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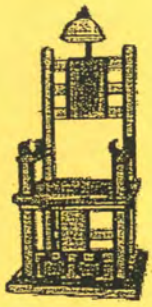

GOD'S HAND IN HISTORY—
The Untold Story of the Collapse of Communism

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

THEOLOGICAL THIEVERY

An Exposé of
Efforts to Steal from Believers
the Blessed Hope of the Pretribulational Rapture

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In 97 minutes of high drama and precision operation a daring band of professional thugs pulled off the greatest cash robbery in history, the epic heist of $7,000,000. Just before 3:00 a.m. on August 8, 1963, the stillness of the English countryside was broken by the sound of the Glasgow-London mail train making its nightly run. In the second car behind the engine of the 13-car train were 128 sacks containing packets of one-pound and five-pound notes. The money had been collected after a long holiday weekend from the northern branches of London banks and was destined for London.

At 3:03 a.m. the train suddenly screeched to an unscheduled stop near an isolated Buckinghamshire bridge. Masked thieves had blocked out the regular signal with a glove and hung a false red light in its place. Moving with the well-drilled precision of commandos, the 15 men overpowered the train crew and the five unarmed guards, loaded the cash sacks into trucks waiting under the bridge, and vanished. The gang moved to a secluded hideout called Leathersdale farm, 20 miles from the scene of the robbery. Immediately, Scotland Yard initiated the most comprehensive manhunt in Britain's history. The earth seemed to have swallowed up the master criminals who soon left the farm. With little success in catching the ringleaders, they called on tireless Tommy Butler, the legendary "Gray Ghost" of Scotland Yard, who at last, five years and three months to the day, tracked down the perpetrators of Britain's Great Train Robbery.

The heist of the $7,000,000 was like a child stealing a piece of penny bubble gum in a candy store when compared to the robbery that has taken place within Christendom since the turn of the century, a robbery, not of money, but of doctrines. But unlike the masterminds behind the Great Train Robbery, the theological thieves and thugs are still at large.

I. The Theft of the Believer's Hope

A. The significance of the theft

When after 1900 German higher criticism inundated the theological schools of our nation, the liberals crept among the true flock of Christ's sheep much like the "thieves and robbers" in Christ's parable (Jn. 10:1, 8). They have attempted to steal from the flock of the faithful those doctrines on which the fundamentalists feed.

It was a thief such as Charles Briggs of Union Theological Seminary who tried to rob fundamentalism of the doctrine of *verbal plenary inspiration*. It was the notorious liberal Nels Ferre who denied the *virgin birth of Christ*, with his blatant suggestion that the Savior was fathered by a German soldier. A Harry Emerson Fosdick attempted to wrest from believers the

doctrine of the *deity of Christ*. Methodist bishop G. Bromley Oxnam rejected the *substitutionary death of Christ*, suggesting that if God demanded the death of His Son for man's sins, God is a "dirty bully." Finally, it was the Neo-orthodoxy of a Karl Barth and an Emil Brunner which rejected the biblical idea of the *physical resurrection and return of Christ*. For Barth the resurrection happened "on the rim of history," wherever that is. For Brunner it was a resurrection of the body (that is, the Church, which is His body, but not of the flesh). The return of Christ vanishes in the mist of an undefined and unreal eschatological and existential encounter. Liberalism and Neo-orthodoxy have robbed the believer of any real hope and help. Fundamentalism has been robbed and the thieves are still at work.

B. The seriousness of the theft

This theological thievery does not come unexpectedly. Long ago Paul predicted that "in the latter days some would depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1), that:

> The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine,
> but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers
> having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from
> the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Throughout the ages believers have always had to battle theological thieves. Every Paul had his Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20). Every John had his Cerinthus. Every Polycarp had his Marcion. Every Athanasius had his Arius. Every Augustine had his Pelagius. Every Luther had his Erasmus. Every Calvin had his Arminius. But what distinguishes the perilous nature of the latter times from the doctrinal problems of previous centuries is the startling fact that theological thieves arise right within the fold of fundamentalism itself, rather than without.

The seriousness of the theft is further underscored by the crucial doctrine which is now being attacked. If there is any one doctrine which gladdens the believer's heart, it is the blessed truth of the any-moment return of Christ. Historically, fundamentalists have championed this doctrine as part of the fundamentals of the faith. The practical importance of this truth can hardly be over-emphasized. The any-moment return is called:

> --a comforting hope (1 Thess. 4:18)
> --a blessed hope (Tit. 2:13)
> --a purifying hope (1 Jn. 3:3)
> --a sure hope (2 Pet. 1:19)

It is this hope which we are about to lose. It is the robbery of this remarkable revelation of the rapture which prompts this word of warning.

Perhaps believers in America amidst their comfort and conveniences cannot truly appreciate the salutary effect of this doctrine. However, this truth takes on tremendous

significance for those believers who are persecuted and perplexed. As I have had the occasion each year to visit believers behind the Iron Curtain, what was I to tell them that would bring comfort and cheer? What does one tell believers who have been enslaved by Communism for over three decades, as my friends and relatives were until 1989? I certainly could not promise them that if they would wait just another five years, the nations of the West would liberate them from their Communist yoke. I could not tell them that conditions would improve. No one could predict the events of that fateful November 9, 1989. Yet there is one truth which never failed to bring joy and hope to their lives. They were blessed when I shared with them passages like 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and John 14:1-3, which set forth the truth that Christ might come today. Repeatedly, those persecuted believers told me that they could hardly wait for the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. As they would leave this earth, they planned to look down at their Communist slave masters and stick out their tongues at them and shout, "You see, all your barbed wire fences and mine fields were not able to keep us in after all." For these and other persecuted believers with trials and troubles, the any-moment return has always been a blessed, a comforting, a purifying and a sure hope. The same blessed hope is an encouragement to believers presently persecuted in various parts of the world. Would that we were equally ready for that event!

The greatest theological theft in the history of the Church is carried on right under our noses. Believers are robbed of that one hope that is to comfort their hearts as the dark curtains of apostasy are closing around us in these final days of the church age. What makes this theological heist especially serious is the nature of the doctrine stolen and the kind of people who are engaged in the theft. The greatest hope for believers in this life is taken away from them, and it is stolen by individuals in the ranks of evangelicalism. Who are these thieves who over the last few decades attempted to rob believers of the blessed hope of the imminent return of Christ?

II. The Thieves of the Believer's Hope

A. The subversives

While George E. Ladd's ***The Blessed Hope*** has been for many years the classic diatribe against the pretribulational rapture, the most scholarly attack on this position comes from Robert H. Gundry of Westmont College. His book, ***The Church and the Tribulation*** (Zondervan, 1973) is billed by the publisher as "the standard text on the post-tribulational viewpoint of the rapture of the Church." Dr. Gundry, a former student at one of our GARBC schools, has repudiated this school's as well as his former position. And he is encouraging others to defect to the post-tribulational position as well.

Some years ago an associate professor of music at Wheaton College entered the controversy. Arthur D. Katterjohn authored ***The Tribulation People*** (Creation House, 1975), suggesting that we are that generation which will have to go through the Tribulation. "The hope of many devout believers" is robbed of its biblical content by Katterjohn's insistence that the Church, instead of looking for the blessed hope, must prepare itself for the baleful hour of tribulation.

The respected and influential Bill Bright, founder and director of Campus Crusade for Christ International, has positionalized himself with these theological thieves. In an interview in *Christianity Today* (Sept. 24, 1976, p. 21) he expresses his belief that there will be a world-wide revival. Whereupon there follows this exchange:

> Q. Scripture seems to teach that at the end of the age the world situation will get worse, and love among Christians will grow cold. So it appears that if this great awakening you anticipate does happen, then the coming of the Lord may not be imminent.
>
> A. I do not personally believe that the Lord's return is imminent. I think the current teaching that it is imminent is leading many, many Christians to fold their hands and disobey what Jesus said to do. Jesus said we should work, for the night is coming when no man can work. According to Scripture, he has delayed his return in order that more people might have a chance to hear.

Besides this clear denial of the any-moment return of Christ, the interview also shows that Dr. Bright rejects the doctrine of the total depravity of man. With sadness fundamentalists observed in recent decades a theological shift by Evangelist Billy Graham in various areas of doctrine, including the imminent return of Christ. In his earlier book, ***World Aflame***, he refers to the rapture as "the next event on God's calendar" (pp. 207-208). In a subsequent book, entitled ***Approaching Hoofbeats — The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse***, Graham espouses a post-tribulational rapture. By grotesquely spiritualizing the judgments of the Tribulation, he concludes that the church is presently going through this period of trial. The promise of Christ's return of John 14:3 and Acts 1:11 are seen as being fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation (pp. 209-210). The ***Approaching Hoofbeats*** appeared with slight changes some years later under the title ***Storm Warning***, with an even greater defection from literal interpretation. For example, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are seen in ***Approaching Hoofbeats*** as riding across this planet during the last two decades of the twentieth century. In ***Storm Warning***, one of the riders, interpreted as Satan, is said to be riding on this earth since the time of Adam and Eve. Even a cursory reading of the prediction of the four horsemen in Revelation 4-6 results in the

conclusion that their activity is still future and lasts for less than the seven years of the Tribulation.

A few years ago, there emerged a strong frontal attack against the pre-tribulational rapture position by someone who had taught that position himself for forty years. Marvin J. Rosenthal, former executive director of the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, published in 1990 ***The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church***. In this 317-page-volume, he espouses a "pre-wrath rapturism," asserting that the Church has to endure three-fourths of the Tribulation but is raptured prior to the outpouring of divine wrath, which he erroneously locates in the final twenty-one months of the Tribulation. With vehemence and arrogance, Rosenthal turns on men like Walvoord, Ryrie and Pentecost, insisting that his position would be within fifteen years "a major position of the believing church." Rosenthal's magazine, *Zion's Fire*, continues to disseminate his aberrant eschatological position.

Regrettably many pastors and laymen have endorsed this novel view which clearly denies the any-moment aspect of the rapture.

In his classic defense of the pretribulational position, entitled ***Kept from the Hour*** (revised 1991), Gerald B. Stanton evaluates every major work on the rapture question published since the 1970's. His verdict concerning Rosenthal's views is that they "are a distortion of prophetic truth, sometimes curious, sometimes strange, and frequently false" (p. 400).

Despite the publication of books contrary to the pretribulational rapture and the multiplication of different views, biblically the only tenable position for those who subscribe to literal interpretation is the any-moment return of Christ.

B. The subtlety of the thieves

Those "seducing spirits" (1 Tim. 4:1) who are turning away from the truth are both sinister and subtle in their approach. They are sinister because they arise within evangelicalism. They are subtle because of their specious argumentation. Fortunately for American fundamentalists, there are numerous books available showing the biblical basis for a pre-ribulational rapture. However, until the 1970's, no single volume by a pretribulationalist had ever been devoted entirely to a critical evaluation of the post-tribulational position. Dr. Walvoord's book, ***The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation*** (Zondervan, 1976), finally met that need. Scores of books have attacked the pre-tribulational position. Walvoord interacts with the four major schools of thought within post-tribulationism, showing how they completely contradict one another, demonstrating that these schools lack exegetical grounds and hermeneutical validity. An argument by argument refutation of Gundry's book, ***The Church and the Tribulation***, shows how illogical his supposedly scholarly arguments really are.

Most post-tribulationists argue that pretribulationism is neither taught by Christ nor by the Apostles. The fact is that the doctrine of the any-moment return is no less clearly taught in Scripture than many other major doctrines. Obviously, this is vigorously denied by many. There will always be those who like the "unlearned and unstable" in Peter's day, wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). But then, just because four-fifths of Christendom baptizes by other than immersion, are we to say that therefore the Bible is unclear in the matter of believer's baptism by immersion? Just because most denominations have a sacramental view of the ordinances, does this mean that we are to jettison our concept of their commemorative nature? In theological discussion, counting noses is always a dangerous procedure for arriving at the truth. Good men with impressive scholarly credentials can usually be found on both sides of a theological issue. The determining factor should be the exegetical precision and hermeneutical correctness of an interpretation. The doctrine of the any-moment return of Christ is based on sound exegesis.

Many opponents of the pretribulational rapture position falsely claim that the Irish clergyman John Nelson Darby was first to develop the idea of pretribulationsim in the 1830's and that he possibly learned it from a Scottish girl, Margaret Macdonald, with charismatic tendencies and claims of special revelation. In fact, while Darby systemalized the truth of the rapture, others before him in church history had taught the any-moment return of Christ. For example, an apocalyptic sermon claiming the authorship of the Syrian church father Ephraem and possibly dating back as early as A.D. 373 contains two references to the rapture. Here is the testimony of Pseudo-Ephraem to the rapture in the *Sermon on the End of the World*:

> "All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins." (***Dictionary of Premillenial Theology***, Mal Couch, ed., 1996, p. 329).

In recent years, the Pretrib Study Group has been formed by Tim LaHaye and Tommy Ice to bring together annually a roster of prophecy scholars who speak in defense of the rapture and through their writing and speaking ministry advance the belief in the blessed hope of the pretribulational rapture.

III. The Thrust of the Believer's Hope

A. The support for the believer's hope

Several passages of Scripture clearly relate to the pretribulational rapture and the any-moment return of Christ. The first classic passage on this subject in the New Testament is John 14:1-7, dealing with ***the return to the Father's house***. Christ promises that the next event for the Church is not a return of the King to rule on earth after a series of signs, but the unannounced return of the Bridegroom to summon the Bride to the Father's house. Post-tribulationists are hard-pressed to explain away the obvious truth of the believer going to heaven before the Millennium. The best that Gundry can do, for example, is to completely spiritualize this event when he says:

> In order to console the disciples concerning his going away, Jesus tells them that His leaving will work to their advantage. He is going to prepare for them *spiritual abodes within His own person*. Dwelling in these abiding places they will belong to God's household. This He will acccomplish by going to the cross and then ascending to the Father. But He will return to receive the disciples into His immediate presence forever. Thus, the rapture will not have the purpose of taking them to heaven. It rather follows from their being in Christ, in whom each believer already has an abode (p. 154, [Emphasis in the original]).

The Father's house becomes with clever theological slight of hand the body of Christ rather than a literal abode in heaven. And this type of interpretation is called "scholastic competence" by Zondervan Press, publishers of Gundry's work.

A second passage dealing with the rapture is I Thess. 4:13-18, where the rapture is said to be a ***reason for the Christian's comfort***. Pretribulationists have pointed out that if it were true that believers had to endure the time of unprecedented tribulation on earth, verse 18 should read, "Wherefore, scare ye one another with these words." The saints are to rejoice because they are not in darkness but are children of the light (1 Thess. 5: 4-5), who have not been appointed unto wrath but unto salvation (1 Thess. 5:9). The Lord will not permit His own to enter the Tribulation but has "delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10).

A third indication of the any-moment return of Christ is found in 1 Cor.15:51-53, which deals with ***the revelation of a concealed truth***. Paul is showing the Corinthians a mystery-something hitherto concealed but now revealed. The resurrection of the dead was no mystery to Old Testament saints, but it is a distinctive church truth that certain saints would not see death but would be translated and receive their glorified bodies. The event referred to here in 1 Cor. 15 cannot be the end of the Tribulation just prior to the establishment of the kingdom, at which

time the Old Testament saints would be raised, living sinners would be put to death, and living saints would enter the kingdom in their physical bodies. If the translation of 1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4 occurs at the end of the Tribulation, who are the believers left on earth to populate the millennial earth? This problem has never been satisfactorily solved by post-tribulationism. As a matter of fact, the problem is generally ignored, how church age saints could receive their glorified bodies at the end of the tribulation and yet enter the Millennium in their mortal bodies to beget children, to carry on normal human life. The biblical text describing the Millennium demands people in the Millennium who have not seen death and who are entering this glorious period of time in their physical bodies. If there is just one return of Christ, as the post-tribulationists would have us believe, who would populate the Millennium?

Perhaps the strongest proof for the pretribulational rapture is found in Rev. 3:10 where the church is promised ***a removal from the coming tribulation***:

> Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

The words "temptation" or "trial" are synonyms for "tribulation" (cf. Lk. 8:13 with Mt. 13:21 and Mk. 4:17). Here is not a reference to normal trials of believers but to a special time of worldwide tribulation. Three factors point to the truth that the Church will not need to endure this special time of persecution. First, Christ promises that the Church will be kept from the hour. The emphatic phrase "kept from" is used only twice in the New Testament--here and in John 17:15. In the gospel passage the Lord prayed that believers would be kept from the evil one. The answer to the prayer is our deliverance from the power of darkness by divine transfer into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 3:13).

Second, the most natural meaning of the promise is that the believer will be transferred to heaven from the earth before the hour of tribulation on earth. The preposition "from" (*ek*) has the sense of "out of." The Church is not promised protection in (*en*) or during (*dia*) the hour of trial but protection out of this time, implying a prior removal.

Finally, the reference to "the hour of temptation" can only refer to the time of seven years of tribulation. And the promise is protection from that hour, which can only be true if the Church is not going through any part of that hour or time. It is impossible to be kept from the hour without being previously removed from it. Post-tribulationists speak of a preservation **in** or **through** the Tribulation but this would make the promise untrue, for God's saints that live on earth during the Tribulation will not be exempt from the judgments or from death (6:9-10; 7:9-14; 14:1-3; 15:1-3). Even the early days of the Tribulation will witness the martyrdom of hosts of believers (Rev. 6:9-10).

LORDSHIP SALVATION:

A Forgotten Truth or a False Doctrine?

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

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LORDSHIP SALVATION: A FORGOTTEN TRUTH OR A FALSE DOCTRINE?

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INTRODUCTION

If you were Satan, which doctrine would you want to undermine? Which area of theology would you pervert, thus preventing people from turning to Christ? An individual may be wrong about the doctrine of the church and still be saved. A person may deny the pretribulational rapture or Millennial Kingdom and yet be gloriously redeemed. However, if a person is wrong on the doctrine of salvation, specifically, the prerequisites for salvation, he is eternally lost. One would indeed expect Satan to attack in the area of soteriology.

The Apostle Paul enjoins the Corinthians not to let Satan get an advantage over them, "For we are not ignorant concerning his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan's device is to counterfeit the work of God. Satan is expert in counterfeiting the Gospel of Grace with a gospel that is so close to the real Gospel and yet is a counterfeit one leading to eternal condemnation. Whereas several decades ago Satan used liberalism to undermine the truth, more recently Satan appears to have penetrated evangelicalism with his false gospel.

1A. THE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM OF LORDSHIP SALVATION

1b. The situation:

The informed and discerning believer soon realizes that there is a battle raging in American Christendom over the matter of the prerequisites for salvation. On the one hand, there are those who insist that salvation is God's gift and that trust in Christ is the only requirement for salvation. On the other hand, there are respected pastors and theologians who teach that unless an individual submits also to the Lordship of Christ at the moment he believes, he is not really saved.

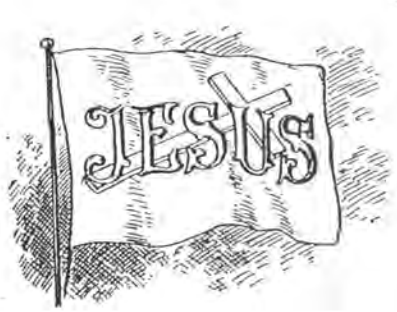
1c. The issue at stake:

A great many peripheral issues, important as they are, have clouded many times the real issue in the discussion.

1d. What the issue is not:

1e. The issue is not whether the recognition of Christ's Lordship in the believer's life is important. All would agree that the matter is of crucial significance for the Christian life.

2e. The issue is not whether Lordship is desirable at the moment of salvation or as soon as possible after salvation. A commitment of



obedience to Christ early in the Christian experience is most commendable.

3e. The issue is not whether individuals claiming to be Christians but showing no evidence of salvation were actually ever saved. This perplexing question is important but not primary to the discussion.

4e. The issue is not whether repentance is part of saving faith. All admit that the Bible clearly teaches the necessity of repentance for salvation (Lk. 24:47), but there is a decided difference of opinion how repentance should be defined.

5e. The issue is not simply one of semantics with individuals on both sides of the issue really speaking about the same thing, though expressing it differently. At stake is a deep doctrinal difference.

2d. What the issue is:

At stake is the essence of the evangel. The basic question relates to the sine qua non of saving faith. What does an individual have to believe or do to be genuinely saved? Is faith the only requirement for salvation or are Lordship advocates correct when they say that a recognition of Christ's absolute control is necessary to salvation?

2c. The importance of the question:

Zondervan Publishing House, in advertising on its display rack both MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus* and Hodges' *Absolutely Free!*, put the matter very succinctly by asking the following: DOES SALVATION REQUIRE MORE THAN BELIEF IN CHRIST? MacArthur says YES. Hodges says NO.

Is MacArthur correct with his unequivocal statement?

"The call to Calvary must be recognized for what it is: a call to discipleship under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. To respond to that call is to become a believer. Anything less is simply unbelief" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 30).

MacArthur maintains: "Thus there is no salvation except 'lordship' salvation" (Ibid., p. 28).

Or is Hodges correct who numbers himself "among those who believe that the moment of simple faith in Christ for eternal life is the very point at which God and human beings can meet. And in that moment of meeting, one's destiny is permanently settled and the miraculous life of eternity itself is created within" (*Absolutely Free!*, p. xiv).

3c. The immediacy of the problem:

Both positions cannot be correct. Either salvation is absolutely free or it costs everything. There is no more important question for man than the one posed by the contemporary debate: How is an individual saved?

1d. Evangelicalism is divided on Lordship:

James Montgomery Boice advocates Lordship salvation in *Moody Monthly*. Michael Cocoris refutes it in *Realife*.

2d. Fundamentalism differs on Lordship salvation:

On the one hand, the *Biblical Evangelist* publishes articles espousing Lordship salvation; on the other hand, the editor of the *Sword of the Lord*, Curtis Hutson, rejects Lordship salvation as a false gospel.

3d. The GARBC disagrees over the matter of Lordship salvation:

John Balyo and Paul Tassell, both writing for the *Baptist Bulletin*, espouse different positions.

