it is viable and consistent to interpret the imagery of 22:13 as relating to a denial of the joy of being at Christ's wedding banquet—that is, of co-reigning with Him. This will be the consequence for the believer who has lived an unfaithful and unproductive life. Stanley paints the imagery thus:

> Now, imagine standing before God and seeing all you have lived for reduced to ashes. How do you think you would feel? How do you think you would respond? Picture yourself watching saint after saint rewarded for faithfulness and service to the King—and all the time knowing that you had just as many opportunities but did nothing about them.

[70] Hodges well notes that the expression "weeping and gnashing of teeth" sounds extreme only to the reserved Western mind. The Middle East was (and is) very demonstrative in expressing grief. See Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 119.

[71] Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "*brychō, brygmos*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 1:642.

[72] Stanley, *Eternal Security*, 127.

[73] Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 90.

> We cannot conceive of the agony and frustration we would feel if we were to undergo such an ordeal; the realization that our unfaithfulness had cost us eternally would be devastating. And so it will be for many believers.
>
> Just as those who are found faithful will rejoice, so those who suffer loss will weep. As some are celebrated for their faithfulness, others will gnash their teeth in frustration over their own shortsightedness and greed.[74]

The Explanation of the Result (22:14)

Jesus concludes His parable with these words: "For many are called, but few (are) chosen" (v 14). This sentence occurs only here in the critical text, but also in Matt 20:16, according to the Majority text.[75] It functions as the explanation by the king for his actions.[76]

The conclusion begins with the plain statement that "many are called." This summarizes the fact that the king invited many people to the wedding celebration for his son.[77] Invitations were extended in vv 3-4, and 9-10.

Despite this fact, only a "few are chosen." The idea here is simply that only those who are appropriately clothed in a wedding garment are

[74] Stanley, *Eternal Security*, 127. One must be careful, though, not to overemphasize the negative aspect of missing out on the wedding supper. To do so is wrongly to read into the parable an *excessively negative* view of the kingdom which is not there. Hodges strikes this balance: "No, it is enough to say that the failing Christian has missed a splendid experience of co-reigning with Christ, with all the multiplied joys which that experience implies . . . Whatever else eternity holds for him, he has at least missed *that!*" (italics in original). See Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 90.

[75] Some scholars suggest that the apocryphal 2 Esdras 8:3 is the source of the saying: "Many have been created, but few shall be saved," but the parallel is not close. See Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1987), 357; M'Neile, *Matthew*, 317.

[76] Musurillo presents the possibility that the saying sums up in a general way all three of the parables beginning in 21:28. See Herbert A. Musurillo, "'Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen' (Matthew 22:14)," *Theological Studies* 7 (December 1946): 587.

[77] This is the position of the majority of the commentators. See Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1:273; France, *Matthew*, 313-14; Ironside, *Matthew*, 290; Lenski, *Matthew*, 859.

chosen to partake of the wedding banquet. The traditional view holds that "chosen" (*eklektoi*) pertains to the doctrine of election.[78] The chosen ones are true believers who accepted the call of God and demonstrated their faith and worthiness to take part in the banquet by the performance of good works. Thus the banquet is synonymous with the kingdom. The man without the garment is representative of either a "false believer" (= an unbeliever), since he did not manifest his salvation in works of righteousness,[79] or a believer who loses his salvation because of disobedience.[80] Either way, he is not chosen and is cast into hell.

But it is not necessary to see *eklektos* as having soteriological significance here. It is more suitable to the immediate context to see that it simply means that the ones properly clothed are *chosen* to be at the banquet. As has been demonstrated, the wedding garment is representative of the good works done by the believer. Since faith, not works, is the only requirement for eternal life in the kingdom, entrance and life in the kingdom are not the issues here. It has also been shown that the wedding banquet is not representative of the kingdom, but rather is an occurrence *within* the kingdom. The experience symbolized by the wedding celebration is reserved for the obedient believer.

The parable of Matt 22:1-14 concludes in vv 8-14 with an extension of the offer of a place at the wedding celebration of Christ to all people, including the Gentiles. Many accepted the invitation and prepared themselves with faithful Christian living which is required for presence at the banquet. The unfaithful and disobedient believer who did not prepare himself for the banquet found himself excluded from the joy of co-reigning with Christ at the banquet.

[78] The fact that the English word *elect* sounds so much like this Greek word (*eklektoi*) tends to obscure the fact that it in itself simply means "picked out" or "chosen." The translation "elect" is good when the theological meaning is intended. Ed.

[79] France, *Matthew*, 313-14; Gundry, *Matthew*, 440; Lenski, *Matthew*, 859; Poteate, "Matthew and Luke," 66-67.

[80] Beare, *Matthew*, 436; Hill, *Matthew*, 303; G. Schrenk, "*legō, logos, rhēma, laleō, logios, logion, alogos, logikos, logomacheō, logomachia, eklegomai, eklogē, eklektos*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, 4:186-87; Sutcliffe, "Many Are Called," 131. Bruce is representative of this position on these verses: "They convey the thought that a heedless life on the part of the believer in Divine grace may be attended with *fatal consequences*" (italics supplied). See Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching*, 483.

III. Conclusion

Our Lord's parable of the wedding celebration provides insight into the enhanced position of relationship and authority to and with Him which will be enjoyed by faithful and obedient believers in the millennial kingdom and possibly on into the eternal state. This is portrayed in the parable as a glorious wedding banquet. Great joy and fellowship with Christ would naturally accompany such an occasion. At the same time, exclusion from such close fellowship would be a cause for sadness and remorse.

The parable also contributes to the understanding of the requirements necessary to participate in the "celebration." The basis for being present at the banquet is a wedding garment, which depicts the good works done by the believer. This corresponds with the NT picture of a life of consistent faithfulness and discipleship as being requisite for reigning with Christ, represented by attendance at His banquet.

The common view of the parable is that the wedding celebration depicts *the kingdom of God* and that the person who does not manifest the righteousness in his life to qualify for a position at the banquet is subsequently cast *into hell.* The person is either an unbeliever or a believer who loses his salvation. These positions are inadequate, both exegetically and theologically. The proposed interpretation of Matt 22:1-14 is offered as a viable exposition which deals with details of the parable and is harmonious with the teaching of the NT concerning soteriology and sanctification.

The parable of the wedding celebration is a message of the importance of righteous living by believers and the relation of that righteous living to the position of the individual in the future millennial kingdom.

One valid motivation for being faithful to Christ is the glorious prospect of receiving rewards and, as Matt 22:1-14 teaches, reigning and fellowshiping with our King in His kingdom. In the words of Paul and John, these kingdom privileges are reserved for those who "endure" (2 Tim 2:12) and "overcome" (Rev 3:21). In the words of Matthew, they are for the ones who are clothed in the "wedding garment" of good works. The one not so clothed will be consigned to "the darkness outside," which is figurative of an experience in the kingdom with serious restrictions. For the truth is, that while *all* believers are *eternally redeemed*, only *faithful* believers will *eternally reign.*

COMING TO TERMS WITH DISCIPLESHIP

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Discipleship affects every Christian. Not only are *we* to be disciples, but we are to make disciples of *others*. But what is a disciple?

The meaning of discipleship has taken on greater significance with the unabating interest in the debate over the relationship between salvation and sanctification fueled by the Lordship Salvation controversy. Many on both sides are being challenged in their assumptions about what a disciple is. There remains a great need for biblical clarification on the issue. This article will look briefly at the confusion over the concept of discipleship, then attempt to define it from the NT data.

I. A Call for Clarification

For decades a chorus of voices has been calling for a more precise definition of the biblical concept of discipleship while the Church goes on grappling with fulfilling her great commission to "make disciples." Christians have not lacked for books on how to be a disciple or how to make disciples of others. Too often these books are based on assumptions about what a disciple is while they take the meaning of discipleship for granted. Yet our understanding of biblical discipleship shapes our practice of evangelism, church growth, missions, and personal lifestyle.

A. Making Disciples

When *discipleship* became a buzz-word of zealous Christian groups, there were some who were not happy with how it was being used (or abused!). For example, in 1971, J. Dwight Pentecost introduced his book on discipleship with this note:

> The subject of Discipleship is frequently discussed today. Men are called to become disciples without any definition of the concept, and

> without any clarification of the requirements the Lord makes of those who are His disciples. Hence no intelligent decision can be made concerning this important question.[1]

Coming from a different perspective, but with the same concern, C. Peter Wagner wrote in 1973,

> The biblical concept of "disciple" has become a key term in contemporary evangelical missiology. Faced with the fuzzy use of the term in much popular literature and preaching, a closer look at the New Testament meaning of the word, together with its implications for missions, is now overdue.[2]

Little progress seems to have been made since then, however. Books on how to make disciples and how to fulfill the Great Commission have proliferated while confusion remains over exactly what a disciple is. One example comes out of the Church Growth Movement and its founder, Donald A. McGavran. His preliminary understanding of what a disciple is had to be clarified because of confusion over the term. He later refined his definition of discipleship by breaking it down into three separate categories he called D_1, D_2, and D_3, but some might say this only clouded the issue all the more.[3]

Another more recent example is the popular book *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, a book of methodology based on Jesus' training of the Twelve. To be sure, in the introduction Hull thought he defined a disciple clearly enough.[4] But in his follow-up book, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, he finds it necessary to argue theologically for a more precise definition of discipleship, stating, "The irony of the church is that we throw the word *disciple* around freely, but too often with no definition."[5]

[1] J. Dwight Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 11.

[2] C. Peter Wagner, "What Is 'Making Disciples?'" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 9 (Fall 1973): 285.

[3] See Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 170; or read an analysis of McGavran's view of discipleship in C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 130-33.

[4] Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990; originally published at Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1984), 9-12.

[5] Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1988), 54-60.

It is not my concern to evaluate these authors' views of discipleship at this point. I cite them only to show that a definition of the term cannot be taken for granted among today's Christians. This was confirmed to me by a recent visit to a Christian bookstore where only one of a half dozen books on disciple-making made an attempt to define clearly what a disciple is (and that attempt was *not* based on a biblical study!). This is in spite of the fact that, in comparing the books, one could discern several different assumptions about what a disciple is.

B. The Lordship Salvation Debate

The meaning of discipleship is most hotly debated and reaches its most crucial significance in the Lordship Salvation controversy. The recent debate on the meaning of discipleship has been led on the Lordship Salvation side by prominent preachers such as John F. MacArthur, Jr. and James Montgomery Boice. Both contend that *to be a Christian is to be a disciple*.[6] The view that *discipleship is a commitment different from, but related to, one's salvation experience* is defended by Free Grace teachers such as Charles C. Ryrie and Zane C. Hodges.[7] Recognizing the disparity in definitions of discipleship between the two sides, Homer Kent has declared, "A fresh look at this matter is long overdue."[8]

The Lordship debate has done more than any other to show that there are two very different views of discipleship in the evangelical church today. The debate is important, for clearly discipleship is a foundational concept of the Christian life which dictates all that we are to be and much of what we are to be doing. If discipleship is becoming a Christian, as Lordship Salvation teaches, then the church must preach a gospel of commitment, surrender, and sacrifice as conditions of salvation, for these are the conditions of discipleship. To do less is to lead people to a false assurance of salvation. On the other hand, if discipleship is a commitment different from the salvation experience, as Free Grace proponents assert, then to teach a "costly" salvation is to pervert the Gospel.

[6] See John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 29-30, 196-98; James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 13-23.

[7] Zane C. Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 77-91; *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1981), 35-45; *Absolutely Free!* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1989), 67-76; Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing The Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 178-79; *So Great Salvation* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 101-14.

[8] Homer A. Kent, "Review Article: *The Gospel According to Jesus*," *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (1989): 75.

This series is designed to add to our understanding of the concept of *disciple* and *discipleship* by examining the words themselves and the relevant passages in the NT. I will relate the discussion of discipleship to the current Lordship Salvation debate in particular. This first article examines the key words used to denote discipleship and some important passages where they are found.

II. Discipleship in the New Testament

We will find that *etymology* is of little help in understanding the theological implications of being a disciple. However, some issues of *usage* will be very important to our discussion.

A. The Words Used

1. Disciple

The word *disciple* translates the Greek noun *mathētēs*, which is found 264 times in the Gospels and Acts. It is not found in the Epistles. The noun has the basic meaning of "a pupil, apprentice, adherent."[9] The verb form, *mathēteuō*, occurs four times in the Gospels and once in Acts. It means to "be or become a pupil or disciple."[10]

That the meaning of the word *disciple* is never explained in the NT indicates that the early readers understood it in relation to contemporary rabbinic or Greek practice. It was used of learners who associated themselves with a teacher, philosopher, or rabbi with the assumption that the pupil would become like his teacher (Matt 10:25; Luke 6:40).[11] The greater the student's submission to his master, the greater the student's transformation and likelihood that he would become the master's successor. The master's ultimate expectation was that each of his disciples would be proficient in his master's teaching.[12]

In the NT we find followers of various teachers called *disciples*. The

[9] *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, compiled by Walter Bauer, trans. and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed. rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. "*mathētēs*," 486-87.

[10] Ibid., s.v. "*mathēteuō*," 486. This is the intransitive meaning.

[11] See also K. H. Rengstorf, s.v. "*mathētēs*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 4:415-41; and Richard D. Calenburg, "The New Testament Doctrine of Discipleship" (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 20-40.

