

Journal of the
GRACE
Evangelical Society

"Faith Alone In Christ Alone"

Journal of the
GRACE
EVANGELICAL SOCIETY
"Faith Alone in Christ Alone"

VOLUME 11	AUTUMN 1998	NUMBER 21
-----------	-------------	-----------

Dr. Art Farstad: A Legacy of Love 5-6

Eulogy for Dr. Arthur Leonard Farstad
FRANK D. CARMICAL 7-11

The National Repentance of Israel
DAVID R. ANDERSON 13-37

Saving Faith in Focus
EDITOR 39-52

A Voice from the Past:
Salvation by Grace
J. IRVIN OVERHOLTZER 53-62

Grace in the Arts:
Some Personal Reflections on Dr. Arthur Farstad
And This Section of the Journal
JAMES A. TOWNSEND 63-73

Book Reviews 75-87

Periodical Reviews 89-92

A Hymn of Grace:
Seasons of Rapture
FRANCES MOSHER 93-94

Books Received 95-96

Journal of the GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY

Published Semiannually by GES

Editor
Robert N. Wilkin

Production
Cathy Beach
Sue Broadwell

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

Journal subscriptions, renewals, and changes of address should be sent to the Grace Evangelical Society, P.O. Box 167128, Irving, TX 75016-7128. You may call us at (972) 257-1160, fax to (972) 255-3884, or E-mail to GES@GRACENET.COM. Subscription Rates: single copy, \$7.50 (U.S.); 1 year, \$15.00; 2 years, \$28.00; 3 years, \$39.00; 4 years, \$48.00. Members of GES receive the Journal at no additional charge beyond the membership dues of \$15.00 (\$10.00 for active full-time student members).

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 his or her 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 167128, Irving, TX 75016-7128.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
©1999 Grace Evangelical Society



IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Arthur Leonard Farstad
(1935 – 1998)

DR. ART FARSTAD: A LEGACY OF LOVE

This issue of the journal is dedicated to one of my dearest friends, Dr. Art Farstad who went home to the Lord on September 1, 1998 at the age of sixty-three. The following are some of the comments we have received about Art from people who knew him and were touched by his passing:

“The news of Art’s death hit me in the pit of the stomach. He was such a vital force for the cause of grace and, more particularly, the mission of GES. I sent him a card saying that surely the Lord would raise him up because he was so vital to the cause in so many ways. But the Lord, who always knows better, knew that He wanted him home and that he had finished well.”

Dr. Earl Radmacher

President Emeritus

Western Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary

“Art was one of the most erudite men I ever knew—yet he never paraded it.”

Zane C. Hodges

Pastor, Author, Educator, Scholar

Dallas, Texas

“My condolences to Art Farstad’s family. I knew him to be an unfailingly gracious man. He will be sorely missed.”

Dr. Jim Congdon

Pastor

Topeka Bible Church

“I was greatly saddened to hear of Art’s home-going, though I rejoice that he is now with the Lord. The death of a loved one or friend is always a bittersweet experience, is it not? Art and I were at DTS together in the 60’s, though he was a few years ahead of me, and I always appreciated his testimony of life and word.”

Dr. George Meisinger

Dean

Chafer Theological Seminary
Huntington Beach, California

“From a human perspective we all would have liked him to be able to do more work for the Lord, but it is great to know that he is rejoicing with his Savior!”


Bob Rowley
Pastor
Grace Bible Church
Laredo, Texas

Art contributed much to GES. If it weren't for Art, we most likely would not have a journal. He has been the journal editor from the start and the driving force behind this publication. He greatly improved all of our publications with his outstanding editing. On top of all this, he served on the GES board for nearly ten years.

He was the sweetest, kindest man I ever knew. When I was going through hard times, he would be there with a hug, a pat on the back, a word of encouragement, and ongoing prayer support.

This issue contains three articles specifically dedicated to Art: Frank Carmical's eulogy, Jim Townsend's reflections, and Frances Mosher's presentation of a wonderful hymn Art wrote entitled *Seasons of Rapture*.

I will greatly miss Art. All of us who knew him will. He leaves behind a wonderful legacy of love.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Wilkin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

EULOGY FOR DR. ARTHUR LEONARD FARSTAD¹

FRANK D. CARMICAL
Evangelist
Harvester Ministries
Plano, TX

The first time I ever heard the name of Arthur Farstad was in 1980 in the old Wyatt's Cafeteria on Abrams Road in Dallas, sitting across the table from Jim Mook. I was a lowly Master's student and Jim was in the doctoral program at Dallas Seminary. I remember sitting enthralled as Jim told me how he actually lived in a big house in Lakewood with Dr. Arthur Farstad, who had been a Greek professor at DTS for five and a half years and was at that time Executive Editor of *The New King James Version* of the Bible.

Wow, I thought. Jim actually lives with this famous guy (even though I'd never heard of him)! Little did I know that in two years I would not only get to meet this famous "Dr. Farstad" (at a Christmas party where we all baked and decorated gingerbread men cookies, no less!), but I would also gain the richest and best friendship I've ever had.

Arthur Leonard Farstad was born on March 7, 1935 in Yonkers, New York (the seventh day of the third month, interesting because Art's favorite numbers were three and seven). He was the youngest of three boys. Art went to be with his Lord at sixty-three years of age on Tuesday evening, September 1, 1998 in Dallas. That same morning, Art commented to me as I drove him to Baylor Hospital: "I came to Dallas on this day thirty-five years ago from Washington D.C.; perhaps today is the day I'll go home."

When Art exited the stage of planet earth, he left a family he loved and prayed for every day of his life: his two brothers and sisters-in-law, Dick and Jane Farstad of Garland, Texas and Arnold and Jan Farstad of

¹ This is the actual eulogy delivered at Dr. Art Farstad's funeral on September 4, 1998 at the Mitchell Ministries Center at Dallas Theological Seminary. Nearly 200 people were gathered from all over the U.S. to remember and honor Art.

Boulder, Colorado; and six nephews and nieces, with their respective spouses and children, Mark Farstad, Martha VanDenHeuvel, David Farstad, Debbie Meyers, Eric Farstad, and Sharon Scanlon. Art also left behind across this world a host of former students, associates, and devoted friends.

He earned degrees and received many honors from Emmaus Bible School, Washington Bible College, and Dallas Theological Seminary. In addition to his translation work on the NKJV and his editorial work on *The Majority Text of the Greek New Testament*, Art was also a founder of the Majority Text Society, editor of the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, and translator and general editor of a new translation of the New Testament called *Logos 21*.

Although Art did not complete that translation, he did finish the Gospel of John, which has been published as an attractive blue (his favorite color) evangelistic booklet. There, in the foyer of the auditorium, are copies of this booklet. If your family does not already have one, you would honor Art's memory by taking a copy with you. And of course, they're absolutely free! When you're finished reading it, please honor the Lord by giving it away to someone who needs to believe that Christ died for our sins and arose and who needs to receive eternal life, free of charge.

Late Tuesday afternoon, Art's oldest brother Dick read in Norwegian from John 14 to Art in his room at Baylor Hospital. I'd like to read from *Logos 21 Gospel of John*, 14:1-2, the last verses that Art heard before his death:

Do not let your heart be distressed. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many homes, otherwise I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you.

Just five days before his death, Art read those same verses in Norwegian and noticed that the Norwegian word for "Father" in verse two was "Far," and the word for "place" in that language was "sted." Art circled both words in his New Testament: "Far," "sted," drew a line between them, and commented that "Father's place" in Norwegian was "Far-sted," like "Farstad!" Art concluded that perhaps the Lord was calling him home.

That story is so typical of Art. He was an individualist, walking to the synch of a different percussionist. He had his own unique style and flare to life. I often kidded him about being a seminary prof and Bible translator and yet having an interest in the macabre. Art was an aficionado of the Lincoln assassination, the Lizzy Borden ax murders, Jack

the Ripper, and the Lindberg kidnapping. Art was a Titanic buff long before it was *cool* to be a Titanic buff. And who could forget his interest in Sherlock Holmes and the mysteries of Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christi? If Art were here right now, he would point out that the name “Agatha” comes from the Greek word that means “good.”

Anyone who ever talked to Dr. Farstad for more than five minutes was soon to be acquainted with the “art” of conversation. He was a man of such ideas and ideals, a veritable *Funk and Wagnalls* of culture and trivia, that to chat with him for an evening was like a crash course in the liberal arts with running footnotes!

No one who knew Art or heard him teach can forget his marvelous sense of humor and wit, his puns and asides. When forced to endure someone’s absurd or inane, world-without-end prattle, Art would turn his head to one side and roll his eyes toward Heaven. Does anyone recall how he would rhapsodize about the ecstasies of Belgian chocolates or repeat for the umpteenth time his lecturette on the origin of the word *chocolate*? “Theobromide: the food of the gods!”

And of course, most hilarious of all was his own idiosyncratic argot devoted exclusively to his beloved Welsh Corgy, Mr. Chips, or Chippy, as he was affectionately called. Art also created the world’s only free, informal, evening school in his home, dedicated to the study of any subject, with its mascot his pooch. He called it CDU: Chippy Doggy University. After he met me, Art was quick to point out that I should be honored to have the same initials as Chippy—mine are FDC and his were CDF: Frank Daniel Carmical and Chippy Doggy Farstad!

Art was an old-fashioned bachelor and gentleman. His interests ranged from classical music to the Olympics to handwriting analysis to roses. He was an artist and a scholar, a modern Renaissance Man, with the mind of a genius inventor, the heart of a medieval romantic, and the soul of a metaphysical poet. Who else, but a man with a boylike faith and walk with God, would never skip his morning quiet time, and yet read those daily devotions alternately in English, French, Latin, Norwegian, Greek, or Hebrew? We shall not see his like again.

On the morning of the day of his death, lying on his hospital bed, Art asked me for his Norwegian New Testament and read the last verse that he was ever to read on this planet, 1 Cor 2:9. I read from his well worn, teaching copy of the NKJV:

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered in the heart of man
the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

When I think of Art, it reminds me of what God can do with one life dedicated to Him. Art's ministry extended to countless lives through those he taught and touched, who in turn have passed on that special torch to new generations. The proof of that is shown in this service by those who have traveled here from across the United States just to honor him.

Over the years, Art opened his home to seminary students, usually young single men, for whom Art was a role model of scholarship, professionalism, character, and moral purity. Those men have gone on to become professors, missionaries, and ministers scattered around this globe. And like the Lord Jesus Christ, Art was a mentor and discipler not only of men, but also a teacher of women, whom he held in high regard, especially his mother, his sisters-in-law, his secretaries, and special friends like Mrs. Winifred Griffith Thomas Gillespie.

Art was more than a friend to me; he was like a father I never had. And though I loved him and looked up to him, I was never blind to his frailties and shortcomings. He ate too much; he didn't get enough exercise; and he didn't take care of his health like he should have. He was a procrastinator and super disorganized. His favorite encyclopedia, *Larousse*, could have used Art's office as an illustration of the word *pile*! But those foibles are all like the muted colors in the corner of a canvas of life painted from top to bottom and side to side with the blazing primary hues of his strengths and virtues.

Why was Art the great man that he was? What can account for such an amazing life? I'll tell you. It was God's work, through His Holy Spirit, conforming Art's life and heart to the character and image of Jesus Christ, even as Art first trusted in Christ as his Savior and then throughout life, made it a habit to respond in faith and obedience to God's Word.

Only Jesus, in and through Art's life, can explain his actions. I never saw Art angry, except against sin or injustice or apostasy from the faith. He had an amazing degree of patience and compassion with the unlovely and unloved. I remember so many times, when others would use, abuse, or accuse Art, how I would seethe with anger, ready to throttle them, and he would simply turn the other cheek and look for the best in them, minimizing their weaknesses and maximizing their strengths. If ever I saw God personify First Corinthians 13 in mortal flesh, I witnessed it in Art:

Love . . . bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Art was also a great man because he had godly parents, who from his childhood instructed him in the faith. Art was so proud of his parents who came to America as immigrants, became citizens, and saw their three sons grow up to be educated and have a better life than they. It's fitting that on his lapel here in the casket he wears a tiny Norwegian flag in memory of his folks. His casket is made of beautifully polished wood, appropriate because his dad was a carpenter.

Finally, Art was a great man because God gave him an exceptional circle of Christian friends who constantly lifted him up in prayer. Some pretty famous people, in this world and in the next, crossed Art's path and left their mark upon him so he in turn could imprint his life on others.

I know how difficult this is for many of you. Me too. He's gone. It seems so unfair that he was ripped out of our lives so suddenly, leaving us never to see him again in this life. We don't even know why he died yet. We will grieve. But that's okay. It's right to mourn our loss, but we also have a responsibility to celebrate Art's gain. There is *so much* to be thankful for in his home going:

- Art is with Jesus!
- He'll never suffer with his heart or surgical pains again.
- He didn't linger a long time in disability or indignity.
- His disciples and students are teaching and winning thousands.
- His translations and writings are impacting millions.
- We Christians will meet Art again in oh, such a short time really.
- And even in his departure—such victory! On the morning of the day of his death Art said to me, "Maybe I've come back to the hospital so my doctor will gain assurance of his salvation."

But we must not only celebrate Art's gain, but our own gain as well. Whether your time with him was little or much, measured in months or years, rejoice that God loved you so much that He gave you the inestimable privilege to have your life journey intersect that of this remarkable man. Give praise to God that He enriched you and touched you through the words and works of His servant Art. I'm not sad that I've lost him. I'm so happy and blessed and thrilled to have had him in my life for fifteen wonderful years.

My mom told me yesterday that she had this picture in her mind of Art arriving at the gates of Heaven and Jesus welcoming him inside. And after hearing Jesus' words and seeing His face, Art then hears near Jesus' nail-pierced feet a familiar sound of padded paws, a jingle, a bark, and Chippy's chiming in: "Welcome home."

THE NATIONAL REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL

DAVID R. ANDERSON

Pastor

Faith Community Church
The Woodlands, TX

John the Baptist had a clear, concise message to Israel: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). Jesus had exactly the same message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17). And the people responded. They came in droves from Jerusalem, Judea, and the regions around the Jordan River. But when the Pharisees and Sadducees appeared on the scene (Matt 3:7), John was not impressed: "Brood of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance."

If we are going to understand the meaning of repentance for the nation of Israel, we must understand the setting of John's ministry, the meaning of the word "wrath," and the curse Jesus placed on the generation of Jews who put Him on the cross. Once we understand the national repentance of Israel, we can also unravel the relationship between water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. After all, Augustine taught that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs during water baptism. R. Shank,¹ and many others have hitchhiked on Augustine's baptismal wagon. Do the Scriptures teach that a person receives the Holy Spirit while he is under the water or while the water is being sprinkled/poured

¹R. Shank, *Elect in the Son* (Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1970) and *Life in the Son* (Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1961), admitted in a personal interview with this author in 1976 that the Holy Spirit is received while the new believer is under the water. When challenged with the example of Cornelius in Acts 10, he said Cornelius was an exception. When further challenged by the example of the thief on the cross (though baptism of the Holy Spirit was not an issue before Pentecost), he credited the thief with the baptism of "desire." The thief desired to get off the cross and get to the water, but since he could not, God credited him with righteousness because of his desire to be water baptized.

over him? If not, why not? Understanding the national repentance of Israel is significant for knowing when the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs. But let's discuss one thing at a time. What was the setting of John's ministry?

The Setting of John's Ministry

Israel's Covenant with Yahweh

In order to understand John the Baptist's, Jesus', and Peter's national call for Israel's repentance, it is necessary to also understand the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. It began long before the covenants with Moses and Abraham. The Abrahamic Covenant was much different than the Mosaic Covenant. The latter was what M. Kline called the suzerainty-vassal treaty.² But M. Weinfeld identified the Abrahamic Covenant as a "covenant of grant." In his words: "Two types of covenants occur in the Old Testament: the obligatory type reflected in the Covenant of God with Israel and the promissory type reflected in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants."³ In contrasting the two categories of covenants, Weinfeld comments:

Both preserve the same elements: historical introduction, border delineations, stipulations, witnesses, blessings and curses. Functionally, however, there is a vast difference between the two types of documents. While the "treaty" constitutes an obligation of the vassal to his master, the suzerain, the "grant" constitutes an obligation of the master to his servant... What is more, while the grant is a reward for loyalty and good deeds already performed, the treaty is an inducement for future loyalty.⁴

L. W. King was one of the first (1912) to publish the plates and translation of royal grants given to faithful servants in his work *Babylonian Boundary-Stones*.⁵ These boundary-stones (*kudurrus*) are dated from

² M. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 9-10. More recent work has refined the outline offered by Kline with considerable benefit in the stipulations section (see S. A. Kaufman, "The Structure of Deuteronomistic Law," *Maarav* 1 [April 1979]: 105-58), but the entire Book of Deuteronomy is generally recognized as one great suzerainty-vassal covenant.

³ M. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (April-June 1970): 184.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁵ L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1912).

1450 B.C. to 550 B.C., or the entire period of the Babylonian history during which boundary-stones were employed for the protection of private property. King comments:

The Kudurru-texts had their origin under the Kassite kings of the Third Babylonian Dynasty, and, while at first recording, or confirming, royal grants of land to important officials and servants of the king, their aim was undoubtedly to place the newly acquired rights of the owner under the protection of the gods. The series of curses, regularly appended to the legal record, was directed against any interference with the owner's rights, which were also placed under the protection of the deities whose symbols were engraved on the blank spaces of the stone.⁶

These same royal grants were used in Israel from the time of Abraham right on through the time of David.⁷ The land grants were invariably rewards for faithful service on the part of a vassal to his suzerain. It is worth commenting that a suzerain-vassal relationship was the basis for a grant. In other words, kings did not give grants to strangers, that is, someone with whom there was no covenant relationship. The relationship preceded the reward.⁸ It is the reward aspect of the grants, along with the parallel terminology between the grants and the covenants with Abraham and David, which convince Weinfeld that these covenants are

⁶ Ibid., x.

⁷ The case for royal grants in the history of Israel is made by A. E. Hill, "The Ebal Ceremony as Hebrew Land Grant?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (December 1988): 399-406, but David's specific use of them is documented by Z. Ben-Barak, "Meribaa and the System of Land Grants in Ancient Israel," *Biblica* 62 (January 1981): 73-91. David may have become acquainted with the custom when he was given Ziklag by Achish, king of Gath, as a reward for his services as a military commander. But the story of Meribaa (2 Sam 9; 16:1-4; 19:17-31) shows that David practiced this custom of giving land as a reward for faithful service himself. There is also evidence from 1 Samuel 8:14 and 22:7 that the system of grants was in vogue during the time of David.