John Balyo equates the Saviorhood of Christ with His Lordship:

"If there is no submission to the will of God and no performance of the will of God, a person is not a genuine believer." He holds that "saving faith properly understood always is both trusting Christ with one's life. . . (and) confidence in Christ to both save and manage one's life. Superficial faith never saved anyone" (*Baptist Bulletin*, March 1987, p. 7).

In contrast, Paul Tassell pleads that we not confuse "the instantaneous act of salvation with the long progress of progressive sanctification. We must not confuse our deliverance from sin with discipleship. We must not make saviorship and lordship synonymous" (*Baptist Bulletin*, Feb. 1989, p. 46).

The problem is immediate. It has not just affected evangelicalism, but fundamentalism, indeed our beloved GARBC fellowship. The question is important. Charles Ryrie sees the issue clearly:

"Confusion about salvation means disaster, for the message of the Gospel is a matter of eternal life or eternal death. 'What is the Gospel?' is not an academic question. It affects the destiny of every lost sinner as well as the activity of every witnessing Christian, every soul-winning ministry" (*So Great Salvation*, p. 9).

2b. The sides:

The listing below of representatives of Lordship salvation and free grace proponents is by no means exhaustive. Both sides can boast outstanding theologians. Their dedication is not the issue. The total difference in their definition of the Gospel is.

1c. Lordship salvation:


J.I. PACKER

1d. J. I. Packer:

In his well-known volume, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, the British theologian asks this concerning erroneous ways of salvation:

"Or will it leave them supposing that all they have to do is to trust Christ as a sin-bearer, not realizing that they must also deny themselves and enthrone Him as their Lord (the error which we might call only-believism)?" (p. 89)

2d. Walter J. Chantry:

Chantry says that salvation without Lordship is impossible:

"Practical acknowledgement of Jesus' Lordship, yielding to His rule by following, is the very fibre of saving faith. It is only those who 'confess with the mouth the *Lord Jesus*' (Romans 10:9) that shall be saved. . . . Without obedience, you shall not see life! Unless you bow to Christ's scepter, you will not receive the benefits of Christ's sacrifice" (*Today's Gospel Authentic or Synthetic?* p. 60, italics in the original).

His words concerning those who preach simple faith in Christ are very strong:

"This heretical and soul-destroying practice is the logical conclusion of a system that thinks little of God, preaches no law, calls for no repentance, waters down faith to 'accepting a gift,' and never mentions bowing to Christ's rule or bearing a cross" (p. 68).

3d. John R. Stott:

Stott suggests a person who does not recognize the Lordship of Christ at salvation cannot be saved:

"I am suggesting, therefore, that it is as unbiblical as it is unrealistic to divorce the Lordship from the Saviorhood of Jesus Christ" ("Must Christ Be Lord to Be Savior?—Yes," *Eternity*, Sept. 1959, p. 37).

4d. James Montgomery Boice:

Boice calls the concept of salvation through faith alone "a defective theology that has crept over us like a deadening fog. This theology separates faith from discipleship and grace from obedience. It teaches that Jesus can be received as one's Savior without being received as one's Lord" ("The Meaning of Discipleship," *Moody Monthly*, Feb. 1986, p. 34).


R.C. SPROUL

5d. R. C. Sproul:

Sproul speaks of a false dichotomy that threatens evangelical theology. He is glad that "MacArthur exposes the current departure from the orthodox Christian view of justification, which fosters a widespread epidemic of antinomianism" (Macarthur, *The Gospel. . .*, back flap).

6d. A. W. Tozer:

Tozer labels the view of salvation by grace alone "a notable heresy": "I must be frank in saying that a notable heresy has permeated our evangelical Christian circles. The widely-accepted concept that we can choose to accept Christ only because we need Him as Savior and that we have the right to postpone our obedience to Him as Lord as long as we want to" ("I Call It Heresy!" *Masterpiece*, Fall 1988, p. 22; cf. the book by the same title, pp. 9,19).

7d. Vance Havner:

This gifted preacher, commenting on Romans 10:9, says that Saviorhood and Lordship are inseparable:

"When an early Christian said Jesus was Lord, he meant it. They had never partitioned saviorhood from lordship in those days. You did not take Jesus as Saviour and then 25 years later in a dedication meeting take Him as Lord. They didn't know anything about that. It happened all at once" ("Jesus Christ Is Lord," *Fundamentalist Journal*, April 1987, p. 25).

8d. D. James Kennedy:

This well-known pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, takes a firm Lordship position. In a printed sermon entitled, "The Lordship of Christ" he states:

"Jesus will not be the Saviour where He is not Lord. Do not be deceived. He will not be Lord at all if He cannot be Lord of all. . . . My friends, Jesus is not Savior where Jesus is not Lord" (pp. 4,7).

9d. John MacArthur:


MacArthur: Opposes "easy believism."

In *The Gospel According to Jesus*, MacArthur states very clearly that Lordship is a requirement for salvation:

"Forsaking one's self for Christ's sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion: it is the *sine qua non* of saving faith" (p. 135).

In the respected periodical, *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, MacArthur writes on "Faith According to the Apostle James." Robert Saucy and Earl Radmacher give their response—both of them documenting their disappointment over MacArthur's mishandling of Scripture. Radmacher sadly concludes:

"I fear that some current definitions of faith and repentance are not paving the road back to Wittenberg but, rather, paving the road back to Rome. Justification is becoming 'to make righteous' rather than 'to declare righteous.' Repentance is becoming 'penitence' (if not 'penance') rather than 'changing the mind.' And 'faith' is receiving more analysis and scrutinizing rather than the 'object of faith'" (*JETS*, March 1990, pp. 40-41).

10d. Billy Graham:

Attentive listeners will note that Dr. Graham concludes almost every one of his broadcasts or telecasts with words such as these:

"Unless you make Jesus the Savior, Lord and Master of your life, you cannot be saved. Accept Him now as your Savior and Lord, give your life over to Him, and He will save you."

Virtually any of Dr. Graham's sermons reproduced in *Decision* conclude with an offer of the Gospel which involves submission to Christ as the necessary prerequisite for salvation. Here is the conclusion of a typical message:

"There is also a form of hell in this life . . . that is because you are separated from God's love. You haven't totally surrendered to him as Savior and Lord. . . . Many people ask me how they can know Christ and how they can be sure that they are saved. . . . Can you say, 'I am going to heaven'? If you have any doubt about it, you can settle it by surrendering your life to him. You can do that right now" ("Not Drugs . . . Christ!" *Decision*, July-August 1990 p. 3).

2c. Salvation by faith alone:

1d. Lewis Sperry Chafer:

Chafer writes that Lordship salvation is a seemingly pious but subtle error that in addition to believing in Christ "the unsaved must dedicate themselves to the will of God" (*Systematic Theology*, III, 384).

2d. Zane Hodges:

Hodges clearly distinguishes between salvation and discipleship: "Eternal life is free. Discipleship is immeasurably hard. The former is attained by faith

alone, the latter by a faith that works" (*The Hungry Inherit*, p. 114, underscore in the original).

3d. Charles C. Ryrie:


RYRIE

Ryrie cautions that "To teach that Christ must be Lord of Life in order to be Savior is to confuse certain aspects of discipleship" and confuses the gospel of the Grace of God with the words of men. (*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 178).

4d. J. Dwight Pentecost:

Pentecost, answering the question about how one becomes a Christian, very clearly states that salvation is by faith alone: "When one receives Jesus Christ as Savior he is receiving One who is already Lord. That's why we address Him as 'Lord Jesus Christ.' Salvation, however, is in no way dependent on making Christ Lord in every area of one's life and then living under that Lordship. That would require a 'newborn babe' (I Pet. 2:2) to assume a role he is incapable of fulfilling in order to 'prove' he qualifies for salvation. One must make a distinction between salvation and discipleship, just as Paul did when he wrote to young believers and encouraged them to make personal discipleship decisions based on the salvation they already possessed (see Eph. 4:17-24). The requirements for the two are different" (*Kindred Spirit*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter 1988) pp. 3,11).

5d. Curtis Hutson:


DR. CURTIS HUTSON

The editor of the *Sword of the Lord* has published a book of evangelistic sermons, with one chapter entitled "Lordship Salvation, A Perversion of the Gospel." After opening with Galatians 1:1-9, Hutson begins as follows:

"Lordship salvation is an unscriptural teaching regarding the doctrine of salvation and is confusing to Christians" (*Salvation Crystal Clear*, p. 301). He calls Lordship salvation "another gospel" which contradicts the teaching of salvation by grace through faith (p. 302).

6d. Michael Cocoris:

Cocoris, after discussing the concepts of repentance, faith, Lord, disciple and the story of the rich young ruler, asks in conclusion:

"What must I do to be saved? Is Lordship salvation the answer? No. The biblical answer is, 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31). That is the good news we are to preach, that others may come to know the gift of God and the God of the gift of eternal life. Don't confuse the issue and thus mislead sinners. Make the message clear and plain that

sinners may be saved by grace through faith" ("Lordship Salvation—Is It Biblical?" *Realife*, May/June 1980, p. 11).

7d. Renald Showers:

Showers, writing in the *Word of Life 1990 Annual*, states:

"Some claim salvation requires a person to receive Christ as Savior and make Him Master over his life. But in light of the distinction between Christ's functions as Savior and Master, this claim comes dangerously close to the idea that salvation is not through the redemptive work of Christ alone" ("The Trouble With Lordship Salvation," p. 19).

3b. The seriousness:

Which side is right; which is wrong? There seems to be no middle ground possible (although Darrel L. Bock, in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June 1986, attempts such in his article, "Jesus as Lord in Acts and in the Gospel Message.")

Charles C. Ryrie shows the seriousness of the issue:

"The importance of this question cannot be overestimated in relation to both salvation and sanctification. The message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel; therefore, one of them is a false gospel and comes under the curse of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), and this is a very serious matter. As far as sanctification is concerned, if only committed people are saved people, then where is there room for carnal Christians? Or if willingness alone is required at the moment of salvation, to what extent is this willingness necessary?" (*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 170).

2A. THE CENTRAL PROOFS AGAINST LORDSHIP SALVATION:

1b. The example of uncommitted believers:

1c. Lot: A life-long rejection of the Lordship of God.

Abraham's nephew Lot is an example of a selfish, unyielded kind of life. His compromise in Sodom, his questioning of God's message of warning, his drunkenness and incest do not suggest that he was a believer. If it were not for the reference to Lot in 2 Peter 2:7-8 where three times he is called righteous (translated "just" in v. 7), one could seriously question his salvation. Life-long disobedience does not prevent a man from being positionally righteous.

2c. The Ephesian believers: Unyieldedness at the time of salvation.

During Paul's third missionary journey, many were converted from a life of paganism, superstition and witchcraft. According to Acts 19:18-19 more than two

years elapsed after Paul had gone to Ephesus when many who had believed earlier (perfect tense), burned their books of magic. The burning did not take place as soon as they believed. As believers they had continued their pagan practices for at least one and a half years. "Yet their unwillingness to give it up did not prevent their becoming believers. Their salvation did not depend on faith plus willingness to submit to the lordship of Christ in the matter of using magical arts. Their salvation came through faith alone even though for months and years afterward many of them practiced that which they knew to be wrong" (*Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 172).

3c. Peter: A definite lapse from total dedication.

Peter's words in Acts 10:14, "Not so, Lord" show at least a temporary lapse in his yieldedness. That lapse took place after his being Spirit-filled on the day of Pentecost. If Christ must be Lord of the life in order for one to be saved, then one might well conclud that Peter was never genuinely saved or that he lost his salvation when he rejected the Lordship of Christ in this specific instance. Ryrie observes that "Such examples would seem to settle the issue clearly by indicating that faith alone is the requirement for eternal life. This is not to say that dedication of life is not expected of believers, but it is to say that it is not one of the conditions for salvation" (Ibid., 170).

2b. The meaning of the title "Lord":

Ryrie's summary of the various meanings of the term "lord" is very helpful:

"But, someone may ask, doesn't Lord mean Master, and doesn't receiving Jesus as Lord mean as Master of one's life? To be sure, Lord does mean Master, but in the New Testament it also means God (Acts 3:22), owner (Luke 19:33), sir (John 4:11), man-made idols (1 Cor. 8:5), and even one's husband (1 Peter 3:6). When it is used in relation to Jesus in the New Testament, it can have an ordinary meaning of a title of respect (as in John 4), but it must also have had some unusual connotation which caused some to question its validity. And such a meaning could only be God" (Ibid., p. 173).

Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:3 that "no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." Lord in context must mean Jehovah-God since unsaved people can call Jesus "Lord," meaning Sir.

No one but a God-Man can save. But deity and humanity must be combined to provide an effective salvation. It is the confession of Jesus as Lord, that is, Jesus the God-Man, that saves. The Jews needed to put their faith in one who was more than man, One who by His resurrection and ascension demonstrated that He is both Lord, God and Christ, the Messiah. Romans 10:9-10 emphasizes this truth: "That if thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus. . .thou shalt be saved." The Jews needed to believe in the God-Man, their promised Messiah. When Lord is used in a soteriological context, the meaning is clearly God rather than Master.

THE LAW OF THE CROSS

3b. The exhortation of Romans 12:1-2:

"[1]I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2]And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The Apostle Paul pleads with believers to submit to the Lordship of Christ. These individuals had been justified by faith (Rom. 5:1), were being led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14) and would never be separated from the love of God (Rom. 8:39). Yet these believers were enjoined to "present their bodies a living sacrifice." Paul presumed that these who had received the plentiful mercies of God needed to present themselves to be used of the Master. *If Lordship were a requirement for salvation, these individuals would not have been saved until the moment of dedication.* Clearly, the Rom. 12:1-2 passage is addressed to believers. It is strange that this key passage on discipleship and dedication is nowhere discussed by MacArthur in *The Gospel According to Jesus*, a book dealing with commitment and consecration. This passage argues most forcefully against the Lordship position. Believers are addressed to present their bodies. The Greek tense of "present" refers to a once-for-all action. They are clearly saved but have not absolutely surrendered. In contrast to what Paul clearly teaches, MacArthur says:

"Forsaking oneself for Christ's sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion: it is the *sina qua non* of saving faith" (*The Gospel. . .*, p. 135).

Paul says, Because you have been saved and abundantly blessed by God, surrender yourself to Him. MacArthur says, "Unconditional surrender, a complete resignation of self and absolute submission . . . is the essence of saving faith" (Ibid., p. 153). Paul says, Because God saved you, be willing to submit to Him. Who is right, MacArthur or Paul? In a sense, the whole issue of Lordship salvation can be decided on the interpretation of this classic passage. Does Paul address unbelievers? If so, Lordship salvation stands. If he addresses believers, then discipleship is not a prerequisite for but a product of salvation.

Some believers may dedicate their lives to the Lord at the moment of salvation. The Apostle Paul immediately after salvation asks the question: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). With most believers—and we all know this from personal experience—dedication takes place after a fuller understanding of our spiritual responsibility. With dedication we begin our path of discipleship leading to Christlikeness.

4b. The expression "easy believism":

Those who insist on Lordship salvation maintain that those who teach salvation through faith alone advocate "easy believism" or "cheap grace" (Boice, p. 35).

The New Testament contains over 200 references in which the reqirement for salvation is given as faith alone in Christ as our substitute. But while faith is the only condition for salvation, it is not easy to believe. Dr. Ryrie shows why "easy believism" is a totally misapplied term.


Ryrie

"Though my view has been dubbed 'easy believism,' it is not easy to believe, because what we ask the unsaved person to believe is not easy. We ask that they trust a person who lived 2,000 years ago, whom he can only know through the Bible, to forgive his sins. We are asking that he stake his eternal destiny on this. Remember the example of Evangelist Jesus. He did not require the Samaritan woman to set her sinful life in order, or even be willing to, so that she could be saved. He did not set out before her what would be expected by way of changes in her life if she believed. He simply said she needs to know who He is and to ask for the gift of eternal life" (John 4:10). (*Basic Theology*, p. 339)

5b. The fact of spiritual inability:

It should be noted that the Lordship salvation view has a very watered-down view of the sinfulness of man. It assumes that unregenerate man has the power to respond with total commitment before salvation, something which only the Holy Spirit can accomplish through the new nature.

Hodges observes correctly that, "MacArthur apparently holds the Reformed view that regeneration logically *precedes* saving faith" (*Absolutely Free!*, p. 219. Italics in the original). MacArthur has spiritual sight logically preceding saving faith, for he says, "Spiritual sight is a gift from God that makes one willing and able to believe" (*The Gospel. . .*, p. 75).

Despite MacArthur's claim that he is "a traditional premillennial dispensationalist" (Ibid., p. 25), in his doctrine of salvation he evidences tendencies of Reformed theology. Pickering also agrees with this appraisal:

"There is a pre-salvation work of the Holy Spirit which may be called a quickening. In Lydia's case, the Lord opened her heart to believe (Acts 16:14). An awareness of sin is vastly different from an ability and a desire to submit, as Reformed theologians posit, who suggest a presalvation regeneration" (*Lordship Salvation*, p. 2).

In this matter of human inability before salvation, it would be well to heed Chafer's words:

"The unregenerate person, because of his condition in spiritual death, has no ability to desire the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14), or to anticipate what his outlook on life will be after he is saved. It is therefore an error of the first magnitude to divert that feeble ability of the unsaved to exercise a God-given faith for salvation into the unknown and complex spheres of self-dedication, which dedication is the Christian's greatest problem" (cited in the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1988, p. 50).

Similarly, Renald Showers writes:

"*The unsaved* cannot and do not submit to the divine rule (Romans 8:7). Just as a tree cannot have apples unless it already has the nature of an apple tree, so a person cannot have a willingness and desire to submit to Christ's rule unless he already possesses the new nature received by regeneration at salvation (2 Peter 1:3-4). Thus, even the

willingness and desire to submit to Christ's rule are the result of, and not a requirement for, salvation" (*Word of Life 1990 Annual*, "The Trouble With Lordship Salvation," p. 19).

6b. The difference between a saint and a disciple:

It costs absolutely nothing to be a Christian. It costs everything to be a disciple. In Luke 14 the Lord distinguished between salvation and discipleship while teaching two parables, side by side. In Luke 14:16-24 he related the parable of the great supper into which the entrance was free and unrestricted for all who followed the invitation. In Luke 14:25-33 Christ taught that discipleship was only for those who gave up all.

Ryrie underscores the sharp contrast between the two parable of Luke 14:

"Whereas the story of the banquet says 'come' and 'free,' the next says 'stop' and 'costly.' What is free? The invitation to enter the Father's kingdom. What is costly? A certain kind of discipleship. . . . The contrast between these two sayings of our Lord could not be more vivid. Come to the banquet. It's free. Don't rush into discipleship. It's costly" (*So Great Salvation*, 75-76). Being a Christian means following an invitation. Being a disciple means forsaking all. To confuse these two aspects of the Christian life is to confound the grace of God and the works of man. The Gospel of grace is scriptural. The gospel that adds the works of man to salvation is a counterfeit gospel.

3A. THE CURRENT PUBLICATIONS ON LORDSHIP SALVATION:

1b. Books on Lordship salvation:

1c. John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*.

The cover jacket states the basic premise of the book: "*The Gospel According to Jesus* clearly teaches that there is no eternal life without surrender to the Lordship of Christ." The well-known Bible expositor also taught essentially the content of his book on the "Grace to You" Hour. The evangelical world is, in a sense, indebted to MacArthur for bringing national attention to the confusion in the Church concerning this most important issue, the nature of the Gospel. MacArthur rightly sees that there are "two conflicting messages from the same conservative, fundamentalist, and evangelical camp" (xiv). He agrees that "whoever is wrong on this question is proclaiming a message that can send people to hell" (Ibid.).

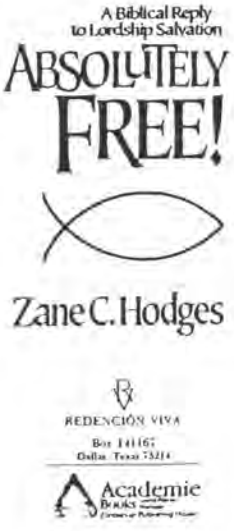
Some reviewers of MacArthur's book have understood him to say that a believer needs to be willing to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ at the moment of salvation. Hodges sees very clearly that MacArthur's main point is that submission to Christ, not a willingness to submit, is a prerequisite for salvation and gives the following quotations from MacArthur's book:

This radical redefinition of saving faith is illustrated by such statements as these from MacArthur:

"Forsaking oneself for Christ's sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion. It is the sine qua non of saving faith" (p. 135).

SO GREAT SALVATION
by Charles C. Ryrie; Victor Books, 166 pages, $12.95
ABSOLUTELY FREE!
by Zane C. Hodges; Zondervan, 240 pages, $14.95
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS
by John F. MacArthur; Zondervan, 240 pages, paper, $9.95

Hodges: Emphasizes theology of grace.



"He is glad to give up all for the kingdom. That is the nature of saving faith" (p. 139).

"His demeanor was one of unconditional surrender, a complete resignation of self and absolute submission to his father. That is the essence of saving faith" (p. 153).

"A concept of faith that excludes obedience corrupts the message of salvation" (p. 174).

"So-called 'faith' in God that does not produce this yearning to submit to His will is not faith at all. The state of mind that refuses obedience is pure and simple unbelief" (p. 176).

Not one of these statements is a true reflection of the biblical doctrine of saving faith. What these claims in fact reveal is a deep-seated fear of the total freeness of God's saving grace, as though that freeness subverted morality. On the contrary, it is precisely the wondrous unconditional love of God that is the root and cause of all New Testament holiness.

(Hodges, p. 250)

2c. Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*:

The book, as Hodges sees it, "is first and foremost a tribute to the perfect freeness of God's saving grace" and an effort "to set this gospel in clear relief" (xiv).

Hodges is clearly agitated by the treatment he receives in MacArthur's book. He resents being misquoted, misunderstood and misrepresented (pp. 205-206). Here is his burden:

"Let it be clearly said: *lordship salvation holds a doctrine of saving faith that is in conflict with that of Luther and Calvin and, most importantly, in conflict with God's Word*" (p. 209, italics in original).