[12] Shmuel Safrai, "Master and Disciple," *Jerusalem Perspective* 3 (November–December 1990): 5, 13.

Pharisees claimed to be disciples of Moses (John 9:28), because they were students and followers of the law which Moses gave (John 1:17). The Pharisees also had their own disciples (e.g., Matt 22:16; Mark 2:18). Those who followed the teachings of John the Baptist were called his disciples (e.g., Matt 9:14; 14:12; Mark 2:18; Luke 11:1; John 3:25). Most prevalent in the NT are those called disciples who identified themselves as followers or learners of Christ (e.g., Matt 5:1; John 4:1; 8:31; 9:27-28), especially the twelve chosen as apostles (e.g., Matt 10:1; 11:1; 20:17; Luke 9:1).

A disciple is one who puts himself in the position of a learner. In relation to those who learned from Jesus, this definition in and of itself does not distinguish between those who are unsaved, simply saved, or saved and having made a deeper commitment. These distinctions are the issue in the Lordship Salvation debate. The particular meaning of *disciple* in any passage must be determined by the context, as we will see in the discussions below.

2. Follow

The other word which speaks of discipleship in the NT is the verb usually translated "follow" (*akoloutheō*). It is used over sixty times in the Gospels in reference to following Christ. A parallel thought is expressed by the phrase "to come after" (*opisō elthein*) in relation to Christ (cf. Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23).

Like the word *disciple*, these terms do not indicate the spiritual condition of the person in view. The Gospels speak both of those who follow Christ in general and of those who follow with more commitment. Large crowds followed Jesus (e.g., Matt 4:25; 8:1; 12:15; 21:9; Mark 10:32), but there were also individuals called to follow Him in a more intimate relationship (e.g., Matt 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; Mark 2:14; 8:34; Luke 5:27; 9:23).

However, Lordship Salvation proponents consider the invitation of Jesus to "follow Me" an invitation to salvation. They argue not from the meaning of the word, but from incidents where it is used. After citing several encounters where Christ said "follow Me," Boice concludes,

> The command to follow Jesus was not understood by Him to be only a mere physical following or even an invitation to learn more about Him and then see if one wanted to be a permanent disciple or not. Jesus understood it as a turning from sin to salvation.[13]

[13] Boice, *Discipleship*, 17.

This opinion is misinformed, because Jesus sometimes issued the invitation to follow Him to those who were clearly *already believers* (e.g., Matt 8:21-22; 16:24; John 12:26; 21:19, 22). Like the term *disciple*, the significance of *follow* or *come after* must be determined from the context.

One occasion where "follow Me" is associated clearly with salvation is John 10:27-28: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." Both Boice and MacArthur cite this passage to argue that following Christ signifies the obedience that secures salvation.[14]

Two observations help us to understand the meaning of *follow* in this passage. First, it is used to describe what the subjects are doing, not to demand what they must do for salvation. It is a description of the visual response of the sheep to the Shepherd's voice.

Second, the interpretation of "follow Me" is rooted in the larger metaphor. John uses metaphors frequently to picture faith in Christ.[15] Here the word *follow* pictures faith in Christ in that it focuses on the visible result of hearing. Faith itself is indicated by the sheep hearing Christ's voice. Hearing stands alone to represent faith in 10:3, 8, and 16. Hearing is also used elsewhere by John to speak of faith (cf. 5:24-25; 8:43, 47). Given the pastoral metaphor, it is hard to picture faith in any other way than in the sheep following the trusted voice of the Shepherd.[16]

Lordship Salvation's interpretation of John 10:27-28 not only ignores the metaphorical use of the term in this passage, it also neglects the context. In the verse immediately before v 27, Jesus rebukes the Jews, saying, "You do not believe, because you are not of my sheep." This contrast of the Jews' unbelief with the belief of Christ's sheep in the metaphor demonstrates that the focus of the discussion is on belief in Jesus as Messiah and Savior.

[14] Ibid., 166-67; MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 178.

[15] For example, "come" (John 5:40; 6:35, 37, 44, 65; 7:37); "enter" (10:9); "eat" (6:51-58); "drink" (4:14; 6:53-56; 7:37); "accept" (1:12; 5:34). See George Allen Turner, "Soteriology in the Gospel of John," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 19 (Fall 1976): 272-73.

[16] See Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, eds. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 343-44. He contrasts the metaphorical use of *follow*, which he takes as equivalent to *believe*, with its meaning of discipleship in other passages in John. Essentially the same view is taken by Zane C. Hodges in *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: Redención Viva, 1981), 43-45.

The Lordship argument that *follow* in John 10:27-28 signifies an obedient lifestyle that brings salvation is an unfortunate misinterpretation. It does not prove that "follow Me" in the Gospels is an invitation to salvation. It only shows how crucial the context is in interpreting the term.

B. Discipleship in the Gospels

We will now see how the words *disciple* and *follow* are used in relation to those who learned from or followed the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels. They are used in a number of ways, which shows that those called *disciples* had varying degrees of the commitment to learn and submit.

1. Curious followers[17]

The broadest meaning of *disciple* in relation to Jesus Christ comes from those instances where the term may be used of the multitudes who followed Him. For example, in Matt 5:1 it is unclear whether the multitude is identified synonymously with the disciples or the disciples are a smaller group within the multitude. Likewise, in Luke 6:13 Jesus chooses the twelve disciples from a larger group of followers also called disciples. In these settings Jesus is teaching and the multitude is willing to be taught, and thus in the general sense they could be called disciples (Matt 5:2ff.; Luke 6:20ff.).

John 6 contributes an important truth about disciples. While the chapter begins with a distinction between the multitude and the disciples (cf. vv 2-3, 11, 22), we later learn that among the group of disciples are unbelievers. After Jesus' Bread of Life discourse, John tells us that "many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, 'This is a hard saying: Who can understand it?'" (v 60). In His answer to them Jesus said, "But there are some of you who do not believe," which John indicates included Judas Iscariot, who would betray Jesus later (v 64). When the text notes that "from that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" (v 65), we are led to assume these unbelievers are a large part of the departing group. However, at least one unbeliever, Judas Iscariot, remains with the twelve disciples (v 67).

This interchange with Jesus in John 6 shows that the term *disciple* in its broadest sense can even refer to unbelievers. They merit the term

[17] This convenient outline of *Curious, Convinced, Committed* I credit to Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, who has greatly influenced my understanding of discipleship.

because outwardly they are followers or learners of Christ, though they may only have the barest personal commitment to Him. In fact, their motivation seems little more than political (v 15), or to obtain free food (vv 26, 34), or simply to satisfy their curiosity.

In a comment on this passage, MacArthur admits in a footnote:

> It is apparent that not every disciple is necessarily a true Christian (cf. John 6:66). The term *disciple* is sometimes used in Scripture in a general sense, to describe those who, like Judas, outwardly followed Christ.[18]

This admission deserves more than a footnote! This is especially true coming from one who goes on to rigidly espouse discipleship as a complete and total surrender to Jesus as Master of one's life—and equates this with salvation. MacArthur is acknowledging, though minimally, that the context must inform one's definition of discipleship. In a review of MacArthur's book, Kent supports MacArthur's view of discipleship, but also agrees that the term is fluid, depending on the context. He concludes from John 6:66, "... the term itself merely means 'a follower.' The nature of that discipleship must be derived from the larger context." It is somewhat disconcerting when Kent then goes on to assert, without appeal to any specific context, that "Those who have separated discipleship from salvation have not done us any service."[19]

We see that even those of the Lordship Salvation persuasion agree that the term *disciple* is flexible enough to refer to unbelievers.

2. Convinced followers

Those disciples who decided to remain with Jesus in John 6 include the Twelve. Acting as spokesman, Peter confesses their faith in Jesus as the Messiah (John 6:66-69). His statement springs more from a logical and settled conclusion than a vow of personal devotion. These men, except Judas, were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Savior. At this point in the text, however, we see no deep commitment.

Sometimes we note in the Gospels those who were undoubtedly believers in Jesus Christ, but who were reserved in their commitment to Him. Though obviously committed as well as saved, some, like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, never followed Christ in the sense of leaving their homes and families. John also mentions rulers of the Jews who avoided

[18] MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 196, n. 2.
[19] Kent, "Review Article," 75.

a full commitment to Jesus Christ as Master:

> Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42-43).

While some might argue circularly that because the rulers did not confess Christ publicly they never truly believed, this would ignore the context and the details of the text itself. Verse 42 begins with a strong adversative (*homōs mentoi*) showing that from among the Jewish nation and leadership which did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah (vv 37-41), there were *individual exceptions who truly believed.* If they were not true believers in Christ, John's contrast is muted and meaningless.[20] John clearly declares that they "believed in Him."

Apparently, Joseph of Arimathea is one of the rulers who believed. John describes him as "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38). Joseph's request for the body of Jesus and the subsequent public burial certainly ended his secrecy. Following Joseph's example, Nicodemus joins him in Christ's burial. It is said of Nicodemus that it was he "who first came to Jesus by night" (v 38). Though John does not call Nicodemus a believer or a disciple, we get the sense from John 3 and this notation that he was in the same category as Joseph—a secret disciple finally gone public.

Jesus even offered a degree of commendation to those who had less than a full commitment to follow Him as Master. At one point, the Twelve rebuked a man casting out demons in Jesus' name because, they said, "he does not follow us" (Mark 9:38), or "he does not follow with us" (Luke 9:49). Though not a follower in the fullest sense, the man was declared by Jesus to be "on our side" (Mark 9:40), or "for us" (Luke 9:50), and Jesus implied that he would receive a reward (Mark 9:41). In some instances, Jesus was unsettlingly inclusive about who was considered a follower!

[20] Among those who agree that these rulers actually believed are Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 1:487; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 605; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 2:452; Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 5:232.

3. Committed followers

The preponderance of references to disciples in the Gospels speaks of those who have submitted to Jesus Christ as Master of their lives. They are committed to following Jesus as their Lord and Teacher in the same sense in which others devotedly followed Moses, the Pharisees, or John the Baptist. In this sense the term *disciples* is used most frequently in the Gospels to speak of the smaller group of twelve apostles chosen by Christ (e.g., Matt 10:1; Luke 6:13). In addition to the Twelve, however, a larger group of seventy is also called *disciples* (Luke 10:1, 17, 23). They too appear as those committed to Jesus in a special way since they are sent out by the Lord to preach the Gospel.

The commitment involved in this deeper relationship is seen in the various conditions that Jesus attached to discipleship as His ministry progressed. He said that true disciples, or "disciples indeed" (*alēthōs mathētai*), are those who "abide in My word" (John 8:31). While a fuller interpretation of this condition will be offered in the third article in this series, it is enough to note here that this condition was stated to those whom the text says had *already* believed in Christ (John 8:30-31). The word "abide" (from *menō*) denotes the more intimate relationship that Christ desires of those who believe in Him (cf. John 14:21, 23-24; 15:4-10).

As Jesus began to teach the significance of His work on the Cross, He also expounded other stringent conditions for those who would continue as disciples in the deeper sense. In these conditions (Matt 16:24-27; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23-26; and 14:26-33), Jesus said a disciple must:

> Deny himself
> Take up his cross
> Follow Christ
> Lose his life
> Not be ashamed of Christ
> Hate his family and his own life.

The nature of these commitments and the fact that they were directed primarily to those who were already His close followers argue that they are conditions not of salvation, but of a deeper relationship to Jesus as Lord and Master.[21] They represent a progression in the revelation of God's will which must be accepted if a believer would continue on the

[21] This assertion and an explanation of these conditions will be the substance of the third article in this series.

path of discipleship. By these conditions, discipleship becomes something which is very costly to the Christian.

C. Discipleship in Acts

In Acts the term *disciples* seems to be equated with Christians in general (6:1-2, 7; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; 19:10), especially in 11:26 where we read, "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Acts has no explicit mention of the deeper commitment or the conditions of discipleship found in the Gospels. Lordship Salvation proponents argue from this that there *is* no difference between a disciple and a Christian; believing in Christ encompasses the commitment to surrender all of one's life to Jesus as Lord and Master and to follow Him in sacrifice and obedience.[22]

We must agree that Acts assumes Christians are disciples. *Disciple* is one of several terms used to refer to Christians and is thus used more technically than in the Gospels. However, the background for Acts cannot be divorced from the Gospels. Whatever conditions for discipleship the Gospel authors recorded must give form to Luke's view of discipleship, especially those recorded by Luke himself. Furthermore, the bridge between discipleship in the Gospels and in Acts is composed of the final missionary commissions of Christ (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48). Acts records the fulfillment of these commissions as the Gospel is carried beyond Jerusalem to the remotest parts of the world (Acts 1:8).

To develop this connection, a slight digression is necessary. Discipleship in Acts must be understood in light of Jesus' commission to "make disciples" in Matt 28:19-20:

> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Since Acts records the disciples' obedience to this command, it is necessary to understand what Jesus means by "make disciples." Is He equating discipleship with salvation, as Lordship Salvation teaches?

[22] MacArthur, *The Gospel*, 196; Kenneth L. Gentry, "The Great Option: A Study of the Lordship Controversy," *Baptist Reformation Review* 5 (Spring 1976): 49-79; Charles Price, *Real Christians* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1987), 54.