⁸ The relationship with Abraham actually began in Ur of the Chaldeans, a fact often overlooked but made clear by Acts 7:2-3. When the text says, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham," the verbiage is technical jargon for establishing a covenant relationship. The Lord-Servant (Suzerain-Vassal) relationship was established in Ur. The stipulation was that Abraham leave Ur and go to a land this glorious God would reveal to him. Because Abraham was obedient to this stipulation, that is, because he was a faithful vassal, he was given the reward (Gen 15:1) of the covenant of grant, which was the land grant of Israel.

royal grants. Both Abraham and David loyally served their suzerain. Abraham is promised the land of Israel *because* he obeyed God (Gen 22:16, 18; 26:5), and David is promised a dynasty *because* he served God with truth, loyalty, and righteousness (1 Kgs 3:6; 9:4; 11:4, 6, 11, 35; 14:8; 15:3).⁹

⁹ Here are some of the terminology parallels which point to faithful service: 1) "Kept the charge of my kingship" (Ashurbanipal to his servant Bulta) parallels "kept my charge, my commandments, my rules and my teachings" (Gen 26:5); 2) "Walked in perfection" (Aru 15:13-17) parallels "Walk before me and be perfect" (Gen 17:1); 3) "Stood before me in truth" and "walked with loyalty" parallels "who walked before you in truth, loyalty, and uprightness of heart" (1 Kgs 3:6); 4) "I am the King...who returns kindness to the one who serves in obedience and to the one who guards the royal command" (Aru 15:6-7; 16:6-7; 18:9-12) parallels "the God who keeps His gracious promise to those who are loyal to Him and guard His commandments" (Deut 7:9-12) and "who keeps His gracious promise to your servants who serve you wholeheartedly" (1 Kgs 8:23); 5) "Land" and "house" seem to be the primary gifts given by kings, which parallel the gifts given to Abraham (land) and David (house = dynasty); 6) "Gives it to Adalšeni and his sons forever" (PRU III 16.132:27-38) parallels "for your descendants forever" (Gen 13:15) and "for your descendants after you throughout their generations" (Gen 17:7-8); 7) "On that day Abba-El gave the city" parallels "On that day Yahweh concluded a covenant with Abraham." According to Weinfeld, "on that day" has legal implications; 8) The delineation of borders for land grants is a clear parallel; 9) Marriage/adoption terminology used as a judicial basis for the gift of land or dynasty is quite prevalent among the secular and biblical grants.

By Abrahamic Covenant it should be pointed out that this author is referring to Genesis 15, not Genesis 12. In Gen 12:1-3 there is at least one stipulation regarding future obedience. Abraham had to go to the land. Any future reward for Abraham was contingent on his going to the land. This is what Acts 7:3 confirms. In fact, it is after he has gone to the land, built altars, and rescued his nephew (a parity obligation in the ancient treaties among co-vassals, according to D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*, Analecta Biblica, no. 21 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963], 24-25), and shown his allegiance to the true Suzerain versus the false (the king of Sodom) by paying tribute (a normal vassal obligation [ibid., 32]) to the Suzerain's representative (Melchizedek) and having a covenant meal with him (bread and wine [ibid., 172-73]) that God says to Abraham, "...your *reward* shall be very great" (emphasis added). The covenant of grant of Genesis is a reward for past faithfulness to the Suzerain.

The traditional premillennial distinction of “conditional” versus “unconditional” has muddied the waters.¹⁰ As a matter of fact, the covenants of grant are conditional upon obedience, but are unconditional after their inauguration (at least for the initial recipient).¹¹ The suzerainty-vassal covenants are unconditional in their initiation but conditional after inauguration. The suzerain sovereignly initiated the covenant (as set forth in the historical prologues of these covenants), but any blessings that accrued came only upon the condition of the vassal’s loyalty to the stipulations. The concept of “conditional” versus “unconditional” is both an oversimplification and an inadequate distinction. A better contrast between the two types is “motivation for future obedience” versus “reward for past obedience.”

Oftentimes the royal grants were incorporated with a suzerainty-vassal treaty, much as incentive clauses are included in a “no-cut contract” for a professional athlete. Hakeem Olajuwon has a “no-cut” contract with the Houston Rockets. He gets paid no matter how he performs. He will not be cut from the team. But he also has incentive clauses in his “no-cut” contract. If he leads the league in blocked shots, rebounding, or other outstanding performances, he receives even more pay. The “no-cut contract” is the suzerainty-vassal covenant, while the incentive clauses parallel the royal grants.

Here is the point. Once Abraham or David was given his grant, it could not be taken away. But since these grants included promises regarding future generations (seed), and since these grants were rewards based on the faithfulness of the initial recipient, how can the blessings (rewards) of the grant accrue to future generations if they are unfaithful? The answer is that they cannot. Isaac illustrates this principle in Genesis 26. Abraham has died. Now God appears to Isaac and challenges him to

¹⁰ J. D. Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 65-69.

¹¹ In a private interview with this author in Jerusalem (February 24, 1998) Weinfeld did say that it is his opinion that after the Exile the Jews began to look at the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants as conditioned upon their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. It is too bad they did not understand it that way before the Assyrians and Babylonians were used to discipline them. In fact, it is hard to see how they could miss it after reading Deut 4:23ff. However, though the fulfillment of the blessings of the grant covenants was conditioned on the obedience of a faithful generation, the promise to the line itself was unconditional after the grant had been given. The only question was which generation would be that faithful generation.

future obedience: Do not go to Egypt. God promises Isaac that He will confirm or establish the oath He swore to his father Abraham if only Isaac will be obedient to stay in the land. Isaac was faithful, so the promises of the grant continued to flow through him.

Likewise, God appeared to Jacob in a dream. Jacob was going back to Haran to get a wife, the very place from which Abraham had come. God tells him that the promise given to his grandfather Abraham can only be fulfilled in Palestine. Thus in Gen 31:3 he tells Jacob to return. For the land blessings to flow through Jacob he had to be obedient to God's command. This same principle of obedience in order to possess the land can be traced right on through the Palestinian Covenant to the ultimate remnant that will possess the borders of the land grant originally promised to Abraham. No generation of Jews has yet had the faith necessary to fully possess the land promised in the Palestinian Covenant (Deut 30:1-10). The promise to Abraham still holds; but God is waiting for a faithful generation to inherit the promise.

This same principle of faithfulness applies to the promise of "seed." This aspect of the grant given to Abraham will come to pass. The Davidic grant in 2 Samuel 7 picks up on the seed aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. For all David knew, Solomon would be the one to establish the Davidic throne forever. But Solomon was not capable of being the one to fulfill the everlasting nature of this grant. He was not found faithful (1 Kgs 11:11, 35). The royal grant given to David would await a faithful seed worthy of everlasting rule. This principle of a "faithful generation" required for the fulfillment of the future aspects of the royal grants is a crucial link in connecting Jesus with the fulfillment of both the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. The rewards of the grants would not be realized by an unfaithful generation, or by an unfaithful ruler.

And so, just as Israel was looking for an ideal king to be their Messiah, Yahweh was looking for an ideal generation that would be faithful to the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant (the suzerainty-vassal covenant). Through such a generation He could fulfill the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He could fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant (the covenant of grant). But what happened to unfaithful generations?

An understanding of the grants may be helpful here as well. Unfaithfulness on the part of a vassal did not nullify the covenant relationship in a suzerainty-vassal covenant. The suzerain sovereignly initiated the relationship, and he maintained it as well. This is the argument of God throughout Hosea, as well as in Romans 9-11 and many other passages. The fidelity of the vassal did not determine the duration of the covenant. What, then, did a suzerain do to an unfaithful vassal? Customarily, he

chose from among three different options: (1) he could invoke the curses of the covenant;¹² (2) he could declare holy war on the vassal;¹³ and (3) he could draw up a new covenant.¹⁴ Implicit in all three disciplinary options was the loss of any royal grants that may have been incorporated with the suzerainty-vassal treaty, like incentive clauses. If a grant (by definition) only went to faithful vassals, it is obvious that the unfaithful vassal was not a candidate for a grant. In other words, he lost his reward. The suzerainty-vassal treaty (or a new one) was still in effect, but the bonuses contained in the incentive clauses (covenants of grant) would not be given. Thus the danger lying before an unfaithful vassal was both temporal discipline (heavier taxes, stipulations, or even death) as well as loss of reward (royal grant).

Hopefully from this discussion of covenants it can be seen that when John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministries, God was looking for a faithful generation. But if the Jewish generation living during the first century A.D. were going to be faithful, it had to repent. This call to repentance for them as a nation or generation of Jews was really no different than God's call to them in prior centuries. And this leads us to a discussion of repentance in the OT.

Israel's Repentance in the OT

According to E. Würthwein, there is no OT equivalent for *metanoëō*, or *metanoia*.¹⁵ That is why the term is so seldom found in the LXX (only fourteen times for the verb and always as a translation for *niham*¹⁶ in-

¹²F. C. Fensham, "Common Trends in Curses of Near Eastern Treaties and *kudurru*-Inscriptions Compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 75 (January 1963): 172.

¹³Ibid., 172-74.

¹⁴Exodus 34, for example.

¹⁵E. Würthwein, "*metanoëō*," in *TDNT*, 1967 ed., 4:980.

¹⁶This verb, which meant "to be sorry" or "to comfort oneself," occurs 108 times in the OT, but only three of these deal with the repentance of men over sins (Jer 8:6; 31:19; and Job 42:6). In its theological context it usually refers to the repentance of God (see H. V. Parunak, "A Semantic Survey of *niham*," *Biblica* 56 [1975]: 512-32). Jeremiah 8:6 concerns temporal discipline of Israel for her idolatry. Jeremiah 31:19 speaks of Israel's sorrow after she had returned to Yahweh. And Job 42:6 refers to temporal blessings received by Job after his repentance. None of these refers to any repentance prior to a covenant relationship or personal relationship (see R. N. Wilkin, "Repentance as a Condition for Salvation in the New Testament" [Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985], 17).

stead of *shūb*). The LXX translation for *shūb* is *epistrepḥō*, which we have already seen is a term to be distinguished from *metanoēō*. Of the 1056 occurrences of *shūb* in the OT, Würthwein thinks 118 have a religious context.¹⁷ R. Wilkin counts 203 covenantal uses when the verb, noun, and adjective are combined.¹⁸ In only one passage (the Ninevites of Jonah 3:5-10) is the word used for anyone other than Israel. The vast majority of the uses are a call from the prophets for Israel to return to covenant loyalty. Yahweh and Israel have an intimate relationship. As Würthwein comments:

Hence Hos. can depict the relation between Yahweh and Israel in terms of a marriage in which the wife is unfaithful to her husband. Again, Is. can speak of sons who rebel, and Jer. can describe sin as forsaking Yahweh. All these expressions show that sin is simply turning away or apostasy from God. It is the more serious because Israel stands in a special relation to Yahweh.¹⁹

The point here should be obvious. The call to repentance in the OT, if there was such a call,²⁰ was to a nation already in covenant relationship with Yahweh. They were viewed as married or as the children of a loving Father (Jer 31:3, 9). The “turning” summoned by the prophets was a “return” to fellowship with a God with whom they already had a relationship. Failure to return to the Lord would bring temporal judgment. Deuteronomy 4:23-31 sets the stage:

Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God . . . you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed . . . But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn [*shūb*] to the Lord your God and obey His voice (for the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them. (NKJV)

¹⁷ Würthwein, 4:984.

¹⁸ Wilkin, 13.

¹⁹ Würthwein, 4:985.

²⁰ We must remember there is no Hebrew term that is equivalent to *metanoēō*.

Note the features of this passage: 1) God's faithfulness to the covenant of the fathers (the Abrahamic Covenant, that is, the covenant of grant) despite the unfaithfulness of succeeding generations to the Mosaic Covenant, the suzerainty-vassal covenant; 2) the wrath of God which is described as a consuming fire; 3) the temporal nature of the judgment; 4) a judgment that would destroy physical lives and scatter the Jews among the nations; and 5) the compassion of the Lord in the latter days toward the generation which returns to Him and seeks Him with their whole heart.

It is interesting that the only uses of *shūb* in the Pentateuch which refer to Israel's (or anyone's) turning to the Lord are in the passage just cited and Deut 30:1-10 (the Palestinian Covenant),²¹ where it is said that the Jews can return to Yahweh from being scattered among the nations if they do so with all their heart and soul. Thus, it can be concluded that the appeal to Israel to return to the Lord in the OT is an appeal to turn away from her infidelity to the Mosaic Covenant and to seek the Lord with her heart and soul. It is a call for fellowship, not relationship. Infidelity to the covenant evokes God's temporal wrath, but not His eternal judgment. Though individuals in the nation may undergo eternal judgment for lack of faith, the nation as a whole will never face eternal judgment.

The Corruption in Judaism

Much has been made of the condition of Judaism during John's era. There had not been a legitimate High Priest over Israel since 143 B.C. Annas finished his role as High Priest in A.D. 15, but simony or nepotism prevailed, and five of his sons followed as high priests, in addition to his son-in-law, Caiaphas. The latter may have been High Priest during John's day, but his father-in-law Annas²² was the power behind the

²¹ See Pentecost, 95-99, for a more detailed analysis of this covenant. This passage reaffirms the ongoing nature of the grant covenant to the recipient and his offspring. The grant, whether it was a land grant as in the case of Abraham or a dynastic grant as in the case of David, was the permanent possession of the line. However, once again, in order to enjoy the full blessings of the grant, God was waiting for a faithful generation of Jews who would possess the land, and the Jews were waiting for a faithful king who would reign from Zion.

²² He is even called High Priest after his tenure is over, perhaps in the same manner as we address a former President as President So-and-So, even though his tenure is past. In the Jewish mind the High Priest was in office for life, so Annas may have wielded the influence of the Torah over the nation in spite of any Roman appointment.

office (as witnessed by the informal trial of Jesus by night before Annas, as well as in Acts 4:6). And "Annas' Bazaar" has been well documented. Through corruption and graft the temple till was full of money taken from the temple tax (one shekel instead of the normal half shekel), the moneychangers with their 12 percent surcharge, and the sale of animals and birds for sacrifice. Truly the temple had become a den of thieves. The Copper Scroll lists 4,630 talents of gold²³ hidden around Israel to keep the Romans from getting it when Titus' army came through in A.D. 70. Many think this money came from the temple.²⁴ Whether it did or not, the record is clear that Judaism had been turned into a moneymaking scheme run by con artists. God had endured enough. Judgment was about to fall on that kind of corruption, just as it had in the past when the Assyrians, and then the Babylonians, were used by God to purge His people.

John was calling the people out of Judaism. He realized the system was too far gone to change it from the inside out. So rather than going into Jerusalem to attempt an influence, he went out into the wilderness and called the people out of Judaism. And out they came! But in order to effect their separation and disassociation from Judaism they needed to repent and be baptized in water.

If a Greek wanted to become a Jew, he needed to do three things: bring a sacrifice to Jerusalem, be circumcised if a male is in view, and be baptized in water. Through water baptism one gained a new identity. He disassociated from the old and reassociated with the new. To become a Jew one needed water baptism to disassociate with the Gentile ways and to reassociate and identify with the practices of Judaism. If one wished to renounce Judaism, he also needed to be water baptized. That is exactly what John was asking the people to do. Whether John had any exposure to Qumran is still debatable. But he did seem to share their distaste for the temple system in vogue during his day. The Essenes of Qumran disassociated themselves from the temple community. So did John and his followers. For John knew that the wrath of God was coming upon that generation of Jews. This leads us to a discussion of the meaning of "wrath" in the NT.

²³ Since a talent could be anywhere from 25-75 lbs., the weight of this gold would be anywhere from 58 to 174 tons.

²⁴ R. Price, *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1966), 280-82.

Wrath in the NT

John queries the Pharisees and Sadducees: "Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" The word for "wrath" is *orgē*, a word used most frequently in Romans and Revelation. In neither of those books is there a clear reference to wrath that is eternal. Revelation 6:17 refers to the end of the tribulation period as the "great day of His wrath." Though the word is used six times, it always occurs in Revelation 6–19, chapters which describe the last seven years of Daniel's program for Daniel's people and his holy city, Jerusalem. If the term were meant to include or refer to eternity, we would expect to find it after Revelation 19 in connection with hell or the lake of fire or the Great White Throne Judgment. Not so.

In Romans the first occurrence of the word "wrath" is in Rom 1:18. There the wrath of God *is being revealed* (*apokalyptetai*—present tense) from heaven upon all the impiety and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. God's wrath is then revealed in His turning men over to the increasing control of their sinful natures (vv 24, 26, 28) until they cannot tell right from wrong (an *adokimos* mind). The salvation story of Romans (see 1:16) goes beyond justification to deliverance from the tyranny of the sin nature in one's life (see 5:9–10). We were justified by Christ's death; we shall be saved from "wrath" by His life. Just as He was our substitute in death, so He must be our substitute in life. By the one we are justified; by the other we are sanctified (progressively). The point is that Romans, which uses wrath more than any other NT book, does not use wrath of eternity;²⁵ it is used of God's outpouring of His anger against man's sin in time.

²⁵ The reference in Rom 2:5 may look like eternal judgment at first blush. But it also may be taken as 1 Thess 2:16 where the Jews who have rejected Christ and hindered the cause of the gospel are filling up the cup of sins until God judges. The certainty of this judgment is expressed by Paul through a proleptic aorist (*epthasen*—will certainly come upon them) to the uttermost. This wrath again is most likely the same wrath mentioned in 1 Thess 1:10 and 5:9, but it does not preclude the outpouring of God's wrath on that generation of Jews who rejected Christ. They are a foreshadowing of the wrath to come in the Tribulation Period. Romans 2:5 may be a similar reference. The "treasuring up" in Rom 2:5 is similar in concept to the "fill up" in 1 Thess 2:16. And the "day of wrath" may well refer to the same wrath as we find in 1 Thessalonians (see also Zeph 1:14–18 for the day of God's wrath and Rev 6:16–17 where the great day of His wrath has come), not to preclude a temporal judgment on the Jewish

So it goes in the rest of the NT.²⁶ Just one more example from Paul's letters should suffice to establish this point. Many writers recognize 1 Thess 1:10 and 5:9 as among the strongest of proofs of a pre-trib rapture. Both of these verses use "wrath" in reference to the tribulation period. Because they say that members of the universal church will be delivered from this wrath, and are not appointed to this time of wrath, many expositors see the rapture referenced in 1 Thess 4:13-18 as a promise to be removed before the tribulation period begins. In other words, once again "wrath" is not a NT reference to eternity, but rather to something temporal.

The Cursed Generation

In this study it is being suggested that John the Baptist's use of wrath was consistent with the rest of NT usage. The "wrath to come" was something in time. This is not to say that those who rejected Christ will not suffer eternal condemnation (see Matt 23:33). But there was also a severe judgment in time. Jesus Himself defined the curse upon the generation that rejected Him in Matthew 23. In that passage He excoriated the scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites over and over again. Like John the Baptist, He referred to them as a brood of vipers (v 33). Because they rejected not only Him but also other righteous prophets (v 34), there was to be a curse on the generation which rejected Him. That curse was unfolded in Matt 23:35-36. All the righteous blood from righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah . . . came upon that generation. Jesus went on to leave some indication as to what that judgment

generation which rejected Christ. Most expositors agree that this section in Romans deals with the sins of the Jews. One problem with relegating Rom 2:5-10 to the Great White Throne is the reference to eternal life in v 7. No eternal life is given at the Great White Throne. It is unlikely that Paul is hopscotching back and forth across the Millennium with judgments. More likely that the judgment is the temporal wrath of the Tribulation Period immediately followed by the separation of the sheep and goats (Matt 16:27 and 25:31ff).