3c. Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*:

Ryrie's book is not a direct rebuttal of MacArthur, but it certainly deals with the issues raised by Lordship salvation. Concepts like grace, the Gospel, faith, Lordship repentance, discipleship and security are treated in Ryrie's typically clear, concise and courteous style. Most helpful is his treatment of carnality, especially since MacArthur accuses dispensationalists of inventing "this dichotomy carnal/spiritual Christian" (p. 30). "Contemporary theologians have fabricated an entire category for this type of person—'Carnal Christian'" (p. 129).

Ryrie distinguishes between Saviorhood and Lordship. He correctly differentiates between the two ideas by observing that "Saved people need to be dedicated, but dedication is not a requirement for being saved" (p. 74).

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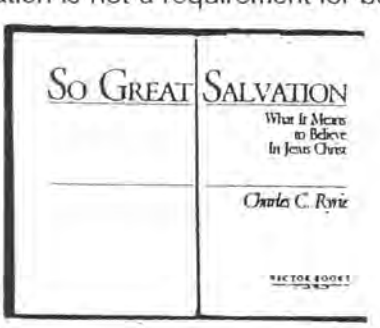

Ryrie further notes that "the issue of mastery over life is not involved in receiving the gift of eternal life. It is very much involved in God's desire for His children, but facing and deciding that issue does not bring us into the family of God" (p. 109).

4c. John MacArthur, *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles*:

In this sequel to his earlier book, MacArthur interacts with the responses to *The Gospel According to Jesus*. He continues to defend the view that commitment of one's life to Christ is a condition of eternal salvation (pp. 204-205, 110). Further, despite his claim to be a dispensationalist, he evidences Reformed tendencies as he suggests that regeneration precedes faith (pp. 61, 67), as he rejects the concept that the believer has an old and a new nature and as he writes of "The Myth of the Carnal Christian" (p. 125). He concludes that the "no-Lordship" position leads "to a sub-Christian antinomianism" (p. 233).

2b. Reviews of *The Gospel According to Jesus*:

It is most informative to read various reviews of MacArthur's book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, in the theologial journals. Perhaps it is safe to assume that the review generally represents the position of the organization or institution which sponsors the publication. The reviews are listed in the order of agreement with, to disagreement with, MacArthur's position on the issue of Lordship salvation. The list is obviously selective.

1c. Homer A. Kent, *Grace Theological Journal* (Spring 1989), pp. 67-77.

Surprisingly this respected professor at Grace Theologial Seminary agrees that Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9 "seem to support his (MacArthur's) contention that anything less than a belief in Jesus as one's Lord does not fulfill the Biblical instruction" (p. 69). He also joins MacArthur in his criticisim of Ryrie because the latter "does not seem to view commitment as an integral part of faith" (Ibid.).

ROLLAND D. McCUNE

2c. Rolland D. McCune, *The Sentinel* (Spring 1989), p. 3.

The President of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary concurs with MacArthur's position and thinks that he makes a convincing case that saving faith . . . involves a volitional surrender and submission to Him as the sovereign Savior. McCune appears to agree with MacArthur's attack on L. S. Chafer, Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges whose "rather recent approach to salvation and Christian living . . . is really a divergent view of salvation that offers a false hope, and that much of our weak Christianity today can be attributed to it."

3c. Darrell L. Bock, *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January-March 1989), pp. 21-39.

Bock is Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is somewhat critical but primarily sympathetic in his evaluation of MacArthur's book. His main effort seems to be to explain MacArthur because, says Bock, "*there is often a difference between what MacArthur says and what he*

apparently means" (p. 22, italics in the original). Bock attempts a synthesis between the two sides of the issue and places MacArthur and Chafer basically in the same camp.

Zane Hodges, reviewing Bock's review, notes that Bock's position in the review, which was elevated to the status of a major article, "is a clear and distinct departure from the seminary's prevailing historical position on salvation" (*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, (Spring 1989), p. 83).

It must be said by way of balancing the picture of Dallas Theological Seminary that Roy B. Zuck, Academic Dean and editor of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, takes a strong position against Lordship salvation:

"The Lordship view does not clarify the distinction between sanctification and justification, or between discipleship and sonship. It mixes the condition with the consequences. It confuses *becoming* a Christian with *being* a Christian. . . . Regeneration pertains to one's relationship to Christ as Savior from sin. Sanctification, on the other hand, pertains to one's relationship to Christ as his Lord and Master. In the new birth a person is made a new creation in Christ; in sanctification he grows in that relationship. . . . If a person must *do* something to be saved, he is adding to salvation. . . . Repeatedly the Bible clearly states that salvation comes only be receiving it by faith. . . . To add to faith, to add to receiving God's gift of eternal life is to alter the gospel" (*Kindred Spirits*, Summer 1989, p. 6).

4c. Harold Freeman, *Calvary Review* (Fall 1988), pp. 13-14.

Freeman, who is Vice President for Public Ministries and Alumni Affairs at Calvary Bible College in Kansas City, Missouri, rightly notes the various straw men attacked by MacArthur and shows MacArthur's dispensational inconsistency manifested in his failure to distinguish between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace. However, Freeman does not address the main issue at stake, that of MacArthur making submission and discipleship a prerequisite for salvation.

5c. J. Kevin Butcher, *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Spring 1989), pp. 27-43.

Butcher, who is pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, writes a critique of *The Gospel According to Jesus*, dealing with the numerous technical and theological problems raised by the book. His criticisms are grouped under the categories of "Inaccurate Understanding of the Free Grace Position," "Inadequate and Improper Methods of Validation," "Theological Weaknesses," "Practical Errors" and "Logical Difficulties."

6c. Ernest Pickering, *Lordship Salvation*. Central Press, p. 7.

Ernest Pickering

The former president of Central Baptist Seminary and pastor of Fourth Baptist Church in Minneapolis and present Deputation Director of Baptist World Mission

was possibly the first person in print with a critical review of MacArthur's book. It is a well-written and well-reasoned review of the controversial work. His concluding remarks best summarize his position:

"None of us are happy with shoddy, fleshly, and disobedient Christians. But the remedy for this condition is not found in changing the terms of the gospel. Well over 100 times in the New Testament, we are told that salvation is by faith or through believing. It is a very serious matter to add an ingredient to the gospel of salvation which is not found in the New Testament. While one may argue that 'faith,' if properly understood, includes the ingredient of 'submission' or 'enthronement,' we believe the Scriptures do not support this contention. Our task is to keep preaching the plain, simple gospel of free grace. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce in true believers those qualities of righteousness which we all devoutly long to see" (p. 7).

7c. Robbins, John W. "The Gospel According to John MacArthur," *The Trinity Review*, Part 1, No. 98 (April 1993), pp. 1-4. Part 2, No. 99 (May 1993), pp. 1-4.

Robbins offers a critique of MacArthur's book from a Reformed perspective. He correctly observes that "MacArthur attacks justification by faith alone and suggests that works be understood as part of faith." He thus "rejects the Biblical view of justification and adopts the Roman Catholic view" (Part 1, pp. 1,2).

3b. Articles on the issue:

Since the publication of MacArthur's book, a number of articles have appeared in apparent response to the widely read work.

1c. *The Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*:

This periodical has appeared semi-annually since Autumn 1988. It represents the Grace Evangelical Society, whose purpose it is "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" (Autumn 1988, p. 4). Its articles, review of magazine articles and books relate primarily to grace and salvation and a clear Gospel presentation.

2c. *Word of Life 1990 Annual*:

Renald Showers, quoted above, writes on "The Trouble With Lordship Salvation" (pp. 18-19).

3c. *Realife*, Tennessee Temple University's magazine, published "Lordship Salvation—Is It Biblical?" by Michael Cocoris (May/June 1988), pp. 8-9, 11.

4c. *Bibliotheca Sacra*. "Has Lordship Salvation Been Taught throughout Church History?" by Thomas G. Lewellen (Jan-March 1990), pp. 55-69. Lewellen refutes

MacArthur's claim that Lordship salvation was uniformly taught in the ancient church and the concept of free grace is recent, therefore wrong.

5c. *The Biblical Evangelist* in its November 1, 1989 issue reproduced two chapters from the book *Defective Evangelism* by James Alexander Stewart, dealing with "both repentance and Lordship as ingredients in salvation" (p. 1). The editor of the *Biblical Evangelist* introduces the article with a warm endorsement: "We highly recommend this work."

In the article the contemporary deviation from Lordship salvation is called, "A complete perversion of the blessed evangel" which leads "to an adulterous gospel" and amounts to "SATAN'S MASTERPIECE" (p. 16, capitals in the original).

The Gospel is at the very core of our Christian faith. Lordship salvation offers one Gospel, free grace another. Each side calls the other position a perversion of the Gospel.

If it were ever necessary for believers to rightly divide the Word of truth, it is now—and it is in this area!

THE FORMULA OF FAITH

EPHESIANS 2

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

8 τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι
– For by grace ye are *having been* saved
διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν,
through faith; and this not of you,
θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· 9 οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή
of [is] the gift; not of works, lest
God
τις καυχήσηται. 10 αὐτοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν
anyone should boast. For of him we are
ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
a product, created in Christ Jesus
ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς, οἷς προητοίμασεν
unto works good, which 'previously prepared
ὁ θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.
– 'God in order that in them we might walk.

correct view: Grace + Faith = Salvation + Works

corrupt view: Grace + Faith + Works = Salvation

MK

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Lord of All?

by John G. Balyo

Is Jesus Christ the Lord of all Christians, or is He the Lord only of those who have acknowledged His lordship sometime after conversion? I confess that I am somewhat surprised that the issue has been raised at all. I never expected anyone to understand the Bible to teach that Jesus is the Savior of all Christians but the Lord of only a more spiritual group.

Is not the Word of God clear that no Christian is autonomous? If you have been saved by Christ, you are not your own because you are "bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). No Christian owns himself; he is the property of the Lord Who bought him and is, therefore, obligated to function under the lordship of Jesus Christ and obey Him. Are we to believe that a genuine convert can say, "Jesus is Lord, but He is not *my* Lord"?

Perhaps we need to give more serious heed to the Savior's words in Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my father which is in heaven." We understand that no one does the will of God completely and that occasions of rebellion may occur in a true believer's life; but if there is no submission to the will of God and no performance of the will of God, a person is not a genuine believer. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). There should be no confusion here about mixing faith with works as a condition of salvation. Of course salvation is by God's grace and faith alone.

Faith, however, is something more than trusting Christ for the benefits of salvation; it is sufficient confidence in Christ to commit one's life to Him. How can one receive Christ and the salvation He offers, and at the same time have no thought of obeying Him? He will not perfectly obey Christ anymore than married persons perfectly honor their marriage vows, but obedience to Christ should be his intent and should be demonstrated in a significant way in his life. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new (creation)" (2 Cor. 5:17). Surely that newness must eventually manifest itself in a meaningful way. If old things never pass away and nothing becomes new in a person's life, obviously nothing happened.

The effort to separate salvation and discipleship is futile. "My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me," said Jesus. Yes, we know that true believers wander at times, but "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not (as the practice of his life); but he that is begotten of God (guards) himself . . ." (1 John 5:18). It will not do to say that a saved person need never accept the lordship of his God by citing examples of backsliders. It has been said that Lot was a righteous man who is "an example of a lifelong rejection of God's lordship over his life." Surely there was a submission to God's authority earlier in his life, and he was vexed every day he was in Sodom because he knew he was living in disobedience to his Lord. Also, it is presumptuous to say that his rebellion was lifelong. Is it not more reasonable to believe that God's discipline was effective in restoring him to fellowship and obedience?

It has been too long overlooked that a number of the verses in the New Testament regarding salvation emphasize the necessity of a person's submission to Christ as Lord. Romans 10:9 and 13 tell us plainly that "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as *Lord* (as the Greek text puts it), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 6:23 informs us that the "wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ *our Lord*." Acts 2:21 reads: ". . . Whosoever shall call on the name of *the Lord* shall be saved." Does not Peter here mean to emphasize the lordship of Christ?

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If some salvation verses do not mention Christ's lordship, it is because saving faith properly understood always involves trusting Christ with one's life. It means the believer transfers confidence in himself to confidence in Christ to both save him and manage his life. Superficial faith never saved anyone. Christ is more than a means of escaping hell. He is the "great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20). Is not the shepherd the "lord" of the sheep? Christ is also the "head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). Does not the head control the body? And Christ is, like Melchisedec, both a priest and a king to whom each Christian owes the utmost loyalty and obedience.

To say that the above are mere titles that do not involve the believer in a relationship of submission to the Lord's authority hardly makes sense. And to admit that believers sometimes rebel against the Lord does not contradict the believer's initial surrender to Christ. Whatever the spiritual state of the believer, Jesus Christ is his Lord. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8). And we wouldn't have it any other way! ■

Paul N. Tassell

BIBLICAL SALVATION

Paul penned the classic definition of Biblical salvation in Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle John concurs with Paul: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

The key words are "faith" and "believe." In the GARBC Articles of Faith, Article VIII on salvation declares our agreement with Paul and John: "We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation."

We reject any teaching that ultimately leads to salvation by works. Religious systems such as Roman Catholicism and the well-known cults like Mormonism are repudiated by Regular Baptists because such systems deny the clear teaching of the Bible; namely, salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8–10). We must call into serious question any preacher or teacher who departs from such basic, foundational Scriptural truth.

In 1879, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached on Romans 5:1. His sermon was entitled "Peace: A Fact and a Feeling." He said:

> None of us will ever experience true peace with God except through Jesus Christ. I like that strong expression of Luther, bold and bare as it is, when, in commenting on the epistle to the Galatians, he says, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." If you have anything to do with God absolutely, you will be destroyed. There cannot be any point of contact between absolute deity and fallen humanity except through Jesus Christ, the appointed Mediator. That is God's door; all else is a wall of fire. You can by Christ approach the Lord, but this is the sole bridge across the gulf. Whenever you, dear soul, begin to deal with God according to your own experience, according to your own frames and feelings, or even according to the exercises of your own faith, unless that faith keeps its eye on Christ, you will lose your peace.

Spurgeon was right! We are saved solely by personal faith in the crucified, buried, risen, ascended Christ. We must not confuse the instantaneous act of salvation with the long process of progressive sanctification. We must not confuse our deliverance from sin with discipleship. We must not make saviorship and lordship synonymous. We are declared, as far as our *standing* is concerned, righteous at the moment of personal faith in Christ. We may not be very righteous as far as our *state* of actual being is concerned, but we are, thank God, *saved*.

Charles Hodge correctly concluded: "It is not through ourselves in any way, neither by our own merit, nor our own efforts. It is all of grace. It is all through Jesus Christ. And this the justified soul is ever anxious to acknowledge" (p. 132, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* published by Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1955).

The mixing of law and grace, works and faith, has ever been the bane of true salvation doctrine. Dispensational distinctives are ignored at our own peril. Salvation has always been by faith. Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, David and all other saved people were saved by grace through faith. That is why Paul wrote: "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:2, 3).

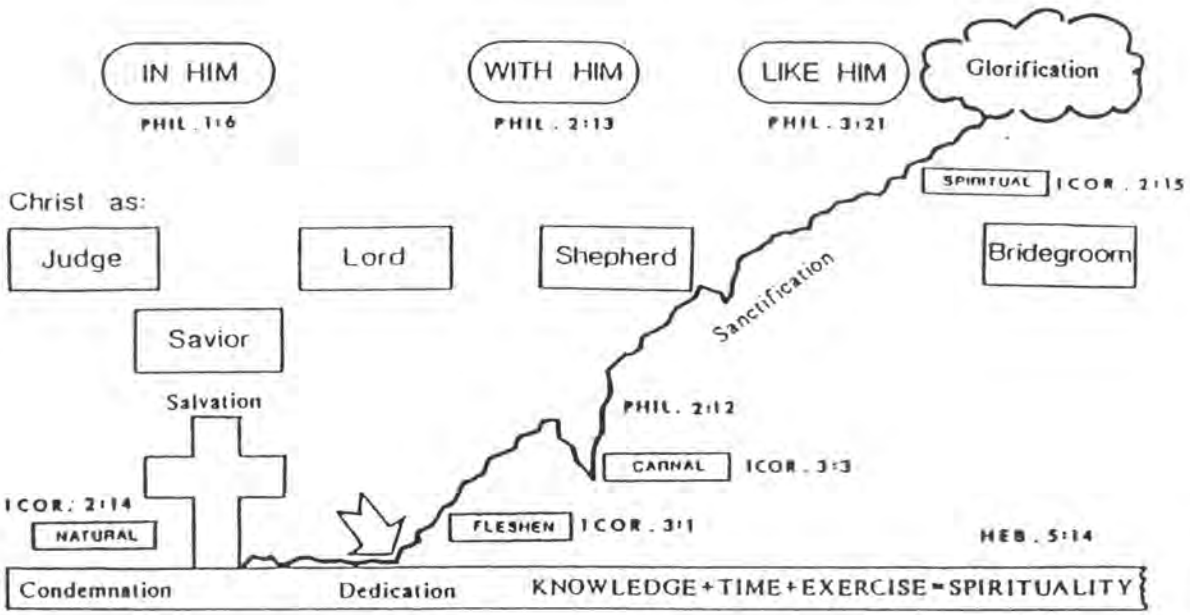
NO PAIN, NO GAIN

Recently I read of an Ohio girl who almost never cried. She never wept when she fell down. She never cried when she bumped her head or skinned her knee. She did not even let out a yelp when she burned her hand on a hot stove. She cried only when she was angry or hungry.

Medical personnel quickly discovered she had a defect in the central nervous system for which no cure is known. She simply could not feel pain. The doctor told her mother she must watch her daughter constantly. The girl might break a bone and continue using it until it could not be set properly. She might develop appendicitis without the usual

(turn back to page 39)

THE SPIRITUAL MAN



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MUST CHRIST BE LORD TO BE SAVIOUR?

		Salvation	Discipleship
1.	Cost	Nothing	Everything
2.	Center:	Jesus as Savior	Jesus as Master
3.	Commencement:	Salvation	Dedication
4.	Conception:	Born	Made
5.	Concept:	Deliverance from	Following after
6.	Content:	Deliverance	Duty
7.	Course:	Believe	Do
8.	Consequence:	Forgiveness	Fruit
9.	Confirmation:	Life	Love
10.	Commandment:	Invitation	Imperative
11.	Company:	Unbelievers	Believers

MK

THE FORMULA OF FAITH

EPHESIANS 2

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

8 τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι
– For by grace ye are *having been* saved
διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν,
through faith; and this not of you,
θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· 9 οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή
of [is] the gift; not of works, lest
God
τις καυχήσηται. 10 αὐτοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν
anyone should boast. For of him we are
ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
a product, created in Christ Jesus
ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς, οἷς προητοίμασεν
unto works good, which [2]previously prepared
ὁ θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.
– [1]God in order that in them we might walk.

correct view: Grace + Faith = Salvation + Works

corrupt view: Grace + Faith + Works = Salvation

MK

John MacArthur:
A Pastor's Dilemma
or
John MacArthur's Doctrinal Deviations and Ethical Expediencies

(A Personal Perspective)

John F. MacArthur, Jr.

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

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John MacArthur:
A Pastor's Dilemma
or
John MacArthur's Doctrinal Deviations and Ethical Expediencies

(A Personal Perspective)

Prof. Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

1. HIS DEFENSE OF LORDSHIP SALVATION
2. HIS DOUBLE-TALK ON THE BLOOD OF CHRIST
3. HIS DEVIATION FROM THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST
4. HIS DEPENDENCE ON COVENANT THEOLOGY
5. HIS DISMISSAL OF THE CATEGORY OF "CARNAL CHRISTIAN"
6. HIS DENIAL OF THE TWO NATURES IN THE BELIEVER
7. HIS DE-EMPHASIS OF POSITIONAL TRUTH
8. HIS DISCREPANCIES IN HIS PRESENTED MATERIALS
9. HIS DOCTRINE OF ELDER RULE
10. HIS DESIGNS AGAINST BAPTIST CHURCHES
11. HIS DIATRIBES AGAINST THE DISPENSATIONALISTS
12. HIS DISTORTIONS OF HIS OPPONENTS' VIEWS
13. HIS DEFECTS IN HERMENEUTICS
14. HIS DILEMMA IN RELATION TO THE IFCA

INTRODUCTION

The writer of Proverbs observed that "in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise" (Proverbs 10:19). Similarly James writes, especially in relation to teachers of spiritual truth, "For in many things we offend all" (James 3:2). Solomon's truism and James' observation suggest that the more one speaks (or writes), the more mistakes one will make. To err is human. However, there is a vast difference, on the one hand, between occasional mistakes and misstatements by all of us in the public arena, indicating our humanness and, on the other hand, a dangerous and detrimental departing in ever more areas of biblical truth and practice by well known Bible teachers. What makes the matter of John MacArthur, for example, a concern to fundamentalists is (1) the ever-widening circle of doctrinal aberrations in his teachings, (2) the nature of doctrinal deviation in the crucial areas of salvation and sanctification, (3) his evangelistic zeal in expounding these doctrinal errors, and (4) his stubborn resistance to any effort by major theologians such as Hodges and Ryrie and Showers to correct his inaccuracies and heresies.

One writer has put the problem succinctly:

> A wake of confusion, contention, and controversy have followed MacArthur for many years. In an apparent attempt to astound and bedazzle his audiences and to bring out "some new thing," he continually tries to put a new twist on old doctrines. In so doing, he has resurrected some age-old heresies, and he has even invented some new ones. We are reminded of Dr. H. A. Ironside's warning, 'If it is true, it is not new, and if it is new, it is not true' (Lloyd L. Streeter, *The Baptist Arrow*, Vol. 2, No. 2, March 1993, p. 3).

The inspired injunction is to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). What follows below is a listing of some of the concerns I personally have with John MacArthur. These thoughts are penned, not out of any personal animosity, but in response to the numerous inquiries coming my way from students, pastors, and laymen concerning my position on one point or another of MacArthur's teaching and practice.