Gentry insists that Matt 28:19 is simply a "fuller account" of the commission in Mark 16:15, which says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." He says, "The preaching of the gospel summarized in Mark is the making of disciples in Matthew."[23]

But we must take issue with Gentry's equating of the two commissions. If "preach the gospel" in Mark is a summary of Matthew's "make disciples," then preaching the Gospel includes baptizing and teaching obedience as elements that define the Gospel. However, it is clear that Paul did not consider baptism and obedience to "all things" which Christ commanded part of the saving Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 1:17; 15:1-4; Eph 2:8-9), and we would agree. The parallel between the two commissions is found in the participle *poreuthentes*, translated in both passages as "go." In both places it should be understood as "having gone" or "as you go," which denotes a presupposed or simultaneous activity.[24] For Mark, the main activity is denoted by the finite verb "preach" (*kēryxate*), but in Matthew by the finite verb "make disciples" (*mathēteusate*). Matthew's "go" equals Mark's "go . . . preach the gospel" as the first step in making disciples.[25] While Mark's commission stops with gospel proclamation, Matthew speaks optimally in making discipleship the ultimate goal, which harmonizes with his emphasis on discipleship in his Gospel.[26] The other participles in Matthew, "baptizing" and "teaching," tell *how* to "make disciples." After

[23] Gentry, "The Great Option," 70; See also Boice, *Discipleship*, 159-169; Kent, "Review Article," 75.

[24] Robert D. Culver, "What Is the Church's Commission?: Some Exegetical Issues in Matthew 28:16-20," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (July-September 1968): 243-53; D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, 595.

[25] So William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 999; Wagner, "Making Disciples," 286-87.

[26] Sheridan explains the emphasis on discipleship in Matthew from this Gospel's purpose: "For Matthew, the comprehensive charge to his followers by Jesus is 'to make disciples of all nations.' Teaching others to observe what Jesus had taught them is the way to achieve this. In a sense, Matthew's gospel is a manual for discipleship, and we may expect to find in the lengthy discourses to the disciples not just instruction for the twelve limited to their historical mission but essentially what they are to pass on in their efforts to make disciples." Mark Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 3 (October 1973): 240-41. See also Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1988), 221-22; Wolfgang Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums*, 3d. auflage (München: Kösel-Verlag,1964), 21ff. Trilling begins his Matthean theology with this commission and its emphasis on discipleship.

the Gospel is believed, baptism is the first step of obedient discipleship, and teaching obedience to the commands of Christ is the means by which believers develop as disciples.

In light of the commission in Matt 28:19-20, it is natural that Christians should be called disciples in Acts, since Acts is the historical account of the fulfillment of that commission. As a historian writing selectively, Luke describes the early Christians in general as committed followers of Christ who continued in His teaching. He does not concern himself with the few believers who may not have associated with the Church. In Acts the early converts were enthusiastic in their commitment to Christ with but few exceptions.[27] For example, Luke notes how new believers do not hesitate to obey the Lord in baptism (cf. 2:41; 8:13, 36; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 33-34; 18:8; 19:5). His historical perception of the early believers was that of a new community following the Christian Way with diligence and the marks of true discipleship as enunciated by Jesus: They continued in the Word (Acts 2:42; cf. John 8:31), showed love for one another (Acts 2:42 and 4:32; cf. John 13:34-35), and were willing to deny themselves worldly gain (Acts 2:45 and 4:32-35; cf. Luke 9:24-25). Furthermore, the stringent conditions of discipleship preached by Christ were not preached by the Apostles in Acts. Indeed, it wasn't necessary, for these early believers were generally viewed as committed to Christ in discipleship. Calenburg notes,

> The sermons of Acts seemed to reaffirm the distinction between conversion by faith in Christ and committed discipleship. The general use of the term "disciple" for all believers and the practice of many new converts implied [that] committed discipleship to Christ was the common and expected response to His will as taught by the Apostles.[28]

That the first Christians were committed as disciples is no surprise in light of the hostile Jewish environment. For a Jew to become a publicly confessed Christian was *ipso facto* to bear the cross of Christ's suffering through certain persecution, ostracism, or even death.

Christians are called disciples in Acts, because as Luke sees it, these early believers are committed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is every indication that as a whole, these believers were meeting the conditions for true discipleship found in the Gospels.

[27] Exceptions would be Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), Simon the sorcerer (8:13ff.), and the Ephesian sorcerers (19:10-19). Even so, the latter two accounts lead us to believe that these believers would probably continue in Christ's teachings.

[28] Calenburg, "Discipleship," 238-39. See also 197-200.

D. Discipleship in the Epistles

The assumption that Christians were committed disciples in Acts harmonizes with the absence of the word *disciple* in the Epistles. Conceptually, the idea of discipleship is communicated through the noun "imitator" (*mimētēs*) and the verb "imitate" (*mimeomai*).[29] Calenburg concludes that "The factors involved in such imitation were similar to the conditions of discipleship, namely, observation, attachment, motivation, submission to authority, and obedience."[30]

When Paul exhorts his readers to "imitate me" (e.g., 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; cf. Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:7, 9), he desires a committed response to *him* as he is committed to and so imitates *Christ* (1 Cor 11:1; cf 1 Thess 1:6). Imitation is therefore the commitment of a believer to follow Christ as a disciple. Bauder observes,

> "Imitation" in the NT is consequently not conceived as the reproduction of a given pattern. It is . . . an attitude of thanks in response to the salvation that has been given to us (cf. H. Conzelmann, *Epheser*, 83). The summons to discipleship can only be fulfilled, when a man is grasped by Christ and undergoes the transformation which existence under the Lordship of Christ involves.[31]

To imitate Jesus or Paul is to follow them so as to reproduce their character and behavior. This "Christlikeness" is the goal of discipleship.

The Epistles, by implicitly equating discipleship with imitation, affirm that discipleship is the commitment of believers to obey and submit to the authority of Christ. However, since the Epistles never teach that salvation is procured through imitation of Jesus Christ, neither is it procured through discipleship, which is the same thing.

III. Conclusion

We have found in our study on the meaning of discipleship that in the NT *disciple* is a somewhat fluid term. It is used of those who obviously had never believed in Christ, of believers with limited commitment, and of believers with the fullest commitment. The ultimate determination of its meaning in any given passage must be the context.

[29] So W. Michaelis, s.v. "*mimeomai*," in *TDNT* 4:673; W. Bauder, s.v. "*mimeomai*," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)* 1:492.

[30] Calenburg, "Discipleship," 239.

[31] Bauder, Ibid.

Sometimes, as in Acts, consideration of the context involves the perspective of the whole book.

To be a disciple in the broadest sense is to be a follower or learner of Jesus Christ. In the narrower sense used by Christ later in His ministry, it meant to be fully committed to follow and learn from Him in a life of self-denial and obedience to His Word. This latter idea is the most relevant to the Lordship Salvation debate and to our practice as Christians. The stringent conditions Christ attached to this sense of discipleship should not be made conditions of salvation, but should move us who are Christians further into God's will.

We cannot ignore the degrees of discipleship presented in the NT. Whether as a minimal commitment or full surrender, discipleship denotes a direction or *an orientation* more than *a state*. It is a journey, not an arrival. Anywhere on one's journey *toward* Christ, one can be called a disciple. Though all disciples find themselves at different points on the journey, the committed disciple is seen as well on the way with his destination clearly in view.

Therefore, we must regard with suspicion those who make absolute statements about what a disciple is or those who make the simplistic charge that the Free Grace position teaches two classes of Christians: ordinary Christians and super-Christians.[32] Though sometimes used to refer to Christians in general (as explained in relation to Acts), the majority of uses by the Lord Jesus indicates that full-fledged discipleship is when a believer fully submits to Christ's Word and Christ's will in all areas of life. Lordship Salvation not only confuses discipleship with salvation, but also confuses entry-level discipleship with the ultimate goal of committed discipleship.

Only when we recognize what a disciple is in the NT can we effectively fulfill our Lord's commission to make disciples and become fully committed disciples ourselves.

[32] For example, see Dallas Willard, "Discipleship: For Super-Christians Only?" *Christianity Today* 24 (October 10, 1980), 24-25, 27.

A Voice from the Past:

LOOK AND LIVE*

ROBERT MURRAY McCHEYNE [1]

I do not even know your name, but I think I know something of the state of your soul. Your friend has been with me, and told me a little of your mind; and I write a few lines just to bid you to look to Jesus and live. Look at Num 21:9, and you will see your disease and your remedy. You have been bitten by the great serpent. The poison of sin is through and through your whole heart, but Christ has been lifted up on the cross that you may *look and live*. Now, do not look so long and so harassingly at your own heart and feelings. What will you find there but the bite of the serpent? You were shapen in iniquity, and the whole of your natural life has been spent in sin. The more God opens your eyes, the more you will feel that you are *lost in yourself*. This is your disease.

Now for the remedy. Look to Christ; for the glorious Son of God so loved lost souls, that He took on Him a body and died for us—bore our curse, and obeyed the law in our place. Look to Him and live. You need no preparation, you need no endeavors, you need no duties, you

*This letter, written on March 20, 1840, is taken from *Memoirs of McCheyne*, ed. by Andrew A. Bonar (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1947, rep. 1976), 91-93. Our title was chosen from the words we have italicized in the first paragraph.

[1] Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843), a Scottish minister beloved by both Reformed and dispensational believers, was educated at the University of Edinburgh. The death of an older brother caused him to look for "a brother who cannot die," whom he found in the Lord Jesus. At his own church, St. Peter's in Dundee, McCheyne, in spite of frequent sickness, maintained a rigorous regimen of prayer, Bible study, visitation, and sermon preparation. His sermons are still in print and valuable. McCheyne had an interest in reaching Jews, and in 1839 he traveled to Palestine and started a Church of Scotland mission to God's ancient people. His godly influence and ministry, watered by many tears, spread from St. Peter's to all Scotland, and through the memoirs from which this excerpt is taken, throughout conservative Protestantism worldwide. He died before he reached his thirtieth birthday, having done more good in a short life than most Christian leaders have done in twice his age-span. For an example of his poetic talent, see "Jehovah Tsidkenu" in this issue under "A Hymn of Grace." Ed.

need no strivings, you only need to look and live. Look at John 17:3. The way to be saved is to know God's heart and the heart of Jesus. *To be awakened*, you need to know your own heart. Look in at your own heart, if you wish to know your lost condition. See the pollution that is there—forgetfulness of God, deadness, insensibility to His love. If you are judged as you are in yourself, you will be lost. *To be saved*, you need to know the heart of God and of Christ. The four Gospels are a narrative of the heart of Christ. They show His compassion to sinners, and His glorious work in their stead. If you only knew that heart as it is, you would lay your weary head with John on His bosom. Do not take up your time so much with studying your own heart as with studying *Christ's heart*. "For one look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ!"

Look at Rom 15:13. That is my prayer for you. You are looking for peace in *striving*, or peace in *duties*, or peace in *reforming* your mind; but ah! look at His Word. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and *peace in believing*." All your peace is to be found in believing *God's Word* about His Son. If for a moment you forget your own case altogether, and meditate on the glorious way of salvation by *Christ for us*, does your bosom never glow with a ray of peace? Keep that peace; it is joy in believing. Look as straight to Christ as you sometimes do at the rising or setting sun. Look direct to Christ.

You fear that your convictions of sin have not been deep enough. This is no reason for keeping away from Christ. You will never get a truly broken heart till you are really *in Christ*. (See Ezek 36:25-31.) Observe the order: *First*, God sprinkles clean water on the soul. This represents our being washed in the blood of Christ. *Then* He gives "a new heart also." *Third*, He gives a piercing remembrance of past sins. Now, may the Lord give you all these! May you be brought as you are to the blood of the Lamb! Washed and justified, may He change your heart—give you a tender heart, and His Holy Spirit within your heart; and thus may He give you a broken heart for your past sins.

Look at Rom 5:19. By the sin of Adam, many were made sinners. We had no hand in Adam's sin, and yet the guilt of it comes upon us. We did not put out our hand to the apple, and yet the sin and misery have been laid at our door. In the same way, "by the obedience of Christ, many are made righteous." Christ is the glorious One who stood for many. His perfect garment is sufficient to cover you. You had no hand in His obedience. You were not alive when He came into the world and lived and died; and yet, in the perfect obedience, you may stand before God righteous. This is all my covering in the sight of a holy God. I feel

infinitely ungodly *in myself:* in God's eye, like a serpent or a toad; and yet, when I stand *in Christ alone*, I feel that God sees no sin in me, and loves me freely. The same righteousness is free to you. It will be as white and clean on your soul as on mine. Oh, do not sleep another night without it! Only consent to stand in Christ, not in your poor self.

I must not weary you. One word more. Look at Rev 22:17. Sweet, sweet words! "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The last invitation in the Bible, and the freest—Christ's parting word to a world of sinners! Anyone that pleases may take this glorious way of salvation. Can you refuse it? I am sure you cannot. Dear friend, be persuaded by a fellow worm not to put off another moment. Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

You are sitting, like Hagar, within reach of the well.[2] May the Lord open your eyes, and show you all that is in Christ! I pray for you, that you may spiritually see Jesus and be glad—that you may go to Him and find rest.

[2] See Gen 21:19. Ed.