²⁶John 3:36 is another verse which could easily be misunderstood for eternal judgment. But careful attention to the tenses reveals that both the eternal life mentioned and the wrath of God are present time experiences. The believer has eternal life right now, the moment he believes. It is not a gift given at some future judgment. So also the wrath. Like Rom 1:18 this wrath is in the present: "the wrath of God *abides* on him."

would look like a few verses later when He told his disciples that not one stone of the temple area would be left standing upon another (Matt 24:2). That prophecy was fulfilled when Titus brought his Roman army against Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

This brings us to the matter of the length of a Jewish generation. If the wilderness wanderings are any indication, then a generation was considered to be forty years. Is it a coincidence that Jesus began His ministry in A.D. 30 and the judgment of Titus came upon them in A.D. 70? Forty years—a Jewish generation? God gave the Jews of that generation forty years to separate from the corruption of Judaism if they wished to avoid the curse. When Titus came through, he killed 600,000 Jews—all the blood from righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah.

John's Ministry

John the Baptist was calling people out of Judaism. If they would repent, be water baptized, and confess their sins, they would be back in fellowship with Yahweh. They would be walking in the light, ready-willing-and-able to recognize the Messiah when He came. It is not insignificant that John refers to Jesus as "He who is coming" (Matt 3:11). There is a great likelihood that John had more than Isaiah 40 on his mind when he saw himself as the one who prepared the way for the Lord. In the last book of the OT, Malachi speaks of the messenger who would prepare the way for the Lord (Mal 3:1). Here it says the Lord will come to His temple. Behold, "He is coming," and who can endure the day of "His coming" (v 2)? He will sit as a refiner; He will purge the sons of Levi (v 3). Of course, these verses refer to His second coming and the great and terrible day of the Lord (4:5). But John the Baptist probably was not oriented to two comings of the Messiah. He was preparing the way for what he must have thought would be the only coming. And from his perspective the day is coming, burning like an oven; and neither root nor branch would be left (4:1).

Thus when John the Baptist said, "Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees" (Matt 3:10), he envisioned the wrath of God already beginning in terms of the hardening of the hearts of the leaders of Israel. When Titus came with his army, the tree fell. But for forty years these people who were already in covenant relationship with Yahweh had an opportunity to remove themselves from the curse.

This opportunity to save themselves from this curse is exactly what Peter was offering the "men of Israel" at Pentecost. The entire company listening to him in Acts 2 were Jews who had come from around the

Mediterranean world for Passover and stayed on through Pentecost. When they were convicted of having crucified a man who was both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), they asked what they should do. The answer Peter gives is an answer to the nation of Israel. He is calling the entire nation to repent, be baptized in water—in the name of Jesus Christ, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is the same call given by John the Baptist, only this time the Holy Spirit has been sent as promised by the Messiah, Jesus Christ. But in order to receive the Spirit they needed to repent and be baptized in water.

Peter's Ministry

The connection between the curse given by Jesus and the call of Peter to the nation is made clear by verse forty. There it is written, "And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.'" He was not telling them how to be saved from hell or the lake of fire (though that would be included in the package for those coming to faith for the first time). He was specifically telling them how to avoid the curse, the impending judgment on that crooked generation.

Had the entire nation heeded the words of Peter at that point, presumably Jesus would have returned from heaven and set up His kingdom on earth to reign for a thousand years. But the entire nation had yet to hear, so Peter speaks again to the "men of Israel" in Acts 3. He again tells the story of Jesus and speaks of the guilt of the people and their leaders. Again he asks them to repent and turn (Acts 3:19—*metanoēō + epistrephō*). If they would do that, a number of things would happen: 1) their sins would be blotted out; 2) times of refreshing would come from the presence of the Lord; and 3) Jesus would be sent. The English text of Acts 3:19-20 (NKJV) says "that . . . so that . . . that," which makes it look as though there are three successive purpose/result clauses.

Actually, there are two, the second one having two parts. So it could be argued that the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord would come from His return to the earth. In other words, once again the King and the Kingdom are being offered to the nation of Israel. If they would repent, the King would return to set up His Kingdom.

Peter goes on in this passage to speak of the judgment that would come upon those who rejected the Messiah (v 23). Then he refers back to the covenant relationship the people of Israel had through Abraham. This covenant was a guarantee of future blessing to the seed of Abraham. The

relationship was firm. Fellowship was not. The men of Israel needed to do nothing to establish a relationship between the nation and God. Yahweh had done that with Abraham in Ur of the Chaldeans before he went to the land of Canaan. But the nation of Israel needed to repent in order to restore fellowship with God and to receive the blessing promised to that faithful generation which would receive the Messiah.

Water Baptism and the Holy Spirit

Water baptism is not mentioned in the Acts 3 message, but neither is the Holy Spirit. It is interesting to note that reception of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in connection with five groups or individuals in Acts. In each case where there was an interval of time between the belief of the new Christians and the reception of the Spirit (Acts 2, 8, 9, 19), it was believers of Jewish lineage. The Samaritans of Acts 8 were half-Jews. The believers of Acts 19 had received John's baptism, so they were Jews. For each of these new believers water baptism was a requirement for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But when Gentile salvation was in view, water baptism was not required. Cornelius is the prototype of Gentile salvation in Acts. For the Gentiles remission of sins came from the point of their initial belief (Acts 10:43). But not only remission of sins, reception of the Holy Spirit was also part of God's gracious dealing with any Gentile who would believe the good news. Repentance is not mentioned. In Acts 3:19 the men of Israel had to "repent and turn" for the times of refreshing to come. But for the Greeks the blessing came when they "believed and turned" to the Lord (Acts 11:21). When Cornelius and company believed the words being spoken to them, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those listening. Then they were baptized in water. Water baptism was not required of them to receive the Holy Spirit. Why? Because they were not Jews living in the generation which crucified Christ. They had no need to separate from Judaism.

Conclusion

How then does this understanding of wrath, regeneration, and water baptism impact the meaning of "repentance" in relation to the nation of Israel? We are suggesting that John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter had dual ministries. One was to call the nation of Israel back into fellowship with Yahweh. The covenant relationship had long since been established. The nation of Israel did not need a new relationship with

God. But they were sorely lacking in fellowship. The sacrificial system of the Mosaic Covenant had been so corrupted that without a complete resolve to turn from this corruption (repentance) and the fruit that would go along with this repentance (the actual turning), a severe temporal judgment was going to fall.

This fiery, but temporal, indignation may well have been the warning of Heb 10:26ff (remember the fiery warning of Deut 4:23ff). For those Hebrew Christians to have believed in Christ, but to revert back to the corrupt sacrificial system of Jerusalem, would not enable them to avoid the curse. They had disassociated themselves once from Judaism, but to reassociate would bring upon them the plagues of the curse.

John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter were all trying to persuade Israel to repentance and turning that would bring them back to a refreshing fellowship with God. The Pharisees and Sadducees were right. They were the physical seed of Abraham (Matt 3:9). As such they did have a covenant relationship. But until a faithful generation of Jews came along, the blessings of the grant covenants (Abrahamic and Davidic: land and kingdom) would not be realized. Instead they would experience the curses of the suzerainty-vassal treaty (the Mosaic Covenant). The only way to avoid it was a complete turn around.

But the ministry of John, Jesus, and Peter was more than calling the nation of Israel to repentance. John was the forerunner, the messenger sent to prepare the way of the Lord. "This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:7). Jesus also wanted people to believe in Him and His gospel (Mark 1:15; John 6:29-47). So did Peter (Acts 2:44; 4:4, 32; 10:43). Though the nation was called to repentance, individuals in the nation were called to believe and repent.

Some of these Jews were probably OT believers in the sense that many Jews under the Old Covenant were people who had placed their faith in that which God had revealed to them, and their faith was reckoned to them for righteousness, just as Abraham's was. The word used to describe the men who observed the filling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is *eulabēs*, an adjective used only three times in the NT, and all by Luke. In fact, the noun (*eulabeia*) and the verb (*eulabeomai*) are also used only by Luke and the writer to the Hebrews. In the other two uses of the adjective believers are clearly in view. In Acts 8:2 "devout" men carry off the body of Stephen for burial and mourn him. These are believers. And in Luke 2:25 it is Simeon who is described as just and "devout," and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Surely this is what we

might call an OT believer. It is very likely that many of the three thousand who heard Peter's sermon in Acts 2 fell into this same category. Nevertheless, all those who responded to his message needed to place their faith in Jesus (Acts 4:12).

It is highly unlikely that those who were looking for the Messiah and were already justified before God, like Simeon, would not recognize and believe in Him when He appeared on the scene. But both these people and those who had never exercised faith in what God had revealed under the Old Covenant had to place their faith in God's highest revelation, His Son Jesus Christ.

Peter clearly lays the blame on the people and their leaders for the crucifixion of Jesus: "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3:17)—*even though it was an act of ignorance*. Now as a nation they needed to repent and turn (Acts 3:19) in order to have fellowship with God. But the individuals within the nation needed to believe in order to have eternal life, for the Lord was adding to the church daily those who were to be saved (Acts 2:47). As Paul said to the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia, "by Him everyone who *believes is justified* [emphasis added] from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). Hence, the nation needed to repent for *fellowship*. But the individuals within the nation needed to believe for *relationship*. And it can be inferred that all Jews who believed (whether their faith in Jesus was subsequent to earlier faith or was their initial experience of faith) also repented, were baptized in water, and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. For Acts 2:41 identifies those who gladly received Peter's word as three thousand people who were baptized. Just three verses later (Acts 2:44) we are told that these are those "who believed." The point of their belief was likely when their hearts had been "pricked" by Peter's message (Acts 2:37). It is at that point that they ask what they need to do in order to right this wrong. If they had not believed the message, there would be no point in asking what they should do to rectify matters. Hence, a strong argument can be made that these listeners at Pentecost first believed and then repented.

The same argument can be made for those listening in Acts 3. As he was making his appeal, Peter tells them to "repent and turn" (Acts 3:19) in order to have their sins blotted out and the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. But the response of the people who heard this message is recorded in Acts 4:4 where it says, "... many of those who heard the word *believed* [emphasis added]; and the number of men came to be about five thousand." Again, the likely order of events was

believing, repenting, and turning (by being baptized and joining the new assembly of believers).

Thus it can be said that for the nation and the individuals within the nation of Israel, relationship preceded fellowship, and faith preceded repentance. The nation already had a relationship and needed fellowship. This was also true for some of the individuals within the nation. But whether or not certain individuals within the nation were already justified, the examples of Jewish repentance found in Acts were the result of faith, not the producer of it. Hence, for the Jews of that accursed generation, faith was the condition for justification, while repentance was the condition for sanctification; faith is for relationship, while repentance is for fellowship.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Bock, D. L. "A Theology of Luke-Acts," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, eds. R. B. Zuck and D. L. Bock, 87-166. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.

Baltzer, K. *Das Bundesformular*. Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag, 1964.

Calderstone, P. J. *Dynastic Oracle and Suzerainty Treaty: II Samuel 7, 8-16*. Loyola House of Studies, 1966.

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996.

Chamberlain, W. D. *The Meaning of Repentance*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1943.

Clements, R. E. *Abraham and David*. Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1967.

Craigie, P. C. *The Book of Deuteronomy. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976.

Demarest, B. *The Cross and Salvation*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1997.

Driver, S. R. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895.

Eichrodt, W. *Theology of the Old Testament*. 2 volumes. The Old Testament Library. Translated by J. A. Baker. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961.

Fensham, F. C. "Father and Son as Terminology for Treaty and Covenant," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of W. F. Albright*, 121-35. Edited by K. Goedicke. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971.

_____. "Ordeal by Battle in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament," in *Festschrift for Eduardo Volterra*.

Frankena, R. "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon and the Dating of Deuteronomy," in *Oudtestamentische Studien*. Edited by P. A. H. De Boer. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965.

Güterbock, H. G. *Siegel aus Bogasköy*. Berlin: Im Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1940.

Hillers, D. R. *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*. *Biblica at Orientalia* 16. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964.

Hoffner, H. A., Jr. "Propaganda and Political Justification in Hittite Historiography," in *Unity and Diversity*, 49-64. Edited by Hans Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.

Hodges, Z. C. *Absolutely Free!* Dallas and Grand Rapids: Redención Viva and Zondervan Publishing House, 1989.

Keil, C. F. and Delitzsch, F. *The Books of Samuel*, 2 volumes. Translated by J. Martin, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 volumes. N.p.; reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982.

Kitchen, K. A. *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1966.

Kline, M. *The Structure of Biblical Authority*. Revised ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975.

_____. *Treaty of the Great King*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963.

Korosec, V. *Hethitische Staatsverträge: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer juristischen Wertung*. Leipzigerrechts wissenschaftliche Studien, 60. Leipzig: Verlag von Theodreicher, 1931.

Luther, M. *What Luther Says*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1959.

MacArthur, J. F. *The Gospel According to Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988.

McCarthy, D. J. *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions*. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1972.

_____. *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*. Analecta Biblica, 21. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963.

Noth, M. "God, King, and Nation in the Old Testament," in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies*, 145-78. Translated by D. R. Ap-Thomas. Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, Ltd., 1966.

Pentecost, J. D. *Things to Come*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969.

Postgate, J. N. *Neo-Assyrian Royal Grants and Decrees*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969.

Price, R. *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1966.

Pritchard, J. B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*. 3d ed., with supplement. Princeton University Press, 1969.

Quell, G. "κύριο," The Old Testament Name for God," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1984 edition.

Schaff, P. *History of the Christian Church*. 5th ed. Vol. 2, Ante-Nicene Christianity. N.p.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910; reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967.

Shank, R. *Elect in the Son*. Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1970.

_____. *Life in the Son*. Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1961.

Spurgeon, C. H. *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*. Vol. 7. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978.

Steinmetzer, F. X. *Die babylonischen Kudurru (Grenzsteine) als Urkundenform*. Paderborn: Verlag von Ferdinand Schöningh, 1922.

Thompson, J. A. *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974.

_____. *The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament*. London: The Tyndale Press, 1964.

Tozer, A. W. *I Call It Heresy!* Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1974.

Weinfeld, M. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Wiseman, D. J. *The Alalakh Tablets*. London: The British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1953.

Woolf, B. L. *Reformation Writings of Martin Luther*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1952.

Wright, G. E. "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 3," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*. Edited by B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson. New York: Harper and Row Publishing Co., 1962.

Periodicals

- Allis, O. T. "Thy Throne, O God, is for Ever and Ever," *Princeton Theological Review* 21 (1923): 237-39.
- Ben-Barak, Z. "Meribaa and the System of Land Grants in Ancient Israel," *Biblica* 62 (January 1981): 73-91.
- Clines, D. J. A. "The Psalms and the King," *Theological Student's Fellowship Bulletin* 71 (Spring 1975): 1-6.
- Combrink, H. J. B. "Some Thoughts on the Old Testament Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Neotestamentica* 5 (1971): 22-36.
- Cooke, G. "The Israelite King as Son of God," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 73 (161): 202-25.
- Fensham, F. C. "Common Trends in Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and Kudurru Inscriptions compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 75 (1963): 155-75.
- _____. "Maledictions and Benediction in Ancient Near Eastern Vassal-Treaties and the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1962): 1-9.
- Gordis, R. "The 'Begotten' Messiah in the Qumran Scrolls," *Vetus Testamentum* 7 (1957): 191-94.
- Gerstenberger, E. "Covenant and Commandment," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965): 33-51.
- Harner, P. B. "Exodus, Sinai, and Hittite Prologues," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966): 233-36.
- Hill, A. E. "The Ebal Ceremony as Hebrew Land Grant?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (December 1988): 399-406.
- Huffmon, H. B. "The Treaty Background of Hebrew YADA'," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 181 (1966): 31-37.

Jones, B. W. "Acts 13:33-37: A Pesher on II Samuel 7," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87 (Spring 1987): 321-27.

Kaiser, W. C., Jr. "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15 (1972): 11-23.

Katz, P. "The Quotations from Deuteronomy in Hebrews," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 49 (1958): 213-23.

Kaufman, S. A. "The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law," *MAARAV* 1/2 (1978-79): 105-158.

Korosec, V. "The Warfare of the Hittites—From the Legal Point of View," *Iraq* 25 (1963): 159-66.

Loewenstamm, S. E. "The Divine Grants of Land to the Patriarchs," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91.4 (1971): 509-10.

McCarthy, D. J. "Covenant in the Old Testament: Present State of Inquiry," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965): 217-41.

_____. "Notes on the Love of God in Deuteronomy and the Father-Son Relationship Between Yahweh and Israel," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965): 144-47.

_____. "Three Covenants in Genesis," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 26 (1964): 179-89.

Mendenhall, G. E. "Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (May 1954): 50-76.

_____. "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (September 1954): 50-76.

Muilenburg, J. "The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations." *Essays In Honor of Miller Burrows*, reprinted from *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (1963): 380-89.

Parunak, H. V. "A Semantic Survey of *niḥam*," *Biblica* 56 (1975): 512-32.

Thompson, J. A. "Covenant Patterns in the Ancient Near East and Their Significance for Biblical Studies," *The Reformed Theological Review* 18.3 (October 1959): 65-75.

_____. "The Significance of the Near Eastern Treaty Pattern," *The Tyndale House Bulletin* (1963): 1-6.

Tucker, G. M. "Covenant Forms and Contract Forms," *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965): 487-503.

Weinfeld, M. "B^crit-Covenant vs. Obligation," *Biblica* 56 (1975): 120-28.

_____. "Covenant Terminology in the Ancient Near East and Its Influence on the West," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93 (1973): 190-99.

_____. "Deuteronomy—The Present State of Inquiry," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967): 249-62.

_____. "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 184-203.

Wiseman, D. J. "Abban and Alalah," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 12 (1958): 124-29.

_____. "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon," *Iraq* 20 (1958): 1-99 + 53 (plates).

Yadin, Y. "A Midrash on 2 Sam. vii and Ps. 1-11 (4QFlorilegium)," *Israel Exploration Journal* 9 (1959): 95-98.

Unpublished Materials

Merrill, E. H., interview by author, 15 March 1994, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

Shank, R., interview by author, 7 April 1976, Conroe, Texas.

Weinfeld, M., interview by author, 24 February 1998, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Wilkin, R. N. "Repentance as a Condition for Salvation in the New Testament." Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985.

SAVING FAITH IN FOCUS¹

ROBERT N. WILKIN

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

Confusion over the gospel abounds. I hear it from people all over the country and around the world. They don't know what to believe. They aren't sure what God requires. Is it turning from sins or commitment of life? Inviting Jesus into their hearts? Obeying the Golden Rule? Confessing their sins? Being baptized?

There is only one true gospel. The key is to discover and believe it. However, that isn't necessarily easy to do, because many different gospels are being preached and it is hard to determine which one is correct.

Most forms of the gospel being preached today are what I call *faith-plus* gospels. These say that faith in Christ for eternal life is *necessary*, but that it is *not enough*.² Works must accompany faith, according to faith-plus gospels, in order for a person to make it to heaven. There are two versions of the faith-plus gospel.

Salvation by faith plus works. Some say that one must have faith plus works in order to obtain salvation. A person lacking sufficient good works, or guilty of major sins, will not make it to heaven, even if he believes in Christ.³

¹ This article is chapter 1 in a book by this author entitled *Confident in Christ: Living by Faith Really Works* set for a March 1999 release date.

² An exception is universalism. Universalists say that God is so loving and gracious that the death of Christ saves everyone, regardless of what they believe.