My purpose in this monograph is not to refute MacArthur but to itemize some of my concerns and to suggest some reasons for these concerns.

I readily commend his writings on a variety of topics, such as the charismatic chaos of our day and his generally fine exposition of Ephesians, for example. But I am concerned about the crucial central areas of faith and practice where MacArthur departs from clear biblical teaching.

The question each one of us must ask himself is how much error he is able to tolerate in a man and his message. How important is MacArthur's clear deviation, for example, from the biblical doctrine of salvation and the eternal Sonship of Christ? At which point do we

separate from heretical brethren and warn others of their errors? As we attempt to resolve the question in our own minds, may the Holy Spirit give us His discernment to follow the divinely mandated procedure outlined by Paul as we "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17-18).

1. HIS DEFENSE OF LORDSHIP SALVATION

MacArthur has written two books in defense of Lordship salvation, *The Gospel According to Jesus* and *Faith Works–The Gospel According to the Disciples*. Furthermore, he has authored numerous articles and preached many messages on Lordship salvation, insisting that an individual is not genuinely saved unless he has dedicated his life.

Here is MacArthur's position:
"The call to Calvary must be recognized for what it is: a call to discipleship under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. To respond to that call is to become a believer. Anything less is simply unbelief." (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 30. Quotations from his work are taken from the first edition, published in 1989).

"Forsaking oneself for Christ's sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion: it is the *sine qua non* of saving faith" (*Ibid.*, p. 35, italics in the original).

"Let me say again unequivocally that Jesus' summons to deny self and follow him was an invitation to salvation" (*Ibid.*, p. 196).

"Submission to the will of God, to Christ's lordship, and to the guiding of the Spirit is an essential, not an optional part of saving faith" (*Ephesians*, p. 249).

"Saving faith is placing oneself totally in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Romans 1-8*, p. 205).

"You give up all that you are and receive all that He is. . . A person becomes saved when he is willing to abandon everything he has to affirm that Christ is the Lord of his life" (*The Parables of the Kingdom*, p. 109).

John MacArthur makes full surrender to Christ's Lordship a requisite for salvation. In fact, as Paul taught in Romans 12:1-2, dedication is an important response ~ause of salvation. Biblically, faith is the only prerequisite for salvation, yet, thur, quoting with approval in his magazine *Masterpiece* (Fall 1988) A. W. s article "I CALL IT HERESY!" labeled such a view as heresy.

Salvation is either by faith alone or by faith, dedication, and surrender. One of these positions comes under the anathema of Galatians 1:8-9: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

(Anyone interested in a more lengthy treatment of Lordship salvation may want to consult Charles C. Ryrie's *So Great Salvation*. For a discussion of the various authors on both sides of the debate, see my paper, "Lordship Salvation: A Forgotten Truth or a False Doctrine?")

2. HIS DOUBLE TALK ON THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

MacArthur's discussion of the blood of Christ is confusing at best and misleading and heretical at worst. In his thinking, the physical blood of Christ is of no intrinsic value. It is simply a symbol of the death of Christ.

MacArthur spells this out on Tape #GC 80-44, entitled "The Blood of Christ–selected Scriptures." The sermon from which this quote is excerpted was preached in 1972.

> There is no sense in getting teary-eyed and mystical about blood. We sing hymns about 'There is Power in the Blood,' and so forth, and we don't want to get preoccupied with blood. The only importance that the blood of Jesus has is that it shows He died. There is no saving in that blood itself. We cannot say that the very blood of Jesus--His physical blood--is what atones for sin. It is His death that atones for sin. His blood shed was an act of death. So, we do not want to become preoccupied about fantasizing about some mystical blood that is floating around somewhere. It is by the sacrificial offering of Himself--it is by His death--that we are redeemed. Blood shed is only the picture of His death....So, when Jesus died and shed his blood this is no big thing. This is nothing for Israel to get all bent out of shape about.

MacArthur's slighting of "the precious blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18-19) prompts Lloyd Streeter to conclude that the above statements are "absolute heresy! . . .The words he speaks are poison to the souls of men! . . .MacArthur's big error in the above quoted statement is that he separates Christ's bleeding from His dying, and says that only Christ's death was the redemption price." (*The Baptist Arrow*, Vol. 2, No. 2, March 1993, p. 4).

In an April 1976 sermon (Tape #GC 80-44) entitled "The Outrage of Idolatry," MacArthur makes the following statement:

> Let me say something that might shake some of you up, but I will try to qualify it. There is nothing in the actual blood that is efficacious for sin! Did you get that? The Bible does not teach that the blood of Christ itself has any efficacy for taking away sin! Not at all!

The biblical emphasis is not just on the fact that Christ died but on the method of His death, the crucifixion which entailed the shedding of His blood. It was important that Christ die; it was imperative that He die by shedding His blood. Both His substitutionary death and shed blood must be defended tenaciously. It is not wrong to make much of the shed blood of Christ, because "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). "For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). To de-emphasize the blood of Christ is to devalue the atonement, and that is dangerous.

3. HIS DEVIATION FROM THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST

(see appendix for a change in MacArthur's position)

While MacArthur is not the only Bible teacher to deny the eternal Sonship of Christ, he is the best known among those who deviate from this position. MacArthur forcefully and repeatedly insists in his writings that while Christ is eternal in His deity, He was not the Son of God until His incarnation.

MacArthur writes the following in his commentary on Hebrews:

"As was noted, Son is an incarnational title of Christ. Though His sonship was anticipated in the Old Testament (Prov. 30:4), He did not become a Son until He was begotten into time. Prior to time and His incarnation He was eternal God with God. The term Son has only to do with Jesus Christ in His incarnation. It is only an analogy to say that God is Father and Jesus is Son–God's way of helping us understand the essential relationship between the first and second persons of the Trinity." (*Hebrews,* Chicago: Moody, 1983, p. 27)

"Christ was not Son until His incarnation" (*Ibid.*, p. 28)

"He is no 'eternal son'" (*Ibid.*)

In MacArthur's thinking, Christ's Sonship is incarnational and simply points to Christ's submission to the Father–this, in spite of the clear teaching of Scripture that His Sonship is related not to His humanity but to His deity. The contemporaries of

sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). Even the demons recognized that the title "Son of God" was the designation of His deity. They prostrated themselves before Christ. "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God" (Mark 3:11).

4. HIS DEPENDENCE ON COVENANT THEOLOGY

MacArthur's claim notwithstanding that he is a dispensational Premillennialist, a careful scrutiny of his doctrine of salvation has led a number of theologians to the conclusion that MacArthur is more of a covenant theologian than a dispensationalist. His concept of regeneration preceding salvation, his defense of Lordship salvation, and his denial of the two natures in the believer evidence his espousal of Reformed Theology, whether he is willing to acknowledge this or not. His positions endear him to Reformed theologians, such as J. I. Packer, R. C. Sproul, James M. Boice, and John Gerstner.

Zane Hodges correctly observes that, "MacArthur apparently holds the Reformed view that regeneration logically *precedes* saving faith" (*Absolutely Free!*, p. 219, italics in the original). MacArthur has spiritual sight logically preceding saving faith, for he says, "Spiritual sight is a gift from God that makes one willing and able to believe" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 75).

While recognizing that salvation is a "single, instantaneous" event, MacArthur does stress that regeneration comes before faith. He says that regeneration, as "the work of the Holy Spirit that imparts new life to the sinner. . .must *logically* initiate faith and repentance" (*Faith Works*, p. 62. Italics in the original.)

Ernest Pickering agrees with Zane Hodges concerning MacArthur's tendencies toward Reformed theology: "It seems evident that MacArthur's thought has been greatly influenced by Reformed thinkers, and the enthusiasm with which some of them have received this volume would tend to support this observation" (*Lordship Salvation*, p. 2).

5. HIS DISMISSAL OF THE CATEGORY OF CARNAL CHRISTIAN

In his book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, MacArthur makes the incredible charge that, "Contemporary theologians have fabricated an entire category for this type of person–'Carnal Christian'" (p. 135). Notwithstanding the fact that numerous reviewers of his book have pointed out that the idea of carnality is of Pauline origin, not a dispensational invention, MacArthur, in his sequel book, *Faith Works--The*

Gospel According to the Apostles, persists in his error by entitling a section, "The Myth of the Carnal Christian." Under this heading, MacArthur writes the following:

> Almost all no-lordship theology leans heavily on the notion that there are three classes of humanity: unsaved people, spiritual Christians, and carnal Christians. This was one of the planks in the no-lordship platform that was laid by Lewis Sperry Chafer. Chafer popularized the carnal-Christian idea in his 1918 book, *He That Is Spiritual* (pp. 124-125).

6. HIS DENIAL OF THE TWO NATURES OF THE BELIEVER

Following his Reformed mentors, MacArthur insists that at the moment of the new birth, the believer's old nature is abolished. Unlike Arminian theologians, he does not believe in sinless perfection. A believer still sins, but his sins are explained in terms of the vestiges of the old life, old habits which occasionally break into our life. MacArthur's denial of the old nature explains his disclaimer of the concept of the carnal Christian. Obviously, if the believer no longer battles an old nature, carnality is, in fact, an aspect of the believer's new nature.

In an article entitled "The Good-Natured Believer," MacArthur writes: "If you are a Christian, it's a serious misunderstanding to think of yourself of having both an old and new nature. We do not have a dual personality! Assuming the dual nature of the believer could easily lead one to excuse all kinds of sin by blaming them on the old nature" (*Masterpiece,* March/April 1990, p. 18).

In his more recent volume he writes:

> ...Christians sin because of the vestiges of sinful flesh, not because they have the same old active sinful nature. Certainly we sin, but when we sin it is contrary to our nature, not because we have two dispositions–one sinful and one not. . . Sin has lost its dominating control over us. Obviously we all struggle with sinful propensities. Death to the sinful self does not mean death to the flesh and its corrupted inclinations. Because of the pleasures of sin and the weakness of our remaining flesh, we often yield to sin. (*Faith Works–The Gospel According to the Disciples*, pp. 116-117).

The believer's sins, it seems, are unfortunately more than vestiges of a former nature. The picture painted by Paul of the believer's struggle between the flesh and the spirit certainly suggest a daily struggle between the old and the new nature. (Galatians 5:17).

7. HIS DE-EMPHASIS OF POSITIONAL TRUTH

MacArthur displays a great deal of confusion in the matter of positional truth in the two areas of salvation and sanctification. He evidences a defective understanding of the believer's position and practice, his standing and his state. The glorious biblical truth of the Reformation, describing the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator* (at the same time justified and a sinner) seems to escape MacArthur.

MacArthur's basic thesis is that "every Christian is a disciple" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 196). Any distinction between believer and disciple is "purely artificial" (*Ibid.*, p. 196). And a call to Christian discipleship explicitly demands "total dedication. It is full commitment with nothing knowingly or deliberately held back" (*Ibid.*, p. 197).

Converted individuals such as the Corinthians are positionally perfect before God. They are "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints" (I Corinthians 1:2). And yet, their conduct was characterized by carnality. They had positional sanctification but lacked progressive sanctification. They had accepted Christ as Savior, but had not yet recognized him as Sovereign and Lord. Lordship is imperative for sanctification. It should not be confused with salvation, let alone be made a prerequisite of it. MacArthur's insistence that a new convert (position) give every evidence of dedication (practice) ignores the fact that many believers need some amount of spiritual growth before giving their all to the Savior, as seen in Paul's encouragement to the saints of Rome to present their bodies a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). In the case of Abraham's nephew Lot, one would never suspect from the Old Testament that he was a believer. Only Peter informs us that Lot was righteous (II Peter 2:7-8). Lot had a righteous standing before God and yet lived an entire life of carnality. His practice never matched his position. Since in MacArthur's thinking an individual cannot be saved without recognizing Christ's lordship and is not plagued by an old nature after salvation, he must live more or less a Spirit-filled and dedicated life. Lot's unseparated and undedicated life to the contrary, MacArthur incredibly considers him an example of a spiritual believer. "Lot was certainly not 'carnal' in the sense that he lacked spiritual desires" (*Faith Works*, p. 128). A defective understanding of positional and practical truth leads to defective interpretation.

8. HIS DISCREPANCIES IN HIS PRESENTED MATERIALS

The dictionary defines discrepancy as inconsistency, disagreement. The verb *discrepant* is derived from the French, *dis* + *crepare*, to rattle, creak. Some things in MacArthur's writings creak, or don't sound right. MacArthur's publications are characterized by numerous internal inconsistencies which are apparent even to the casual reader. At one place, MacArthur makes one statement, at another place a

totally opposite statement. Time after time one comes across totally contradictory statements, sometimes in the same book or even the same chapter. The reader is prompted to ask, "Will the real MacArthur please stand up?" Both propositions cannot be right.

Will a believer demonstrate fruit or won't he?

Statement A:

"There is no such thing as a fruitless Christian...There is no such thing as a Christian who does not bear fruit" (*Freedom from Sin*, p. 89, 109).

Statement B:

"A believer can be just as barren and fruitless as an unbeliever. Even a barren and fruitless Christian will enter into the Kingdom" (*Adding to Your Faith*, p. 49)

Does the believer have one nature or two?

Statement A:

"Believers do not have dual personalities. . .There is no such thing as an old nature in the believer" (*Freedom from Sin*, p. 31).

Statement B:

Being a Christian doesn't make you perfect, but you do have the capacity not to sin. Sometimes our fallen nature tempts us to sin, and we give in" (*Ibid.*, p. 85).

Is there a difference between Israel and the Church, Law and Grace, or isn't there?

Statement A:

"I am a dispensationalist and am convinced that the dispensational distinction between the Church and Israel is an accurate understanding of God's eternal plan as revealed in Scripture" (*Faith Works*, p. 220-221).

Statement B:

"The age-of-law/age-of-grace division in particular has wreaked havoc on dispensational theology and contributed to confusion about the doctrine of salvation" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 25)

Is a believer totally yielded and sanctified or can he resist the Lordship of Christ and live in sin?

Statement A:

"Thus salvation cannot be defective in any dimension. As a part of His saving work, God will produce repentance, faith, sanctification, yieldedness, obedience, and ultimately glorification. Since He is not dependent on human effort in producing those elements, and experience that lacks any of them cannot be the saving work of God" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 33).

Statement B:

"Once they have come to Him, some Christians lose their first love for Him as Savior and resist obeying Him as Lord. But their lovelessness makes Him no less Savior, and their resistance makes Him no less Lord" (*Ephesians*, p. 39).

Further:

"After salvation, sin no longer resides in the innermost self, which is recreated like Christ. Yet it finds its residuals dwelling in our flesh. That's why Paul said nothing good dwelt in his flesh (v. 18)" ("The Good-Natured Believer," *Masterpiece*, March/April 1990, p. 20).

Further:

"You are not less evil now than you used to be. In your unredeemed mortality and humanness you are evil" (Tape GC 45-52, Romans 7).

Further:

"Sin is still present in our humanness, which includes the mind, emotions, and body" (*Freedom from Sin*, p. 173).

9. HIS DOCTRINE OF ELDER RULE

The church is a unique institution for this dispensation. The local church is designated by the Lord to carry on the work of evangelism and edification. The New Testament contains detailed instructions for the church, including its organization, officers, and ordinances. MacArthur differs in several aspects from Baptists in the area of ecclesiology. He insists that Baptists are unbiblical in their concept of congregational rule. In his thinking, the final authority of the local church is not the congregation but the board of elders.

MacArthur forcefully argues for elder rule in his booklet, *Answering the Key Questions About Elders*. He insists that:

> The biblical norm for church leadership is a plurality of God-ordained elders. Furthermore, it is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Nowhere in Scripture do we find a local assembly ruled by majority opinion, or by one pastor (p. 1).

> Elders are called and appointed by God, confirmed by the church leadership and ordained to the task of leadership. . . Nothing in Scripture indicates that anyone at a lower level of leadership should be involved in decision making as it relates to church policy or doctrine (p. 31).

Baptists maintain that a close examination of the biblical data will bear out the concept of congregational rule. In Matthew 18, the final court of adjudication in a local church matter is not the board of elders but the congregation. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (18:17). In matters of church discipline, the final say is not given to the elders but to the congregation. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:" (I Corinthians 5:4-7)

10. HIS DESIGNS AGAINST THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

MacArthur's ecclesiology is at variance with Baptist doctrine in the area of who heads the flock and who has the final authority. Baptists traditionally have maintained that each congregation need only have one pastor/bishop/elder. They further defend the concept of congregational rule.

MacArthur espouses the plurality of elders view and the elders as the final authority in the church. He is not content to live and let live. In his Shepherds' Conferences, he instructs pastors how to undermine Baptist churches and other churches with a congregational form of government and change them into plurality of elders and eldership-rule churches. On one of the tapes from the Shepherds' Conferences to which I listened, MacArthur was asked by a pastor how he should go about starting elder-rule type churches. MacArthur's response was that rather than starting new churches it was better to take existing churches with congregational rule and convert them to elder rule. This writer has spoken with several pastors who were so enamored with MacArthur's position that they completely changed their churches to non-Baptist eldership-rule congregations.

In an article entitled, "Honesty in the Ministry," by Frank Bumpus in *Frontline* (Vol. 6, No. 1, p.18), an audio tape from one of the Shepherd's Conferences is quoted. The speaker relates the following conversation:

> I had a guy call me from the inter-city in Los Angeles, and he said, 'Dr. Barsaw, we are going to change to "elder rule." '
> I said, "Great. What are you going to do?'
> He said, 'We are rewriting our constitution and our bylaws.'
> I said, 'What are you going to do when they are rewritten?'
> He said, 'We are going to bring them to the congregation, and they are going to pass this new constitution and these new bylaws.'
> I said, 'Sure they are.'
> He said, 'Do you have any advice?'
> I said, 'Yeah, I have some great advice for you.'
> He said, 'What is that?'
> 'Tear it [the constitution and bylaws] up--tear it up! When you [church] start functioning, then you can worry about rewriting. That is what we had to do at Grace....We first built a credible group of elders that no one minded following, and they [congregation] had been so used to following them [elders] that, when they came in with a change, they [congregation] said, 'Sure. If they say it, it must be true.' 'Credibility' is the key word in this whole thing. (*How to Go from Congregational to Elder Rule.*)

Bumpus registers his total objection to the above practice: "I disagree. The 'key word' is 'dishonesty,' not 'credibility.' The speaker is telling those pastors not to be honest and straightforward with their churches, but to hide their objective until they have gained the confidence of the people in order to set the stage for a takeover. This speaker is saying that if you are open and honest about your intention, it won't work. Listen to his next comment: 'All right, so pitfall number one is, "Don't try to rewrite it before you do it. Do it and then worry about rewriting it." '

Bumpus quotes from yet another audiotape which relates a query directed to John MacArthur from a man in the audience:

> As churches go from congregational to elder rule, a lot of times there is a fear in the hearts of the congregation that they are losing their voice and their say in the decision and direction of the church. What place, then, does the congregation have in the direction or decision-making in the church? [Dr. MacArthur answers] 'Well, it's a justified fear because that is, in fact, what's happening' (*Questions and Answers*). (*Frontline, Ibid.*)

When MacArthur took over the leadership of the Los Angeles Baptist College, a school built with money from fundamental Regular Baptists, apparently by his insistence, the name Baptist was dropped immediately. No one disputes MacArthur's prerogative to preach and practice what he pleases, but one wonders

why Baptist churches, schools and state fellowships are so enamored with one who espouses so many doctrinal aberrations and has a well-known antipathy toward Baptist distinctives.

11. HIS DIATRIBES AGAINST THE DISPENSATIONALISTS

It has already been noted under point 5 that MacArthur accuses dispensationalists of inventing the category of carnal Christian. MacArthur claims to be a dispensationalist, yet in a strange twist of logic, he berates the dispensationalists for believing what makes them dispensationalists: that the church is not Israel, that the Law is not Grace, and that the Old Testament is not New Testament truth. His cavalier treatment of dispensationalists such as Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie, and Hodges has endeared him to leading covenant theologians who commend his theology warmly on the dust jackets of his books. His Reformed position on salvation and sanctification as well as his nondispensational exposition of the Sermon on the Mount set him at odds with dispensational distinctives and raise all sorts of questions about his claim to belong to the dispensational camp.

MacArthur defines dispensationalism as "A system of biblical interpretation that sees a distinction between God's program for Israel and His dealings with the church" (*Faith Works*, p. 219).

And yet, MacArthur accuses dispensationalists of extreme exegesis for making distinctions between Law and Grace and Israel and the Church:

> There is a tendency, however, for dispensationalists to get carried away with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they can make unbiblical distinctions. An almost obsessive desire to categorize everything neatly has led various dispensational interpreters to draw hard lines not only between the church and Israel, but also between salvation and discipleship, the church and the kingdom, Christ's preaching and the apostolic message, faith and repentance, and the age of law and the age of grace. The age of law and the age of grace division in particular have wreaked havoc on dispensational theology and contributed to confusion about the doctrine of salvation (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 25).
>
> It is a mistake of the worst sort to set the teachings of Paul and the apostles over against the words of our Lord and imagine that they contradict one another or speak of different dispensations (*Ibid.*, p. 214).
>
> I decried the methodology of dispensationalists who want to isolate salvation from repentance, justification from sanctification, faith from

works, and Christ's Lordship from His role as Savior, in a way that breaks asunder what God has joined together" (*Ibid.*, p. 221).

In *Faith Works*, MacArthur continues his denunciation of dispensationalism as taught by Chafer and Ryrie. First, he observes that Ryrie and he are "in essential agreement on the distinction of Israel and the Church and literal hermeneutics" (*Faith Works*, p. 221). Then he says his purpose is "to plead for a purer, more biblical application of the literal, historical, grammatical principle of interpretation" (*Ibid.*) But when dispensationalists practice literal, historical, and grammatical hermeneutics, MacArthur calls it a "rigid partitioning of 'the age of law' and 'the age of grace,'" such as when Chafer notes that "the teachings of the law, the teaching of grace and the teachings of the Kingdom are separate and complete systems of divine rule" (*Ibid.*, pp. 229-230).