Grace in the Arts:

TOWARD SINGING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING

A Discussion of the Gospel Hymn—Part 1

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I. Introduction

Some standard hymnals are divided into topical sections such as "Worship," "Gospel Testimony," "Praise," or "Invitation." However, selections in a hymnal might also be divided according to historical, literary, and/or musical type and style. A particular type of congregational song known as the "gospel hymn" or "gospel song" (the two terms are used interchangeably) was first associated, not with traditional church worship, but with the mass revival meetings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The term "gospel" in connection with this body of hymnody does not mean that all hymns in this category have the Gospel, *per se*, as their main theme or topic; gospel hymns treat a variety of topics. Their kinship lies in other common features.

Since its introduction, the gospel hymn has "gained a substantial place in the congregational singing of fundamentalist churches as well as in a number of America's evangelical denominations . . ."[1] Indeed, in many such churches, songs of this type are used for a large percentage of the congregational singing. A survey of three standard hymnals currently used by church groups generally considered fundamental showed that a third or more of the selections in each book consisted of gospel hymns or their close relatives.

In light of its wide use in many Bible-believing churches, a consideration of the gospel hymn's history and characteristics as well

[1] Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 182.

as the doctrinal soundness of representative examples could aid us in singing both "with the spirit and with the understanding," as we are encouraged to do by 1 Cor 14:15.

II. History and Background

"The gospel hymn is a distinctively American phenomenon. It developed out of the camp meeting songs of the early decades of the nineteenth century."[2] "The need for hymns simple and contagious enough to appeal to unlettered frontier folk brought into being a simplified folk hymn."[3] By the latter half of the 1800's, these "folk hymns" had become so popular that they were adopted and further developed as a common feature of the urban revival movement.

> During the Civil War the [YMCA] carried these hymns into the army and the *Soldiers' Hymn Book* became a leading instrument of army work . . . After the war, the "Y" began a large revival work in the cities of the North, and soon adopted the gospel hymn as its distinctive type. These hymns gave the evangelists of the postwar revival exactly the aid needed for their campaigns.[4]

It was through the campaigns of revivalist Dwight L. Moody (who began his revival career under the auspices of the YMCA) that the term "gospel hymn" came into use. In 1874, Philip Bliss, who served for a time as Moody's song leader, published a collection including many hymns of the new type. The title, *Gospel Songs*, was later modified when, in 1875, Bliss and Ira D. Sankey together published a similar collection entitled *Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs*.[5] In all, six volumes were published under the latter title. The widespread sale of the volumes, and of the subsequent compilation of the six volumes under the title *Gospel Hymns, Nos. 1-6 Complete*, solidified use of the term "gospel hymn" or "gospel song" for a type of song heavily represented in the volume. (It should be noted that not all the selections in the *Gospel Hymn* volumes were gospel hymns. Hymns of other types *were* included.)

As might be expected, given the association of these hymns with the revival movement, "most authors were Protestant evangelicals, especially Methodists and Baptists."[6] More women contributed to this segment of

[2] Albert Edward Bailey, *The Gospel in Hymns* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 482.

[3] Eskew and McElrath, 164.

[4] Bailey, 483.

[5] Eskew and McElrath, 176.

[6] Sandra S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 23.

hymnody than to that of previous periods.[7] For example, Fanny Crosby, surely the most prolific of the gospel hymn lyricists, authored more than 8,000 hymn texts.[8]

The lyrics of a number of the gospel hymns "had, in part, an independent existence, often appearing in religious periodicals as a poem without a tune."[9] Prior to the emergence of the gospel hymn, hymn lyrics were only infrequently published independently.

While the heyday of gospel hymn writing took place during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some later composers and lyricists have continued to produce hymns rooted in the genre. A hymnal published in 1977 included forty-nine gospel hymns written in or after 1920, sixteen of those being written after 1950.

III. Musical Characteristics

Gospel hymns such as "Revive Us Again," "The Lily of the Valley," and "Only Trust Him" are no doubt considered quite traditional in most fundamental churches. It may, therefore, be amusing, enlightening, or both, to discover that the melodies used for gospel hymn texts often raised eyebrows when the gospel hymn was "the new kid on the block." In America, Lowell Mason (1792-1872) and Thomas Hastings (1784-1872), the leading "traditional" hymn writers of their day, "regarded unfit for religious use" the secular-sounding melodies employed for the new type of hymn being so successfully used in urban revivalism.[10] However, it was in large part the gospel hymns' easy singability and catchy tunes that made them so easy to learn and remember.

To those who criticized his use of a secular-sounding gospel hymn, Homer Rodeheaver replied,

> It was never intended for a Sunday morning service, not for a devotional meeting—its purpose was to bridge the gap between the popular song of the day and the great hymns and gospel songs, and to give men a simple, easy, lilting melody which they could learn the first time they heard it, and which they could whistle and sing wherever they might be.[11]

[7] Sizer, 23.
[8] Eskew and McElrath, 169.
[9] Sizer, 9.
[10] Eskew and McElrath, 169.
[11] Ibid., 180.

> The new melodies penetrated even the music halls and were whistled by the men on the street . . . easy, catchy, sentimental, swaying with a soft or a martial rhythm and culminating in a taking refrain, calling for no musical knowledge to understand and no skill to render them; inevitably popular, with the unfailing appeal of a clear melody.[12]

Melody

Melodically, gospel hymns, as a group, are like any other type of well-written hymn for congregational singing in that they generally avoid frequent large or difficult intervals (the distance from one pitch to the next). The first musical feature which sets them apart from other types of hymns and which gives them their distinctive popular sound is their typical harmonic structure.[13] "Gospel hymns use . . . simple harmonies consisting largely of the tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords in slow harmonic rhythm."[14] The tonic (I), subdominant (IV), and dominant (V) chords are build on the first, fourth, and fifth tones, respectively, of the scale on which a melody is built, and are often called the "primary chords" of the key in question. "Slow harmonic rhythm" means that, for the most part, the same chord is used for one-half to one full measure or more before a different chord is employed. (A common exception to this occurs just before cadence points—places where the music temporarily "rests.") Other types of hymns may change the chord with each subsequent melodic note and frequently employ chords other than I, IV, and V. A gospel hymn tune is more likely to avoid modulation

[12] Bailey, 484.

[13] The gospel hymn's harmonic characteristics make it especially good for introducing piano students to hymn playing and to improvisation—creating a fuller accompaniment than can be achieved by playing only the voice parts as printed in a standard hymnal. So well does the gospel hymn lend itself to this type of improvisation that a certain style of accompaniment is sometimes called "gospel style." The music director of a small Southern Baptist church recently called to ask if I could provide from among my students a temporary substitute for his regular church pianist. He stated early in the conversation that he needed someone who could play the hymns "gospel style," and sure enough, every song he had planned for the following Sunday's meeting was a gospel hymn! Fortunately, I had a student who could supply the need and who enjoys playing gospel style, as do most students who learn the basic techniques involved. The problem then lies in helping them to discern which hymns are and which are not compatible with that style, and then in convincing them to use *other* styles of accompaniment for other types of hymns!

[14] Eskew and McElrath, 42.

(a temporary shift out of the home key lasting for one or more measures) than are hymns of other types. Gospel hymns written since around 1920 often show more harmonic sophistication. The melody may allow for more rapid chord changes, a wider vocabulary of chords, and may employ modulation more frequently. "Gospel hymnody has not remained static in musical style . . . it has continued a process of development in its more than a century of existence."[15]

Rhythm

The second musical feature distinguishing the tunes of most gospel hymns from hymns of other types is rhythmic.

> Although gospel hymns are frequently in simple meters such as 4/4 and 3/4, they make a greater use of compound meters [6/8, 9/8, 12/8, 6/4] than any other body of hymn tunes . . . [and] dotted rhythms . . . are characteristic . . . Some gospel hymns also make use of syncopated rhythms.[16]

These devices give the hymns the strong rhythmic lilt (or, in some cases, bounce!) and flow which makes them so appealing to many. Some examples of gospel hymns in compound meter are "Blessed Assurance," "Wonderful Words of Life," and "The Light of the World Is Jesus." "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder," "Standing on the Promises," and "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story" are examples of gospel hymns which make especially extensive use of dotted rhythms.

IV. The Repeating Refrain

Perhaps the single most common and readily recognizable characteristic of a majority of gospel hymns is the repeating refrain, a feature which helped to give the songs the simplicity and easy learnability that made them so useful to the revivalists. "The basic technique of simplification is repetition."[17] Few hymns written before the gospel hymn's advent had such refrains. A few well-known gospel hymns which lack the repeating refrain are "I've Found a Friend, Oh, Such a Friend," "Jesus Is All the World to Me," and "All the Way My Saviour Leads Me."

A comparison of the three musical settings of the hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" may be instructive. The lyrics were composed

[15] Ibid., 184.
[16] Ibid., 42.
[17] Ibid., 164.

by Edward Perronet, who lived from 1726 to 1792, well before the introduction and popularization of the gospel hymn. The hymn tune "Coronation" often used for Perronet's lyrics was composed by Oliver Holden, who died in 1844, about the time the gospel hymn was coming into being. Predictably, "Coronation" is not musically typical of most gospel hymns, nor is the alternate tune "Miles Lane" by William Shrubsole, who died in 1806. However, when a later composer, James Ellor (1819-1899), created a third setting, "Diadem," for these lyrics, he added a repeating refrain. While "Diadem" is on no other count typical of the gospel hymn, it would seem that Ellor was influenced in at least one regard by the new form which had become so popular.

V. Lyrics

In examining the lyrics of gospel hymns in order to discuss their common characteristics, the field for consideration has been limited to songs which appeared in *Gospel Hymns, Nos. 1-6, Complete* (1894), and which also appear in *Worship in Song* (1972), *Hymns of Truth and Praise* (1971), and/or *The New Broadman Hymnal* (1977).

A consideration of the writings of various authors on the topic of the gospel hymn reveals, in some instances, a somewhat condescending attitude toward the genre. This attitude seems to stem most often from an author's opinion that gospel hymns in general are overly subjective and sentimental, and that they overuse, or use unsophisticatedly, the literary devices of metaphor and contrast.

It is true that a much greater degree of subjectivity is the most consistent characteristic which sets the lyrics of gospel hymns as a whole apart from the lyrics of other types of hymns. In *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham*, William G. McLoughlin, Jr. "links the Sankey hymns and Moody revivals to a general intellectual reorientation which took place . . . between the Civil War and World War I."[18] This "intellectual reorientation" was likely, in part, the result of an integration into American culture of the romanticism that had characterized much of art, music, literature, and philosophy since the early decades of the 1800's. One of the main distinctives of romanticism is subjectivity—the placing of great importance on the individual's emotions, perceptions, and responses. We shall discuss later the scriptural validity and possible problems of such an approach to church music. Let us first, however, examine subjectivity as it is reflected in

[18] Sizer, 8.

various themes and expressions which occur in specific gospel hymns, and compare these to expressions of similar themes in non-gospel hymns.

Prayer

In "'Tis the Blessed Hour of Prayer," gospel hymn lyricist Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) penned these words:

> 'Tis the blessed hour of prayer, when our hearts lowly bend,
> And we gather to Jesus, our Saviour and Friend.

John Newton (1725-1807), years before the gospel hymn appeared on the scene, approached the subject of prayer with the following words in "Behold the Throne of Grace":

> Behold the throne of grace!
> The promise calls us near!
> To seek our God and Father's face,
> Who loves to answer prayer.

A comparison of these two expressions concerning prayer reveals perhaps the most fundamental difference in outlook between gospel hymns in general and non-gospel hymns. Newton, while acknowledging that the Lord "loves to answer prayer," seems to see more distance between himself and the "God and Father" whose face he will seek, than does Crosby, who "gathers" to her "Saviour and Friend." In "Draw Me Nearer," Crosby wrote:

> O the pure delight of a single hour
> That before Thy throne I spend,
> When I kneel in prayer and with Thee, my God,
> I commune as friend with friend.

Crosby expresses a very personal, intimate view of God—a view typical of gospel hymns as a group. The impression is given of "Jesus . . . not as the distant creator deity, but as a friend."[19]

This much more personal, intimate, and, yes, subjective view of God is accompanied by an increased expression of concern with how we, personally, are affected experientially and emotionally by our relationship with God in its various aspects. The general outlook is brought to bear upon numerous hymn themes or topics.

[19] Ibid., 33.

Heaven

A frequent theme found in *Gospel Hymns* is that of heaven. "Much nineteenth-century American hymnody is concerned with the afterlife. This is especially true of folk and gospel hymnody."[20] In the gospel hymn's characteristically subjective viewpoint, hymns about heaven center on *our* place in heaven and the joys which we will experience there. This is Sanford Bennett's (1836-1893) outlook both in the first two stanzas and in the refrain of "There's a Land That Is Fairer Than Day."

There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar;
For the Father waits over the way
To prepare us a dwelling place there.

We shall sing on that beautiful shore
The melodious songs of the blest,
And our spirits shall sorrow no more,
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest.

Refrain:
In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore;
In the sweet by and by,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

Compare Bennett's hymn to one of the few non-gospel hymns which has heaven as its main theme—"Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken," by John Newton.

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for His own abode:
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

[20] Eskew and McElrath, 175.