³ One evangelist who has been in the ministry for 51 years recounted his testimony by quoting from a letter he wrote shortly after his conversion: "It has been over nine days since I smoked a cigarette...I am now taking part in all the church work I can . . . I have been born again. You may think I will get over this in a few days and be back to normal but I will never be the same again. I had not been born again before now. *I did believe but I did not have the love of God*" (*Challenge to Evangelism Today* [Fall 1997]: 1, emphasis added). Clearly for this evangelist believing, while necessary, is not enough. One must also love God by living an obedient life.

Salvation by faith that works. Others say that one must have faith that works. They claim that one is saved by faith in Christ plus nothing, but that *true* faith in Christ results in commitment, obedience, turning from sins, etc.⁴ This may sound significantly different than salvation by faith plus works. However, it is actually another way of saying the same thing.

There is no real difference between saying that to be saved you must turn from sins, commit your life to Christ, and believe in Him, and saying that believing in Christ necessarily results in turning from your sins and committing your life to Him. Both insist that turning from sins and commitment of life is necessary to obtain final salvation.

Salvation apart from faith or works. In addition to faith-plus gospels, there is one gospel requiring no faith at all! That is the gospel of universalism, which teaches that all are already saved, or will ultimately be saved. According to this view no one will spend eternity apart from God, even those who never believed in Christ. This view can surface anywhere, even in very conservative, evangelical churches. The motive may seem to be good—an abhorrence of people going to hell—but it is a direct contradiction of God's Word. The way to keep people from hell is by proclaiming the true gospel that they might believe it and be saved, not by distorting the gospel.

The Bible Is the Only Reliable Guide to the Gospel

Understanding the gospel is not a matter of taking a poll. The majority is rarely right and that is especially true in terms of the gospel. Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult⁵ is the way which leads to life, and there

⁴ This is sometimes called Lordship Salvation. It is the view that to be saved you must not only believe in Christ for eternal life, but you must also yield to His Lordship over your life. While Lordship Salvation typically refers to Calvinists who believe in salvation by faith that works, it applies equally well to Arminians who believe in salvation by faith plus works. See the appendix on Lordship Salvation for more details.

⁵ The word translated *difficult* (*thlibō*) actually is better translated as *confined* or *narrow*. See *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Second edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker

are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus unequivocally said that the majority of people are on the wrong road. *Many* are on the broad way. *Few* are on the narrow way.

The gospel is contrary to our expectations. Very few things in life are received simply by believing. (Actually, I can't think of anything, other than eternal life, which is received by faith alone.) Thus, the gospel seems to be "foolishness to those who are perishing" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

To be saved you must resist the impulse to follow the crowd. There is only one reliable guide to spiritual truth and that is the Bible.

When the apostle Paul went to the city of Berea, he began teaching in the Jewish synagogue. Paul's traveling companion, Luke, reports that the Bereans "were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Every person should study the Scripture to see whether the gospel they are hearing is correct. We should all be like the Bereans, searching the Scriptures, so that we will know what to believe.

The only condition of eternal salvation is faith in Christ. Even a casual reading of the Gospel of John, the only book in Scripture whose purpose is evangelistic (John 20:31),⁶ makes this clear. "He who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47). "He who believes in Him is not condemned" (John 3:18). "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24). "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die [spiritually]" (John 11:26).

The Bible is God's Word. As such, it is without contradiction. We can be sure that if these and many other passages list faith in Christ as the sole condition of eternal life and freedom from condemnation, this is indeed true. There are no other conditions.

from Walter Bauer's Fifth Edition, 1958 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 362. Both the gate and the road to which it leads are narrow. Since a different Greek word, *stenē*, is used for the gate, a word which also means *narrow*, it is probably best to refer to the way as *confined*, a synonym for narrow.

⁶ Books such as Galatians and Romans present the gospel to Christians to make sure they remain clear on the gospel. However, no other book is written to tell unbelievers how they might have eternal life. All other books in Scripture are addressed to believers.

What Is Faith in Christ?

Let's begin by considering what *faith* is. Once we determine that, we will consider what *faith in Christ* is.

Faith is the conviction that something is true. We all exercise faith every day. For example, most of us believe that George Washington was the first President of the United States because we have recognized that the evidence is convincing.⁷

Do you believe that you exist? That is, are you *convinced* that you are alive? I once met a college student who doubted his existence and that of everything in the universe. I was tempted to pinch him to give him some tangible evidence! Most rational people are certain they exist, no doubt about it. The evidence is overwhelming.

Though long past her childbearing years, Abraham's wife Sarah believed that she was going to have a son. God had said she would: "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, *because she judged Him faithful who had promised*" (Hebrews 11:11, italics added). Ninety-year-old Sarah was positive that God would keep His promise, and would do what He said. Abraham too was "*fully convinced* that what [God] had promised He was also able to perform" (Romans 4:21, italics added). Faith is being convinced or persuaded (the KJV has "fully persuaded" here) of the truth of something—in this case, the promise that a son would be born to an elderly couple.⁸

⁷ Of course, some don't think of it in these terms. They may think they believe it simply because they were told that it was true. Their elementary school teacher told them that George Washington was the first president and they believed her. However, that is believing evidence. Taking a teacher at her word is not really any different than taking God at His word. The issue is the trustworthiness of the one making the statement or promise. Of course, elementary school students have lots of additional evidence to convince them that Washington was the first president. Our textbooks say so. Our national capitol and one of our States are named after him. And his likeness appears on the dollar bill and the quarter.

⁸ Jesus is called the Son of Abraham in Matthew 1:1. The promise that Abraham believed did not merely concern the birth of Isaac. It also concerned the birth of Abraham's ultimate Son, the Messiah, the Savior, and the Giver of eternal life. Abraham believed in this coming Son for eternal life (Genesis 15:6; John 8:56; Romans 4:21-22; Galatians 3:6-14). That is, Abraham believed in Christ long before the incarnation. That is why Paul could rightly say that Abraham is the father of all who believe in Christ. And that is why Jesus Himself could truly say, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day" (John 8:56).

The key to believing something is the proof in favor of it. Thus, despite popular opinion, faith is not really a choice. You don't "choose" to believe that George Washington was the first President, that you exist, that two plus two equals four, etc. Similarly, Sarah and Abraham didn't "choose" to believe that God would keep His promise to them regarding a son. When the evidence that something is true persuades people, they believe it. When they aren't persuaded, they don't believe it.

Let's say you were on a jury. After listening to all of the evidence, you concluded that the defendant was guilty. Could you *choose to believe* that he was innocent? Of course not. You could *vote* not to convict, but that would be acting dishonestly, contrary to what you believed. The only way you could move from belief to unbelief or the other way around is if you came to perceive the testimony differently.⁹

Doesn't this mean, then, that the evidence traps us? In a sense, yes. However, two people can look at the same evidence and draw different conclusions because they have different opinions on whether the evidence is trustworthy. We are guided by our perception of the evidence. We believe evidence that we perceive as true. We don't believe evidence that we perceive as false.

Therefore, faith is not a decision. It is the conviction that something is true. It is especially important that we understand this, for much confusion about the gospel has resulted from the mistaken idea that we can be convinced that the gospel is true and yet not be saved until we decide to believe it.

Faith in Christ is the conviction that He is the Guarantor of eternal life for every believer. Faith in Christ is sometimes called *saving faith*, since the Bible teaches that all who believe in Him have eternal salvation. There are many things that Jesus promised. When the Bible speaks

⁹There is one sense in which continuing in *unbelief* can be a choice, when one refuses to even look at the evidence. A person raised in another religion might choose not to read the Bible, attend church, listen to Christians, or read Christian books. While, of course, God could upset those plans and bring a witness into one's life that was unexpected and unavoidable, apart from such intervention a person might indeed be able to choose to remain in unbelief. However, even then, the unbelief is based on a conviction that Christianity is wrong.

of "faith in Christ," it is talking about believing a specific promise that He made. Jesus explained that saving promise to His friend, Martha:

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

—John 11:25-27

"Do you believe this?" Jesus' question to Martha cuts to the heart of the gospel. While Jesus promised many things in the course of His ministry, this one promise is the key to gaining eternal salvation. Jesus is claiming to be "the resurrection and the life." Anyone who believes that has eternal life and will never die.

First, as "the resurrection," He guarantees, "He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." That is, He insures bodily resurrection from the dead to all who believe in Him. Since we know from other Scriptures that both believers and unbelievers will be resurrected (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Acts 24:15), this must refer to the resurrection of the righteous, also called the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5-6). Jesus is promising that death will not keep a believer from bodily participation in His eternal kingdom. All believers will live eternally in glorified bodies in Jesus' kingdom.

Notice that this promise has no other conditions. Many add to what Jesus said and end up with this distorted gospel: "He who believes in Me and turns from His sins and perseveres in good works, though he may die, he shall live." That is not what Jesus promised. A person who believes this altered message does not believe what Jesus said.

Second, as "the life," He certifies, "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." This is another way of reinforcing what He has just said. In verse 25 He confirms that *physical* death cannot keep the believer from bodily participation in the eternal kingdom. In verse 26 Jesus affirms that no believer will ever experience *spiritual* death. As "the life," Jesus is the Guarantor of eternal life: "Whoever lives and believes in Me *shall never die*." He guarantees the believer will never lose eternal life. All who believe in Him are secure forever.

Some say, "Yes, He is the Giver of eternal life; however, to be saved takes more than just believing. You must also commit your life to Him, turn from your sins, confess Him, obey Him, be baptized, etc., etc., etc." Once again, if a person is convinced that this distorted message is true,

then he doesn't believe what Jesus is saying. Jesus made it clear that the *only* condition is being convinced that He guarantees eternal life to all who believe in Him. Add anything to that and you have a different gospel.

Martha believed Jesus' promise. In answer to the question, "Do you believe this?" she said, "Yes, Lord, I believe." She then went on to acknowledge Him as "the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." She knew that Jesus was the Messiah and as such, He certainly fulfills His promise to give eternal life, life that is forever secure, to every believer (compare John 20:31). Martha understood that there were no strings attached. She knew that she had eternal life and that she would never lose it because Jesus, as the Son of God, was trustworthy.

The apostle Paul sums up what Martha, and every Christian, believes when they come to faith in Christ: "However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life" (1 Timothy 1:16). In order to be saved, we must believe on Jesus *for everlasting life*. On the basis of His death and resurrection, He always fulfills His guarantee to give everlasting life to all who believe in Him for it.

Martha did not *decide* to believe in Jesus for eternal life. She was convinced of the truth of what Jesus said and hence she believed in Him in the biblical sense.

Faith in Christ does not erase every problem. It greatly saddens me when I hear some evangelists tell the unsaved to believe in Jesus for benefits other than eternal life. "Believe in Jesus and He will heal your broken marriage." "Believe in Him and He will turn your finances around." "Become a Christian and all your depression will vanish." People who believe in Jesus for a better marriage, for financial prosperity, or for emotional well being, are not guaranteed eternal salvation.

Many today think they are saved because they went forward at some meeting and gave Jesus their life, believing in Him for something other than eternal life. While it is true that He can help us with all issues in life, that is not the promise of the gospel, and the help He gives is not necessarily the deliverance we want. He doesn't guarantee a happy marriage, good finances, or freedom from depression to every believer. There are many factors other than faith in Christ, which influence these things. However, the only condition of eternal life is faith in Christ!

What Saving Faith Is Not

It is sometimes helpful to consider what something is *not*. This is particularly true of saving faith. Contrary to popular understanding, none of the following are a part of or a synonym for saving faith: believing general Bible truth, promising to serve God, praying, walking an aisle, being sorry for your sins, turning from your sins, inviting Jesus into your heart, believing with a special kind of faith, doing good works, or having heart faith.

Believing general Bible truth. You can believe many biblical concepts and still miss the one truth that is saving—the truth of the gospel. For example, you can attest to Jesus' deity, His virgin birth, and His bodily resurrection, and yet not believe Jesus' promise to give you eternal life freely if you just believe in Him for it. There is only one truth that will save: Jesus' guarantee that anyone who believes in Him for eternal life has it.

Promising to serve God. Promises, promises! Almost every child who goes to a Christian camp makes some sort of commitment in front of a campfire. If all the young people who promised to become missionaries had done so, there would never be a lack of workers on any mission field in the world.¹⁰ Many have vowed to serve God in the hope that their commitment would cause God to save them. Because it is possible to promise sincerely to serve God, and yet not be convinced that Jesus freely gives eternal life to all who just believe in Him, commitment isn't an absolute indicator of saving faith. (Many cult members are radically committed.) Pledges to serve God in hopes of gaining salvation actually become a stumbling block, for to be saved one must believe in Christ *alone* for eternal life, not Christ *plus commitment*.

Praying. A very popular evangelistic technique today is to ask unbelievers to pray to become Christians. However, there is not one biblical example of anyone ever praying to be saved. Jesus never led anyone in a prayer of salvation, nor did any of the apostles or evangelists mentioned in the Bible. A person is saved by *believing in* Christ for eternal life, not by praying.¹¹

¹⁰ There might even be more workers on the mission field than there are in the home churches!

¹¹ If a person came to believe the gospel while he was praying a prayer, he would be saved. However, it is not a good idea to ask a person to pray something that he doesn't already believe. And, if he already believes it, then he is already saved without the prayer.

Walking an aisle. Asking unbelievers to come forward—to walk the aisle or come to the front of the auditorium—in order to be saved is another popular evangelistic practice without biblical precedent. A person may stand before others with complete sincerity and with a strong desire to be saved and yet return to his seat not having believed in Christ for eternal life. Coming forward will not save. Only believing in Christ will save.¹²

Being sorry for your sins. A popular song of years past contained the phrase, “Cry me a river.” You may indeed shed many tears, be extremely sorry for your sins, and yet not believe in Christ for eternal life. No amount of anguish over sin can open the way to heaven. Only believing in Christ alone can.

Recognition of one’s sinfulness shows a person that he needs a Savior, and this acknowledgment may result in tears. But the presence or absence of tears is not the point. Nowhere does the Bible say that being sorry for your sins is a condition of eternal life. There is but one requirement: believing that Jesus is the Guarantor of eternal life to all who just believe in Him.

Turning from your sins. Can someone undergo radical changes in his or her life without believing the gospel? Of course. Often, for example, unbelieving alcoholics give up drinking. Moral reform is certainly possible. And it is a good thing to do in the sense that it is always best to follow God’s blueprint for living, whether or not you are a Christian. Yet, moral reform will not save.

In fact, if people think that turning from sins is a condition of salvation, their faith in moral reform can actually *prohibit* them from being saved. To be saved, a person must believe that Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who believe in Him.

Inviting Jesus into your heart. Another very common and unfortunate evangelistic appeal is telling people to invite Jesus into their hearts

¹² Of course, if a person comes forward and a counselor is used of God to convince him that Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who believe in Him, then he would end up being saved. However, coming forward is not a condition, any more than coming to church in the first place is a condition. A person can be saved at school, at work, in her car, in a foxhole, on a basketball court, or anywhere, with or without an aisle or a preacher!

in order to be saved. The problem here is that they can invite Jesus into their hearts and yet not believe in Him for eternal life.¹³

Some individuals have invited Jesus into their hearts hundreds of times. Whenever they doubt the efficacy of what they did (with good reason), they just repeat the invitation, thinking: *Maybe I didn't invite Him in sincerely enough the last time.*¹⁴ Jesus enters the lives of people the moment they believe in Him for eternal life.

Believing with a special kind of faith. Some pastors today teach that saving faith is different than everyday faith.¹⁵ This, however, is just not true. All faith is the conviction of the truth of some proposition. What makes saving faith *saving* is not the uniqueness of the faith, but its object. Saving faith results instantly in eternal salvation because it believes in the right object: the guarantee of life made by Jesus Christ to every believer.

Doing good works. Saving faith should not be confused with doing good works. In their zeal to call people to godliness, some pastors and theologians today mingle the two.¹⁶

¹³ In my early days in evangelism I used this appeal. I remember one student at my college who invited Christ into his life. I gave him some material to read and scheduled an appointment for the next week. When we met for follow-up, he told me that the material I had given him said that Jesus was the only way to God, but that he didn't believe that. "Really," I said. "Then why did you invite Jesus into your heart?" He told me that he was a Bahai and that he had invited Jesus into his heart because he wanted all of the prophets in his heart.

¹⁴ Of course, this approach is futile. Each time the person doubts, he invites Jesus in "one last time." It becomes more difficult to do this sincerely since it seems so hypocritical. The only way to be sure that Christ is in your life and that you are eternally secure is to believe Jesus' promise that all who simply believe in Him have eternal life.

¹⁵ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 42.

¹⁶ Bernard Koerselman, *What the Bible Says About a Saving Faith* (Chandler, AZ: Berean Publishers, 1992), 138-39, 143, 160. Note: the cited statements are all headings of sections in a chapter entitled "A Saving Faith." See also Curtis I. Crenshaw, *Lordship Salvation: The Only Kind There Is! An Evaluation of Jody Dillow's The Reign of the Servant Kings And Other Antinomian Arguments* (Memphis: Footstool Publications, 1994), 58-59; James Montgomery Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 113-14; Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Lord of the Saved: Getting to the Heart of the Lordship Debate* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1992), 19.

A desire for godliness is admirable. However, it is simply not true that in order to believe in Christ for eternal life you must also do good works and forsake bad works. Works have no place in saving faith. Saving faith is based solely on what the Lord Jesus has already done and promises to do for us. It is not based even in part on what we might do for Him.

The thief on the cross was a terrible sinner who was at death's door. He had only hours left to live. He couldn't offer Jesus any good works, any service, any moral reform. He could only believe in Him, and that he did. Even though Jesus' own disciples were disheartened and had lost faith in His return to set up the kingdom, the thief boldly said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Jesus' response shows the freeness of the gospel for all who believe in Him: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Head Faith, Heart Faith, and Mind Games

How do you convince someone that saving faith is not just faith in the gospel, that it includes commitment, turning from sins, perseverance in obedience, and the like? Since there is no verse in Scripture that identifies saving faith as anything other than believing the gospel, you'd have a hard time proving your view from the Bible. However, there is an easier way.

The best way to sell the idea that saving faith includes the kitchen sink is through the use of pejorative terms like *intellectual faith* or *head faith*. Some preachers and teachers tell people that just believing the facts of the gospel is *intellectual faith* or *head faith*. Then they espouse the idea that the Bible teaches that the faith that truly saves is *heart faith*.¹⁷

Heart faith can include almost anything. However, heart faith raises potential problems. *How much* commitment, turning from sins, obedience, and the like is enough? The biblical evidence demonstrates that this supposed distinction between head faith and heart faith is really a mind game.

¹⁷ There is a tract called "Missing Heaven by Eighteen Inches." It argues that you would miss heaven if you believed the gospel with your *head* rather than with your *heart*. *Head faith* is dangerous, it suggests, because you may think you are saved simply because you believe the facts of the gospel. Yet without the heart commitment, that "faith" is not saving faith at all.

First, the Scriptures never refer to the *head* as the source of thinking and feeling. In addition, the word *head* is never associated with faith in the Bible.¹⁸

Second, of the two remaining words, *heart* and *mind*, the Scriptures often use them interchangeably.¹⁹ Both refer to the inner self where one thinks and believes²⁰ and feels.