MacArthur deplores these distinctions as "rigid forms of extreme dispensationalism" (*Ibid.*, p. 232) which teach that the Mosaic law has ended. Chafer's system, with its "grace teachings. . .pave the way for a brand of Christianity that has legitimized careless and carnal behavior" (*Ibid.*, p. 228).

MacArthur concludes with a word of warning: "Dispensationalism is at a crossroads. The lordship controversy represents a signpost where the road forks. One arrow marks the road of biblical orthodoxy. The other arrow, labeled 'no-lordship,' points the way to a sub-Christian antinomianism" (*Ibid.*, p. 233).

There you have it. The system of dispensationalism championed by Chafer and Ryrie leads to careless and carnal behavior as well as to a sub-Christian antinomianism!

12. HIS DISTORTIONS OF HIS OPPONENTS' VIEWS

In scholarly debate, whether oral or written, it is always important to represent one's opponent's views correctly and quote him accurately. One deplorable feature of MacArthur's writings is that he does not represent his opponent's positions accurately. In quoting others he adds a word here, changes a phrase there, thus altering the original meaning of the quote. This is unscholarly and unethical, but in this fashion he constructs straw men which he then proceeds to dismantle, never mind what the author's actual position is.

One of MacArthur's main criticisms of dispensationalists is that they have created easy-believism which has ruined the purity of the church. To support his point, MacArthur quotes Lewis Sperry Chafer as saying that grace is "the Christian's liberty

to do precisely as he chooses" (*The Gospel According to* Jesus, p. 31). What MacArthur omits is that in the same paragraph Chafer also said, "but God has provided a sufficient safeguard which consists in the fact that the divine ideal is first wrought in the heart: 'for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure'" (*Grace*, p. 345).

In *Faith Works*, MacArthur contrasts the Lordship and free grace positions (pp. 26-27). He especially quotes Ryrie's book *So Great Salvation*, but unfortunately alters numerous quotes by Ryrie in a most unfair, unscholarly, and unethical manner.

MacArthur quoting Ryrie: "Saving faith is simply being convinced or giving credence to the truth of the gospel (*SGS* 156)."

Ryrie's actual statement: "*Faith.* Being convinced or giving credence. . ." MacArthur adds the word *simply*.

MacArthur quoting Ryrie: "Christians can even lapse into a state of permanent spiritual barrenness (*SGS* 53-54)."

Ryrie's actual statement: "Christians may even slide back to a fruitless condition for some period of time."

MacArthur changes "some period of time" to "permanent," thus totally twisting the meaning.

MacArthur quotes Ryrie: "disobedience and prolonged sin are no reason to doubt the reality of one's faith (*SGS* 48)."

Ryrie neither says this nor believes this. It must be very exasperating for scholars like Ryrie and Hodges not simply to be misunderstood but to have one's words misquoted. Whatever happened to Christian scholarly integrity?

13. HIS DEFECTS IN HERMENEUTICS

No one disputes the fact that John MacArthur is one of America's foremost Bible teachers. His radio messages, tapes and books have blessed millions around the world. A careful examination of his exegesis of Bible passages and terms shows that when he teaches in controversial areas, he falls prey to a temptation that we all must resist: –to make the passage or term say what he wants it to say–not what it actually says–or to simply ignore passages which appear to support his opponents' views. For example, because of his Lordship salvation stand, in which he makes Lordship a prerequisite of salvation, he needs to give a new and unbiblical meaning to such terms as "faith," "believe," and "repentance." After all, Acts 16:31 says nothing about Lordship or dedication. Salvation is simply based on faith: "And they

said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Since in MacArthur's thinking this cannot be, he expands the definition of faith (*pistis*) beyond the meaning of confidence and trust to commitment and yielding. "Repentance" (*metanoia*), which is biblically a change of mind, becomes a term of surrender and complete yieldedness. The significant title of "Lord" is, especially in soteriological passages, a reference to Jesus not as Master but as Yahweh. It is a designation of deity. The Jews of Romans 10:9-10 had difficulty recognizing Jesus as Yahweh, the eternal creator God.

Besides changing the meaning of terms, MacArthur twists Scriptures for support of his position that saving faith involves not simply trust but dedication. One illustration must suffice. The account in Numbers 21:7, as quoted by Christ in John 3, relates to the brazen serpent. MacArthur writes as follows:

> In order to look at the bronze snake on the pole, they had to *drag themselves* to where they could see it. They were in no position to *glance flippantly* at the pole and then *proceed with lives of rebellion*" (*The Gospel According to* Jesus, p. 46; italics added).

Hodges, who comments on MacArthur's exposition, rightly observes: "Most readers will rightly regard these comments as totally without support from the biblical text in Numbers. MacArthur is guilty of distorting the obvious simplicity of our Lord's illustration about saving faith" (*Absolutely Free!*, p. 212).

14. HIS DILEMMA IN RELATION TO THE IFCA

The fellowship of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America (IFCA) has a very clear doctrinal statement. Twice the eternal Sonship of Christ is mentioned, and the wording is precise and unmistakable. This should pose a dilemma for John MacArthur, who for years has been associated with the IFCA. MacArthur equally clearly and consistently denies the eternal Sonship. He wants to remain a part of the IFCA, but his position is diametrically opposed to that of the IFCA. What to do? He signed the IFCA's doctrinal statement anyway. How can one ethically sign a doctrinal statement which is clearly and diametrically opposed to one's stated position?

The IFCA Doctrinal Statement clearly speaks to the issue of the eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ: 'WE BELIEVE IN ONE TRIUNE GOD, ETERNALLY EXISTING IN THREE PERSONS--FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT' [Article IV; Section 1 (2)]; 'WE BELIEVE THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD, BECAME MAN, WITHOUT CEASING TO BE GOD.' [Article IV; Section 1 (3a)].

ARTICLE IV
FAITH AND DOCTRINE

Section I. Articles of Biblical Faith

Each and every person, church, or organization, in order to become or remain a member of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America (IFCA), shall be required to subscribe to the following articles of faith:

(1) The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20,21; Matthew 5:18; John 16:12,13).

(2) The Godhead

We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections (Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

(3) The Person and Work of Christ

a. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that he might reveal God and redeem sinful men (John 1:1,2,14; Luke 1:35).

As already quoted, MacArthur denies the eternal Sonship of Christ. His position is very clear: "The Bible nowhere speaks of the eternal Sonship of Christ....Christ was not Son until His incarnation....His Sonship began in a point of time, not in eternity....He is no 'eternal son'" (*Hebrews*, pp. 27-28).

In light of this contradiction between what MacArthur teaches and the IFCA's official position, five IFCA Regionals on the east coast adopted in 1991 "A Statement of Doctrinal Integrity." This urgent appeal is addressed to the IFCA National Executive Committee which feels that MacArthur's divergent view falls within the area of "interpretive freedom." In a strongly worded-statement the IFCA pastors and churches state:

> We are obligated to hold firmly to our Doctrinal Statement which declares that Jesus Christ is 'the eternal Son of God.' We cannot and must not accommodate, tolerate or allow for contrary positions. Any member of the IFCA who denies the eternal Sonship of Christ is out of harmony with our doctrinal position and he must be denied membership in our Fellowship. Renewal of membership must be denied to any who do not express wholehearted concurrence with our doctrinal position regarding Sonship or any other issue.

Rev. George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church in Middletown, Connecticut, rightly concludes:

> In light of this a fair question would be this: How could John MacArthur sign the IFCA doctrinal statement and be in hearty agreement with it when it clearly states that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God? Such an affirmation is in clear conflict with MacArthur's published statements found in five of his commentaries (not to mention his public tapes, official position papers, etc.). ("The Teachings of John MacArthur, Jr.", p. 11; emphasis in the original).

Was it ethical for John MacArthur to sign the IFCA doctrinal statement? Is it proper for the IFCA to permit in its membership individuals who deviate decisively from its doctrinal statement? It is no wonder that because of this ethical dilemma a number of IFCA churches left the fellowship.

Besides clearly affirming the eternal Sonship of Christ, the IFCA doctrinal statement likewise recognizes that the believer has two natures, an old nature and a new nature: "We believe that every saved person possesses two natures, with provision made for victory of the new nature over the old nature through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and, that all claims to the eradication of the old nature in this life are unscriptural" (Section 1, Article 8).

How could MacArthur sign the statement when his teachings flatly contradict the official IFCA position? MacArthur writes, "I believe it is a serious misunderstanding to think of the believer as having both an old and new nature. Believers do not have dual personalities. . . There is no such thing as an old nature in the believer" (*Freedom from Sin*, p. 31-32).

Let us come back once more to the question that was raised in the introduction to this paper. How many doctrinal errors or ethical expediencies should one tolerate? It depends how highly one values the doctrine of salvation and the Sonship of Christ. It depends on one's convictions concerning the biblical distinctives of Baptists and the importance of sanctification. Do we have a right to mark those who cause divisions among us and avoid their error? Biblically, we have both the right and the responsibility (Romans 16:17-18). While we would not deny others the freedom to speak even in error, we have the responsibility to speak the truth, but to speak it in love. We must always be mindful as ministers of the Word that those of us who teach the Word of God have a great responsibility because of our future accountability (James 3:1).

When others bring confusion to the faithful, it is not wrong to contend earnestly for the faith. When salvation by faith alone and the Sonship of Christ are denied, it is cowardly not to contend for the truth and to combat unbiblical compromise with error.

REEXAMINING
THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST

By John MacArthur

Near the end of his life, Augustine of Hippo meticulously reviewed everything he had ever published. He wrote an entire catalogue of his own works, a painstakingly annotated bibliography with hundreds of revisions and amendments to correct flaws he saw in his own earlier material. The book, titled *Retractationes*, is powerful evidence of Augustine's humility and zeal for truth. Not one of his earlier publications escaped the more mature theologian's scrutiny. And Augustine was as bold in recanting the errors he perceived in his own work as he had been in refuting the heresies of his theological adversaries. Because he reviewed his works in chronological order, *Retractationes* is a wonderful memoir of Augustine's relentless, lifelong pursuit of spiritual maturity and theological precision. His forthrightness in addressing his own shortcomings is a good example of why Augustine is esteemed as a rare model of both godliness and scholarship.

I've often wished for the opportunity to review and amend all my own published material, but I doubt I'll ever have the time or the energy to undertake the task. In this day of electronic recordings, my "published" material includes not just the books I have written but also nearly every sermon I have ever preached--about 3,000 of them so far. It's far too much material to be able to critique exhaustively the way I wish I could. Not that I would make sweeping or wholesale revisions. Throughout my ministry, my theological perspective has remained fundamentally unchanged. The basic doctrinal statement I subscribe to today is the same one I affirmed when I was ordained to the ministry almost 40 years ago. I am not someone whose convictions are easily malleable. I trust I am not a reed shaken in the wind, or the kind of person who is naively tossed about by various winds of doctrine.

But at the same time, I do not want to be resistant to growth and correction, especially when my comprehension of Scripture can be sharpened. If more precise understanding on an important point of doctrine demands a change in my thinking--even if it means amending or correcting already-published material--I want to be willing to make the necessary changes.

I have made many such revisions over the years, often taking measures to delete erroneous or confusing statements from my own tapes, and sometimes even preaching again through portions of Scripture with a better understanding of the text. Whenever I have changed my opinion on any significant doctrinal issue, I have sought to make my change of opinion, and the reasons for it, as clear as possible.

To that end, I want to state publicly that I have abandoned the doctrine of "incarnational sonship." Careful study and reflection have brought me to understand that Scripture does indeed present the relationship between God the Father and Christ the Son as an *eternal Father-Son relationship*. I no longer regard Christ's Sonship as a role He assumed in His incarnation.

of God. It is reasonable to conclude that the begetting spoken of there is also something that pertains to eternity rather than a point in time. The temporal language should therefore be understood as figurative, not literal.

Most theologians recognize this, and when dealing with the sonship of Christ, they employ the term "eternal generation." I'm not fond of the expression. In Spurgeon's words, it is "a term that does not convey to us any great meaning; it simply covers up our ignorance." And yet the concept itself, I am now convinced, is biblical. Scripture refers to Christ as "the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14; cf. v. 18; 3:16, 18; Heb. 11:17). The Greek word translated "only begotten" is *monogenes*. The thrust of its meaning has to do with Christ's utter uniqueness. Literally, it may be rendered "one of a kind"--and yet it also clearly signifies that He is of the very same essence as the Father. This, I believe, is the very heart of what is meant by the expression "only begotten."

To say that Christ is "begotten" is itself a difficult concept. Within the realm of creation, the term "begotten" speaks of the *origin* of one's offspring. The begetting of a son denotes his conception--the point at which he comes into being. Some thus assume that "only begotten" refers to the conception of the human Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary. Yet Matthew 1:20 attributes the conception of the incarnate Christ to the Holy Spirit, not to God the Father. The begetting referred to in Psalm 2 and John 1:14 clearly seems to be something more than the conception of Christ's humanity in Mary's womb.

And indeed, there is another, more vital, significance to the idea of "begetting" than merely the origin of one's offspring. In the design of God, each creature begets offspring "after his kind" (Gen. 1:11-12; 21-25). The offspring bear the exact likeness of the parent. The fact that a son is generated by the father guarantees that the son shares the same essence as the father.

I believe this is the sense Scripture aims to convey when it speaks

of the begetting of Christ by the Father. Christ is not a created being (John 1:1-3). He had no beginning but is as timeless as God Himself. Therefore, the "begetting" mentioned in Psalm 2 and its cross-references has nothing to do with His *origin*.

But it has everything to do with the fact that He is of the same essence as the Father. Expressions like "eternal generation," "only begotten Son," and others pertaining to the filiation of Christ must all be understood in this sense: Scripture employs them to underscore the absolute oneness of essence between Father and Son. In other words, such expressions aren't intended to evoke the idea of procreation; they are meant to convey the truth about the essential oneness shared by the Members of the Trinity.

My previous view was that Scripture employed Father-Son terminology *anthropomorphically*--accommodating unfathomable heavenly truths to our finite minds by casting them in human terms. Now I am inclined to think that the opposite is true: Human father-son relationships are merely earthly pictures of an infinitely greater heavenly reality. The one true, archetypical Father-Son relationship exists eternally within the Trinity. All others are merely earthly replicas, imperfect because they are bound up in our finiteness, yet illustrating a vital eternal reality. If Christ's sonship is all about His deity, someone will wonder why this applies to the Second Member of the Trinity alone, and not to the Third. After all, we don't refer to the Holy Spirit as God's Son, do we? Yet isn't He also of the same essence as the Father?

Of course He is. The full, undiluted, undivided essence of God belongs alike to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is but one essence; yet He exists in three Persons. The three Persons are co-equal, but they are still distinct Persons. And the chief characteristics that distinguish between the Persons are wrapped up in the properties suggested by the names *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy*

it. Theologians have labeled these properties *paternity, ation*, and *spiration*. That such distinctions are vital to our erstanding of the Trinity is clear from Scripture. How to lain them fully remains something of a mystery.

fact, many aspects of these truths may remain forever scrutable, but this basic understanding of the eternal relationships hin the Trinity nonetheless represents the best consensus of istian understanding over many centuries of Church history. I refore affirm the doctrine of Christ's eternal sonship while nowledging it as a mystery into which we should not expect to too deeply.

This statement by John MacArthur was received by way of e-mail from the office of Phillip Johnson who serves on John MacArthur's staff. It was sent 9/1/99.

A Response to John MacArthur's Statement

I have read carefully John MacArthur's document entitled *Reexamining the Eternal Sonship of Christ* which I received on 9/1/99 from Phillip Johnson, a member of John MacArthur's staff. I want to say, first of all, that I am very thankful to God for what Dr. MacArthur shared and for his very clear affirmation of Christ's eternal Sonship and his abandonment of the doctrine of incarnational Sonship. May God be pleased to use this document for the edification of believers everywhere and to help them understand the true significance of Christ's Sonship. I find myself giving a hearty "Amen" most everything that he said, though my understanding of "this day" in Psalm 2 would be more in line with Dr. Renald Shower's exposition of this passage (see chapter 8 in *The Eternal Sonship of Christ)*, where Showers understands "this day" as referring to the day of the resurrection (Acts 13:33). MacArthur's understanding of this passage, however, is certainly within the bounds of sound orthodoxy. Again, I sincerely thank God for his reversal on this issue and his willingness to humbly admit and acknowledge that his earlier teaching on Christ's Sonship was not in line with Scripture.

In spite of MacArthur's great reversal on this issue, I do have some lingering concerns. They are as follows:

1) As you may or may not know, MacArthur's teaching of incarnational Sonship triggered a great amount of controversy in the IFCA which lasted for years and which resulted in scores of men (including myself) and a number of churches leaving the IFCA. These men who left were merely defending the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ which MacArthur now strongly affirms. And yet in 1989 MacArthur appeared at the National

Convention in Limerick defending the incarnational Sonship view, and in 1991 he wrote his booklet "The Sonship of Christ" defending this same doctrine which he now says was in error. The damage all of this did to our fellowship of Churches was inestimable. I am NOT blaming John MacArthur for what happened. I believe the burden of responsibility rested on the IFCA leadership. But the fact remains that it was his teaching that triggered the controversy. My point is simply this: In MacArthur's recent document, I would wish there could have been some statement of remorse or regret over the damage that took place in the IFCA. I know that I personally would be deeply grieved if something I taught had triggered a tremendous controversy in a fellowship of churches resulting in great damage and division. Especially so if I later concluded that my teaching had been in error. "Be not many teachers knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment" (James 3:1). Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men.

2) In MacArthur's document he mentioned certain "outspoken critics" who accused him of attacking the deity of Christ or questioning His eternality. This is the same charge that he made in his booklet written in 1991, "The Sonship of Christ" in which he said the following: "In recent months a few vocal critics have raised doubts about my orthodoxy, based on written statements I made about the sonship of Christ in my New Testament commentary series. Some of these critics seem to imply that my position is incompatible with the doctrine of Christ's deity....Nothing I have written can legitimately be twisted to suggest that I have in any way been unclear or equivocal about the deity and eternality of Christ" (pages 2,4). MacArthur has accused his critics of charging him with a denial of the deity of Christ and His eternality but the men who were part of the IFCA, to the best of my knowledge, never made such charges. I certainly never made such an accusation. In the book THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST (Zeller/Showers) we make it very clear that those who hold to incarnational Sonship do not deny the deity of Christ or His eternality: "Most of them, however, say that He became the Son of God at the incarnation. They believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, before his incarnation in the womb of the virgin Mary, was the eternal Word, the eternal God, and even the second Person of the Trinity, but He was not the eternal Son....Such teachers do not deny the deity of Christ, and for this we can be thankful. They do not deny the eternal existence of Christ....They teach that Christ was always God but that He BECAME the Son" (pages 30-31). The same clarification was made in my rebuttal to MacArthur's booklet, "The Sonship of Christ." This is what I wrote: "We are thankful that MacArthur holds to the deity of Christ and to His eternality. Our concern is that He denies that Christ is the ETERNAL SON OF GOD....MacArthur makes His Sonship merely a ROLE and a TITLE which He assumed when He was born....We have never accused MacArthur of denying the full deity and eternality of Christ" (pages 3-4). MacArthur's statement about these false accusations was made in the context of the IFCA controversy, and yet we have never accused him of attacking Christ's deity and eternal existence. Perhaps he has in mind other vocal critics that I am unaware of that have made such a charge. I was deeply involved on the side of those men who were seeking to defend the eternal Sonship of Christ and who were convinced that the IFCA doctrinal statement did not allow for the other view. None of these men, to my knowledge, accused MacArthur of denying Christ's deity or eternality. We have consistently accused him of denying the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ.

3) MacArthur, in his most recent statement, said that the incarnational Sonship view was "by no means rank heresy." As he continues to examine this doctrine in the light of Scripture, my hope is that he will come to see the incarnational Sonship view as serious error. It is certainly not to be compared with the case of a pastor who teaches that one of the two witnesses is Enoch and later changing his mind to Elijah. It is far more serious than the case of a Pastor who taught that Antichrist was a Jew and later changed it to a Gentile. Though everything the Bible teaches is important, the IFCA would never deal with such matters in their doctrinal statement. But the IFCA doctrinal statement does touch

upon the matter of eternal Sonship in two places. To teach that Christ did not become the Son until Bethlehem is serious error that has far reaching ramifications. I have pointed out these ramifications in Chapter 10 of our book, THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST. Also very helpful in this is Philpot's book, THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST. MacArthur gave the impression in his recent statement that this doctrinal change was not very significant and that the incarnational Sonship view, though a minority view, still falls within the boundaries of orthodoxy. With this I would strongly disagree.

4) The IFCA doctrinal statement clearly sets forth the fact that Christ is the eternal Son of God and that He has eternally existed as the Son of God: "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man." "We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Compare this first statement with John 1:14—"the Word became flesh." It is obvious that He existed as the Word before He became flesh. Likewise, "the eternal Son of God became man." It is obvious that He existed as the Son of God before He became a man, according to this statement. How then can a person believing in incarnational Sonship give his hearty agreement to these statements? It would have been very helpful if MacArthur's document had included an acknowledgment and an affirmation that the IFCA doctrinal statement does indeed set forth the doctrine of eternal Sonship and that a person who holds the other view cannot sign this statement with honesty and integrity and wholehearted agreement.

5) I am concerned, as MacArthur is, about his many commentaries and booklets and tapes which set forth the incarnational Sonship position, sometimes in very strong terms: "The Bible nowhere speaks of the eternal Sonship of Christ" (etc.). Incarnational Sonship is also hinted at in his Study Bible notes and in his school's doctrinal statement. The problem comes when people read these published materials and they may not realize that he no longer holds to the incarnational Sonship position. But I

have been assured by Phillip Johnson (of MacArthur's staff) that they will be systematically making the appropriate changes as soon as possible.