See, the streams of living waters,
Springing from eternal love,
Well supply thy sons and daughters
And all fear of want remove;
Who can faint while such a river
Ever flows their thirst to assuage?
Grace which, like the Lord, the Giver,
Never fails from age to age.

Saviour, if of Zion's city
I, through grace, a member am,
Let the world deride or pity—
I will glory in Thy name.
Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion's children know.

Newton looks forward to a home in heaven and its attendant bliss, but the hymn's focus is more on heaven as *God's* dwelling place into which He will graciously allow His sons and daughters.

References to heaven in songs predating the gospel hymn are often made obliquely through phrases such as "the throne of God" or "the Father's throne," or by mention of angels, or of singing, worshiping "throngs" or "multitudes." The emphasis is on heaven chiefly as the site from which God rules and judges and where He receives the worship that is His due. Fanny Crosby, in the gospel hymn "My Saviour First of All," also describes heaven as a place where the Saviour should have preeminence. However, note the proportion of lyrics devoted to this idea, and the proportion devoted to the author's or singer's projected personal experiencing of heaven:

When my lifework is ended, and I cross the swelling tide,
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see;
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,
And His smile will be the first to welcome me.

Oh, the soul-thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face,
And the luster of His kindly beaming eye;
How my full heart will praise Him for the mercy, love, and grace,
That prepare for me a mansion in the sky.

Oh, the dear ones in glory, how they beckon me to come,
And our parting at the river I recall;
To the sweet vales of Eden they will sing my welcome home;
But I long to meet my Saviour first of all.

Thro' the gates to the city in a robe of spotless white,
He will lead me where no tears will ever fall;
In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight;
But I long to meet my Saviour first of all.

Refrain:
I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
And redeemed by His side I shall stand,
I shall know Him, I shall know Him
By the print of the nails in His hand.

Aspiration or Devotion

A number of the gospel hymns could be grouped under the topic of "aspiration" or "devotion." This would include songs dealing with the Christian's desire to live a godly and spiritually fruitful life. In nineteenth-century hymnody, "There is an emphasis on hymns of devotion to Jesus and of a personal relationship to Christ."[21] "I Need Thee Every Hour," by Annie S. Hawks (1835-1918), is an example:

I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
No tender voice like Thine can peace afford.

I need Thee every hour, stay Thou near by;
Temptations lose their power when Thou art nigh.

I need Thee every hour, in joy or pain;
Come quickly and abide, or life is vain.

I need Thee every hour, most Holy One;
O make me Thine indeed, Thou blessed Son!

Refrain:
I need Thee, O I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee;
O bless me now, my Saviour,
I come to Thee!

[21] Ibid., 175.

Two hundred years before the gospel hymn's debut, Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676) expressed similar thoughts, but in a much more objective way, in "Put Thou Thy Trust in God," translated by John Wesley (1703-1791).

Put thou thy trust in God,
In duty's path go on;
Walk in His strength with faith and hope,
So shall thy work be done.

Commit thy ways to Him,
Thy works into His hands,
And rest on His unchanging word,
Who heaven and earth commands.

Though years on years roll on,
His covenant shall endure;
Though clouds and darkness hide His path,
The promised grace is sure.

Through waves, and clouds, and storms
His power will clear thy way;
Wait thou His time; the darkest night
Shall end in brightest day.

Leave to His sov'reign sway
To choose and to command;
So shalt thou, wond'ring, own His way
How wise, how strong His hand.

Evangelism

It should not be surprising, given the gospel hymn's close connection with an evangelistic movement, that the aspiration frequently expressed in the hymns is toward the spreading of the Gospel and the winning of souls for Christ. This sentiment is not often found in other types of hymns. The greater importance which gospel hymns place upon public expression of the individual's needs and feelings apparently extends to public expression of one's concern for the needs and feelings of lost and suffering humanity. Fanny Crosby provides an example in "Rescue the Perishing."

Rescue the perishing
Care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one,
Lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.

Though they are slighting Him,
Still He is waiting,
Waiting the penitent child to receive;
Plead with them earnestly,
Plead with them gently,
He will forgive if they only believe.

Down in the human heart,
Crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart,
Wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.

Rescue the perishing,
Duty demands it;
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;
Back to the narrow way
Patiently win them;
Tell the poor wanderer a Saviour has died.

Refrain:
Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful,
Jesus will save.

Spiritual Warfare

Related to the theme of aspiration is that of spiritual warfare. One of the best-known gospel hymns addressing this theme is "Faith Is the Victory," by John H. Yates (1837-1900).

Encamped along the hills of light,
Ye Christian soldiers, rise,
And press the battle ere the night
Shall veil the glowing skies.

Against the foe in vales below,
Let all our strength be hurled;
Faith is the victory, we know,
That overcomes the world.

His banner over us is love,
Our sword the Word of God;
We tread the road the saints above
With shouts of triumph trod.
By faith they, like a whirlwind's breath,
Swept on o'er ev'ry field;
The faith by which they conquered death
Is still our shining shield.

On every hand the foe we find
Drawn up in dread array;
Let tents of ease be left behind,
And onward to the fray;
Salvation's helmet on each head,
With truth all girt about,
The earth shall tremble 'neath our tread,
And echo with our shout.

To him that overcomes the foe,
White raiment shall be giv'n;
Before the angels he shall know
His name confessed in heav'n.
Then onward from the hills of light,
Our hearts with love aflame,
We'll vanquish all the hosts of night,
In Jesus' conquering name.

Refrain:
Faith is the victory!
Faith is the victory!
Oh, glorious victory,
That overcomes the world.

An earlier lyricist, Charles Wesley (1707-1788), exhorted the Christian soldier with these words in "Soldiers of Christ, Arise":

Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armor on,

Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul;
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole.
To keep your armor bright
Attend with constant care,
Still walking in your Captain's sight
And watching unto prayer.

Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued,
And take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God;
That having all things done,
And all your conflicts past,
Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone,
And stand complete at last.

Note that there are similar elements in both the Yates and the Wesley hymns. Believers are referred to as soldiers. Each discusses the Christian armor, an allusion to Eph 6:13-17. In both hymns, a reward on completion is promised to the overcomer. However, in "Faith Is the Victory," there is an emphasis on the Christian's participation in and experience of the battle. This facet is completely lacking in "Soldiers of Christ, Arise." Subjectivity enters even into warfare!

God's Love and Care

Many gospel hymns address the theme of God's love and care for us. One effect of subjectivity in this area is seen in an emphasis on Jesus' support in dealing with our earthly sorrows, fears, and trials. Consider the words to Fanny Crosby's "Safe in the Arms of Jesus":

Safe in the arms of Jesus
Safe on His gentle breast,
There, by His love o'ershaded,

Sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark! 'Tis the voice of angels
Borne in a song to me
Over the fields of glory,
Over the jasper sea.

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world's temptations—
Sin cannot harm me there.
Free from the blight of sorrow,
Free from my doubts and fears;
Only a few more trials,
Only a few more tears!

Jesus, my heart's dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me;
Firm on the Rock of Ages
Ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience,
Wait till the night is o'er,
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the golden shore.

Refrain:
Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There, by His love o'ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.

Non-gospel hymns also deal with our need for Christ's support as we face life's trials. However, their focus and expression is usually a bit different, as we can see from "In the Hour of Trial," by James Montgomery (1771-1854).

In the hour of trial,
Jesus, be with me,
Lest, by base denial,
I depart from Thee;
When Thou seest me waver,
With a look recall;
Nor, thro' fear nor favor
Suffer me to fall.

With forbidden pleasures
Would this vain world charm,
And its sordid treasures
Spread to work me harm?
Bring to my remembrance
Sad Gethsemane,
Or, in darker semblance
Cross-crowned Calvary.

Should Thy mercy send me
Sorrow, toil, or woe;
Or should pain attend me
On my path below;
Grant that I may never
Fail Thy hand to see;
Grant that I may ever
Cast my care on Thee.

"Safe in the Arms of Jesus" is a statement concerning the emotional comfort which Jesus affords the believer in the midst of life's tribulations. "In the Hour of Trial" is a prayer for Jesus' presence during life's tribulations, not so much for the sake of emotional comfort, but as a safeguard to prevent the believer from failing his Lord.

Gospel Testimony

Certain hymn topics seem almost solely the domain of the gospel hymn. The hymn of "gospel testimony" is an example. In *Hymns of Truth and Praise*, the "Gospel Testimony" section includes sixty-one hymns. Forty-eight of these are gospel hymns in every sense. Eleven others were written in or after the latter 1800's, and their music and lyrics all show a definite gospel hymn influence. Given the subjectivity which we have been discussing, it is not surprising that the hymn of gospel testimony—in which the singer most often describes his salvation experience and what it has meant to him—should have come into prominence with the gospel hymn. An example of the gospel testimony hymn is "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story," by Francis H. Rowley (1854-1952).

I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
How He left His home in glory
For the cross of Calvary.

I was lost, but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray,
Threw His loving arms around me,
Drew me back into His way.

I was bruised, but Jesus healed me;
Faint was I from many a fall;
Sight was gone, and fears possessed me,
But He freed me from them all.

Days of darkness still come o'er me,
Sorrow's paths I often tread,
But the Saviour still is with me;
By His hand I'm safely led.

He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet;
Then He'll bear me safely over,
Where the loved ones I shall meet.

Refrain:
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.

Invitation and Decision

A second theme which seems the special property of the gospel hymn is that of invitation or decision—a predictable result of being rooted in evangelistic revivals. Subjectivity manifests itself in many of these hymns in an unabashed emotional appeal to the lost ones to whom the invitation is extended. A prime example of this is "I Am Praying for You," by S. O'Malley Clough (1837-1910).

I have a Saviour, He's pleading in glory,
A dear, loving Saviour, though earth-friends be few;
And now He is watching in tenderness o'er me,
And, oh, that my Saviour were your Saviour, too!

I have a Father: to me He has given
A hope for eternity, blessed and sure;
And soon He will call me to meet Him in heaven,
But, oh, that He'd let me bring you with me, too!

I have a peace; it is calm as a river—
A peace that the friends of this world never knew;
My Saviour alone is its author and giver,
And, oh, could I know it was given for you!

When He has found you, tell others the story
That my loving Saviour is your Saviour, too;
Then pray that your Saviour may bring them to glory,
And prayer will be answered—'twas answered for you!

Refrain:
For you I am praying,
For you I am praying,
For you I am praying,
I'm praying for you.

Metaphor

In addition to an overall subjectivity, a heavy use of metaphors[22] is often specified as a distinctive feature of the gospel hymn by several of the authors whose works were examined.

> It is clear from even a superficial reading that the gospel hymns are largely constructed around a series of metaphors in poetic form—Jesus as "shepherd;" life as a 'stormy sea' . . . Structural analysis shows that such metaphors consistently appear as elements in a group of contrasting sets.[23]

An example of extensive use of metaphor and contrast in a gospel hymn is "Jesus, I Come," by William T. Sleeper (1819-1904).

Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

[22] It should be noted that the word *metaphor* is not a technically correct term for all of the figures of speech in the gospel hymns to be cited. Some are actually examples of *simile* or *metonymy*. For convenience, the term *metaphor* will be used to refer to all of these figures of speech.

[23] Sizer, 24.

Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into the glorious gain of Thy Cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of earth's sorrows into thy balm,
Out of life's storms and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of unrest and arrogant pride,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy blessed will to abide,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of myself to dwell in Thy love,
Out of despair into raptures above,
Upward for aye on wings like a dove,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of the fear and dread of the tomb,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into the joy and light of Thy home,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of the depths of ruin untold,
Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold,
Ever Thy glorious face to behold,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

The entire hymn "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning," by Philip P. Bliss, is an extended metaphor in which the Gospel is portrayed as a lighthouse to give hope to those lost at sea (the unsaved), and in which Christians serve as lighthouse keepers.

Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From His lighthouse evermore,
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.

Dark the night of sin has settled,
Loud the angry billows roar;
Eager eyes are watching, longing,
For the lights along the shore.

Trim your feeble lamp, my brother;
Some poor sailor tempest tossed,
Trying now to make the harbor,
In the darkness may be lost.

Refrain:
Let the lower lights be burning!
Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save.

This likening of life's problems and/or the condition of the unsaved to storms or stormy seas, and of Jesus to shelter, safety, and calm is the poetic comparison which seems to occur most frequently in the selections from *Gospel Hymns* which are still in common use.

Another commonly occurring metaphor involves representing the world and its sinful condition by terms such as "darkness" or "night," and likening Jesus to "light" or "sunshine." (Note that both the storm/calm and darkness/light metaphors occur in "Jesus, I Come," cited earlier.) In "Jesus Is Calling," Fanny Crosby asks, "Why from the sunshine of love wilt thou roam?" Another example of the darkness/light metaphor is found in the fourth stanza of Crosby's "Safe In the Arms of Jesus," also cited above. And Philip P. Bliss's "The Light of the World Is Jesus" is built entirely around this metaphor.

In "Saved by Grace," Fanny Crosby uses two especially poetic metaphors to represent the idea of a Christian's death. The song opens with:

Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing.

The third stanza depicts the Christian's death with these words:

Some day, when fades the golden sun
Beneath the rosy-tinted west . . .

The first verse of "Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling," by Will L. Thompson (1847-1909), compares Jesus to one waiting at the doorway for an expected guest:

See, on the portals He's waiting and watching,
Watching for you and for me.