¹⁸ The word *head* occurs approximately 330 times in the Bible. Of those, the vast majority refers literally to the head. The figurative uses include *lifting up the head*, which refers to being placed in a position of honor or having one's former status reinstated (Genesis 40:13; Job 10:15), *blood or wickedness being on the head*, which refers to guilt and judgment coming against persons for their wicked deeds (1 Kings 2:37, "your blood shall be on your own head," 1 Samuel 25:39, "the Lord has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head"), and *head* as ruler or authority over others (2 Samuel 22:44, "head of the nations," 1 Corinthians 11:3, "the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God"). There is absolutely no biblical warrant for speaking of *head faith*.

¹⁹ For example, "Thus my *heart* was grieved, and I was vexed in my *mind*" (Psalm 73:21). There is synonymous parallelism here. That is, the two halves of the verse are saying the same thing using synonyms. To be grieved in your heart is to be vexed in your mind. The same thing is evident in Hebrews 8:10, "I will put My laws in their *mind* and write them on their *hearts*." *Mind* and *heart* are used synonymously there.

Another example is found by comparing Luke 24:25 and Luke 24:45:

"O foolish ones, and slow of *heart* to believe in all that the prophets have spoken."

"And He opened their understanding [lit. *mind*], that they might comprehend the Scriptures."

Those two passages are talking about the same thing. The disciples were *slow of heart* to believe the prophetic teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures regarding His resurrection. So what did Jesus do? He *opened their mind* that they might comprehend those Scriptures. There is no difference whatsoever here between believing in the heart or believing in the mind. Compare also 1 Samuel 2:35; Psalm 26:2; Jeremiah 11:20; 20:12; and Ephesians 4:17-18.

²⁰ The *mind* is associated with believing in at least three passages (Luke 24:45; Romans 14:5; Ephesians 4:17-18). In these three passages the words *believe* and *faith* do not occur. However, synonyms are present. Luke 24:45 is discussed in the immediately preceding note. In that text, opening of the mind is shown to be antithetical to being "slow of heart to believe" (verse 25). Romans 14:5 reads, "Let each be *fully convinced* in his own *mind*." Ephesians 4:17-18, which, like Luke 24:45, equates the heart and mind, says, "The Gentiles walk in the futility of their *mind*, having their *understanding* darkened...because of the blindness of their *heart*."

Third, the mind is not viewed as being inferior to the heart in Scripture. In one of the most famous verses on sanctification in the Bible, Paul exhorted the believers in Rome, "Be transformed by the renewing of your *mind*" (Romans 12:2). Similarly, he exhorted the Ephesian believers, "Be renewed in the spirit of your *mind*" (Ephesians 4:23). Paul spoke to the Corinthian believers of having "the *mind* of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). Luke said that the Lord "opened [the disciples'] understanding [literally *mind* in Greek], that they might comprehend the Scriptures," that is, the Old Testament Scriptures, concerning His resurrection (Luke 24:45).

Fourth, while the words *believe* and *faith* occur approximately 450 times in the Bible, only a few passages specify where belief takes place.²¹ They speak of believing as though the reader of Scripture knows what that means and where it occurs.

Believing in Christ is the sole condition of eternal life. There is no such thing as special types of faith called *heart faith* and *head faith*. Saving

²¹ One passage, Romans 10:9-10, directly speaks of "believ[ing] in your heart." That is set in contrast with "confess[ing] with your mouth." The former is internal; the latter external. The former is by faith alone. The latter includes works. "Confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus" is the action that involves commitment, obedience, and turning from sins, not "believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead." Nor is believing with your heart defined as some special kind of faith that might rightly be called *heart faith*. Paul is merely indicating that saving faith takes place internally, as opposed to confessing Christ in word and deed, which takes place externally. Romans 10:9-10 is dealing with salvation from the wrath of God, both eternally and temporally. Believing the gospel is the condition of escaping the wrath of God eternally ("with the heart one believes unto righteousness"—all righteous people go to heaven; hence, the only way to escape the eternal wrath of God is faith in Christ). Confessing Christ is the condition of escaping the wrath of God here and now ("with the mouth confession is made unto salvation [from God's temporal wrath]"). For a discussion of Romans 10:9-10, see Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Dallas and Grand Rapids: Redención Viva and Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 197-98.

Four other passages, none of which is dealing with saving faith, indicate indirectly that belief takes place in the heart (Mark 11:23; 16:14; Luke 8:12; 24:25). However, in each of those verses the point is just that belief takes place internally. And, as we have already seen, in the last of those passages believing in the heart is equated with believing with the mind.

faith doesn't include commitment, obedience, or turning from sins. It is merely the conviction that Jesus is speaking the truth when He says, "He who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47).

There Is No Additional Step

Many well-meaning people unintentionally introduce a lot of confusion when they say something like this, "Do you believe that Jesus, by His death and resurrection, freely gives eternal life to all who believe in Him? Great! Now would you like to *trust* Him?"

This two-step approach to saving faith is confusing. How does a person who already believes something choose to trust it? Say, for example, that you believe that Jesus is God. Do you also need to choose to *trust* His deity in order to really believe it? Of course not. You believe in Jesus' deity if the evidence convinces you that He is indeed the Second Person of the Trinity. What you believe, you trust to be true.

The same is true with the gospel. If you believe it, you are saved. Jesus guarantees it.

Sometimes this supposed distinction is illustrated by means of a chair and belief in its ability to hold one up. The illustration goes as follows.

"Do you believe that this chair will hold you up if you sit in it?"

"Yes, I believe it will."

"Okay, then have a seat."

"No, I won't do that."

"Then you don't *really believe* the chair will hold you up, for to truly believe it, you must trust that it will hold you up. And you only trust it when you take a seat."

The illustration is patently false. Only a masochist would sit in a chair he didn't "really believe" would hold him up. You sit in a chair *because* you already believe it is dependable, not *in order to* believe it is.

The only condition of eternal life is belief in Him for it. Once you do that, you have eternal life. There is no additional step involved.

Yes, Believing the Gospel Is Enough!

Saving faith means believing the gospel, believing in Christ alone for eternal life. Nothing else is saving faith. Not only is believing the gospel enough, but it is the only way to salvation. Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who believe in Him for it. Do you believe this?

A Voice from the Past:

SALVATION BY GRACE¹

J. IRVIN OVERHOLTZER²

Editor's Note: This is a delightful testimony of how God revealed His grace to a modern-day Pharisee. Overholtzer's humility and love for the Free Grace gospel is evident again and again in this article. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have.

I. Introduction

Salvation is a free gift. Oh, sinner, believe it! Salvation is *free*! Oh, believer, proclaim it! We are saved by grace, and rewarded for service. I know it is too good to be true, and yet it is gloriously true, as true as the infallible Word of God (Rom 6:23; Eph 2:8-9).

A deacon in the church, a church member for twenty-two years, sent for me to come to see him. This was in the country and he took me way out behind the barn, out of hearing of every one. I wondered what was coming. He was about to tell me that he was not saved. Is it any wonder that he wanted to be where none of his family would hear such a confession? Can you understand the agony of soul and the courage required for him to make this acknowledgment?

¹ This article appeared originally as the first three chapters in J. Irvin Overholtzer's book by the same title, *Salvation by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Child Evangelism Fellowship Press, 1958). Minor adjustments have been made in spelling (e.g., Saviour to Savior) and capitalization (words in upper case were converted to lower case italics). A few sections of the article were excised for various reasons and are noted where they occur.

² Jesse Irvin Overholtzer (1877-1955) was raised in a church that taught that praying and religion was for adults. He came to faith in Christ at the age of 20. Later, pastor J. Irvin Overholtzer began to be burdened for the salvation of children. He knew that if properly taught, children could understand the good news of salvation. With the help of Dr. Paul W. Rood and Dr. Harry A. Ironside, Overholtzer founded Child Evangelism Fellowship in May 1937.

This is what he said, "My daughter has something that I do not have, and I want to know how to get it." I soon found that through all the years he had been working to get himself saved. He had accepted Christ only as one of those necessary good works. Never had he seen that salvation was a free gift.

When I had shown him, by the Word of God, that salvation could be had instantly by a single, simple act of faith, he said, "If I could believe that I would be the happiest man in Glenn County." But he could not believe it. However, a ray of light had entered his works-darkened soul, and he was now willing to let others know that he was a "seeker" for salvation, though a deacon.

I called his daughter and asked her to tell her father how she had come into possession of that which he had seen in her. She gave a simple testimony of how she had realized that she was a sinner and that Jesus had died on the cross for her. That she had simply accepted Him as her Savior and that He had saved her. The father listened eagerly but said, "It is too good to be true." I could not convince him, and as it was growing late I had to leave him.

The next day I met him again and even before he spoke his shining face proclaimed the good news. Sometime in the night he had come to believe the blessed Gospel, and his soul had been flooded with the joy of salvation, and he was one of the happiest men in the county. I said one, for I was in that county too.

What this man had needed for more than twenty years was someone to teach him in all simplicity the blessed Gospel of grace. Oh, why had it not been done!³

II. An Unbelieving World

Paul faced a world that did not believe his message, very much the same kind of a world that we face, yet he had the only Gospel that could save them in time or in eternity. Oh, yes, they believed in a god, for few people have lived who did not believe in a god, but they did not believe in the true God whose "only-begotten Son" (John 3:16) was the God-man, Jesus of Nazareth. Did he compromise with these unbelievers? He did not. He could not and be true to them or to God.

They also believed in sin and in salvation. Few have lived who have not believed that sin was real and that they were sinners; but the world

³A section entitled "By Grace Through Faith" was excluded at this point due to length-of-article restrictions and enhanced readability.

has always believed, or professed to believe, either that death would end all and thus prove their savior, or that by some scheme of good works God would be satisfied, or that perfection could be attained.

All of this Paul denied as Christ had done before him. He taught that salvation was alone in Christ the Son of God who died on the cross as a substitute for sinners (Acts 4:12). He taught that Christ having died did no one any good unless they knew what He had done for them and then believed on Him (Rom 10:13-14). But he was just as emphatic that even belief in Christ would avail nothing unless the person believing came to Christ on the ground of grace (Gal 2:16). That is to say that he must renounce all trust and dependence in good works, and in any and all other means of salvation, and trust in the finished work of Jesus as Sin-bearer only, as the ground of getting right with God and obtaining forgiveness of sin.

III. The Galatian Error

No sooner had this glorious Gospel been declared and believed by many, to their inexpressible joy, than Jewish teachers appeared on the scene and began to corrupt the message of grace. They said it was proper and right to believe in Christ—even to believe in Him as the God-man, Sin-bearer; but this alone would not save, that certain ordinances must be observed, that certain commandments must be obeyed, in addition to believing, or one would not be saved, or at least keep saved. Paul wrote the Galatian letter to refute this fundamental error. Here he stated with burning emphasis that such a corruption of the Gospel left no gospel at all and instead of bringing the salvation of God, only brought the curse of God upon those who taught these things (Gal 1:6-9).

This terrible corrupting of the Gospel of grace has been ever with us since that time. It has taken many forms. We have added many things to simple faith as the condition of salvation. We have demanded that all sin be forsaken as a condition of salvation. This is not the Gospel of grace at all. Sin is to be forsaken after Christ receives us and gives us His power with which to forsake the sin. We have demanded that a promise to obey Christ as Lord must be made—that we give our hearts to Him. This is not grace. Grace presents salvation to helpless sinners as a free gift (Rom 6:23; Eph 2:8). If promises are to be exacted, the salvation obtained would be anything but a gift (Rom 4:4-5). But the tragedy is, no salvation at all would be had. We have demanded that a certain creed be subscribed to. All of these are but forms of the Galatian error. They are under the condemnation of God.

Again a certain amount of sorrow for sin, or a certain kind of sorrow, has been demanded. We have required a public confession of Christ as a condition of justification. This, Christ and the apostles never did. Confession of Christ should follow and not precede faith in Christ. The salvation mentioned in Romans 10:9 and 10 refers to something beyond justification, as the context shows.

In the Galatian church those who accepted these errors lost their "blessing," even if they were already saved, which left them without the Holy Spirit's witness and guidance. This has always been true where any form of salvation by works has been accepted. This explains the loss of spiritual blessing in many a Christian life. Teachers who teach any form of salvation by works cannot have the blessing of God upon them, for they are really leading people away from salvation instead of to the only Savior who can save.

IV. Sixteen Years in Error

I spent about sixteen years in the Galatian error, and can testify to the loss of the Holy Spirit's witness and blessing during those years. At twenty years of age I came to Christ. I had been a great sinner, and while I knew but little of the plan of salvation, I knew that Christ alone was the Savior and that I was so sinful that anything I had done or could do could not count toward my salvation. I threw myself on God's mercy, in Christ, and instantly received peace, and as soon as I had publicly confessed Christ I received a gracious witness and blessing of the Holy Spirit. This brought me great joy and freedom in witnessing for Christ. This happy experience was short-lived.

Soon temptation came and sometimes I yielded, never deliberately, but through weakness and not knowing how to obtain victory. These sins I confessed to God and sought His forgiveness, but gradually Satan tempted me to question whether a sinning Christian was still saved. I began doubting my salvation, for I was now looking to my conduct instead of to the merits of Christ. This grieved the Holy Spirit and I soon lost His witness, not to return for sixteen long weary years.

Then in addition to falling into sin, as I studied the Bible, I found that there were many commandments to keep and many duties for a Christian to perform. Was a person really saved unless all these commandments were being kept? Was I saved unless all the requirements of duty were met? Then it was sometimes hard to know what the requirements of duty were, so how could I be sure I was doing right? And if not doing right was I still saved? You see I had turned away from grace,

unconsciously, but nevertheless really, and was now depending on my works, my conduct, and my commandment keeping, as the ground of my acceptance with God. I still believed Christ died for me but my justification depended on more than my simple faith in Him as my Savior.

V. The Bondage of Works

When I had lost the witness of the Holy Spirit, how miserable I was! But instead of casting myself on God's mercy in Christ again I thought my conduct was not pure enough and that He was grieved because of that. Perhaps I was not obeying His commandments sufficiently well. Perhaps He wanted me to make greater sacrifice in Christian service. I became more and more strict in every way, hoping to get back my joy. I began preparing for the ministry, longing through service to regain His favor. I volunteered as a missionary to a foreign field. I did everything that suggested itself, or that others suggested, to bring my life to the place where I would be good enough to claim salvation. The years were passing, with my soul oh, so hungry. I was now preaching—in the pastorate—doing some evangelistic work—preaching a gospel of works. Few responded to my message and these gave but little evidence of being born again. They had come to Christ on the ground of works. They were told that they must do other things in addition to simply believing if they would be saved. They believed the preacher and failed to find Christ!

I worked on and on, harder and harder; now so strict that in my zeal I found myself differing with almost everyone on questions of conduct and of doctrine. By this time I had a family of children and was so strict with them that they well-nigh lost their love for me; all to get salvation, to keep it, or to regain it, but still no blessing. There was no blessing in any department of my life. No blessing in my business and no blessing in my prayer life. My prayers seemed to get no higher than the ceiling; there were no answers. Oh! The agony of soul. I would have given my right arm to know that I was saved, to get my blessing back.

VI. A Pharisee and His Bible

I had become a Pharisee, having stumbled at the stone over which they stumbled (Rom 9:32). I was trying to provide a righteousness of my own instead of taking, by faith, the one God had provided (Rom 3:22). I knew my Bible in those days, could quote a great deal of it, but the texts that

stressed works were my favorites. I did not know what to do with the ones that mention grace. They had no place in my thinking—in my theology. Had I been asked to define the word grace I could not have done it. It had never caught my attention. One of my favorite texts was, “Work out your own salvation”; never realizing that the next verse taught that God had already worked that salvation in me and I was only to work out what He had worked in (Phil 2:12-13).

The book of James was my favorite book of the New Testament and the second chapter the big chapter. Little did I understand that while James referred to the life of Abraham to prove salvation by works, he was talking of salvation in the sight of men, while Paul in Romans 4 taught that salvation in the sight of God was by faith alone without any works, and he also used Abraham as an illustration. Here is perfect agreement. James believed in grace as much as Paul. He was not discussing how we get *salvation*, but how we *show* it—show it to men. Of course, we show that we are saved by our works, for men cannot see our faith, but God can, and He saves us on the basis of the faith He sees.

My pursuit of a righteousness on the basis of my own conduct was fast leading me to despair, for if after sixteen years of earnest effort I was not saved, was there any reasonable prospect that I ever would be? Then what message did I have for others who wanted salvation? The best I had to offer them was an opportunity to yield to Christ in obedience, and start to working for their salvation as I was doing.

I believed, of course, that God forgave my sins from time to time, but was I ever free from sin when I was not perfect, and what if I should die in such a state? I feared death. I longed to have the witness of the Holy Spirit again. I was not in the position of those who fall into the error of salvation by works before they get to Christ for salvation, for they have never tasted of the bliss of the Holy Spirit’s witness, and do not know what it is, and what they are missing; but I once had enjoyed this blessing and it was agony to live without it.

Little by little I came to the place where I was willing to be taught. I wanted God to bring me to the truth, no matter how, or by whom. When this place was reached God could give me light, which He had longed to do through the years. It is wonderful to look back and see how wonderfully He worked.

VII. God Seeking a Wanderer

The first clear ray of light came through reading the life of D. L. Moody. I saw that he had something which I did not have—the Holy Spirit’s presence and blessing in his life and ministry. But it is very won-

derful how I came to read the life of Moody. I had, of course, heard of his great meetings, but in my pharisaical bigotry I had refused to become interested in his work, for since he failed to obey some of the commandments of Jesus which I held so essential he could not possibly have God's blessing upon him. I admitted that he had power, whether through natural ability or from Satan I did not know, but I felt sure it was not from God.

One day I was passing the express office in the town where I held my pastorate and out of curiosity I stopped a moment while some unclaimed packages were auctioned off, among them a bundle of books. For these I bid twenty-five cents, not really wanting them, and little expecting to get them. To my surprise I found I had made a purchase. When I took them home I found among them a life of Moody, and while I did not at first read it, I could not get rid of the desire to do so in spite of my deep-seated prejudice. After reading it my unhappiness increased more and more, but it was a long time before I was willing to investigate the questions which it raised, though I could not get away from the conviction that here lay a possible solution to my problem.

VIII. God Using the Weak Things

The next thing that influenced me greatly was the life of a little girl, perhaps thirteen years of age. She had been raised in the Salvation Army and had been saved at a very early age. She joined the Sunday School class of which I was the teacher. She knew the Lord in the most real and precious fellowship, yet lived without any thought of making a show of the Holy Spirit's blessing in her life. Had she been an adult my prejudice might have found some explanation of her seeming blessing from God, for I could not believe her a Christian because in those days I thought no one could be saved until they were properly baptized, and she had never been baptized at all. Yet she was a constant rebuke to my theology and to my Christian life, for I could see that she was a better Christian than I was.

About this time an elderly man moved into the neighborhood. Before his conversion he had been a terrible drunkard and after he was saved he gave up drink instantly, but either the use of liquor, or giving it up, had affected his mind so that he became to some extent simple-minded. In spite of this he was very clear on salvation by grace and enjoyed the great blessing of the Holy Spirit's presence.

God used him to bring me the message which I needed and in a sense longed for. Had the Lord sent someone mentally capable I think I would

have argued with him and received no help. On two different occasions this man came to my home, delivered me a little sermon of about a minute's length, turned on his heel and was gone before I could answer him. Each time the message was just what I needed to convict and enlighten me. The gist of his two "sermons" was, salvation can be received instantaneously. He told me long afterward, when I had gotten my blessing back, that God sent him to me both of those times and revealed to him what he should say.