Again, I am very thankful that John MacArthur is now teaching and preaching the doctrine that Christ has eternally existed as the Son of God and that it was the eternal Son of God who became flesh at Bethlehem. This is a giant step in the right direction. May the Lord continue to deal with his heart about these important matters. May we all be in the place to learn, re-learn and un-learn and to amend our thinking in favor of God's Revelation.

George Zeller
September 1999

Other literature items related to this topic:

The Eternal Sonship of Christ (Zeller/Showers), $5.75.
The Eternal Sonship of Christ (2 helpful papers)–(15¢).
The Deity of Christ (Alva McClain & others)–(30¢)
The Teachings of John MacArthur (120+ pages)–$6.00.
The John MacArthur Study Bible (30¢).
Clarifying statement on Modern Trends and Positions (50¢).
Does Doctrinal Purity Hinder the Cause of Missions?(20¢).
The Importance of Doctrine—Campus Crusade Critique (20¢).
Saved by Grace Alone (Lordship Salvation Issues)—(35¢).
The Dangers of Reformed Theology (50¢).

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Theology in Germany

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Theology in Germany

by Manfred E. Kober, Dallas, Texas

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It cannot be doubted that German theology is setting the pace for the rest of the world. The maxim is true, which is frequently heard, that America is twenty years behind Germany, as far as the field of theology is concerned. This therefore being the case, it is only right for Americans to examine the theological climate of Germany today and be thus informed as to the changes and trends which will become evident before long in their own country too. The following reflections are written by one who recently studied in Germany. The purpose of this article is primarily to record personal impressions and to give specific examples of contemporary belief, rather than to make a doctrinal analysis of German theology, for this alone would necessitate the writing of a little volume to do justice to the subject. For clarity's sake I will discuss German theology under four headings: the schools, the scholars or professors, the students, and the studies.

There are a number of well-known universities in Germany where Protestant theology is being taught. Among them are the universities of Heidelberg, Göttingen, Marburg, Tübingen, Erlangen, Bonn, Mainz, and Münster. I studied at Erlangen.

Diverse Theology

If there is anything typical of the schools of theology at these universities, it is the diverse theology. A person who expects to find Neo-Orthodoxy in Germany will surely be disappointed. A neat theological system of that nature just doesn't exist there. One of the students confirmed my observation when I asked him recently how he would characterize German theology. He unhesitatingly uttered, "It's a mess!" There are as many different types of theology here as there are theologians. Decades ago men like Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann nearly eclipsed all other theological directions and made many converts to their ideas, but their students, now professors themselves, have long since departed from their masters' methods. The theological spectrum is so variegated that one would have to study each theologian individually to understand German theology. Like the scholastics, each has his own little system, and perhaps the last verse in the book of Judges would describe the situation in Germany best of all: "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Disparaged Scholars

Also characteristic of Germany is the disparaging of other scholars who don't agree with one's views. The passion with which one professor belittles another is astounding. They seem to be following the old German principle, "Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein, so schlag ich dir den Schädel ein" (And if you do not wish to be my brother, I shall knock in your skull.) Teaching only a maximum of six hours per week, the prime task of the professors is to do research and to write books. These books are usually written against a treatise by some other professor. Then a third professor joins the dialogue with another volume to denounce both books as inanity and illogic. And so it goes on . . . each professor thinks that he alone has the truth. It is therefore little wonder that a crusade especially against conservative theologians is being carried on with the greatest vehemence. The university of Erlangen is known to be the most "conservative"

in Germany, because certain professors still hold to at least some historical details about the Bible. For example, the N. T. professor Stauffer insists that much of the gospel of John is historically accurate – notwithstanding current theological consensus. This causes him to be ridiculed everywhere. Whenever his name is mentioned in a lecture at some other university, like Heidelberg, for example, everyone howls. But this is nothing compared to the scorn that is heaped upon the true conservative theologians of a century or so ago. (There just are not any true conservative professors in Germany today, in the American sense of the word.) Their high esteem for the Bible, their efforts in the defense of the truth, these are touched upon in such a way that there is created a contempt for them among the students. Paul Althaus, considered by many as Germany's most "conservative" theologian, by-passed Theodor Zahn, who fought here in Erlangen so valiantly against the tide of liberalism and radicalism in the last century, with the words, "He was an extremely learned man but his greatest mistake was that he tried to defend the authenticity and infallibility of the Bible."

Notwithstanding the teaching at most other universities, many professors here still hold that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a historical fact and event, and therefore Erlangen is often ridiculed as being unscholarly and unprogressive.

Disillusioned Students

It is impossible to speak of German theology without mentioning the widespread disillusionment among the students. They are looking for something to believe, something objective and absolute. Their perplexity and discontent are understandable. Professors contradict each other in almost every area of theology. Whom then should the students believe? Which innovation are they to follow? In addition to this, studies are anything but conductive to a firm personal faith. It is really a saddening experience to see how theologians delight in the destruction of their students' faith. No wonder many students finally refuse to become pastors of the Staatskirche (Lutheran State Church), for which most theological students are preparing, once they have completed their studies. Typical is the comment which two graduates made: "We have now finished our studies at the university, but we have nothing which we can believe or preach. How can the church expect us to be preachers?!" Even my roommate, a brilliant student, decided that he would not enter the ministry –

after diligently studying theology for three years. To my question why he, who seemed so convinced of the value and rectitude of German theology, would suddenly turn his back on it, he gave a very illuminating answer: "If I want to have a personal faith which I should preach to the people, I can have nothing to do with this theological science. On the other hand, if I want to be a conscientious theologian and be true to theology's logical consequences, I must reject the possibility of a personal faith in the facts of the Bible." This disjunction between theology and a biblically oriented faith is discernible everywhere. In the words of one professor: "We must be honest and admit that we have two types of theology: a practical theology, which is that which we must preach, and a scientific theology, which is that which we really believe."

Scholars

Let us now look more closely at these men who are presently professors of theology.

Practical Unbelief

The unifying factor among professors today is an appalling unbelief relative to the contents of the Bible, though their other teachings and ideas might be as disparate as can be. Before coming to Germany, I surely thought that the great Bible teacher Dr. Charles Woodbridge was exaggerating when he stated that as far as he knew, there was not a single university professor in Germany today who believed in the inerrancy of the Bible. Now I am convinced that he was absolutely right. I would even venture to go one step further and say that it seems an utter impossibility for anyone subscribing to the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures to be ever able to become a professor at a German university. Such a primitive and naive concept of the Bible is unscholarly and unscientific, meriting only the greatest condemnation, we are told. It is said to be an utter impossibility and sign of abysmal ignorance to maintain that we can have a Bible-based system of theology, a true biblicism, in the light of 20th-century knowledge.

Profound Teaching

The great erudition of German scholars is universally recognized. Some of these men have mastered as many as eight or ten languages. Their knowledge in every area of theology is astounding to say the

least. In writing books they are very prolific. Despite these commendable factors, and upon their own admission, there is coupled with their teaching and writing an innate ambiguity. It is a standard joke that a book is of little value unless one has to read a sentence three times to understand its meaning. Clarity is tantamount to naivete. The lectures are often equally as unintelligible. To a student who is used to an easily-followed, clear outline in class, this vagueness and lack of clarity are a source of constant despair. A prime example of this ambiguity was a recent lecture held by a visiting professor from Mainz. Two hundred students listened over one hour to a lecture on a certain form of philosophical hermeneutics by Professor Pannenberg. Nobody knew what he tried to say; in fact, the whole discourse was so unintelligible, that a professor rose immediately subsequent to the peroratory and rebuked the lecturer for his excessive and unwarranted vagueness. This is no uncommon occurence, by far. A logical outcome of such teaching is, of course, an equally ambiguous type of speech and expression on the part of the students – tomorrow's pastors. Is it therefore any wonder that people no longer attend church (whereas churches were filled to capacity during the 17th century, when people "naively" believed the Bible)? One of the professors assured me that a typical Lutheran church in Germany has 3000 members; 300 members attend church; 30 come to the mid-week service; and there are 3 persons with whom the pastor can pray!

Pious Appearance

It is impossible to tell whether or not these teachers are born-again Christians. There is much talk about faith and justification through grace, and yet, there is a deadness and a coldness in the lectures, sermons, and church life as a whole. One receives the unmistakable impression that something is missing. It may just be that the whole amalgamated theological system contains enough truth which the Holy Spirit would use to bring men to salvation, but it is difficult to see how men who deny or ignore the fundamentals of our Christian faith, such as the inerrancy of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, and the historicity of His resurrection, can really be loving Christ. Notwithstanding the erroneous and unbiblical teaching of the professors, their traditional and characteristic erudition is displayed with a personal piety and a Christian decorum which merits and obtains the respect of all. Among the theology students, the professors are practically honored more than God Himself, and

it is considered a real boon when a professor at times condescends to converse with a student. Of course, not all professors display such outward virtues of piety and gentility, but the exception merely confirms the rule. Therefore the common idea is unwarranted that all teachers of doctrinal error are naturally unlikable in appearance and obnoxious in demeanor. Satan himself employs only angels of light.

The Students

Scholarly Interest

German students evidence a tremendous thirst for knowledge. It is customary that students study at as many different universities as possible. They are a modern counterpart of the ancient Athenians who always ran to hear something new. When, for example, a visiting lecturer comes, the lecture hall will be crowded, no matter how insignificant and unimportant the subject matter of his lecture might be. Students will flock to hear a lecture on the derivation of some words in Hindu mythology with the same interest and participation as a discourse on *analogia entis* (the analogy of being) and the related critique of the basis of the dogmatic methodology. At most universities the lecture halls are filled to capacity and if a student hopes to get a seat, he will have to let a friend reserve a seat for him from the previous hour. Most Germans are studying for learning's sake and one must admire their zeal and dedication. Almost all theology students – and this includes women also – possess an amazing knowledge of at least Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

Scriptural Ignorance

Despite these admirable qualities listed above, the typical German student has a profound ignorance relative to the contents of the Bible. Being taught that it is unscientific and improper to use the Bible as a proof text, the students primarily learn the theories about and criticisms on the Bible, but little of what it contains. This is why some student borrowed my Bible before a lecture on 1 Corinthians 15 one day, so that he could see what its subject matter was. And this is why my fellow students, instead of citing the Bible, run to get their theology books, when I ask them about their personal beliefs. They can recite with astounding accuracy what this or that theologian has said about a given subject. They know how many redactors supposedly worked on a given book; where Babylonian myths or Greek thought can be traced in the Scriptures; or where the early

Church is said to have mutilated the text of the Scriptures and injected its own ideas; but it is impossible to ascertain what the students really believe. Few of them have any personal convictions.

Soteriological Indifference

In the light of the foregone observations it seems only natural that the current German theologies quench any evangelical zeal. The first reason for this appears to be the vagueness of the teachings on the matter of salvation and a misplaced emphasis in theology, lacking any real authority. And secondly, the Lutheran Church firmly adheres, at least in practice, to the doctrine of infant salvation. At "baptism" faith is given to the child and he or she becomes a disciple of Christ. This error is being taught in most churches.

An oft-repeated phrase heard in lecture halls from the mouth of professors, as they refer to some current teaching, is, "Sagt das ja nicht eueren Leuten!" ("Don't ever tell that to your people!"). For instance, we were recently exhorted not to tell our people at a funeral that it is a great fallacy to believe in the immortality of the soul. Professors and students alike are well aware of the fact that a multitude of church members would rise up in protest if they were exposed to certain teachings of this *neology* (one can hardly call it theology, for theology is the teaching about God). The ancient, sound church creeds and confessions of faith have their place in the church as they had in years gone by. But, as someone has well observed, "creeds and stated policies are but verbal opiates to tranquilize the unsuspecting into continued support of institutions that are antagonistic to biblical Christianity."

A third reason for this indifference relative to the Lord's command to preach the message of salvation to every creature is the tragic fact that a simple Bible Christianity has been replaced a long time ago by an involved theological science. Listening to professors and preachers, one cannot help but receive the impression that it is impossible for a person to have even the vaguest understanding of what the gospel is all about, unless he is a great scholar who has mastered four of five languages, is familiar with the "gains" of biblical criticism, and knows all the current theories about the Bible. While theologians are wrestling with the latest hypotheses and ideas about the proper understanding of the Bible, thousands are perishing because no one has ever told them the simple words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

What are the problems and questions with which German theology concerns itself today? Can there be seen a uniform concept or idea which underlies the theological science and the tremendous amount of research and studying going on?

Unsound Doctrines

It is unwarranted to engage in any universal condemnations, but one certainly has the right to ask what German theology has in common with historic evangelical Christianity, and whether or not there is any evidence that it is moving in that direction. It cannot be denied that every theological system stands or falls upon its concept of the the Bible. It is legitimate to say that German theology is antagonistic to the biblical doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration. The fact of the matter is that the term "Verbalinspiration" is like a red flag to German theologians and they seem unable to heap sufficient scorn and ridicule upon those who adhere to this blessed teaching.

Dr. Edward J. Young, in his most penetrating book on the biblical testimony to its own inerrancy and infallibility, *Thy Word Is Truth*, rightly observes that a false concept of the Bible is really rooted in a false form of theism or view of God. What kind of a God is this who cannot even reveal Himself to men in words free of error and human modification? Certainly not the almighty and holy God of Truth whom the Bible reveals. And if God has passed on even a few words void of any error – all would admit that He has – why could He not have done it with all of the Scripture? And in the Scriptures we find unmistakable evidence that He has. Therefore the fact being true that in German theology the foundation – the view of the Bible – is faulty, it would hardly follow that the superstructure could be built properly. Consequently, since theologians expect and attempt to find flaws and errors in God's Word of Truth because their whole system is built upon an errant Bible, there remains not even the remotest possibility that they shall ever return to the biblical and historic Christian view of an inerrant, pure Word of God. This false view of the Bible brings with itself, of necessity, a shift in authority. The Bible is no longer our rule of faith and practice, for we must first determine, through diligent scholarship, what is the true text of the Bible. Reason exalts itself above revelation. The Bible can no longer be accepted as it stands.

Men like Bultmann have attempted to remove the so-called myths from the Bible. This process of *Entmythologisierung* (demythologizing) has been carried out to the nth degree by Bultmann's students, so that hardly anything stands before the pen-knife of the critics. Many theologians now completely deny the personality of God and make Him to be some kind of an inter-personal relationship between men.

Besides the term "de-mythologizing", one often hears the term "kerygma" (preaching) mentioned. We should direct our efforts, we are told, to find out the most central teachings in the sermons of the apostles and the early Church, to determine what we really must believe. Everything else, the Old Testament, and most of the New Testament doctrines are merely secondary, unimportant. They may or may not be believed. Along these lines, Dr. Frör, one of the professors here, told us recently that if anyone had difficulties with miracles, he need merely ignore the miraculous elements and go to something more appealing. The core of the kerygma, to which we ought to adhere here at Erlangen, is the death and resurrection of Christ. The inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, His deity and His return are no longer believed. The problem is, that few people agree what the absolute minimum for our faith really is. At other universities the resurrection of Christ is likewise denied. Thus for these theologians, of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, only Christ's death remains. But this is not the substitutionary, expiatory death of Christ, for their Christ is not the Christ of the Bible. He is the Christ of their imagination and "scholarship." Refusing to believe the biblical account of the origin of Jesus of Nazareth, they are left to their own devices to account for this miraculous person. One day Professor Stauffer, who has devoted his entire life to the study of the person of Christ, stood in front of his class, while discussing John 1, and exclaimed almost with despair: "The writer of the gospel of John evidently doesn't know where Christ came from; I have no idea where Christ came from; and you, ladies and gentlemen, probably don't know either." This then is the result of a life-time searching for the truth while rejecting the Word of Truth: plain, unadulterated agnosticism. Incidentally, this same professor has developed a very elaborate system of five steps as to how one can determine the true words of Jesus Christ. This, he says, is necessary, because the gospel writers obviously attributed many words to Christ which in reality they made up. Thus, for example, it can

be said with certainty that only those words are from Christ which are original, that is, which were not and could not have been spoken by someone before Him. Furthermore, the true words of Christ were always a *scandalon*, a reproach or an offense to someone. It is rather ironic that the professor down the hall has developed a system of three steps to ascertain the words of Christ; but his prerequisites are virtually the opposite of those taught by Stauffer. Pity the poor student who wants to know what Christ really spoke! – These then are some of the methods employed by German theologians as they study the Scriptures.

Unpromising Future

The forced methodology in the study of God's Word cannot but have a devastating effect on the students and ultimately on the churches and on the country as a whole. The spiritual atmosphere at such institutions of learning, where men supposedly are trained to be servants of God, may be briefly illustrated by relating what occured at a certain meeting. The professor of practical theology, Dr. Frör, was asked by an evangelical group within the student body to speak to them, and anyone else who wished to attend, on the topic: Hat die Bibel wirklich recht? (Is the Bible indeed inerrant?) Hundreds of students crowded into the lecture hall as the professor started his tirade against the authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures. The first twelve chapters of Genesis were dismissed as myths, which nevertheless have a deep and lasting lesson for us. He never pointed out just what that lesson was. Next he dealt with the subject of prophecy in the most ambiguous terms and finally dismissed prophecy as an impossibility – for how could man foretell future events? Thus he went on for over an hour, concluding his lecture by assuring us that despite all, we still could trust the Bible! There was a time for questions and I expected at least some of the more conservative students from evangelical churches to rise up in protest. But for thirty minutes this and that point were discussed and yet, not a single student disagreed with what the professor had said. Indeed, the students obviously agreed with him. Finally I ventured to ask why prophecy should be an impossibility in the light of 2. Peter 1:20-21 and 2. Tim. 3 : 16, which passages clearly indicate the divine origin of prophecy and the divine enablement of the writers. Why should it be impossible for the Holy Spirit to reveal events which happened *in pre-historic* time (such as the creation) or events yet many years in the future?

Neoorthodoxy: Its Representatives and Renegades

KARL BARTH 369

EMIL BRUNNER

PAUL TILLICH 270

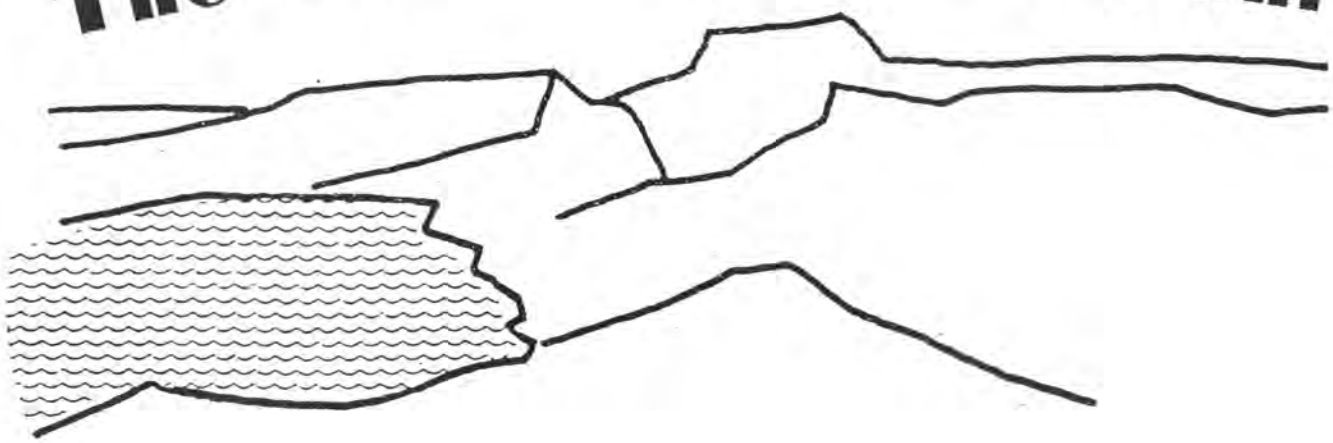
Karl Barth
1886-1968

THE DILEMMA OF CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

LIBERALISM – 1850	NEO-ORTHODOXY – 1919		NEO-EVANGELICALISM – 1956	FUNDAMENTALISM – 1909
Friedrich Schleiermacher	Karl Barth		Billy Graham	Robert T. Ketcham
				
DENIES THE MIRACULOUS	DELETES CERTAIN DOCTRINES	BIBLE	DEEMPHASIZES MAJOR DOCTRINES	DEFENDS THE FUNDAMENTALS
DESTROYS ORTHODOXY	DISMISSES FUNDAMENTALISM AS BIBLIOLATRY	CHURCH	DISASSOCIATES ITSELF FROM FUNDAMENTALISM	DEMANDS SEPARATION FROM DOCTRINAL DEVIATION
DISBELIEVES IN THE DEITY OF CHRIST	DETRACTS FROM CHRIST'S DEITY BY VAGUENESS	CHRIST	DIALOGUES WITH EVERYONE	DELIGHTS IN THE THEANTHROPIC SAVIOR
DEVELOPED THE SOCIAL GOSPEL	DEPENDS ON A LEAP IN THE DARK	SALVATION	DISSEMINATES THE CULTURAL MANDALE	DECLARES THE OLD-FASHIONED GOSPEL

Dr. Manfred Kober

The Sermon on the Mount



LAW,

GRACE

or KINGDOM?

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: LAW, GRACE, OR KINGDOM?

1A. INTRODUCTION

1b. The Intent of the Paper:

To determine whether the Sermon on the Mount is to be considered as truth for the church age, truth and instruction for the kingdom, or instruction and exhortation for the Jews living in the Lord's day.

2b. The Importance of the Problem:

1c. The Sermon on the Mount is a major discourse of our Lord and we must determine the addressees, the purpose of the instruction, and the primary interpretation, as well as the secondary application.

2c. False doctrines and a false standard of Christian conduct result from an erroneous interpretation. A wrong interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount invariably leads to wrong conduct.

2A. VIEWS

1b. The Soteriological View:

1c. The Representatives: This is generally the view of the liberals.

2c. The Rationale: Men may attain salvation through governing their lives by the principles set forth in the Sermon.

3c. The Refutation:

1d. The view is out of accord with the rest of Scripture. The Sermon would become a gospel of works.