"The Lily of the Valley," by Charles W. Fry (1837-1882), contains in its very title a metaphor for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also described as "the Bright and Morning Star" in the hymn's chorus. In the second stanza, Fry writes:

> In temptation He's my strong and mighty tower.

And the third stanza contains these words:

> A wall of fire about me,
> I've nothing now to fear,
> With His manna He my hungry soul shall fill.
> Then sweeping up to glory to see His blessed face,
> Where rivers of delight shall ever roll . . .

The second and third stanzas of "Christ Liveth in Me," by Daniel W. Whittle (1840-1901), also offer some especially poetic imagery:

> As rays of light from yonder sun,
> The flowers of earth set free,
> So life and light and love came forth,
> From Christ living in me.
>
> As lives the flow'r within the seed,
> As in the cone the tree,
> So, praise the God of truth and grace,
> His Spirit dwelleth in me.

A strong use of metaphor and an increased subjectivity do, indeed, appear to be hallmarks of the gospel hymn. It seems open to debate, however, whether gospel hymns depend on metaphor and other types of figurative language considerably more than do non-gospel hymns; these devices occur in good poetry of all styles and eras (the Psalms are full of them). It is true that some specific images occur so often in gospel hymns as to come near the point of cliché, but there are also numerous examples of original and solidly descriptive figures of speech.

In truth, an overall survey of the old gospel hymns still in common use does not seem to support charges, from a literary point of view, of general *over*-subjectivity and emotionalism, nor of an excessive and tasteless use of clichéd metaphors and contrasts. (This does not mean that there are not isolated examples of such.)

In pondering why my general findings did not match those of some of the research materials examined, I arrived at two possible explanations. *First*, the writers in question had considered the *entire* body of gospel

hymns contained in *Gospel Hymns, Nos. 1-6 Complete*. Many of these hymns do not appear in many currently used hymnals. A number of the old hymns likely fell out of favor over the years precisely because of overly emotional subjectivism or lyrics flowery to the point of silliness. These negative qualities are not generally a factor in most of the hymns that have survived.

Second, some of the gospel hymn critics may have had only a casual knowledge of Scripture and, therefore, may have been unaware that many of the images and doctrinal concepts commonly found in gospel hymns are not attempts at romanticism on the part of the lyricists, but are, in fact, *drawn from Scripture*. For example, one writer spent several paragraphs discussing with a somewhat negative slant the "passivity" expressed in many of the gospel hymns. An examination of the lyrics of gospel hymns in current use, however, indicates not so much a negative passivity as an acknowledgment of the powerlessness of our own efforts either to save ourselves from sin eternally, or to experience victory over sin and to live a godly life presently. This is not a romantic concept developed in the late nineteenth century, but the thrust of scriptural teaching regarding man's relationship with God. It is also a concept which is completely foreign to the natural man.

[To be concluded in autumn issue]

BOOK REVIEWS

Healing Grace—Let God Free You From the Performance Trap. By David Seamands. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1988. 192 pp. Cloth, $14.99.

Over the years, there have been many books written about the theology of grace. But in *Healing Grace*, Dr. David Seamands has given us a book that powerfully demonstrates how grace can practically impact our everyday life.

The subtitle, *Let God Free You From the Performance Trap*, reveals Seamands's intended audience—believers who to one degree or another have bought the lie that who we are, how we feel about ourselves, and how God and others feel about us depends on *our performance*. Seamands suggests that while most Christians believe in grace (the favor of God freely given in spite of performance), they have trouble applying it to their lives. The result is a life of emotional and spiritual pain, demonstrated in low self-esteem, guilt, negative feelings, problems in relationships, and an insecure relationship with God. Seamands wants to free believers from the painful performance trap.

To this reviewer, who has himself experienced firsthand the pain of the performance trap, Seamands's efforts to provide healing instruction are an unqualified success. In fact, he accomplishes his goal in three specific ways.

First, he exposes key barriers to grace—those factors in our lives and culture that distort grace and lead to an addiction to performance. Especially helpful is the section on grace in the home (chap. 3) with instruction on avoiding the abuse of grace ("parental dysgrace") as well as positive teaching about communicating *unconditional love* to children.

Second, Seamands describes in detail the journey of an average believer from early hurts all the way to perfectionism with its many destructive tendencies (chap. 6). The clarifying chart alone (pp. 90-91) is worth the price of the book, as the author helps us "see" if perfectionism has somehow infiltrated our lives.

Third, he encourages us with a sure hope of recovery and attempts to lead us through the recovery process by saturating us in healing grace. Especially poignant is his emphasis on the necessity of grace being fully realized in our emotions. Specific chapters on grace and guilt (chap. 8)

and self-esteem (chap. 10) help provide the application.

But perhaps *Healing Grace* accomplished a more far-reaching (though secondary) purpose by providing some much-needed insight into the current debate on the Gospel. Seamands does this in three ways:

First, he is amazingly clear in his statements concerning justifying grace. The focus in justification is not on turning from sin or any other part of our performance, but on "Christ's perfect performance for us" (p. 169). Faith is clearly defined as "trust" (p. 81), not "commitment" (p. 36). The focus of Seamands's Gospel is not on the quality of our faith, but its Object.

Second, he provides proper biblical emphasis on the relationship between faith and works in sanctification. He suggests that "we are most certainly called to respond to grace with obedience," not to earn God's grace, but simply out of "thankfulness for it" (p. 114). Guilt and fear of possible condemnation are not needed to "hold us in line" or to motivate us to serve Christ. Instead, grace is the most effective motivation for the Christian life. The author admits that all believers sin, sometimes even severely and continuously. And he includes an extensive discussion of the concept of "failure" in the Christian life. Assurance for the author is based not on works, but on grace, and it is available "in spite of all the sins and failures we see in ourselves" (p. 169).

Third, Seamands reminds us that there are other reasons to believe in the doctrine of Free Grace besides solid exegesis and theological thinking. Simply put, *grace works!* The only way to have the peace, joy, emotional health, and long-term productivity that God desires for His children is to believe and live the truth that "grace and grace alone is and always will be the basis of our relationship with God" (p. 110). Performance, so central to the Lordship view of motivation in the Christian life, is neither the basis nor the proof of receiving grace. To Seamands, true biblical performance flows out of experiencing grace.

In years to come, the practical side of the grace issue may gain more and more prominence in the debate over the Gospel. If that is true, I believe that this book will prove to be an invaluable asset, not only to the individual caught in the performance trap, but to the pastor and theologian who desire to apply and defend the Free Grace Gospel on a practical level.

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An Ember Still Glowing: Humankind as the Image of God. Harry R. Boer. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990. 187 pp. Paper, $14.95.

This book is a direct but friendly attack on the bedrock doctrines of Reformed theology by one who is himself a Reformed theologian. Boer writes boldly in an effort to salvage the spirituality of the Reformed community, which he thinks has suffered from the traditional views of total depravity, common and special grace, predestination, election, and reprobation.

His starting point is man in the image of God. He argues that this concept should not be thought of in the individual sense, but in the sense of mankind as a whole. The human race still retains a remnant of God's image—"an ember still glowing"—thus the term "total depravity" is theologically incorrect. Whether or not one agrees with Boer's collective meaning for the *imago Dei*, the reader will be impressed with how he argues persuasively that all people, not just a select few, are spiritually capable of responding to God's revelation in faith. This is quite a departure from Reformed thought, which teaches that man can only believe as enabled through divine regeneration!

One can easily see how Boer's central premise erodes other Reformed doctrines. In succession he also denounces those doctrines which are more or less necessitated by the teaching of total depravity, such as the distinction between special and common grace, and double predestination. In doing so, he shows limited reverence for the sacred Reformed confessions and even crosses swords briefly with Calvin. Commendably, his premier concern is the *biblical data* tempered by sound logic and practicality.

Evidently, Boer does not reflect the more conservative side of Reformed theology. Concessions to some unacceptable views are apparent (the Documentary Hypothesis; salvation apart from the Gospel; corporate election). One should read Boer carefully and discern his excesses. However, in the main, I found his thinking refreshing and very beneficial. Not only is he willing to poke a bloated sacred cow, but he makes sense in his central point. For too long, much of the conservative Protestant Church has assumed the Reformed position of total depravity and allowed it to shape her soteriology, only to result in the birth of some ugly stepchildren: limited atonement, double predestination, and Lordship Salvation.

This book is provocative and potentially revolutionary. It will be interesting to observe the reaction from Reformed quarters. Students

of theology will want to get this book and let it inform, but not mold, their thinking on the doctrines of sin and salvation.

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The Cross of Christ. By John R. W. Stott. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986. 383 pp. Cloth, $17.95.

As a leader in British evangelicalism and in worldwide Christian mission, Anglican John R. W. Stott has widely impacted mainstream evangelicalism ever since the publication of his evangelistic work, *Basic Christianity*, in 1958. Dr. Stott's early espousal of the Lordship Salvation position preceded the present conflict among evangelicals with his 1959 magazine article, "Must Christ be Lord to be Savior?—Yes" (*Eternity* 10 [Sept. 1959]: 15, 17-18, 36-38). Recently Stott has again become controversial with his departure from the orthodox doctrine of eternal punishment for unbelievers.

Nevertheless, it is with great interest that one approaches his 1986 work, *The Cross of Christ*. This book deals primarily with the issues of the atonement of Christ and its implications for Christian theology and experience. It is a very organized and well-written defense of the conservative, evangelical position on these issues.

The book is divided into four parts. The first, "Approaching the Cross," is an introduction to the central importance of the doctrine of atonement to the Christian faith. The second section, "The Heart of the Cross," is an exploration of the concepts of penal substitution and satisfaction in the atonement. The third part, "The Achievement of the Cross," examines the things accomplished through the Cross—the salvation of sinners, the revelation of God's glory and goodness, and the conquest of evil powers. The last section, "Living Under the Cross," investigates the implications of the atonement for one's experience of God, self, others, and social justice.

Stott's most brilliant section is his defense of the historical, evangelical Protestant view of the scriptural teaching of "substitutionary atonement." This reviewer has not read a more understandable or more complete defense in contemporary theological literature.

One might expect that Stott's Lordship Salvation position would come through clearly in the book. Surprisingly, such is not the case. Instead, we find statements like this: "Christ's salvation must be a free gift. He 'purchased' it for us at the high price of his own life-blood. So what is there left for us to pay? Nothing! Since he claimed that all was now 'finished', there is nothing for us to contribute. Not of course that we now have a license to sin and can always count on God's forgiveness. On the contrary, the same cross of Christ, which is the ground of a free salvation, is also the most powerful incentive to a holy life. But this new life follows."

How can such a Free Grace emphasis be found in a work written by one who espouses Lordship Salvation? The answer, I believe, is found in the topic itself. A study of the atonement, by its very nature, focuses on the sufficiency of Christ and His work. The result of such an emphasis is that the basis of salvation (the Person and work of Christ) becomes much more central and important than the subjective means of salvation, which are often debated (faith, repentance, conversion, etc.). This is as it should be. Too many contemporary works start with a cursory statement of the atonement and move on to an examination of how a person can enter into, or find assurance of, a saving relationship with Christ. This subjective approach is flawed from the outset since the emphasis is wrong. The Apostle Paul taught that the Gospel itself is an *objective truth* that "Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead" (1 Cor 15:2-4). The subjective experience that "by this gospel you are saved" follows from this as an implication and result (1 Cor 15:2). The objective truth of the Gospel should always find highest priority.

This is not to say that a clear study of the atonement solves all the problems in the current debate. The disagreement over the definitions of such terms as *faith* and *repentance* is significant and real. Nor is it to imply that Stott has changed his theological position on the terms of salvation. It is simply to say that this book demonstrates a need to emphasize more clearly and forcefully the sufficiency of the work of Christ. Only from such a basis can we draw again the conclusion of the Reformation that salvation can *only* be by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ . . . *plus nothing!*

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The Account Which We Must Give. By Carl G. Johnson. Schaumberg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1990. 131 pp. Paper, $5.95.

Confronted with the importance of the biblical concept of the future judgment of believers, and finding a dearth of publications on this subject, Carl Johnson was motivated to proclaim "the awesomeness of the Judgment Seat of Christ" by means of this volume. In so doing, he sets out to produce a balanced presentation by including "both the positive and negative aspects of the Judgment Seat of Christ."

He begins by giving an overview of this judgment in the first two chapters. Next he narrows his focus in subsequent chapters by concentrating attention on "rewards," "the five crowns," and "loss at the Judgment Seat." He concludes the book with a chapter on the judgment of unbelievers.

This volume is not an exegetical work; it is mostly a compendium of quotations and excerpts from *other* writers on the subject. However, within the quotations and excerpts one can find sound exegesis displayed and a gold mine of thoughts revealed on this subject. This is especially true of the information found on pp. 81-88, which is adapted from *Grace in Eclipse*, by Zane C. Hodges.

The book is very easy to read and is highly recommended to any Christian desiring information in this area. Pastors will welcome this work for its plethora of fine quotations on the subject, for its illustrative material, and for the insights presented— particularly in regard to the judgment of *unfaithful* Christians. Though this reviewer does not agree with the author's division of the "crowns" into five separate rewards, nor with the view presented on p. 31 that the 24 elders of Revelation 4:10-11 represent believers casting their "crowns" before the Lord (indicating that the "crowns" are not the permanent possession of faithful believers), there is very little else with which to quarrel. In fact, this work is to be commended for its overall biblical accuracy.