IX. Too Busy to Find the Truth

By this time I was really eager to know the truth at any cost. It seemed clear to me that the wise course was to restudy my Bible, asking God in simple faith to give me the light, with a determination to follow it even though the heavens fell. But my program was so full that I did not see any possible way of finding so much time as I knew this would require. Just then my family was quarantined for scarlet fever. Only one of the children was very ill but by taking their turns the quarantine was prolonged for thirteen weeks. This gave me the opportunity. How I improved it! I studied my Bible almost night and day. I soon discovered the word grace. I next made a list of the texts which taught that we were saved alone by believing. At first it seemed that these could not possibly mean that a sinner could be instantaneously saved by a simple act of faith without any added or preceding good works or reformation of conduct. But the more I studied them the more the Holy Spirit convicted me that this was the truth. I committed them to memory and set over against them the texts which I had been taught imposed works as a condition of getting salvation, and of keeping it as well. One by one these texts were illumined by the Holy Spirit until I saw that they referred to rewards, etc.

X. Counting the Cost

Now I stood at the parting of the ways. I was at last convinced with my head that salvation was secured alone by believing. Here another great problem arose. If I should accept this truth, I was now sure I would regain my lost blessing; but how could I face my people and tell them I had been teaching them error all the years? I was afraid my church would repudiate me and I would be cast adrift with a large family and little means and no friends. It was a terrible struggle lasting for days—yes, and nights. At last the ground was all canvassed. I would follow the truth

and trust God. The moment arrived when I yielded my will and gave up my old belief in works and accepted salvation by faith alone. Having memorized all of the texts that taught salvation by believing, I repeated them to myself many, many times. At last I said to myself, "It must be true" (that salvation *is* just through believing). Finally I said, "It is true." At that moment I had the peace of God. My soul was flooded with the Holy Spirit's witness. I was too happy for words. This had all happened in secret. Even my own family did not know of the struggle through which I had been passing. Now came the cross of telling it. It was a cross to tell my family, my people; but what a joyous cross it proved to be. Oh, the blessing that came to myself and others in the telling!

XI. A New Gospel Brings a New Ministry

I had taken up my cross, and sometimes the road was thorny, but the joy-bells were ringing in my heart. I knew I was saved! I had the witness of the Holy Spirit constantly. The blessing of God was upon my ministry. Opposition resulted only in new opportunities for God to manifest His presence and blessing. His *blessing* was upon my preaching. I now had a Gospel—*Good News*—to preach. I now had a testimony to give. In private and in public it was a delight to explain the way of salvation, and many were eager to hear. Soon I had my first convert and he has endured through the years, with the grace of God in evidence in his life. Soon there was another, then another, and another—all young men. What a joy it has been to follow these first four and to see the Gospel of grace prove itself true in experience.

Sometimes the old processes of thought would recur for a brief time. Usually this was brought about by coming in contact with men, often preachers, much more able than myself in every way, who taught works in one or the other of its subtle forms. It seemed there were few Christians whom I knew who were trusting alone in the finished work of Christ for justification. But these few showed in their very countenances that the Lord was with them. On these occasions of doubt there was but one recourse. I would turn to the Word again and reread the many texts which teach clearly that salvation is a gift received simply by believing. Soon the fog would lift and my joy would return.⁴

⁴Ed. Note: At this point the author included a long list of Bible texts proving that salvation is a free gift, is not of works, and is simply by faith. These were excluded to aid the flow of the article.

XII. Salvation By Simple Faith in Christ Crucified for Us

Salvation is *free*. Jesus died for me, and if I will admit my guilt, and have a willingness to be saved, and accept Him, He will give me the full benefit of His death on the cross as a *free gift*. I need not wait to reform. I need not promise anything in return. If I did, it would not be a free gift. I simply accept, and immediately I am forgiven, and I pass from death unto life.

XIII. The Place of Service in the Plan of Salvation

When I was “facing out” salvation by grace it seemed too good to be true that God would save me without waiting for me to quit my sins, or before I had rendered any service. Then again I thought this would encourage laxity of living. Many have raised this same objection since. But in my experience it worked just the reverse. When I really knew that I was saved and that God was good enough to save me instantly and without any merit on my part, I was overwhelmed by a sense of gratitude that has never left me. It had seemed to me utterly unthinkable that I should not do my utmost to obey the Christ who has set me free. I soon found that the measure of service I had rendered before was not now enough even to satisfy my own grateful soul.

Then the Holy Spirit had become a real and abiding “Presence,” and He taught me new concepts of service. I am sure that the soul who is saved by grace and continues to trust in the finished work of Christ alone, and then does not grieve the Holy Spirit, or disregard His promptings, will serve and serve and serve. The Holy Spirit soon taught me that all my prior service had been superficial. I had never given my life to God in full once-for-all consecration, that He might take it and plan it in His own way forever. This I now gladly did as the “reasonable service” (Rom 12:1-2) of a saved soul. It resulted in new blessings through the Holy Spirit’s power and also God’s work of “pruning” the branch of the vine that was now wholly His and that He must bring to greater fruitfulness (John 15:1-2).

Grace in the Arts:

SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON DR. ARTHUR FARSTAD AND THIS SECTION OF THE JOURNAL

JAMES A. TOWNSEND

Bible Editor

Cook Communications

Elgin, IL

I. Art and the Arts

Art was for the arts. That is, Dr. Arthur Farstad, long-time editor of this journal, appreciated the arts. In fact, he was a graduate of an art school. That in itself is fairly rare among evangelical Christians. There has long been a suspicion or mistrust of the arts on the part of many conservative Christians.

Back around A.D. 200 the Latin Church father Tertullian concluded that learning non-Christian literature was permissible for a Christian, but teaching it was not permitted, since such writing praised idols. The nineteenth century American evangelist Charles Finney asserted, "I cannot believe that a person who has ever known the love of God can ever relish a secular novel."¹ He proceeded to speak of "Byron, Scott, [and] Shakespeare" as "triflers and blasphemers of God."² (Ironically, Sir Walter Scott was a great Bible-lover.) Robert Louis Stevenson's conservative nursemaid, affectionately nicknamed "Cummy," warned her

¹ Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 62.

² Ibid.

little charge of the evils of the theater attended by both of Stevenson's Calvinistic Church of Scotland parents. Reverend Charles Dodgson, whose pen name was Lewis Carroll, the author of *Alice in Wonderland*, often accompanied his child friends to see adult theater. (Dodgson was probably the exception to the rule among devout Anglicans of that time.)

Part of the mistrust of the arts by conservative Christians is epitomized by the humorously flavored limerick:

There once was a sculptor named Phidias
Whose manner in art was invidious.
He carved Aphrodite
Without any nightie
And shocked the ultra-fastidious.

(Author unknown)

The fact that most art schools require fledgling artists to sketch the naked body of an actual model has been a stumbling block for many sincere Christians, thereby stereotyping all the arts as being tainted with evil.

However, poet Robert Frost (no model of Christian morality) once said, "I like my potatoes, but I like them with the dirt washed off." Most of us are not anti-vegetable despite the fact that there is still dirt on our potato or rutabaga when we purchase it at the grocery store. We remove the dirt, and we ingest the vegetable.

This procedure is the principle enunciated in 1 Thess 5:21—"Test all things; hold fast what is good." God calls us to *test* and then *attest*—to *prove* "all things" and *approve* what is excellent. Philippians 1:10 also summons us to prove things that differ and "approve the things that are excellent."

The difficult duty is to know when to "test *all* things," as 1 Thess 5:21 says—which surely includes a world containing both good *and* evil—versus 1 Thess 5:22 which equally mandates that we "abstain from every form of evil." For my mind, I have read enough by others about the spiritual sewage inside James Joyce's *Ulysses* to know that I do not want to read it. However, the fact that Charles Dickens talks about a prostitute in *Oliver Twist* no more keeps me from re-reading that novel than it keeps me from reading the Bible which reports King David's affair with Bathsheba. Some plays are overdosed with filth. For instance, I felt unduly smudged when I saw the actor George Peppard play Ernest Hemingway in the stage play *Papa*. Curse words peppered the play so

often that I questioned whether 1 Thess 5:22 might have been more apropos an application there than 1 Thess 5:21. Frank Gaebelein declared: "No Christian is obligated to reside in the brothels of the mind in order to know the world in which he lives."³

Art Farstad and I both attended Emmaus Bible College (then Emmaus Bible School)—a school related to the Brethren Assemblies. We attended the same church together for several years while we were at Dallas Theological Seminary. When I transferred from Emmaus Bible School, then in Oak Park, IL, to William Jennings Bryan College in Dayton, TN, I grappled with a conceptual issue that is extremely germane to this discussion of Christianity and the arts. The first school I had attended was a Christian Bible school whereas the second was a Christian liberal arts college. By virtue of the subject matter of the curriculum, I picked up a mental milieu in the second school that was decidedly different from that of the first school. It seemed that the theme song of the Bible school might have been the chorus: "This world is not my home; I'm just a passing through." It seemed that the theme song epitomizing the flavor of the Christian liberal arts college was "This is my Father's world" (a hymn frequently sung by George Beverly Shea).

Obviously both Christian songs see the word "world," but they contain a radically different worldview of the "world" (and thus toward such subjects as the arts). When I was in the Brethren Bible school, I didn't even want to take a class in church history because I thought church history was one step removed from *real* Bible content. Ironically, I ended up getting my Ph.D. in a field related to that subject. By contrast, while at Bryan College, my favorite class turned out to be "Humanities," giving me a real love for the arts, as viewed through a Christian aperture. However, during my early days at the Christian liberal arts college, I found myself thinking through my former mental grid: "What am I doing here in this zoology laboratory dissecting dead frogs while the souls of living people are perishing?" I wonder if our friend Art underwent a similar mental experience? At any rate, I always found him a wonderful, balanced combination of both perspectives—one who was an authentically personable person and who cared supremely about people's eternal well-being, but also someone who valued the arts. Indeed, it was Dr. Farstad who initiated this very section called "Grace in the Arts" as a regular feature of the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical*

³ Frank Gaebelein, *A Varied Harvest* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 116.

Society. I believe I'm correct in saying that I have been its most frequent contributor over the years (now with six articles). Art himself authored five articles for "Grace in the Arts" on Johann Sebastian Bach, Marian Anderson, Rembrandt Van Ryn, William Shakespeare, and Emily Dickinson.

II. Grace and Beauty

Art, by its very nature, to quote the poet Keats, is "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." The rather anti-Catholic Charles Dodgson wept when he viewed the architectural splendor at Cologne Cathedral. Its beauty overwhelmed him. I think anyone who has visited the Washington Cathedral can relate to Dodgson's experience. At a much lower level, aesthetically speaking, I had a similar experience to Dodgson's. A friend of ours from the Denver area was driving us for the first time through the Rocky Mountains outside of Denver. There was an immaculately blue sky that day. My friend had the top to his car down, and the Azusa Pacific College choir at that moment was singing over his car stereo system: "The greatest thing in all my life is loving You." Overwhelmed with the sheer beauty impacting my eyes and ears, tears began to flow involuntarily from my eyes. C. S. Lewis spoke of having such an overwhelming experience with the sheer beauty of "Northerness."

Undoubtedly most regular readers of this journal are people committed to the Free Grace position on the subject of salvation. Yet sometimes it's possible for us to miss the grace-grandeur of the ravishing forest—of God's operation—for the particular exegetical trees.

I believe there is a correlation between *grace* and *beauty*. Even linguistically a rough correlation can be forged. Grace is *charis* (pronounced *KAHR-iss*). Our English derivative *charm* (which certainly carries overtones of *beauty*) is a related term. Simply by turning to Thayer's lexicon, we find the first lexical entry under *charis* as follows: "properly that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness . . ." ⁴ In the Apocryphal book of Sirach (21:16) we read: "delight [*charis*] will be found in the speech of the intelligent." *Charis* brings *chara* ("joy")—as Keats said, "a joy forever."

⁴ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 665.

It is out of the beauty and bounty of our generous God that we have received *charis*. “By grace you have been saved through faith” is the watchword of this journal. Yet that same saving grace of Eph 2:8 produces the result of Eph 2:10: “We are [God’s] workmanship . . .” The Greek term for “workmanship” is *poēma*, and it is found elsewhere in the NT only when referring to God’s creative handiwork in nature (Rom 1:20). (One may think of the line in the hymn “How Great Thou Art” which runs: “When I behold the lofty mountain’s grandeur.”) In the creativity and beauty of God’s sculpted mountains and painted sunsets, even unbelievers are called to see His craftsmanship.

While the Greek word *poēma* in Eph 2:10 does not explicitly denote “poems,” obviously poetry is a derivative or ancillary form of artistic “workmanship.” Sir Thomas Browne, an author, called his life “a piece of poetry.” Famed poet Robert Browning asserted in *Paracelsus*:

God is the perfect Poet
Who in creation acts his own conceptions.⁵

In Ezra 7:27—“Blessed be the Lord God . . . who has put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to *beautify* the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.” If God could “put” it into a Persian potentate’s heart to “beautify” something, cannot the same God of grace “put” into others’ hearts the yearning to bring beauty to those around us—with art forms of beauty: literature [prose, poetry, plays], art [painting, drawing, sculpture, crafts], drama [via theater, movies, television, mime], architecture, and music?

When I viewed the Eugene O’Neill movie *The Iceman Cometh*, or Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*, I could not help but think of the absence of beauty in the Christ-empty life that lacks the grace of God. When I contrast the agnostic, embittered lead character in Somerset Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage* with that of the chief character in Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, the in-breaking of divine grace into human existence becomes transparent. The reverberating strains of Handel’s *Messiah* reveal the artistry of God by means of the artistry of the composer.

When I read Micah 1:10-16 even—or especially—through the lens of the liberal translator James Moffatt, I’m conscious of a God who inspired

⁵ Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), 400.

the imagery and artistry of the word plays there. Moffatt sought to capture the Hebrew puns in the packaging of his English equivalents, as follows:

Weep tears at Teartown (Bochim),
Grovel in the dust at Dustown (Beth-ophray)
Fare forth stripped, O Fairtown (Saphir!)
Stirtown dare not stir . . .

(Micah 1:10-12, Moffatt's translation)

Doctor Farstad was sensitized to such artistic word plays. Even at the very end of his life I understand that he had discovered something interesting in John 14 in the Norwegian New Testament. John 14:2 speaks of "My Father's house." Evidently in the Norwegian text the word for "Father" is *far*, and the word for "house" (or place) is *sted*. Art made the observation that "Far-sted" was very close to his own last name and that perhaps the Lord might be calling him to enter his "Father's house" soon. (It's the sort of thing a word-lover would observe. Art had written in a past issue of this journal about Emily Dickinson, who once remarked, "Now there's a word to tip your hat to!" I tip my hat to Art who loved such hat-tip words.)

For those who sing approvingly "This is my Father's world" (even though it's also true that "we're just a passing through"), it is of interest that the Greek word for "world" is translated at least once in the New Testament as "beauty." (The English terms *cosmos* and *cosmetics* are related.) In 1 Pet 3:3 the apostle speaks of a Christian wife's inner "beauty" (*cosmos*).

Thankfully, through the centuries there have been notable Christian spokespersons for the value of the arts. Martin Luther affirmed, along the lines of 1 Thess 5:21, that "Christians must not altogether shun plays because there are sometimes coarseness and adulteries therein; for such reasons they would have to give up the Bible too."⁶ Luther also announced that "neither should we ordain young men as preachers unless they have been well exercised in music," for it is "a notable gift of God next to theology."⁷

⁶Will Durant, *The Reformation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 419-20.

⁷Hugh Thompson Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), 143.

This viewpoint would appear to have held sway also in Calvin's wing of the Reformation. Abraham Kuyper, president of the Free University of Amsterdam, issued a manifesto at the school's inaugural convocation: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry 'Mine!'"⁸ The Reformed strain of Christianity views the universe under the Lordship of Christ, and so it seeks to understand politics, education, society, economics, the arts, etc., in that way. And, even though Dr. Arthur Farstad was a Dispensationalist, he valued a Christian perspective under which all the arts were umbrellaed.

In more recent times, perhaps the most vocal evangelical spokesperson for this position was Dr. Frank Gaebelein, who wrote of Phil 4:8,

This inspired outline is an invitation for Christian education to range over the realm of science in all its forms, over the treasures of literature, the mansions of philosophy and theology, and the beauty of music and art; according to its warrant, all the best that has been thought and said and done . . . through the ages . . . comes within the provenance of an education that seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.⁹

III. Christianity and Color

As theologian P. T. Forsyth compared Greek art (with its idealized but mostly emotionless sculptured busts of the human body) with the later world of painting, he made a case that Christianity had made some contribution to the world of painting with a greater emphasis on color. The artist Gauguin once advised a fellow painter that if he was impacted by the color of a meadow, he should employ the most vivid green paint possible. Some tradition has claimed that Luke was an artist as well as a doctor. Perhaps not, but have you ever noticed one of the vivid details captured only in the Gospel of Mark? Mark noted that at the feeding of over 5000 people, Jesus made the gathered group "sit down in groups on the *green grass*" (Mark 6:39, emphasis added). Some Bible commentators have felt that, through Peter's lens, Mark "recalled" the Jewish audience in colorful Oriental robes all arrayed and arranged against a springtime coating of verdure. (One of the few artistic depictions of

⁸ Richard Mouw, "Abraham Kuyper: A Man for this Season," *Christianity Today* (October 26, 1998), 86.

⁹ Frank Gaebelein, *Education in a Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 38-39.

Semitic people from the era of Joseph is that of the tomb painting at Beni Hasan on the Nile of more than 30 Semites who are all in multi-colored robes.)¹⁰ Thus, the crowd that day looked like a gigantic flowerbed!

Mark's Gospel is the only one to include the minuscule fact of "the green grass." I know Art Farstad must have appreciated Mark's notation here because he was a color-sensitized person. In fact, in his book *The New King James Version in the Great Tradition*,¹¹ Art included a personal memory from his childhood. He referred to himself as "a crayola kid." In his Sunday school years as a primary student Art remembered being given a handout folder to color of "King Solomon, sitting on a pier, watching his cargo being unloaded from his ships of Tarshish: ivory, apes, and peacocks."¹² He reported being "thrilled" that the peacocks offered great range for "a crayola kid." Alas, later, Art said, he would "unload...Solomon's cargo once and for all," for as head editor of the New King James Version, he realized that the KJV's "peacocks" was an erroneous translation. So, bye-bye to colorful peacocks, but that could never stanch Art's love of the beauty of color. I can remember him expressing his appreciation for the texture of the white meat of a turkey at a Thanksgiving dinner we attended in Dallas, and (by his compliments) I know he appreciated a colorful sermon. In fact, in his book referred to above, Art included an entire section concerning translation on the subject of "Beauty."

IV. *Gratis* and *Gratitude*

It should be apparent from the wording of this heading that a Latinate form of "grace" (as when we offer something *gratis*) should have as its logical corollary an attitude of gratitude. The atheist writer Katherine Mansfield sensed this once when she felt that she wanted to thank someone because of the beauty of the world around her, but, as an atheist there was no one to thank. Some theologians have said that theology is *grace*, and ethics is *gratitude*.

We sense this humble attitude in the apostle who declared himself the chief of sinners (1 Tim 1:15). In that very same context where Paul

¹⁰ J. D. Douglas ed., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1980), I, 421.