2d. The view is out of accord with the Sermon itself. Its high moral standard, that of absolute perfection, is impossible to attain.

3d. The view is now generally abandoned, being unable to stand the test of time.

2b. The Sociological View:

1c. The Representatives: Adolf Harnack, Frederick Keller Stamm

2c. The Rationale:

The Sermon is a guide to the salvation of society. "What would happen in the world if the element of fair play as enunciated in the Golden Rule . . . were put into practice in the various relationships of life? . . . What difference all this would make, and how far we would be on the road to a new and better day in private, in public, in business, and in international relationships!" (Stamm, Seeing the Multitudes, pp. 68-69)

2A. VIEWS

2b. The Sociological View:

3c. The Refutation:

1d. The Sermon was not addressed to the whole world but to the disciples as representative Jews (Mt. 5:1-2).

2d. The Sermon contains no references to basic themes related to spiritual salvation.

3d. It cannot be shown that the kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 5:20; 7:21) means society.

3b. The Ecclesiastical View:

1c. The Representatives: Its proponents are of every theological position--liberals, fundamentalists, amillenarians, premillenarians: F. B. Meyer, C. F. H. Henry, H. A. Ironside.

2c. The Rationale: The Sermon is for the present age, as a rule of life for the believer, a code of personal ethics.

"This discourse, laying the foundation of the Kingdom of Heaven, may also be called the Directory of the Devout Life, and we can wish for nothing better than to drink into its spirit and realize its exquisite ideals" (F. B. Meyer, The Directory of the Devout Life, p. 12).

"We need to remember that, though a heavenly people, we have earthly responsibilities, and these are defined for us in this greatest of all sermons having to do with human conduct" (Ironside, Expository Notes on Matthew, p. 44).

The Sermon is a "statement of the practical way in which agape is to work itself out in daily conduct here and now. The sermon expresses therefore the only righteousness acceptable to God in this age or in any" (C. F. H. Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, p. 308).

"The Sermon on the Mount is nothing but a great and grand and perfect elaboration of what our Lord called His 'new commandment'" (M. Lloyd-Jones, Sermon on the Mount, I, 15). According to Lloyd-Jones, there are five main reasons why the Sermon on the Mount has to be for the church:

1. The Sermon anticipates New Testament truth.
2. The Sermon truths are found in the epistles, although in another form.
3. The disciples formed the nucleus of the Church.
4. The promises are most certainly for us (e.g. salt of the earth, light of the world).
5. If the Sermon is not for us, it is completely irrelevant. (Lloyd-Jones, 15)

3c. The Refutation:

1d. The principle of literal interpretation would have to be discarded if the Sermon applies to the Church.

2A. VIEWS

3b. The Ecclesiastical View:

3c. The Refutation:

2d. The context:

1e. Such a view is contrary to the theological pattern of Matthew, who gives the Sermon a place which definitely relates it to the Messianic kingdom. The order of Matthew is divinely inspired, and the Sermon on the Mount follows the announcement of the kingdom by John in Matthew 2-3 and by Christ in Matthew 4:17.

2e. The church is not mentioned till Matthew 16:18.

3e. John the Baptist and Christ announced the kingdom of heaven as "at hand" (3:2-3; 4:17), making the Sermon on the Mount part of the King's message as He instructed the subjects of the kingdom.

3d. The content:

1e. The complete absence of church truth. L. S. Chafer, in his Systematic Theology, V, 112, shows that unique church age truths are significantly absent from the Sermon. It would be impossible to lead a person to Christ with the Sermon on the Mount. The five major church age truths, conspicuous by their absence, are the following:

1f. Ministry of the Spirit.
2f. Death of Christ.
3f. Regeneration.
4f. Salvation by faith.
5f. Justification.
6f. Prayer in the name of Christ.

The latter is a rather important omission from that which Carl F. H. Henry (p. 305) calls "the rule of daily life for the Christian believer."

Christ mentions the church, prayer, and the Spirit on other occasions during His ministry (Jn. 14:16; 16:13, 24; Mt. 16:18), and if the Sermon were for the church, undoubtedly these truths would be mentioned in the Sermon at least in passing.

2e. The Sermon concerns those who inherit the earth (5:5).

3e. The Sermon is legal in character:

1f. It is delivered within the context of the law (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 15:8).

2f. It re-enacts the decalogue (Mt. 5:17-19) with stringent additions (5:21, 22, 27, 28).

2A. VIEWS

3b. The Ecclesiastical View:

3c. The Refutation:

3d. The content:

3e. The Sermon is legal in character:

3f. No statement of the gospel can be found, notwithstanding C. F. H. Henry's statement: "Grace dominates the whole biblical revelation" (p. 290).

4f. The bringing of gifts to the altar (5:24) is clearly within the context of the Mosaic law.

4d. Neither Christ nor the early church did actually seek to follow the Sermon on the Mount:

1e. Christ: In the Sermon He exhorts to turn the other cheek (5:39), yet Christ protested against being smitten on the cheek (Jn. 18:32).

2e. Early church: Christ stresses that no thought was to be taken for life, things necessary for eating, for drinking, or the clothes necessary for covering (6:26-34). And yet, in the New Testament, church age believers do take care for food and garments, and are exhorted to do so:

1f. The activity of Dorcas (Acts 9:39).

2f. The request of Paul for his cloak (II Tim. 4:13).

3f. The words of Paul that one should plow with hope (I Cor. 9:10).

4f. The work of Paul in taking an offering for the poor of Jerusalem (II Cor. 8, 9).

5d. The view that the Sermon on the Mount is a guide of spiritual life for the church, allows only two alternatives: either blatant contradiction of Scripture or the destructive principle of spiritualization.

4b. The Millennial View:

1c. The Representatives: Gaebelein, Kelly, Pettingill, Barnhouse, Campbell, Ryrie.

2c. The Rationale: The common view held by premillenarians is that which applies the Sermon to the future earthly kingdom, which the Lord announced as being at hand. The Sermon is the constitution of the kingdom.

1d. Its legal character: The law is re-enacted and appended with stringent additions. Romans and Galatians, however, teach that the child of God is free from the law.

2d. The character of Matthew: He portrays Christ as King.

2A. VIEWS

4b. The Millennial View:

2c. The Rationale:

3d. The context of the Sermon: The King was announced and expected (3:2-3; 4:17).

4d. The hearers were faithful Israelites (5:1-2), looking for the Messiah (Jn. 1:45).

5d. The age: The age of law continued. Christ was made under the law (Gal. 4:4), lived in absolute obedience to the law (Jn. 8:46; Mt. 17:5; I Pet. 2:21-23).

6d. The identity of the speaker: Matthew 1:1--the son of David, i.e. King.

7d. The rejection of the King and postponement of the kingdom. This involved a delay in the application of the kingdom's constitution and rule of life.

8d. The principles of the Sermon demand a personal presence of the King (Pentecost, Bibliotheca Sacra, October 1958, pp. 313-315):

1e. To comfort the mourners (c.f. Micah 7:1-7; Is. 61:2).

2e. To give the meek their inheritance (Ps. 37).

3e. To let the merciful obtain mercy.

4e. To grant possession of the land (5:3; 5:5; 5:10).

9d. The description of Millennial conditions:

1e. The salt of the earth, the light of the world, i.e. the responsibility of believers in the kingdom (5:13-16).

2e. The turning of the other cheek, etc. This could only be true in the kingdom because Christ didn't turn the other cheek, nor do the two witnesses of Revelation 11, who destroy their opponents with fire. The turning of the other cheek is encouraged because Christ will personally be present in the kingdom to avenge His own (5:39-44).

3e. The prohibition of judgment. In the kingdom, the righteous judge will be judging for His people (7:1-6).

4e. The possession of the land (5:3, 5, 10).

3c. The Refutation:

1d. The conditions for the Millennium are incongruous:

1e. The disciples are seen as reviled and persecuted for Christ's sake (5:11-12).

2A. VIEWS

4b. The Millennial View:

3c. The Refutation:

1d. The conditions for the Millennium are incongruous:

2e. The disciples are to pray for the coming of the kingdom (6:10), which clearly indicates that the kingdom is as yet anticipated.

3e. The disciples are warned concerning false prophets (7:15), which are unlikely to exist in the kingdom (Rand, Bibliotheca Sacra, January 1955, pp. 28-38).

2d. The entrance into the Millennium is impossible:

The proponents of the kingdom application of the discourse assert that the Sermon contains the constitution of the kingdom. Those who desire to inherit the kingdom must live up to the standards presented in the discourse. Chafer comments:

"The conclusion growing out of this analysis of this discourse is that it is the direct and official pronouncement of the King Himself of that manner of life which will be the ground for admission into the kingdom of heaven and the manner of life to be lived in the kingdom" (V, 111).

If the Ten Commandments present an unattainable standard of life, how much more the Sermon on the Mount? The requirements for entrance into the kingdom are extremely stringent:

--Poor in spirit, meek, persecuted for Christ's sake (5:1-12).
--Righteousness (5:20).
--Perfection (5:48).
--Entering the straight gate (7:13-14).
--Doing the perfect will of the Father (7:21-22).
--The concluding parable: obeying Christ's sayings (7:24-27).

5b. The Interim View:

1c. The Representatives: S. L. Johnson, Pentecost, Toussaint.

2c. The Rationale: The discourse presents a description of the good fruit, the fruit of righteousness and repentance. It is concerned with the life the disciples were to live in the light of the coming kingdom.

1d. The grammatico-historical method of interpretation is employed.

2d. The message of the Sermon is anticipatory:

1e. The entrance to the kingdom is anticipated:

1f. It looks forward to a time when people shall enter the kingdom (5:20; 7:21).

2f. It speaks of future rewards (5:12, 19, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 18).

2A. VIEWS

5b. The Interim View:

2c. The Rationale:

2d. The message of the Sermon is anticipatory:

1e. The entrance to the kingdom is anticipated:

3f. Its sample prayer includes a request for the coming of the kingdom (6:10).

4f. It sees the king as judging before the establishment of the kingdom (7:19-23).

2e. Persecution and false prophets are predicted (5:11-12; 7:15-18). There will thus be a time lapse before the establishment of the kingdom.

3e. The future tense is used abundantly (5:4-9, 19-20; 6:4, 6, 14, 15, 18, 33; 7:2, 7, 11, 16, 20, 21, 22).

3d. The addressees are primarily the disciples:

1e. The setting: 5:1-2

2e. Their description: salt, light (5:13-16)

3e. Their prayer: "Our Father" (6:9)

4e. Their lives:

1f. Characterized by righteousness (5:19-7:12)

2f. Hunger and thirst after righteousness (5:6)

3f. Peace makers (5:9)

5e. Their work: concerned with service and doing (5:10-12, 13-16, 19-20, 21-48; 6:1-18, 19-34; 7:1-12, 12-23, 24-27).

6e. Their instructions: teaching rather than preaching (5:2, 19; 7:29).

7e. Their anticipation:

1f. Rewards (5:12, 19, 46; 6:1, 2, 5, 16).

2f. Seeking first the kingdom (6:30).

4d. The subject matter is service and doing (7:19).

3c. The relevance:

1d. Stanley Toussaint:

"The sermon is <u>primarily</u> addressed to disciples exhorting them to a righteous life in view of the coming kingdom. Those who were not genuine disciples were warned concerning the danger of their hypocrisy and unbelief. They are enjoined to enter the

2A. VIEWS

5b. The Interim View:

3c. The relevance:

1d. Stanley Toussaint:

narrow gate and to walk the narrow way. This is included in the discourse, but it is only the secondary application of the sermon" (The Argument of Matthew, unpublished doctor's dissertation, p. 114).

2d. Lewis S. Chafer:

The Sermon "as a rule of life is addressed to the Jews before the cross and to the Jew in the coming kingdom" (V, 97). "It was addressed to the people before Him and concerned the requisite preparation on their part for admission into the kingdom of heaven then being published as 'at hand.' It likewise declared the manner of life that would be demanded within the kingdom when once it is entered" (V, 100). "A secondary application to the Church means that lessons and principles may be drawn from it" (V, 97).

3d. Dwight J. Pentecost:

"We feel that this Sermon on the Mount is to be connected with the offer of the kingdom, rather than with the description of the kingdom or the kingdom age itself" (Bibliotheca Sacra, April 1958, p. 134). "In its primary interpretation the Sermon on the Mount is directly applicable to those of our Lord's own day who by their profession in John's baptism were anticipating the coming of the King and the kingdom" (Bibliotheca Sacra, October 1958, p. 316).

4d. Charles C. Ryrie:

"1) Basically and primarily it is a detailed explanation of what the Lord meant by repentance. . . . 2) it has therefore relevance to any time that the kingdom is offered. . . . But 3) it does picture certain aspects of life in the millennial kingdom and thus in a certain restricted sense is a sort of constitution of the kingdom. However 4) as all Scripture, it is profitable for any people" (Biblical Theology of the New Testament, pp. 81-82).

3A. CONCLUSION

The Sermon on the Mount is a problem passage of the first magnitude. It is one of Christ's three major discourses. The Upper Room Discourse deals with church age truth, the Olivet Discourse with the tribulation, and the Sermon on the Mount with the kingdom. We have rejected the ecclesiastical interpretation of the Sermon because of its place in the arrangement of Matthew (see diagram on the final page). It comes long before the announcement of the church and, indeed, forms part of the kingdom offer. Furthermore, the Sermon lacks Church truth, such as salvation by faith, prayer in the name of Christ, and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. While certain truths of the Sermon seem to be repeated in the Epistles, similarity does not mean

3A. CONCLUSION

identity. The addressees of the Sermon are subjects of the kingdom rather than members of the Body of Christ. The church was to them as yet a mystery. The bonafide offer of the kingdom forms the interpretive key for the Sermon. Actually, both the interim view and the millennial view are correct in certain respects. The Sermon on the Mount, rightly understood, involves three aspects. It is taught to the disciples who lived during the time of the proclamation of the kingdom. Further, it involves their preparation of the kingdom, and also deals with the participation in the kingdom (see diagram).

1b. The Sermon relates to the proclamation of the kingdom.

Various passages of the Sermon definitely relate to the period just prior to the establishment of the kingdom, such as the persecution of the disciples, the prayer for the kingdom, and the future prospects of rewards. Since the kingdom was officially rejected in Matthew 12, the promise of the kingdom was taken from the Jews of Christ's time, and given to another generation (Mt. 21:43), living during the tribulation, when the disciples would once again expect the coming of the King and His kingdom. The so-called Lord's Prayer will be especially relevant then, as the disciples pray that God's will be done on earth, where the Wilful King of Daniel 11 has free reign. The request for deliverance from the Evil One will then be made by those who suffer under Antichrist's reign of terror.

2b. The Sermon describes the proper preparation for the kingdom.

Lewis S. Chafer is correct in seeing the Sermon as spelling out the entrance requirements for the kingdom. It is the "pure in heart" (5:8) who alone shall see God. The citizens of the kingdom need a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharasees (5:20). In fact, Christ requires of them the absolute perfection of God (5:48). The disciples must have responded in utter amazement. How could they be pure in heart, more righteous than the Pharisees and as perfect as God? The answer lies in Christ's concluding illustration of the house built on the rock (7:24-27). Those disciples who heard Christ's sayings and did them would endure and enter the kingdom. The message of the Messiah would produce faith and works in the attentive disciples, qualifying them to enter the straight gate of the kingdom (7:13).

3b. The Sermon outlines the disciples' participation in the kingdom.

Ryrie stresses that the Sermon pictures "certain aspects of life in the kingdom and thus in a certain restricted sense is a sort of constitution of the kingdom" (Biblical Theology of the New Testament, p. 82). The inheritance of the land will then be a blessed reality. The turning of the other cheek and the giving of one's possessions to anyone who asks, will then be tolerable because of the personal presence of the Prince of Peace. Especially in the Kingdom will His citizens function as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. (5:13-14)

3A. CONCLUSION

4b. The Sermon provides high ethical principles for any dispensation, and any people.

As a guide for daily conduct, the Sermon is no more applicable to the church age believers than are the Ten Commandments. By interpretation, the Sermon is for the subjects of the kingdom, giving them guidelines for life in anticipation of the kingdom, detailing the qualifications for entrance into the kingdom and outlining their participation in the kingdom. Once one realizes these three major purposes for the Sermon on the Mount, it becomes possible to rightly divide the teachings of the Sermon and assign each paragraph to its proper purpose. But, like the entire Old Testament, which, while not written to us, is certainly for us, so the principles of the Sermon may be used with great profit by the church age believers.

Consistent dispensationalists have been unjustly accused of writing off this portion of the Word of God as irrelevant for today. Yet dispensationalists insist that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. And they recognize the necessary distinction which others refuse to see, that between interpretation and application. He who would rightly divide (II Tim. 2:15)--rather than recklessly distort (II Cor. 4:2)--the Word of God, must know that while each passage of Scripture has many applications, it has only one correct interpretation. To determine the correct interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount has been the purpose of this study.

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The Sermon on the Mount

Law

Grace

Kingdom

MT. 3:2-3; 4:17	MT. 3-12	MT. 12-13	MT. 16	ACTS 1-REV.	REV.	MT. 25:32
KINGDOM ANNOUNCED	KINGDOM OFFERED	KINGDOM REJECTED	CHURCH ANNOUNCED	RAPTURE ANTICIPATED	KINGDOM REOFFERED	KINGDOM INSTITUTE

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

This is would have been my last column on prophecy for the SEED—at least if Harold Camping had been correct with his prediction. Camping, owner of Family Radio Network, makes this claim, "God has led us in these last days to discover Biblical evidence that judgment day for the unbelievers and the rapture of believer will occur on May 21, 2011." (FRN Pocket Calendar for 2009).

Then there is the prediction, based on the Mayan Calendar, asserting that the world will come to a catastrophic end on December 21, 2012. So, which is it? May 21, 2011 or December 21, 2012. It can't be both; it will probably be neither. As we know by now, May 21 came and went, without the predicted rapture and apocalypse.

Throughout church history hundreds of dates have been set for the return of the Lord and the end of the world. They all have one thing in common. They were **erroneous predictions uttered by false prophets**. Date setting is unbiblical. Below are some reasons why it is dangerous and wrong.

1. ***It disregards the fact that all previous date-setting attempts were doomed to failure.***

If the date setters were correct, we would all enjoy heaven right now. Unfortunately, most date setters do not repent. They just recalculate and recalibrate. When Edgar Whisenant's book, ***88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be In 88***, turned out to be a false prophecy, he promptly suggested 89 reasons why the rapture would be in 1989. Harold Camping's publication, ***1994?,*** failed to come true but in recent months he was certain that the rapture would be on May 21 of this year. **"The Bible guarantees it,"** was his slogan on the web-site poster.

2. ***It disobeys the injunction from Christ to refrain from unwarranted speculation.***

Sir Robert Anderson, chief of Criminal Investigation for Scotland Yard, and great theologian, discerned the problem with date setters 130 years ago. Insisting with Lord Bacon that the interpretation of prophecy requires "wisdom, sobriety, and reverence," Anderson laments the situation in his time:

"In our day prophetic students gave turned prophets, and with mingled folly and daring have sought to fix the very year of Christ's return to earth,--predictions which possibly our children's children will recall when another century shall have been added to the history of Christendom,. If such vagaries brought discredit only on their authors, it were well. But though broached in direct opposition to Scripture, they have brought reproach on Scripture itself, and have given a stimulus to the jaunty skepticism of the day. We might have hoped that whatever else might be forgotten, the last words which the Lord Jesus spoke on earth would not be thus thrust aside: 'It is not for you to know the times nor the seasons which the Father has put in his own power' (Acts 1:7) . . . the result has been that the blessed hope of the Lord's return has been degraded to the level of predictions of astrologers, to the confusion and grief of faithful hearts and the amusement of the world" (***The Coming Prince***, 11th ed., 131-132).

3. It delves into areas of privileged knowledge that only belongs to God.

At the Lord's ascension, the disciples asked the Lord concerning the establishment of the kingdom:

"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his power" (Acts 1:6-7).

Christ's final comments to His disciples in Acts 1:7 was that it is **futile** for them to guess and **forbidden** for them to know the times or seasons. Neither the period of time ***(chronos)*** nor the moment of time ***(kairos)*** are knowable by mortals. Certain information about the future is God's secret. The unrevealed, secret things belong to the Lord (Deut. 29:29). They are His property.

Christian psychiatrist O. Quentin Hyder has issued a timely warning to believers,

"God has not given us knowledge of the future nor the ability to obtain it. In this dispensation we are limited in knowledge but expected to live by faith. One day we shall know even as we are known. Craving for knowledge of the future is absolutely contrary to God's will for man and therefore any attempt to obtain it is devil inspired and eventually damaging or even destructive to all who pursue it" (***The Christian's Handbook of Psychiatry*** [1971], 75-76).

4. It discounts the fact that even secular predictions are totally inaccurate and impossible.

Who in the summer of 1989 would have predicted the collapse of the Iron Curtain on November 9 of that year? What prognosticator knew about the ouster of Egyptian President Mubarak a week before it happened in February 2011? Mark Twain's wry comment is much to the point: "It is difficult to make predictions, especially about the future."

Samuel Brittan

What do the Arab uprisings and the world financial crisis have in common? They seem very different subjects and are written about by different "experts". What they have in common is the complete failure of almost all these experts to predict them.

FINANCIAL TIMES FRIDAY MAY 27 2011

The follies and fallacies of our forecasters

5. It destroys the concept of imminence, namely, that Christ could return at any moment.

To insist, as Camping does, that the rapture takes place on May 21, means that the Lord cannot return today. Yet we are to look daily and hourly for His coming. In Titus 2:13 Paul literally says the we are "excitedly expecting continually the joyous prospect" of Christ's glorious appearing.