To borrow the words of Dr. W. Myrddin Lewis, cited on p. 27, the Judgment Seat of Christ "*should* be the *greatest inducement* to holy living, greater than any other single thing" (emphasis his). That is why the study of this judgment is a *must* for every believer, and why a book such as *The Account Which We Must Give* should be on the shelf of every Christian. There is still a need for an in-depth *exegetical* work to be

published on this subject, but Carl Johnson's book provides an excellent initiation into this very important field of study.

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Growing in Grace. By Bob George. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1991. 215 pp. Paper, $6.95.

This book by noted counselor and radio personality Bob George attempts to help believers understand who they are in Christ, how to experience freedom—from guilt, sin, etc.—and how to go on to maturity. As the title indicates, the author points out that the way to achieve these aims is by experiencing God's grace.

One place in which the book shines is the author's response to the accusation by Lordship Salvationists that teachers of grace are actually affirming an "easy believism" or "cheap grace." He writes, "The forgiveness of my sins may have been free to me, *but it was not 'cheap' to the One who paid for it!*" (p. 152, emphasis his). Other bright spots in the book include the author's refusal to judge whether a professing believer is a true Christian or not because of sin in his life, and the author's encouragement of a proper focus in regard to assurance of salvation—i.e., it should be based on the faithfulness of *Christ*—not on *our* faithfulness.

Though there are some definite strengths to *Growing in Grace*, there are at least two fatal weaknesses. First, much of the application of the book is vague. For example, the author emphasizes the importance of "abiding in Christ" without ever explaining what that means. Also, though living by faith in Christ is a central idea in this book, we are never told just *how* believers are to do that. Neither are statements such as, "We will be growing in grace as we present our minds and bodies to the indwelling Christ, letting Him live out His life through us" (p. 115), ever explained. This is a grave weakness, because principles cannot be applied until they are understood.

Second, the author appears to espouse the concept that Christians will not ultimately be held responsible for what they do—or don't do. This unfortunate idea manifests itself in this book in four ways: (1) The author seems to dismiss the scriptural teaching of confession of sin for a believer

by rejecting the idea that a Christian could be "out of fellowship with God" (p. 19), by denouncing confession of sin at the Lord's table (pp. 147-48), and by indicating that the practice of confession of sin is a consequence "of failing to finalize the forgiveness issue," which "produces a *total concentration on self*" (p. 148, emphasis his). (2) No mention is made of a Christian's future accountability before the Lord, which accountability provides a necessary counterpart to the clear teaching of grace). (3) The traditional Reformed concept of sanctification is propagated, in which all Christians will eventually and inevitably persevere to the end of their lives as faithful to the Lord. (4) He effectually removes responsibility from a believer in his relationship with Christ by stating that "the Christian life is not trying to imitate Christ" (p. 60), an assertion which is antithetical to Paul's injunctions in 1 Cor 11:1 and Eph 5:1 to do just that!

While this reviewer applauds the book's emphasis on grace, enthusiasm for the publication as a whole is tempered by the author's vague application of his principles and by his apparent emphasis on the abrogation of the believer's responsibility.

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Coming to Grips with God's Discipline of the Believer. By Erwin W. Lutzer. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991. 46 pp. Paper, $3.25.

Can we always draw a direct connection between specific events and judgment from God for specific sins? Dr. Lutzer answers this question in *God's Discipline*, and gives helpful instruction on this often-ignored subject. God's "retributive" discipline is illustrated in the loss of David's child for his sin with Bathsheba. This is only a part of the entire discipline program. The Book of Job illustrates God's "educative" discipline. Job's friends sinned in attributing Job's suffering to God's retribution for sin. Rather, God was refining and teaching Job. Another form is the "preventative" kind. God gave Paul a "thorn in the flesh" to prevent him from becoming proud (2 Cor 12:7), and thus to protect him from self-destruction.

The *basis* for discipline, Lutzer explains, is *sonship*. Since faithful believers are to inherit Christ's kingdom, their chastening results from

the loving parental concern of their heavenly Father: "whom the Lord loves He chastens, and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Heb 12:6).

Lutzer draws a clear distinction between chastening (for believers) and wrath (for unbelievers), and makes an evangelistic appeal to unbelievers to become shielded from God's wrath by accepting Christ's sacrifice for their sins.

In discussing the methods of discipline, the author lists guilt, emotional trauma, Satanic oppression, and physical death with God's many methods of "retributive" discipline for sin. Sinning believers must either come to an agreement with God about their sin (confession), or their experience of God's chastening will continue to become more severe. King Saul, for example, experienced a demonic agitator to increase his jealous rage, and Ananias and Sapphira were taken to glory in quick judgment for their defiant, presumptuous, and insulting lie to the Holy Spirit.

The negative aspects of God's discipline should be sobering to believers who rebel. God is a jealous and holy God. On the other hand, Lutzer points to Christ as our Example of obedience, who "learned obedience through the things that He suffered" (Heb 5:8). As believers grow in Christ, they learn that God's discipline results in "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:11). As they submit to chastening, however painful, they learn to appreciate the loving correction of their Father.

This booklet should prove helpful to Christian workers as they attempt to give young believers a proper understanding of God's discipline in their lives.

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No Other Standard: Theonomy and Its Critics. By Greg L. Bahnsen. Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991. 345 pp. Paper, $9.95.

No Other Standard is a response to the various objections that have been leveled at Bahnsen's first book, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1977) and to theonomy in general.

Theonomists hold that OT moral principles and regulations are still binding today, unless they are specifically annulled in the NT. Theonomy states that only the *ceremonial* aspects of the law have been abolished. This means that the moral and civil aspects of the law are still binding. The insistence of the theonomists on the continuing validity of the *penal sanctions* in the Mosaic Law is their most notable distinction. These require the death penalty for working on the Sabbath, homosexuality, adultery, witchcraft, idolatry, blasphemy, and even for incorrigeably disobedient children, to name a few. Theonomists believe that Scripture is the only objective standard on which government should be based. This is probably the greatest strength of theonomy in that it seeks to apply the Bible to the issue of punishment for crime in society. However, as stated above, this entails more than just rape, murder, theft, etc., but also prosecution for *religious* crimes.

The two lines of opposition against theonomy come from dispensationalists and from Reformed circles. Dispensationalists argue that the Mosaic Law as a system or rule of life is abrogated. The Reformed view does recognize distinctions in the law, but disagrees with theonomy in saying that we are not under the *penal* sanctions, but only the moral aspects of the law. Bahnsen is answering the various objections to theonomy from these two camps.

The introduction gives a synopsis of theonomy. Bahnsen then argues for several chapters against misrepresentations of his persepective. The rest of the book is given to weightier objections to his view. These entail the validity of dividing the law, Dispensationalism, Israel's uniqueness, separation of church and state, pluralism, and other issues of the penal code. There is also an exegesis of Matt 5:17-19 in Appendix A.

Dispensationalism is diametrically opposed to theonomy. The passages that specifically speak to the believer's relationship to the law are the key passages in this discussion. Theonomy understands them to refer only to the ceremonial aspects of the law (cf. Rom 6:14, Gal 3:23-25, 1 Cor 9:19-23, Rom 7: 4-6, Eph 2:14-22, Col 2:13-14, Matt 5:17-19, and 2 Cor 3:6-18). However, the texts in question do not specify this category. There *are* texts in which the writer makes application to the ceremonial aspects of the law, but this is not the same as saying that only the ceremonial aspects of the law are abolished. Romans 6:14 makes no reference to any particular aspect of the law. Second Corinthians 3:7 makes specific reference to the decalogue itself.

Bahnsen's defense against the problem of enforcing the Mosaic death penalties on unbelievers for religious crimes is inadequate. He believes

society will be converted and sanctified to desire God's laws. He also believes that society will hear and fear the law. This seems reminiscent of postmillennial doctrines.

Bahnsen does not discuss Rom 10:4 or 2 Cor 3:6-18, key passages in the discussion of the law's application in the NT. Discussion of these passages is essential for one espousing theonomy. The book is well written overall, though, and is very challenging reading. It should be read by every believer who is interested in the relevance of the Mosaic Law today.

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Transforming Grace: Living Confidently in God's Unfailing Love. By Jerry Bridges. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1991. 207 pp. Cloth, $14.95.

Very few things catch the attention of modern man more than the offer of something free. When we hear the phrase "free, no strings attached," our first reaction is usually healthy skepticism. Most of us believe that "there's no free lunch."

In his latest book, *Transforming Grace*, Jerry Bridges offers his readers a truly appealing look at this matter of Free Grace. Most readers of *JOTGES* should have no trouble accepting Bridges's views concerning salvation by grace through faith alone. He devotes the greater part of the first eight of this thirteen-chapter book to an in-depth examination of this controversial concept of grace.

Although Bridges skillfully discusses at length the aspects of salvation by grace, the book is directed primarily at the *practical* implications of such a salvation. Once the sinner is transformed into a saint by God's grace, how then should the new life be lived? Bridges rightly contends that once a person has crossed over the line and becomes one of God's children, he or she is often placed by other Christians (subtly, of course) under the burden of living up to an unwritten code of conduct and performance reminiscent of the spirit of the Pharisees.

Bridges's previous books (*The Pursuit of Holiness*, *The Practice of Godliness*, and *Trusting God*) should dispel any fears that he advocates a libertine lifestyle. The author makes it clear that we are called to live a

holy life. Bridges's main problem with what many Christians today *call* holy living is that it is nothing more than a refined version of legalism that places people on a never-ending treadmill of performance. One of the most significant points he makes is the reiteration of Jesus' statement: "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). By His grace we are saved and by His grace we live, minister, and, according to our faithful service, will someday receive our final rewards.

There are three groups who should read this book: unbelievers, new believers, and veteran believers. Within its pages, the reader will find an attractive portrait of the God who makes the only bona fide offer of real freedom to anyone who will take it—with no strings attached. This is must reading for all those truly seeking to know the Lord as He wants to be known.

Barry V. Goodgion
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PERIODICAL REVIEWS

The Emmaus Journal: Biblical Studies Under the Auspices of the Faculty of Emmaus Bible College. Vol. 1, No. 1. Fall 1991. 96 pp. Edited by John H. Fish III.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Emmaus Bible College, the faculty has started *The Emmaus Journal.* It is "a bi-annual publication of the faculty and alumni of Emmaus Bible College devoted to the exposition of the Bible, biblical doctrines, and practical issues from a biblical perspective."

In his opening editorial, John H. Fish III expresses the need for such a journal to promote greater Bible study among the College's main constituency, the Brethren Assemblies. While this is the *targeted* readership, I believe all who are Bible-lovers and premillennial would benefit spiritually and intellectually from this new journal. While one can hardly expect the Journal to be as "grace" oriented as *JOTGES*, the Dean of Education, David A. Glock, told this reviewer in a telephone conversation that the Journal would come down on the Free Grace, not the Lordship Salvation, side.

Like the *JOTGES* editorial board, *The Emmaus Journal* felt that Marvin Rosenthal's *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* called for an in-depth review. Dr. Fish's Review is fair, irenic, and includes a helpful chart. He concludes that Rosenthal's time of starting God's wrath is too late, and that the entire 7-year period of Daniel's 70th week must be considered a time of tribulation, though the term "the *Great* Tribulation" best designates the latter half.

Other articles, all well-conceived and executed, are: "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6:1-8)," by the Assistant Editor, David J. MacLeod; "An Exposition of the Letter to the Church in Laodicea," by Kenneth A. Daughters; "The Centrality of the Lord's Supper in the Life of the Assembly," by David A. Glock (all faculty members); "A Theology of Leadership," by Emmaus's President, Daniel H. Smith; and "Dwarfs on the Shoulders of Giants: The Value of Historical Theology for Today," by Alan W. Gomes, a faculty member at Talbot School of Theology (see next review).

The book reviews include *The NIV Reconsidered*, by Earl Radmacher and Zane Hodges, and *The Believer's Bible Commentary*

(NT; OT released February of this year), by William MacDonald and edited by this reviewer. Some reviews are too laudatory of Puritan-Reformed books for most GES members.

Except for some spacing faults and a couple of Greek words apparently not "hellenized" from computer form (perhaps Greek in our own alphabet is best for a popular journal anyway), the quality of *The Emmaus Journal* is very high. Dr. Fish and his associates are to be commended. For those interested, the journal comes out twice a year at $7.00 and is available from 2570 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001.

I wish this new journal God's blessing and a wide readership.

Arthur L. Farstad
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Dallas, TX

"Dwarfs on the Shoulders of Giants: The Value of Historical Theology Today," Alan W. Gomes, *The Emmaus Journal* 1, Fall, 1991, pp. 51-56.

The Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at Talbot School of Theology starts his defense of the value of what most people call "church history" with the following colorful warning: "Chauvinism of the present says, 'we have got it all together, so we do not need to consider what anyone before us has had to say about Christian truth.' Those who are infected with this attitude act as if God stopped working in history shortly after the death of the Apostle John and began again only in recent times" (p. 51). Gomes goes on to "suggest a few benefits of seriously considering the great thinkers of the past, thus avoiding the chauvinism of the present." He supports all five of his main points interestingly and well.