¹¹ Arthur L. Farstad, *The New King James Version in the Great Tradition* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1989).

¹² *Ibid.*, 43.

observed that “the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant” (1:14), he employed an interesting built-in word picture apropos to our topic. In 1 Tim 1:16 Paul stated “that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a *pattern* to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (emphasis added).

In the term *pattern* we detect the artist-apostle. The Greek word is *hypotnōsis*, which is used only here and in 2 Tim 1:13. William Hendriksen refers to our word as a “sketch . . . just like a master will first draw a rough pencil sketch before attempting his final work.”¹³ Anyone who has seen the rough sketches by Leonardo da Vinci will appreciate Hendriksen’s comment. Consequently, Hendriksen went on to remark: “In the gallery of grace the Artist-Savior had, as it were, drawn and put on exhibition a *sketch*” of His masterful work in the life of the apostle.¹⁴

To my mind Dr. Arthur Farstad was a painter whom God had painted. He was indeed a “pattern” for many of us. If there really is “Grace in the Arts,” there was certainly God’s grace in Art (Farstad). He showcased God’s amazing grace in a life of gratitude. Someone has said: Thanksgiving is thanks-living, and Art lived like a graced person.

A *graced* person should eminently be a *gracious* person—and Art was that. At the conclusion of this article I include an autobiographical memory which I hope will not mar the overall effect of the article itself. It is probably the most highly personal item I have ever put into print. At the risk of the reader (who does not know me) writing me off as a case of seriously defective pride, I still feel it would be the right thing to do. My hope is that even if it reflects badly upon me, it will reflect well upon Art’s great graciousness.

Art Farstad and I were friends together at Dallas Theological Seminary. Because we had attended the same Bible school (though at different times) and shared the same Brethren background, we had many grace-filled moments in common. In the Brethren tradition there is more openness in the pulpit (than in most other church traditions) to having more than one gifted person preach or teach. Consequently, Art and I often listened to each other’s public ministry.

I do not know if the same tradition still continues at Dallas Theological Seminary today as when Art and I were there. However, at that time there was a week of senior student preaching at the end of the school

¹³ William Hendriksen, *1–2 Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), 82.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

year. I'm sure there is both good and bad to be said for this practice. Whether for better or worse, an award is given each year for the senior "preacher of the year." To engage in a bit of perhaps prideful name-dropping, in my graduating class there were some sterling people who turned out to be the presidents of Wheaton College, Moody Bible Institute, and Ontario Theological Seminary, as well as a vice president of Denver Theological Seminary, among many other worthy students. However, it was a fairly common assumption among members of my class that I was expected to win the homiletics award that year.

I had grown up among the old Southern tradition of pulpit orators such as R. G. Lee from my hometown of Memphis, TN, and I had worked hard to be the best possible preacher for the Lord that I could be. As a result, I labored toward that senior-preaching week with the great expectation of being part of that four-person group. I worked so hard on my Bible passage for over a month that I used a homiletical analogy for the framework of the text that, according to the two video-viewing professors, clouded over the exposition of the passage itself. Therefore, they felt that they must reject my inclusion among the four senior preachers that week.

As an empathetic person might imagine, I was crushed. It was a very low point in my life. (And whether my motives were God-honoring I will leave to God to decide.) However, it was at this disappointing moment that Art Farstad graciously came to my rescue. He made me a personalized card in which he conferred his own "Art Farstad Preaching Award" on me and enabled me to get back on a more even emotional keel. Sometimes at a strategic down-moment someone steps in and lifts you up with an unforgettable encouragement. I still cherish that personalized "award" card that Art (the artist) gave me, and it is among my treasured possessions to this day. Grace has enabled Art to be gracious to others—as he assuredly was to me.

Art was a true art form of God's grace—and its resulting graciousness. He has now been placed in the heavenly gallery as one of the Lord's masterpieces of grace. I think I can hear my dear friend singing John Newton's lines:

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

This final quotation seems to encapsulate something of the very essence of our friend Dr. Arthur Farstad. The Russian novelist Boris Pasternak happened to be critically ill and thought he was dying, so he wrote:

In the minute which seemed to me the last one in life, I experienced more strength than ever before, and the desire to talk to God, and to praise the visible [world around me] . . . "My God," I whispered, "I thank You that You paint life with such vivid colors and that You have created life and death. I thank You that Your language is sublimity and music, that *You have made me an artist*, that creativity is learnt in Your school, and that You have prepared me a whole life long for this night." And I rejoiced and wept with happiness.¹⁵

¹⁵ Timothy Udd, *The Quiet Hour* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1987), 25.

BOOK REVIEWS

Free and Clear: Understanding & Communicating God's Offer of Eternal Life. By R. Larry Moyer. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1997. 272 pp. Paper, \$13.99.

Larry Moyer, co-founder and executive director of EvanTell ministry in Dallas, has been a Free Grace evangelist for over twenty years. In this book Larry shares insights gained from his many years as an evangelist. There is much to like about this book.

Moyer's discussion of assurance of salvation is excellent. He indicates that the ground of assurance is the promises made in Scripture to the believer, not the works which we do: "The fruit of such a walk is . . . love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ([Gal 5:] 22-23). Nowhere in Scripture, however, are these things the basis for determining if one is saved" (p. 58). Larry deals with a number of so-called problem passages such as Luke 8:13, John 8:30-32, John 15:6, Col 1:21-23, 2 Cor 13:5, Jas 2:14-26, and 1 John 3:6 (pp. 62-79). His explanations are completely consistent with those given in this journal and in *Grace in Focus*.

Also highly commendable is Moyer's refutation of false conditions of eternal salvation such as commitment to Christ's Lordship (pp. 99-114), confessing Christ (pp. 115-126), baptism (pp. 127-140; his discussion of Acts 2:38 and 22:16 on pp. 130-34 is also outstanding), and good works (pp. 145-59). His discussion of Rom 10:9-10 on pp. 116-23 is worth the price of the book.

The discussion of repentance (pp. 85-95) will certainly please all that hold to the change-of-mind view. While I no longer hold that view, I appreciate his position as being one that is consistent with justification by faith alone.

There is one point that deserves attention. The discussion of saving faith lacks the clarity found elsewhere in the book. Since I hold a somewhat different view of saving faith, my perspective is admittedly biased. However, it seems to me that Moyer is on shaky ground when he suggests that saving faith is more than "mental assent" (p. 41).

Take, for example, his illustration of a luxury liner that is sinking in the middle of the ocean. Three people stand near the lifeboats. "The first has no knowledge that lifeboats save and therefore never steps into one. The second understands that lifeboats save but for some reason refuses to step into one. The third passenger not only understands the ability of the boat to save, but accepts as being true that the lifeboat has the ability to save. The passenger therefore steps into the lifeboat and in so doing relies upon it as the means of salvation" (p. 41).

Moyer then asks, "Which of the three is saved?" Obviously the third passenger only. This leads to the conclusion: "*A person is saved when he or she understands the ability Christ has to save and acts on that knowledge by trusting Christ*" (p. 41, italics his).

There are a number of questions that arise. First, while Moyer speaks of the second passenger *understanding* that lifeboats save, does he not mean that the second passenger *believes* that lifeboats save? Of course, that would destroy the illustration, so he is forced to choose the word *understand*. But surely he does not mean that the person merely understands the claim that lifeboats save, but doesn't really believe it. What person on earth is there who doesn't believe that lifeboats save?

Second, isn't the promise of the gospel that the moment we believe in Christ for eternal life we have it? Jesus said, "He who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47). Thus there is no additional step of choosing to "act on that knowledge by trusting Christ." Once a person believes that Jesus saves all who simply believe in Him, that person is born again.

Third, does not John 20:31 show that mental assent, properly understood, is indeed all that is required? All who believe "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" have eternal life. When one compares John 11:25-27 where the same expression occurs, it is clear that the expression refers to Jesus' promise of eternal life to all who simply believe in Him for it.

If the lifeboat illustration were true to Scripture, any person on board ship who believed, or who had ever believed, that lifeboats save all who simply believe in them would at that moment be saved from the shipwreck. There would be no additional step to take. No getting in the boat. Therein is the problem. In the gospel we need to simply believe in Christ. In salvation from shipwrecks we need not only to believe, we must also get in the boat—and stay in the boat since there is no eternal security related to lifeboats! There is no promise that all who have come to faith in lifeboats will be forever free from the danger of death by drowning at sea.

I realize that many *JOTGES* readers will regard my objection as off base. I understand, having once held that very view myself (using similar illustrations which convey the same point). However, hopefully those who do disagree with me will give strong consideration to my points (for example, see Zane Hodges's, *Absolutely Free!*, pp. 25-43) and to coming to our annual conference this Spring. Our topic will be saving faith and this very issue should be a lively source of discussion.

I highly recommend this book. It is, as my fishing buddies say, a definite keeper!

Robert N. Wilkin

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

The Heart of Christianity: What It Means to Believe in Jesus. By Ron Rhodes. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996. 208 pp. Paper, \$8.99.

This book will both please and disappoint most *JOTGES* readers.

It will please in that Rhodes repeatedly speaks of the gift of eternal life and of faith in Christ being the sole condition of that life.

It will disappoint in that the author, though essentially Free Grace in his approach to the gospel, makes some unguarded statements (see below), and he rarely deals with difficult issues or passages in the gospel debate.

The target audience for this book is unique. He addresses not believers, but unbelievers who have little familiarity with the Bible or with theology. And he does so in a very warm and non-condescending style. Rhodes slowly develops his message, attempting to lead the reader to faith in Christ in a gradual and systematic way.

His unguarded statements are not egregious garblings of the gospel. They are, rather, a muddying of the waters. For example, Rhodes says, "Faith is an act of commitment in which I open the door of my heart to Him" (p. 91). This is evidently a slip, for we don't see such language elsewhere, nor is it even explained here. Another example is when Rhodes says, "We are not saved by works, but by the kind of faith that *ends up producing works*" (p. 90, *italics his*). What he means by this is

not clear. However, later in the book he warns the reader, "I wish I could tell you that from the moment you become a Christian everything afterwards will be smooth sailing. But the reality is that there are three potent enemies aligned against those who seek to walk with Christ—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Each of these work in concert with the others to bring about the downfall of the Christian" (p. 149). It may be that Rhodes has the idea that those who are regenerated produce some fruit, though he realizes that they may fail and that any fruit is not a valid basis for assurance.

While this book may not be quite as clear as I would have liked, it is nonetheless a book which is clear enough on the gospel to be an addition to the literature with which I am, and most Free Grace people will be, pleased.

Robert N. Wilkin

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

The NIV Application Commentary: Galatians. By Scot McKnight. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995. 320 pp. Paper, \$22.99.

McKnight is professor of biblical and theological studies at North Park College in Chicago. This commentary is part of the NIV Application Commentary Series, designed to provide both scholarship and application: "bringing an ancient message into a modern context" (p. 7). The author is handicapped, in my estimation, by the need to have *three* separate discussions of each passage. One discussion concerns *the original meaning*, a second concerns *bridging contexts* (from the original readers to today's readers), and a third deals with *contemporary significance*.

Original meaning is an unfortunate choice for the interpretation section. While applications may change, meaning does not. The original meaning is the current meaning and the future meaning.

Dividing the application section into two sections is unnecessary and cumbersome. At times McKnight understandably seems to have difficulty deciding what belongs under *bridging contexts* and what under *contemporary significance*.

And, while one might assume that *all* applications would be under *contemporary significance*, sometimes some of the most important applications are instead found under *original meaning*. For example, under the *original meaning* of Gal 5:4 McKnight understands Paul to be teaching that “the *only sin that can sever a Christian’s relationship to God through Christ is the sin of apostasy*” (p. 250, italics his). In context he makes it clear this refers to loss of eternal life. The implied application is *don’t fall away from the faith or else you will end up in hell*. Yet this application is not found at all in the *contemporary significance* section under Gal 5:1-12.

In addition, it is sometimes a bit difficult to find where the author discusses the meaning of a given verse or expression in a verse. While sometimes there are definite breaks in the text to indicate which verses are being discussed (e.g., pp. 243-53), oftentimes there are not (e.g., pp. 81-90). It would have been much more helpful if definite indications were always given, and not only of subsections being discussed, but also of where the discussion of each new verse begins (perhaps with a number in the margin).

Readers of *JOTGES* will be disturbed by McKnight’s approach to passages dealing with the gospel. As mentioned above, he believes Gal 5:4 is threatening believers with loss of salvation. So, too, he believes, is Gal 5:19-21: “Whether a person made a profession of faith, whether a person had a charismatic experience, or whether a person endured a great deal of suffering does not matter *if he or she lives in the flesh* (cf. Matt. 7:15-27; 2 Cor 5:10; James 2:14-26). One’s final standing before God, Paul contends, is directly related to whether or not a person lives in the flesh or in the Spirit” (p. 270, italics his). This seems to contradict his earlier statement that apostasy is the only sin which can cause a Christian to lose his salvation. McKnight sees one general judgment for all people, believers and unbelievers, where one’s “final standing before God” is made known. He cites 2 Cor 5:10, a passage on the judgment of the saved at the Judgment Seat of Christ, to prove that those who live in the flesh won’t make it into the kingdom. There is no discussion of inheriting the kingdom and what it means. McKnight simply *assumes* that it refers to entering the kingdom. He is either unaware of, or does not feel the need to mention, the view that inheriting the kingdom refers to ruling in the kingdom.

Concerning the anathema of Gal 1:8-9, McKnight says that “Paul is not talking here about church discipline; his language is far too strong for that. He is invoking God’s final damnation and wrath on people who

distort the gospel of grace in Christ and substitute, in effect, Moses' law as the preeminent form of revelation" (p. 51). The author simply asserts that the language cannot refer to temporal judgment. He does not consider other NT uses of anathema, or the fact that Paul includes himself as one who might fall under this anathema ("even though *we*").

Concerning baptism and Gal 3:27, McKnight is confusing, saying, "Baptism was not necessary for salvation, but faith without baptism was not faith for the early church" (p. 198). He seems to argue that in the early church at the moment of faith, and not after, people were baptized and at that moment were born again.

One final example is his treatment of Gal 6:7-9 and the notion of *reaping eternal life*. McKnight says, "What Paul is saying is what I have said on numerous occasions in this book: while works do not save us, no one is saved without works. Why? Very simply, because works are the sure indicators of a person's heart, orientation, and status before God. Every judgment in the Bible is a judgment according to works (cf. Matt. 7:13-27; 16:27; 22:1-14; 25:1-46; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15). A person's final standing before God will be determined by that person's relationship to Jesus Christ as revealed in his or her works. While it is absolutely true that our grounds of acceptance is the sacrifice Jesus Christ made on our behalf, our connection to that sacrifice is by way of a faith that works itself out in the many good works in a person's life" (p. 287).

When the author dealt with other issues there were difficulties for me as well. For example, he argues that Paul's injunctions concerning the role of women in the church are no longer valid by appealing to a cultural shift (pp. 207-211). He suggests that if our contemporary culture is different than the first century culture, then we are free to ignore or alter biblical mandates. This strikes me as a very subjective approach that has no biblical support.

McKnight did, however, share one vignette that I found very helpful. He told of a woman from a fundamentalist background who went to a liberal church and was warmly accepted. Later she was asked to teach a weekly Bible class, and problems arose. The pastor indicated that he felt she "did not belong" in that church because the views she was expressing about the Bible were too conservative for his tastes. This statement by McKnight particularly struck me: "She came to the conclusion that even in liberal Protestantism, there was a 'fundamentalism of liberalism' and that fundamentalism was charged with peer pressure against any

Christian who took seriously the biblical teachings of Christ and Paul" (p. 36). "Fundamentalism of liberalism" is a nice turn of a phrase.

I found this commentary to be of limited value either for understanding or applying the text.

Robert N. Wilkin

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding & Encouraging Ex-Cultists. By Janis Hutchinson. Grand Rapids: Kregel Resources, 1994. 221 pp. Paper, \$10.99.

As one who was in a very small yet dangerous cult group for 14 years before becoming a Christian, I was attracted to this book. Though I have been out of the cult for 26 years now, I found much of what Hutchinson writes to be true to my experience.

This book will do what the subtitle suggests; help you to understand what ex-cultists are going through and to encourage them in their struggles.

Particularly helpful is the author's explanation of the many things which cultists "lose" when they leave a cult. Of course, we who are not in cults tend to think that those who leave cults only gain. How could there be losses? Hutchinson points out that the losses are profound, including friends and community, extra-biblical revelation, elite status, sacred myths, goals, and self-esteem (see, for example, pp. 35-70, especially p. 69).

If we are aware of these losses, we can be more compassionate and better able to point out how there are often corresponding "gains" to be found in the true Body of Christ. Hutchinson gives many practical suggestions in this regard. In fact, each chapter ends with several pages of application.

Readers of *JOTGES* will be disappointed that the gospel is not clearly articulated in this book. There are a few hints, however, of the author's view. For example, at the end of the book there are two pages "About the Author" (pp. 221-22). There we are told that "with God's help, she escaped [from literal kidnapping by an extremist group of Mormons] and later *received Christ*" (*italics added*). Of course, *receiving Christ* is

used in many different ways today so it is difficult to tell from this what she did. Perhaps more telling is Hutchinson's dealing with the question, "Are there some saved cultists?" (p. 209). She favorably quotes John Allen, the author of *Shopping For a God*, who says, "there are without doubt many real Christians—confused, perhaps [!], and in an inconsistent position, but nonetheless Christians—within the fold of cult groups." While I believe that there are *some* (not "many") cultists who are apostate believers and hence are born again, I am convinced that while in the cult they no longer believe the true gospel. However, Allen indicates (by himself quoting from another source) that there are some Moonies who are definitely Christians, and not only that, "who have been truly converted to Christ through the Unification Church." While I am not well versed in the gospel of the Unification Church, I would be amazed if there is even one current Moonie who is proclaiming the clear gospel. Allen fails to give an example of what these special Moonies preach or believe, so we are unable to verify his claim. However, there are many today who identify "true Christians" not by their doctrine, but by their love for Jesus Christ. Possibly this is what Allen means, that there are some Moonies who love Jesus Christ. This I could believe. However, to be saved one must believe in Jesus, not love Him. There are many unsaved Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestants, Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox people who love Jesus Christ in the sense that they feel close to Him and are trying to work their way to Him.

Despite this weakness, I recommend the book, especially for friends and family members of former cultists, and for pastors and church leaders who are sometimes faced with visitors and new church members who have recently come out of cults.

Robert N. Wilkin

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

What's So Amazing About Grace? By Philip Yancey. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997. 304 pp. Cloth, \$19.99.

I was delighted to get a chance to read this new book on grace. We can not have too many. I was not disappointed with the book, but it was not exactly what I expected. I thought there would be more of a treatment of the subject from the Bible. But Yancey treats the subject not like an expositor, but like an artist trying to illustrate biblical truth.

The book has a powerful beginning with good explanations and illustrations of grace. You sense his yearning for the beauty of grace. Yancey never shows much of the Bible, but you can tell he has been there. He tends to develop his ideas more responsively as he is stimulated by the writings of others. He is very well read; the book reflects deep research.