To illustrate "We Learn from Past Mistakes" the author quotes fellow-faculty member Henry Holloman: "The teachings of the *new* cults are really just *old* heresies dressed up in space suits." For example Athanasius's exposé of the Arian heresy (4th century) counters the literature of today's "Watchtower Society" amazingly well.

The "flip side" of Gomes's first point is that, positively, "We Learn from Past Success." The giants of the *past* have already wrestled with

most (not all) of today's issues at length and are well worth reading.

The author's personal experience with a "small, independent Christian fellowship" that started out preaching "holiness of life" and a "total commitment" and ended up teaching Pelagianism (and worse) illustrates his third point: "We Find History to Be a Theological Laboratory."

In the section "We Are Inspired by the Piety of the Past," Gomes recommends specific books and periodicals (complete with addresses and even phone numbers) to encourage readers to "be strengthened spiritually as we encounter past models of true Christian piety." Obviously, not all of these sources will be sound on all points.

The last and shortest section tells us that "We Gain a Priceless Perspective" from historical theology. We "attain our perspective on God and His Word in a good measure from those who have labored before us 'in the word and in doctrine' (1 Tim. 5:17). In regard to the great mysteries of the Faith we are often dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants" (p. 56).

One warning that would have proved helpful is the danger of *misusing* church history to bolster unscriptural doctrines. Sadly, even most of the "giants" held unbiblical views on such things as baptism, church order, prophecy, and even the NT's stress on grace as over against legalism.

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"Master and Disciple," Shmuel Safrai, *Jerusalem Perspective*, November/December 1990, pp. 3-5, 13.

This periodical is the bimonthly publication of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. Shmuel Safrai is a senior member of the school and professor of Jewish History of the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period at the Hebrew University.

Safrai's article offers valuable cultural insight into the relationship between a first-century master and his disciple. It examines the role of Torah in Jewish society and the general attitude towards education. It is not a *biblical* study; but that is precisely its value, because Safrai uses the ancient rabbinic documents (e.g., Jerusalem Talmud, Babylonian Talmud, Mishna) to give a thoroughly *Jewish* perspective of discipleship.

After explaining the preeminent role of Torah in society, Safrai uses rabbinic writings to show how it was studied in the master-disciple relationship. This involved permanent schools as well as movable schools in which the sage would travel with his disciples to teach in various Torah schools. Discussions on the road were a common method of imparting the master's knowledge to his students. Learning was accomplished not only by study but also by service and submission to the master. The disciple participated in his master's life. A master expected his students to become so like him that they could teach proficiently or become his successor.

This is a brief article, but it is packed with valuable cultural data, organized clearly. Though only one reference is made to a NT incident, I constantly was mentally correlating the rabbinic practices Safrai cited with Jesus' ministry to the twelve disciples in the Gospels. This is the reason the article is worth having on file. It will bring a richness to our understanding of NT discipleship.

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Five Articles on Assurance, R. C. Sproul, Roger Nicole, John Gerstner, Ron Kilpatrick, and John Richard DeWitt, *Tabletalk* 16, February 1992, pp. 4-19.

The February issue of *Tabletalk*, the monthly publication of Ligonier Ministries, deals with assurance from the Reformed perspective. These five articles make excellent reading for any who wish to understand the Reformed view of this important doctrine.

R. C. Sproul writes the first article, entitled "Fear Not." Unfortunately, the article falls far short of delivering what the title suggests. The bottom line for Sproul is that assurance is based on our *works*. Assurance "involves a sober analysis of our own lives. We must examine ourselves to see if the fruit of regeneration is apparent in our lives . . . I test my faith by my works" (p. 6).

For Sproul, "Every sin we commit after conversion can cast doubt upon our assurance" (p. 6). That would lead one to believe that no one could *ever* escape doubt about one's salvation—unless, of course, he or

she could attain sinless perfection, which Reformed theology rightly denies. (For a chilling admission by Sproul himself of his own personal doubts of salvation, see *Tabletalk*, November 1989, p. 20.)

The second article, "The Privilege of Assurance," by *Roger Nicole*, is primarily an argument against Arminianism. Nicole shows rightly that Arminianism makes assurance impossible. Only in his last paragraph does Nicole touch on the Reformed teaching on assurance. He seems to imply that Reformed theology makes assurance possible since it is grounded in (1) Christ's work for us, (2) the testimony of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:16), and (3) the work of God in the believer. (These are the three pillars of assurance as found in the Westminster Confession of Faith.)

Does Reformed theology really offer assurance, as Nicole implies? If our works are necessary for assurance, and if our works are imperfect, then would not any assurance at best be imperfect as well?

John Gerstner pens the third article, entitled "True and False Assurance." His article is similar to the previous one. He attacks Arminian theology and shows once again that assurance is not possible under that system. Gerstner, like Nicole, fails to show how Reformed theology offers certainty of one's salvation. If perseverance is necessary for assurance, as Gerstner implies, then certainty is *never* possible, for there is always the possibility that one could fall away.

The point of the fourth article, "Assurance and Sin," by *Ron Kilpatrick*, is that assurance can be lost by backsliding: "Backsliding can cause us to lose our blessed assurance and plunge us to spiritual depression" (p. 14). How can one regain assurance? According to Kilpatrick it is by looking to the work of Christ (p. 16)!

Kilpatrick seems close to the Free Grace position. He never says that backsliding *necessarily* eliminates assurance (although he implies that this is normative). If, as he suggests, one can be assured of personal salvation merely by looking to Christ's promises, then our sins need not undermine our assurance.

The fifth article, "Assurances: A Pastor's Perspective," by *John Richard DeWitt*, deals with spiritual and non-spiritual hindrances to assurance. DeWitt acknowledges that people with certain personalities and physical or emotional illnesses may lose assurance and be disheartened when confronted with Reformed theology. Such an admission is refreshing. If assurance is grounded at least in part on *our* works, then perfectionistic, obsessive, sensitive, introspective, or depressed people will be devastated by the instruction to scrutinize their lives to see if they bear the marks of *truly* saved people.

The author offers no solution to this problem. In fact, he says, "At the present time I am much more concerned about easy believism (notion that one can be a Christian even though one displays no vital signs of spiritual life) than I am about an absence of assurance. One cannot know Jesus Christ as Savior and not know Him, at least in some emerging way, as Lord and Master of one's life" (p. 19).

Thus DeWitt seems to throw up his hands and accept as inevitable the destructive impact of Reformed theology on many people's lives.

While readers will find a classic presentation of Reformed viewpoints here, only one of these five articles can offer a Christian steadfast assurance.

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"Just as I Am," Christine Tachick, *Moody Magazine*, November 1991, pp. 28-32.

"Fearing God I understood. It was His grace I needed to learn." Thus the author begins her short article, which recounts the legalistic fears that were drummed into her before she learned that God accepts us just as we are; we can't bring anything of our own to impress Him.

There is something sad in the writer's account of the length of her search, until at the second church she attended during her college career she heard that God Himself would make the necessary changes in her to meet His demands on her. This has made the reviewer more thankful than ever that her preacher-father stayed home from church on a free Sunday evening—now over eight decades ago—to sit by the bedside of his little six-year-old daughter and show her how simply to accept "the riches of God's *grace*" through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

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"The Perseverance of the Saints: A Theological Exegesis of Four Key New Testament Passages," Robert A. Peterson, *Presbyterian Covenant Seminary Review* 17, Fall 1991, pp. 95-112.

Peterson's stated purpose in examining Col 1:21-23; Heb 3:12-14; 12:14-17; and John 15:1-8 is to "show that true believers continue to the end in faith, love, and holiness" (p. 96).

The author defines the perseverance of the saints as "their continuing to believe the gospel, to love God and their neighbors, and to live godly lives" (p. 95). While some Reformed theologians are uncomfortable calling perseverance *a condition* of eternal salvation, Peterson is not. He writes: "This passage [Col 1:21-23] teaches that *perseverance is a condition of final salvation*" (p. 95, emphasis supplied).

Again he writes, "*Perseverance in faith* (Col 1:23; Heb 3:12; John 15:7), *love* (John 15:9, 12, 17), *and holiness* (Heb 12:14; Heb 3:13; John 15:10, 14) *is a condition of final salvation*" (p. 112, emphasis supplied).

The author logically concludes as well that perseverance in the faith is vital to *assurance* of salvation. "It (Col 1:21-23) sets up a test of the reality of salvation" (p. 99). "The correlation between preservation (eternal security) and perseverance sets up a test of the reality of salvation: Perseverance proves faith's genuineness" (p. 112).

The introduction and conclusion of this article deal with the printed debate between John Owen, a Calvinist Puritan, and John Goodwin, an Arminian Puritan. Goodwin understood Reformed theology as asserting that eternally secure people might "practice . . . all manner of sin and wickedness," so that "no matter how loosely, how profanely, how debauchedly, I behave, yet God will love me, as he does the holiest and most righteous man under heaven" (p. 95).

Owen was incensed by this misunderstanding. So, too, is Peterson! The Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, at least as articulated by strong Calvinists, has no room for sinning believers.

I highly recommend this article. Ironically, its net effect is to do exactly what the author abhors in Arminian theology: to condition eternal salvation upon one's works!

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A HYMN OF GRACE

ARTHUR L. FARSTAD
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JEHOVAH TSIDKENU
The Lord Our Righteousness

Robert Murray McCheyne*

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree
Jehovah Tsidkenu—'twas nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge, no safety in self could I see—
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Saviour must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet name;
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free—
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.

*For a brief appreciation of the life of this author, see "A Voice from the Past" in this issue of the *JOTGES*.

Jehovah Tsidkenu! my treasure and boast,
Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost;
In Thee I shall conquer by flood and by field—
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!

Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,
This watchword shall rally my faltering breath;
For while from life's fever my God sets me free,
Jehovah Tsidkenu my death-song shall be.

The title of this fine hymn is one of the OT Hebrew compound names of God,[1] which were better known in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It means "Jehovah (or Yahweh) Our Righteousness." Based on Jer 23:6, the title speaks of God's putting His own righteousness onto the believer's account.

The author's birth and death dates (1813-1843) would suggest that he reached the age of 30; actually he didn't even reach his 30th birthday.

The progression from no interest in the Lord at all ("nothing to me" in stanza 1) to complete commitment to Christ ("all things to me" in the fifth stanza) mirrors McCheyne's spiritual growth. It was because of his total enrapturement with Christ that he was able to greatly influence first, his own congregation, St. Peter's Church, Dundee, then all of Scotland, then, through Bonar's *Memoirs* of this beloved minister, much of evangelical Protestantism.

It is a shame that few hymnals today contain this work.[2]

Most of us tend to like hymns because of their tunes, because we heard them often in youth or in a certain church or Christian organization that we like, or because of our doctrinal predilections.

This reviewer has only heard and sung this hymn two or three times, once when I gave it out at a little congregation in St. Andrews, Scotland. Since this hymn proved to be a spiritual experience to this reviewer upon

[1] The others are: *Jehovah-Jireh* (The-LORD-will-provide—Gen 22:13, 14); *Jehovah-Ropheka* (The LORD, your Healer—Ex 15:26); *Jehovah-Nissi* (The LORD, my banner—Ex 17:3-15); *Jehovah-Shalom* (The-LORD-*is*-peace—Judg 6:24); *Jehovah-Ro'i* (The LORD, my shepherd—Ps 23:1); and *Jehovah-Shammah* (The LORD *is* There—Ezek 48:35).

[2] McCheyne's hymn, "When This Passing World Is Done," is much better known. He gives all the glory to God, ending each stanza with the words "how much I owe."

the first hearing, I hope that this personal recounting will prove a blessing to some.[3]

As a freshman at Emmaus Bible School in Oak Park, Illinois[4] many years ago I sometimes attended a congregation that rented the school gymnasium while they were constructing their new chapel.[5] It was a large, somewhat chilly gym in the cold Chicagoland winter months, and while the assembly was not small, it only filled a portion of the gym. One Sunday morning the heat in the gymnasium wouldn't work, so the meetings were held in the second-story library. We were now crowded into a cozy room, overlooking the park across the street. Outside, the World War I statue and the trees were getting covered with heavy snow. Many in this assembly were from Great Britain and knew the old Scottish and English tunes well, which were sung *a capella* and, to a certain extent, in parts.

When one of the brethren gave out McCheyne's hymn, and the tune was raised, at least one young freshman got goosebumps as stanza after stanza was sung. Seldom have I been so moved by a hymn. Excellent words and an impressive melody can speak deeply to the Christian's spirit and soul.

If any people who read this article are compiling a hymnal or slides for congregations where the Scriptures are loved and good literary style is appreciated, I trust Robert Murray McCheyne's hymn will be seriously considered.[6]

[3] See Frances Mosher's "Grace in the Arts" article in this issue of *JOTGES* for a discussion of the subjective aspects of Christian hymns.

[4] Now Emmaus Bible College of Dubuque, IA.

[5] This is today Woodside Bible Chapel of Maywood, IL.

[6] This hymn was traditionally sung to a tune called "Jehovah Tsidkenu." A much better-known and easier melody, Clarendon Street, is generally used ("My Jesus, I Love Thee"), by A. J. Gordon.

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