The book is obviously written to and for Christians. While there is an emphasis on God's grace revealed in His unconditional love for us and in Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, this side of grace is more often illustrated with parables and stories than explained. Yancey seems to assume that we all agree on what response grace requires from us for salvation. So while he makes it clear that salvation is not earned, deserved, or merited by our performance, he never enters into an articulation of the terms that are at the heart of the salvation controversy today, such as faith and repentance. This is unfortunate, for it seems a valuable opportunity to throw light on the gospel debate is lost. Indeed, you wonder whether Yancey is even aware of the controversy. Given his whole treatment and understanding of grace, however, the reader will be tempted to assume that Yancey holds to a Free Grace gospel. We will "Amen" statements like "Grace does not depend on what we have done for God, but rather what God has done for us" (p. 55).

It was a bit distracting, at least from my expectations; to have several chapters devoted to the topic of forgiveness of one another so early in the book. Certainly he is rightly applying grace to human relationships; it is just that the book spends a lot of time there. I would like to have seen more reflection on God's grace towards us. Also, though he does apply grace to salvation, there is little discussion about its relationship theologically to sanctification. Romans 6-8 is hardly dealt with, yet that Scripture is the heart of grace-in-life theology.

Also, the book seems to lose a little focus near the end when he applies grace and graciousness to the subject of Christians, culture, and politics. It is a good call to graciousness in those arenas, but probably not where I expected the book to end up.

Yancey draws information, insight, and inspiration from a broad assortment of people. Some may feel uncomfortable with him favorably quoting theologians of a more liberal persuasion or politicians who have no theological definition at all. Yet we should remember that even the apostle Paul quoted pagans approvingly when they got it right (Titus 1:12)!

The book is good reading because Yancey is a polished and thoughtful writer. It does not say everything about grace, but approaches the subject reflectively and leaves the reader appreciating God's grace and motivated to practice it towards others.

Charlie Bing

Director, GraceLife Ministries
Burleson, TX

To Follow Him: The Seven Marks of a Disciple. By Mark Bailey. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1997. 171 pp. Paper, \$11.99.

Discipleship continues to be a buzzword in churches which know that Jesus Christ told them to make disciples. However, there has not been much consistency in approach. Some discipleship literature and courses emphasize the cognitive, some the disciplines of Christian practice. But I have not been able to find much of a systematic approach that could be justified biblically.

Bailey, professor of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, offers what I believe is the best approach to making disciples. His book identifies and explains the seven characteristics (we might also call them conditions) that Christ used to describe what a true disciple is. These characteristics are not primarily cognitive or matters of habit. They are instead issues of and commitments of the heart.

For those frustrated with the many graduates of discipleship courses who learn the lessons, memorize the verses, and do the homework, but are not motivated to continue on after the course expires, this book offers a better approach. Not that it is a study book, or a "how to" guide; though it does have good discussion questions at the end of each chapter. But it covers the essential truths that every disciple must learn and apply to his or her life. These include our love for God, obedience to the Word, attitude towards sin, identity with Christ, stewardship of

possessions, and love for others. If these issues are not covered, then we are truly missing the target in making disciples.

The reader will find an easy read of profound truths. Bailey has a knack for popularizing and applying deep truth. His anecdotes, though sometimes long-winded, are always on target and often amusing. His experience at teaching these seven characteristics in his course on discipleship results in a polished presentation in the book.

I have two criticisms of the book. First, the gospel invitation is not clearly distinguished from the invitation to discipleship. I think this is an unfortunate oversight by Bailey, since I know that in his academic course he clearly distinguishes discipleship from eternal salvation. In a time when there is so much confusion on this distinction, a book about discipleship should begin by showing this. In fact, the Introduction is most confusing because it begins with an invitation from Matt 11:28-30 to find "rest" which seems to be leading to a gospel invitation. But we soon find that Bailey seems to be using it as an invitation to the "rest" available from following Jesus as a disciple. My own view of the verse is that it contains both an invitation to salvation ("Come to Me") and an invitation to discipleship ("Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me"). So while there is clearly a close relationship between salvation and discipleship, the distinctions must be maintained for the sake of a clear gospel. Somewhere, Bailey should have included a discussion of the gospel that clearly distinguished it from the invitation to discipleship.

Second, there is inadequate presentation of motivations to follow Christ as a disciple. If following Christ is a response to His love, grace, and salvation, then this needs to be a constant theme of any approach to discipleship. Along with this, there is also the motivation or consolation of present and eternal rewards for following Christ in a life of obedience and sacrifice. I think this omission is a weakness of discipleship programs in general. People must constantly be reminded of *why* they should deny themselves, take up their cross, etc.

You will be enriched by Bailey's exposition of NT discipleship truths. Buy the book and read it for these, then teach them to others. Just be sure when you teach from it, to make up for Bailey's omissions.

Charles C. Bing
Director, GraceLife Ministries
Burleson, TX

Grace Rules. By Steve McVey. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998. 203 pp. Paper, \$8.99.

This book has a simple message on how to live the Christian life: Focus on Jesus Christ in us and not on rules. Living by rules does not mature us or please God. The difference is between compliance and obedience, trying and trusting, rules and relationship.

McVey, President of Grace Walk Ministries, repeats this enough throughout the book so that you get the message. But it would have helped to have more substance to flesh out what this means in the Christian life. Many readers will appreciate the message, but will want more depth and discussion of Bible passages than this popular-level discussion offers.

At least McVey's emphasis on grace is consistent and healthy. On initial salvation he writes, "Every true believer fully understands that he did nothing to become a Christian. He simply trusted Christ" (p. 21). Though McVey never really explains the gospel, nothing he says compromises the grace gospel. His view of the Christian life would lead us to believe that he is in the grace camp.

McVey's discussions of our relationship to the law, sin, knowing God's will, and forgiveness are helpful even though his style is more conversational than expository or tightly logical. It would have strengthened his book to discuss more of the Bible. Arguments feel weak when specific passages are not discussed but only used as proof-texts, even when you agree with most of the conclusions.

This weakness shows in his discussion of Rom 5:19. I thought it odd that McVey would understand the phrase "by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" as not just positional but experiential or "literally righteous." He does not deal with the language or context, which leaves the reader with many questions even though he says, "That doesn't mean we always act that way. How we act and who we are may not always coincide" (pp. 57-58). How then are we "made righteous?" Does McVey understand this as a reference to the process of sanctification with ultimate glorification in mind? It doesn't seem so, though that is how some interpret the phrase. Clarification is needed on this troublesome phrase. A consideration of the context shows that imputed righteousness is in view in Rom 5:16 and 17. Thus many interpret the verb *kathistēmi* with the sense of *constituted righteous* or *placed in the category of the righteous*, which denotes imputation not actualization. We might think this interpretation better fits into McVey's view of the

Christian life so that we merely live up to our standing in Christ. But his view is more that we *are* righteous because Christ's life is in us, so just focus on Christ and you will live righteously; don't worry about rules.

In essence, I agree with the message of relationship instead of rules. However, when this is translated into action, it helps to know what Christ wants us to do. Thus the many exhortations in the epistles to *do* certain things. Whether we *do* from a desire to serve God (love) or a desire to gain acceptance with Him (legalism) is a matter of the heart, a matter of motivation. But instructions and commands are helpful so that we are not left in a mystical vagueness. There is nothing wrong with saying, "I love you Lord; now tell me what I can do for you," as long as we do not neglect the relationship.

Even with this slight imbalance, it is good to see a book that emphasizes grace. Its message will help those who have been trapped in legalism or performance as their basis for acceptance with God.

Charlie Bing
Director, GraceLife Ministries
Burleson, TX

PERIODICAL REVIEWS

“Internal Evidence for the Inerrancy of the Pentateuch,” Eugene Merrill, *The Conservative Theological Journal* 2 (June 1998), 102-122.

In a time when most evangelical scholars either directly or indirectly deny inerrancy, this article is a breath of fresh air. Eugene Merrill, Professor of OT at Dallas Theological Seminary, brilliantly defends the inerrancy and hence the authority of the Pentateuch.

Merrill shows that later OT references clearly show that the Pentateuch is God’s Word. Similarly, he shows that the NT does this as well. Merrill makes it clear that if we accept the testimony of the Bible, we cannot deny that the Pentateuch is God’s inerrant Word. But he doesn’t stop here. He goes on to demonstrate convincingly that the Pentateuch itself claims that it is God’s Word.

This article is helpful for several reasons. First, it defends inerrancy. This is much needed today.

Second, it affirms the validity of the NT’s interpretation of the OT. Recently a prominent evangelical NT scholar told me that Abraham really didn’t believe that God would raise Isaac from the dead. He understood the author of Hebrews to be stating what Abraham’s actions *meant*, not what Abraham actually believed. Even among many conservative evangelical scholars the NT is not regarded as a valid interpreter of the OT. Merrill’s article forcefully bucks this trend.

Third, it underscores the miraculous nature of OT revelation. For example, Merrill concludes that the information about creation preceding Adam and Eve (Gen 1:1-2:4) was directly given by God, most likely to someone in antiquity who passed it on ultimately to Moses. Another disturbing trend in evangelical scholarship today is the evisceration of direct messianic prophecy. Most OT scholars teach that there are very few direct messianic prophecies. Some go so far as to limit the number to two or three! Yet what about Luke 24:27 where the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were joined by Jesus who “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”? While Merrill does not deal with this question

directly, he certainly does not buy the view that OT authors merely wrote out of their own situation in life (*Sitz im Leben*). Merrill rightly shows that God intervened and, in many cases, spoke directly with the OT authors. That David knew he was writing about the coming Messiah in Psalm 22 and 110, for example, is obvious, unless one has an antisupernatural bias, which Merrill clearly does not.

This is a superb article. I give it my highest recommendation.

Robert N. Wilkin

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

"A Half Millennium Rift: Lutherans and Catholics Reach Agreement on the Issue That Once Split Western Christianity in Two,"
David Van Biema, *Time Magazine*, (July 6, 1998), 80.

I recently received a call from someone who, after reading this article, was thrilled to learn that Catholicism and Protestantism were no longer split and that both now held to justification by faith. However, a careful reading of this article does not justify such optimistic conclusions.

Representatives of Catholicism and Lutheranism drafted a Joint Declaration on justification by faith. One crucial sentence reads, "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works."

To its credit, *Time* reports that there were some problems. For example, while the Vatican approved of the document, it did so with some caveats. The Vatican had significant problems with three of the document's forty-four points. For example, Van Biema writes, "Without denying that salvation always *begins* [!] with God's grace, the church refuses to relinquish some cooperative agency on humanity's part through, say, penance or charity" (*italics added*). That is a big difficulty! Concerning the Vatican's caveats, *Time* reports that one of the drafters of the Joint Declaration, German Lutheran Harding Meyer, indicated, "This is the worst news I've received during my whole career. This is not the basis for continuing the dialog."

Van Biema fails to point out that the statement speaks of justification by faith, but not by faith *alone*. Roman Catholics are forbidden to believe in justification by faith *alone* since the Council of Trent declared that anyone doing so was under God's anathema.

There is no room for rejoicing on account of this Joint Declaration. It merely shows the futility of trying to ignore theological differences in an effort to achieve some sort of unity. There can be no unity until agreement on the gospel takes place. And if Protestants do eventually come to actual agreement with Roman Catholicism on the gospel, then the resulting agreement will reflect the fact that the vast majority of Christendom does not believe the gospel of God's saving grace through faith alone in Christ alone.

Robert N. Wilkin

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

"The Place of Greek and Hebrew in a Minister's Education,"
Michael Burer, *The Conservative Evangelical Theological Journal*
1 (August 1997), 116-18.

Burer, a student at Dallas Theological Seminary at the time of publication, urges schools not to decrease or even eliminate the amount of Greek and Hebrew students must take in order to become pastors.

There is a disturbing trend, Burer suggests, among seminary students today to emphasize what he calls *practice* (that which is practical) over *content*. Thus many seminarians today would be happy to jettison Greek and Hebrew entirely from the curriculum. Why spend all the time and effort studying these languages when what we really need to do is to learn how to do the practical aspects of ministry?

Burer gives three reasons, which I will not restate here, since they essentially boil down to one point, which I would call the thesis of his article: the effectiveness of the minister who lacks exegetical expertise in Greek and Hebrew will be greatly diminished, regardless of how skillful he is in the "practical" aspects of ministry.

One final aspect of this paper deserves special attention. A brief introductory note by Dr. Daniel B. Wallace, Associate Professor of NT at Dallas Seminary prefaces the article. Wallace also includes two footnotes. In his second footnote, Wallace takes issue with Burer over this statement: "The English Bible may help us understand with 95% accuracy the truth of God's Word, but as ministers of integrity we should strive for 100% accuracy. Greek and Hebrew provide the key for that."

Wallace responds, "I would personally set the percentages lower, for both English and the biblical languages. Even Greek and Hebrew cannot give us 100% accuracy. However, what the knowledge of the biblical languages can give is a more informed set of multiple choice options. Though this may be disillusioning to some, the alternative is uninformed ignorance." This sounds a bit like Postmodernism. Can we be certain of *anything* in Scripture? The deity of Christ? Salvation by faith alone in Christ alone? Creation? Certainly Wallace does not mean to imply such uncertainty. However, his statement, taken at face value, surely does imply exactly that. (In addition, it seems to ignore the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.)

There are some weaknesses in this article. It tends to be repetitive and it doesn't clearly make its points. However, these things are also part of its charm. Here is a student baring his soul, sharing his burden for being the very best he can be as a communicator of God's Word. He wants to urge others to pay the price and take the time and effort to learn Greek and Hebrew well. Though very brief, this is a very helpful article. I recommend it highly.

Robert N. Wilkin

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Irving, TX

A Hymn of Grace

SEASONS OF RAPTURE

Frances Mosher

Pianist

Christ Congregation

Dallas, TX

If Christ comes back in winter, when earth lies cold and pale,
Will He find pilgrims watching, or will our hearts' love fail?
O hail our King in white!
He comes from heaven to save us from tribulation's night.

If Christ comes back in springtime, when burst the buds leaf green,
He will gather up His garlands, God's saints, from earth's dark scene.
O hail our Bridegroom-King!
He comes His Bride to rapture: how can we help but sing?

If Christ comes back in summer, when shines the orange sun,
Will He find Christians toiling in love, with hearts as one?
O hail our great Sun-King,
With healing splendor rising to draw us to His wing!

If Christ comes back in autumn when glow the fields with gold,
He will reap with joy His wheat sheaves which He did plant of old.
O hail! Our Lord shall come
To gather in His loved ones and shout His "Harvest Home!"

—Arthur L. Farstad (1935-1998)

A friend of Art Farstad's once suggested that he write a hymn about Christ's second coming, centering each verse around one of the four seasons. The inspiration for this suggestion was Art's admiration of a second-coming hymn by Lewis Sperry Chafer, "If the Lord My Saviour Comes," in which each verse focuses on a different time of day that our Lord might return.

Art accepted his friend's challenge, and the result is "Seasons of Rapture." Artist that he was, Art not only spotlighted a different season in each verse, but also used a color theme associated with the season in question to make the poem's imagery more vivid.

Art considered the songs used in a church meeting extremely important, and was always concerned that a hymn or spiritual song has its roots in the Scriptures. The scriptural basis for both Art's and Chafer's belief in the literal return of Christ for His Church is most clearly and concisely set forth in 1 Thess 4:13-18. Art's love for, and intimate knowledge of, God's Word was also surely responsible for three scriptural allusions in "Seasons of Rapture." The first stanza's association of our Lord with the color white is likely drawn from the description of Christ's clothing in the gospel passages reporting the Transfiguration (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29), and from the description in Rev 1:14: "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow . . ." The third stanza's reference to the "great Sun King with healing splendor rising to draw us to His wing," is clearly based on Mal 4:2: "But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings . . ." And the fourth stanza's likening of the church to a field of ripened wheat ready for harvest is surely an allusion to Christ's parable of the wheat and the tares related in Matt 13:25-30; 36-43.

"Seasons of Rapture," published by Singspiration in 1970, was set to music by contemporary Christian composer Don Wyrzten. Wyrzten's lovely haunting melody is in a minor key and has the flavor of an English folk tune. Using the composer's suggested option of making the final chord major gives the song a triumphant finishing sound to match the thrilling picture of the Lord shouting His "harvest home" as He gathers to Himself all those who have become His children because of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Guarantor of eternal life.

I shall always count the privilege of knowing Art as one of God's greatest blessings to me. I shall also rejoice that, according to 1 Thess 4:16, Art will be in the first group of saints to hear and respond (and *what* a response—rising from the dead!) as the Lord Himself "shouts His harvest home."

BOOKS RECEIVED

ALCORN, RANDY. *Deadline*. Portland: Multnomah Press, 1994
Pp. 427 \$12.99 (paper).

BEERS, V. GILBERT. *Jesus and Me: Five-Minute Virtues to Grow On*.
Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998. Pp. 64. \$14.99 (cloth).

BLYTON, ENID. *The Boy with the Loaves and Fishes*. Eugene, OR:
Harvest House Publishers, 1998. Pp. 28. \$5.99 (cloth).

BOA, KENNETH. *That I May Know God: Pathways to Spiritual For-
mation*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1998. Pp. 220. \$18.99
(cloth).

BONNKE, REINHARD. *Faith: The Link with God's Power*.
Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998. Pp. 252. \$12.99 (paper).

CHITWOOD, ARLEN L. *From Acts to the Epistles*. Norman, OK: The
Lamp Broadcast, Inc., 1998. Pp. 190. (paper).

_____. *Redeemed for a Purpose*. Norman, OK: The Lamp Broad-
cast, Inc., 1998. Pp. 130. (paper).

GANNETT, ALDEN A. *Christ Preeminent: A Commentary on
Colossians*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998. Pp. 109. \$7.99
(paper).

GILLHAM, BILL. *What God Wishes Christians Knew About Chris-
tianity*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998. Pp. 230. \$10.99
(paper).

GOVETT, ROBERT. *Eternal Suffering of the Wicked and Hades*.
Reprint. Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1989. Pp. 227.
\$8.95 (paper).

- _____. *Kingdom of God Future*. Reprint. Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985. Pp. 154. \$6.95 (paper).
- _____. *Reward According to Works*. Reprint. Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1989. Pp. 213. \$8.95 (paper).
- GRAHAM, BILLY. *Just As I Am*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997. Pp. 736. \$28.50 (cloth).
- KOLENBERGER, III, JOHN R. and JAMES A. SWANSON. *The Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998. Pp. 2200. \$99.99 (cloth).
- MCKNIGHT, SCOT. *Galatians. NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995. Pp. 320. \$21.99 (cloth).
- MCVEY, STEVE. *Grace Rules*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998. Pp. 203. \$8.99 (paper).
- MERRILL, DEAN. *The God Who Won't Let Go*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998. Pp. 160. \$10.99 (paper).
- MOYER, R. LARRY. *Free and Clear: Understanding & Communicating God's Offer of Eternal Life*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1997. Pp. 304. \$13.99 (paper).
- NEIGHBOUR, R. E. *If By Any Means...* Reprint. Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985. Pp. 127. \$5.95 (paper).
- ROGERS, CLEON L., JR. and Cleon L. Rogers, III. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998. Pp. 652. \$39.99 (cloth).
- STANTON, GERALD B. *Kept from the Hour: Biblical Evidence for the Pretribulational Return of Christ*. Reprint, 4th ed. Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1991. Pp. 423. \$12.95 (cloth).
- WILLARD, DALLAS. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998. Pp. 428. \$22.00 (cloth).