6. ***It displays a certain arrogance of the date setter by suggesting a novel interpretation hidden from everyone else.***

Date setters claim to have special insights either through hidden codes, direct revelation, special interpretation or exercises in numerology. Whisenant referred to his predecessors as "the wrong date setters of the past (***88 Reasons***, 52). Of course, he promptly joined their ranks. Camping observes that previous speculators were wrong because "they did not base their conclusion upon a careful analysis of everything the Bible had to say about the return of Christ. (***We Are Almost There***, 18) As for himself, Camping says, **"We indeed can be certain that the rapture will occur on May 21, 2011 and the final day of the history of the world is October 21, 2011"** (Ibid. 63, emphasis in the original). When May 21 came and went without the predicted rapture of saints and commencement of the judgment of sinners, all that Camping could mutter, once again demonstrably a false prophet, "I am flabbergasted."

Camping Picks New Rapture Date of Oct. 21

California preacher says May 21 was only "an invisible judgment day."

http://slatest.slate.com/posts/2011/05/22/harold_camping_judgement_day_c...

UPDATED Monday at 11:35 p.m.: Harold Camping isn't ready to concede defeat just yet.

Sure, Saturday came and went without any signs of the apocalypse he promised, but the California preacher said Monday that was only because, until now, he had been a little fuzzy on the timeline that he had prophesied. Turns out May 21 was only an "invisible judgment day" and that the actual end of the world will occur five months after he had been predicting.

"It won't be spiritual on October 21st," world is going to be destroyed all together, but it will be very quick."

UPDATED Monday at 8:52 a.m.: Harold Camping opened his door briefly Sunday to speak with reporters, telling them that he was "flabbergasted" that his end-of-days predictions did not come true.

"It has been a really tough weekend," the 89-year-old fundamentalist radio preacher said,

7. ***It distorts genuine interpretation and holds all legitimate teachers of prophecy up to ridicule.***

In a number of states Harold Camping's sensational warnings appeared on thousands of billboards: **Judgment Day--May 21,2011—The Bible Guarantees It.** Not unexpectedly, reports in the news media are ridiculing these precipitous predictions. Now that nothing happened on May 21, unbelievers and skeptics gleefully are pointing out how wrong these fundamentalists are in their predictions. The news media worldwide is having a field day, lumping together all who claim to believe the Bible as fundamentalists and thus besmearing a perfectly good theological movement. Camping's claim that the Bible guarantees his view implies to skeptics and scoffers that the Bible cannot be trusted in other areas of end times teaching and doctrinal truth.

Typical for the world press coverage of Camping's false prophecy is the column in the conservative German Newspaper, ***Die Welt***, (Monday, May 23, 2011, p. 27), reproduced and translated below:

USA

Gläubige warten vergeblich auf Weltuntergang

In den USA haben Hunderte christliche Fundamentalisten vergeblich auf das Ende der Welt gewartet. Laut einer Vorhersage des 89-jährigen Radiopredigers Harold Camping sollte die Apokalypse am Samstag weltweit mit schweren Erdbeben beginnen, während einige wenige Auserwählte in den Himmel auffahren sollten. Doch der große Knall blieb aus, Ungläubige reagierten mit bösem Spott.

Laut Campings Prophezeiung sollte die Erde am Samstag weltweit jeweils um 18 Uhr Ortszeit zu beben beginnen – es wurden jedoch aus keinem Erdteil besondere Vorkommnisse gemeldet. Alle Menschen, denen der unheilvollen Botschaft zufolge ein Platz im Himmel versagt geblieben wäre, hätten sogar noch fünf Monate weiter leiden müssen, bis die Welt am 21. Oktober endgültig untergegangen wäre.

DIE WELT | **SEITE 27**

MONTAG, 23. MAI 2011

The Faithful Wait Futilely for the End of the World

"In the USA hundreds of fundamentalists waited futilely for the end of the world. According to predictions by the 89-year-old radio preacher Harold Camping, the apocalypse was to begin worldwide this Saturday with heavy earthquakes, while some few of the elect were to ascend to heaven. The big bang did not happen. Unbelievers reacted with cutting ridicule.

According to Camping's prophecy, the earth was to begin quaking on Saturday everywhere at 6 p.m. local time—however, from no parts of the globe were there reports of any special occurrences. As for the rest of the human population, which, according to the disconcerting message had no place in heaven, they would have to continue suffering for another five months until the final end of the world on October 21."

Unfortunately, doctrinal error seldom stands by itself. Harold Camping's horrible and heretical hermeneutics lead him to insist that the church age ended in 1988, when Satan entered into the local church. According to him, that there is no millennial rule of Christ. Even if the rapture were to occur this year, the end of the world, in biblical perspective, could not be for another seven years of tribulation followed by 1000 years of the reign of Christ. Camping further asserts that the wicked will be annihilated rather than suffer everlasting punishment in hell. After the non-event of May 21, 2011, Camping insists that while the rapture did not occur, divine judgment has begun, precluding any salvation of sinners.

8. It disseminates its error with missionary zeal and thus influences others to be heretical.

It is difficult to conceive what the life of Camping's followers and employees will be like, now that their faith in their leader has been shattered. The rapture which they anticipated on May 21 did not happen! What do they tell their relatives and friends? What of their witness to their loved ones and acquaintances? What of their credibility and usefulness in any future ministry?

9. It discourages young or immature believers.

One can only imagine the sad disappointment of young Christians by a spiritual leader in whom they had confidence. They looked up to their spiritual mentor and subscribed to his sensationalism and speculation. Now they must question everything they were taught by this false prophet. Sadly, they will be the laughing stock of their unsaved relatives and acquaintances. The emotional and spiritual scars left by this devastating experience will not soon disappear.

10. It diverts resources from legitimate Christian enterprises.

The millions of booklets distributed free by Edgar Whisenant, giving 88 reaons why he believed the rapture would be in 1988, involved tragic misuse of the Lord's money. The millions of dollars spent by Camping and his followers on 2000 billboards warning of the rapture and ensuing judgments on May 21, 2011, might well have been spent on missionary enterprises, sound local churches and biblical educational institutions. Deluded disciples of Camping spent all their life savings to spread an egregious error.

This isn't the first time the radio host's biblical math seems to have failed him. He previously predicted Jesus Christ would return to Earth in 1994. For those who bought into Camping's latest predictions—followers and Family Radio reportedly accepted donations and spent millions on 2000 billboards and other advertising to get the word out about the apocalypse—the lack of rapture seemed to offer few answers.

"I don't understand why nothing has happened," retired transit worker and New York City resident Robert Fitzpatrick told *Reuters*. The 60-year-old retired transit worker had spent $140,000 of his savings to help spread Camping's warning of the approaching Judgment Day.

http://slatest.slate.com/posts/2011/05/22/harold_camping_judgement_day_christian_radio_

Conclusion:
Rather than engaging in speculation and sensationalism, the believer is characterized by

a. **Eager anticipation** (Titus 2:13, "excitedly expecting . . .")

b. **Energized activity** (Luke 19:13, "occupy till I come")

c. **Extraordinary alertness** (2. Thessalonians 2:3, "Let no man deceive you. . .")

May this be our concern until the trumpet sounds and summons us into the presence of the Savior. And that may be this very day!

Question: "Is Harold Camping and Family Radio a cult?"

Answer: Family Radio started as a biblically based and theologically sound radio ministry in the mid-20th century. Sadly, at the leading of Harold Camping, Family Radio has forsaken its roots and become a purveyor of false teaching. While there is still some good programming on Family Radio, Camping's teaching that the church age is over and his repeated failed "judgment day" predictions, along with the rabid and blind following he has developed, are certainly cult-like. While we are not yet prepared to declare Family Radio a cult, due to the leadership of Harold Camping, it is moving in that direction.

Harold Camping's most recent failed "prophecy" that the rapture would occur on May 21, 2011, is not the first time he has made false predictions based not on sound exegesis of Scripture, but on his own methods of interpretation. His first prediction was that the end of the world would occur on May 21, 1988. When that failed, Camping wrote a book early in the 1990s titled 1994?. In it, Harold Camping speculated—perhaps "claimed" would be more accurate—that history would end in September of 1994. Christ would return and judge the world, according to Camping. Camping was obviously wrong, and we know from Scripture that God's prophets are never wrong. In fact, those who claimed to speak for the Lord in the Old Testament were proven to be false prophets when their words did not come true, and they were put to death (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). Today, in the age of grace, we no longer put false prophets to death, but the test is still the same. By any standard of interpretation, Harold Camping is a false prophet.

In spite of Camping's claim to be a biblical interpreter, his interpretations from Scripture have consistently ignored the words of the Lord Jesus regarding His return. In His most extensive revelation on end times, Matthew 24, Jesus specifically states, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Matthew 24:36). This is so clear and so obvious that it is incomprehensible that anyone could make the statements Harold Camping makes and that others can believe them. But people do believe him and, sadly, they make crucial life decisions based on his foolish and unbiblical predictions.

Camping's use of an allegorical method of interpretation for Scripture, and especially for unfulfilled prophecy, is fatally flawed. God gave us His Word to communicate very specific information. Our job when approaching Scripture is to determine what God is communicating by using rational, normal methods of communication. God does not hide truth in obscure, undecipherable terms and symbols. His Word contains truths that affect our lives and our eternal destinies, and He gave those truths to us to be read, studied and understood. We need no bizarre interpretations to determine truth. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth (John 16:13), and His guiding influence is more than sufficient for our understanding.

Along with his false predictions, Harold Camping has stated that the witness of the church is over, that God has destroyed it, and that believers should leave the church. He has concluded that the church is dead, existing only as a shell of its former self. There should no longer be pastors, elders, or deacons. People should not be submitting to spiritual leadership. He says that the Holy Spirit is no longer present in the church and that people who are accepting Christ as Savior in the church are really not saved since the Holy Spirit is not present there.

However, it is clear that Harold Camping has overlooked the very nature of the church. The church is inseparable from the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son. It is the body of Christ, with Christ as the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 2:19). Jesus said He would build His church and the gates of hell would "not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). He has appointed elders and deacons to be undershepherds in His church, and He never identified a time when that structure would change. Right up until the rapture of the church, His plan for church government will remain.

We strongly urge people to have nothing to do with Harold Camping and Family Radio. Do not to listen to him—he has forsaken sound doctrine on many issues and has proven himself to be a false prophet. Whether it is repentance unto genuine salvation, or repentance from false teaching, Christians should be praying for Harold Camping to repent and for Family Radio to remove him from leadership.

THE CATASTROPHIC CONDUCT OF HAROLD CAMPING

Harold Camping's prediction concerning the date for the rapture on May 21, 2011, is evidence of an unusually severe spiritual failure. The catastrophic results for him as well as for all legitimate teachers of prophecy can only be deplored in the strongest terms.

1. **His failure** to _____ the Word of Truth.

2. **His failure** to learn from past _____.

3. **His failure** to obey the _____.

4. **His failure** to differentiate between clear _____ and convoluted _____.

5. **His failure** to repent of his pride in equating his words with those of _____.

6. **His failure** to cease from his horrible _____ and sensationalizing.

7. **His failure** to apologize to his _____.

8. His **failure** to be a faithful steward of _____.

9. His **failure** to consider the _____ of other teachers of the Word.

THE CATASTROPHIC CONDUCT OF HAROLD CAMPING

Harold Camping's prediction concerning the date for the rapture on May 21, 2011, is evidence of an unusually severe spiritual failure. The catastrophic results for him as well as for all legitimate teachers of prophecy can only be deplored in the strongest terms.

1. **His failure** to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

2. **His failure** to learn from past exegetical errors.

3. **His failure** to obey the injunction of Christ.

4. **His failure** to differentiate between clear revelation and convoluted ruminations.

5. **His failure** to repent of his pride in equating his words with those of the Scriptures.

6. **His failure** to cease from his horrible spiritualizing and sensationalizing.

7. **His failure** to apologize to his misled followers.

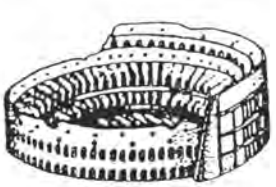
8. His **failure** to be a faithful steward of ministry monies.

9. His **failure** to consider the spiritual insights of other teachers of the Word.

No Tricentennial for America?

A Balanced Biblical Discussion of the Future of America

☆USA!



NO TRICENTENNIAL FOR AMERICA?

Pre-Trib Conference December 6-8, 2010
Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.
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Introduction

God has ordained three institutions for the benefit of man: the home, the church, and civil government. As there are biblical principles explaining what makes a godly family and a growing church, there are principles explaining what makes a great nation. If a nation follows divine directives, it can expect God to **promote** it, **protect** it, and **preserve** it. Our nation has been graciously blessed by God more than any other nation because certain things are true in our country's background that are not true at all or only partially so of other nations.

We would like to consider four inspired passages and draw from them four important principles that explain why God has uniquely blessed the United States. From each passage we will glean a major premise, from our nation's heritage we will derive a minor premise, resulting in a hopefully cogent conclusion.

Because the effects of these principles continue, God's blessings on America will also continue. God stands by His Word. Predictions concerning our country's demise are premature. America can boast unique features that are absent from other nations. The following discussion in the first part of this manuscript will point out some of these formative features of the United States and possibly give us hope for America's future. Part two deals with some of the major events of the end-times. In part three an effort is made to discern America's place in the context of prophetic predictions for this planet and its nations.

1A. The Exceptionalism of the USA

1b. The Genuine Piety of Our Founding Fathers:

> Exodus 20:5,6: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

1c. The Major Premise:

As the twelve tribes of Israel were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, they were about to be fused into a nation. Incorporated in the Ten Commandments, which are directed exclusively to Israel, is a timeless principle which applies to any nation. If a nation is begun by an ungodly, idolatrous nucleus, God will mete out punishment to the third and fourth generation (Ex. 20:5). However, if a nation is initiated by a group of godly founding fathers, God will bless that nation to a thousand generations. (See Deut. 7:9, where the word generations is used.) The premise of Exodus 20:6 then is: **God will bless even the remote descendents of a godly people**.

2c. The Minor Premise:

Although denied by many, **our nation more than any other nation, was established by a group of godly men for God's glory**. Though rejected by revisionist historians, this truth can be demonstrated from early American documents. The Mayflower Compact, framed in 1620 by the first permanent English settlers in the North American wilderness, gives three reasons for their settlement: "having undertaken for the glory of God, the advancement of the Christian faith and the honor of King and country...." They **loved God**, **loved the Gospel**, and **loved their mother country**. (If the king of England had not made it impossible for the colonies to exist as he tore to shreds every agreement he made with the settlements, we would still be loyal Englishmen.)

Even in Jamestown, founded in 1607 as a strictly economic venture, the first Charter of Virginia of April 10, 1606 expressed their desires:

> We, greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their Desires for the Furtherance of so noble a Work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the Glory of his Divine Majesty, in **propagating of Christian Religion to such People as yet live in darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God**, and may in time bring the infidels and Savages, living in those parts, to human Civility, and to a settled and quiet Government: DO, by these our Letters Patents, graciously accept of, and agree to, their humble and well-intended Desires (emphasis added).

Not every colonist in those formative years was a Christian, but on those early vessels there came not just sailors, soldiers, servants, and scoundrels, but saints. These individuals helped lay the foundation of each colony. Their Christian piety influenced the colonial politics. They had one overriding passion, to share the Gospel both with their neighboring settlers as well as the noble savages. It is they who qualify for the promise of Exodus 20:6.

3c. Conclusion:

Our country today is blessed not because of what we are now, but because of what we were in those early days when a band of believers framed the foundation of a cluster of colonies with one overriding purpose: for the **worship of God** and the **witness of the Christian Gospel**. God promised blessings to thousands of generations. Assuming that a generation is about 25 years, we have exhausted only 16 of these generations since the Mayflower landed. The promise strongly suggests that God's blessings will continue.

2b. The Gracious Promotion of The Jews:

Gen. 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

1c. The Major Premise:

The principle of Genesis 12:3 is clear: **God will deal with nations in accordance with how they treat the nation of Israel**. Those who **promote** and **protect** Israel will experience the blessing of God. Those who **persecute** Israel will be cursed by Him. As God avowed in Jeremiah 30:20: "I will punish all that oppress them." History is replete with illustrations of nations that persecuted Israel and the God of Israel in turn punished them. Where are the mighty Assyrians and the militaristic Babylonians? Their empires crumbled. Their races vanished. Why did they disappear? There is one major reason for the demise of these peoples. They touched God's people. Israel is God's special treasure. Even when Israel is in unbelief, He calls His people "the apple of his eye." Let us note the two prominent passages of God's loving concern for Israel:

Deut. 32:10 He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Zechariah 2:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

2c. The Minor Premise:

The United States holds a unique place among the world's nations in relation to the Jews. Unlike other nations, we have never once had a governmentally instigated persecution of the Jewish people. The first refuge in history with full freedom for persecuted Jews was called Rhode Island where Roger Williams encouraged all persecuted individuals, especially Jews, to settle. With his blessing the Touro Synagogue, the first synagogue in America, was established by the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island, in 1656. **Our nation's history demonstrates that we have never been guilty of persecuting the Jews but have helped them more than any other nation.**

In modern history it was the political pressure exerted by the United States that brought about a homeland for the Jews in 1948. It is the United States that guarantees the continuous existence of the State of Israel through economic and military aid at the rate of $1.2 billion annually. When attacked by its intractable Arab enemies, Israel has just one friend it can count on and that is the United States. Former President Jimmy Carter, whatever we might think of him, echoed the sentiments of the United States Government toward Israel in his congratulatory comments upon Israel's thirtieth anniversary as a nation: "As the President of the United States I can say without hesitation that we will support Israel, not

for just another thirty years, but forever." Other American presidents have made similar statements.

3c. Conclusion:

In Genesis 12:3 God promised continuous blessings upon those who bless Israel. Our nation has had many differences with Israel but it has never failed to promote and protect Israel. Because of our gracious promotion of Israel, God has greatly blessed us as a nation.

3b. The Great Preponderance Of Christians:

Genesis 18:23-26 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? [24] Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein? [25] That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? [26] And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

1c. The Major Premise:

Before God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their "very grievous" sin (18:20), He disclosed to Abraham His purpose in the impending judgment. Abraham, true to his Jewish nature, started to dicker with God and asks whether a righteous God would destroy the righteous with the wicked. God's justice seems to preclude an indiscriminate judgment of the godly with the ungodly. The Lord graciously affirms in response to Abraham's annoying questioning that, indeed, He would not destroy these two abominably wicked cities until the righteous have been delivered, whether they number fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, or ten. The main point of the passage is clear: **God is very reluctant to destroy a wicked place with many righteous people in it**. God will normally not destroy the wicked without first delivering the godly.

2c. The Minor Premise:

God always judges sin. He has not forgotten the sins of America and will settle the score someday, but the Just Judge (Gen. 18:25) will not allow the righteous to perish with the wicked. The Lord was very reluctant to destroy the world in the deluge without first delivering Noah and his family. He would not destroy the corrupt cities without first rescuing that *one* pious person, Lot (2 Pet. 2:7,8). And God is not about to destroy our wicked nation until and unless the believers are removed into the presence of the Lord through the Rapture. Then the **well-deserved and long-delayed judgment will come**. Some say that if God does not judge America, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology. This statement ignores the debauchery of these cities where every male individual was a homosexual (Gen. 19:4). Certainly the United States with all its problems has not sunk to their level of degeneracy. Indeed, **we in the United**

States have the world's preponderance of Christians. By some estimates, over 80% of the world's believers reside in the United States. Many thousands of fundamental churches and institutions make America unique in the world. When church attendance in Europe has declined to 2%-3% of the population, some 43% of the people in the United States attend church regularly. America alone has a fundamentalist movement that still influences our nation, represented by 17,000 godly churches.

3c. Conclusion:

God, the righteous Judge, is very reluctant to punish a place until first delivering the righteous. Our nation has been uniquely blessed by God with the world's majority of believers. It is because of their righteousness that God has exalted our nation (Prov. 14:34). When these believers are removed in the Rapture, the postponed punishment upon America's sins will come, but not before.

4b. The Grand Purpose For America:

Acts 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.

1c. The Major Premise:

Paul, speaking to the Athenians on Mars Hill, makes an important point: God has determined the course of each nation, including the time a nation begins and ends as well as the geographical boundaries where it is located. While men establish countries and through conquest and treaties fix borders, God in His sovereign superintendence determines the existence and extension of nations. It is He who sets the chronological and geographical boundaries. God has a purpose for every person, every family, congregation, indeed for every one of His creatures. He works all things after the counsel of His own will to accomplish His purpose (Eph. 1:11). This is especially true of nations whom the Lord raises or removes (Dan. 4:35). Thus we conclude: **The Lord has a special purpose for each country**.

2c. The Minor Premise:

The United States is not specifically mentioned in Scripture; therefore, we cannot point to a passage of Scripture and extrapolate from it God's purpose for our nation. The silence of Scripture is compensated for by the frequent observations by our Founding Fathers concerning the divine design for America.

It bears repeating that the First Charter of Virginia of 1606 speaks of the main purpose of the first English settlement as that of "propagating of Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness." Plymouth, the first permanent English settlement in North America, was established, according to the Mayflower Compact, "for the glory of God and the

advancement of the Christian faith." Most American charters spell out the main reason for these settlements: to proclaim the Gospel. America, as our Founding Fathers saw it, was to be a lighthouse for the unsaved. More than that, it was to be a land for the oppressed. God appeared to have at least a two-fold purpose for our country. **He ordained it to be a hope for the world's unsaved and a home for the world's oppressed.** We send out missionaries to all countries and absorb immigrants from all nations. People hated and hounded elsewhere have found a home here. The motto "E pluribus unum" ("Out of many, one") suggests our national destiny. As our founders saw it, this was something totally new, a *novus ordo seclorum*, a new order of the ages. They were establishing a nation where everyone would be welcome and a nation that would bear a witness to the world.

3c. Conclusion:

America, however imperfectly, has been true to its destiny. We have been a lighthouse of the Gospel. Of the world's approximately 50,000 evangelical missionaries, 45,000 come from the United States. We are the land of refugees and immigrants. The boat people from Vietnam as well as the captives of Castro's Cuba all are welcome here. The rejected, the refugees and the refuse of other nations find a refuge in the United States. God has blessed us because we are fulfilling His destiny for our country. As long as we are faithful to that destiny, God will be faithful to America.

2A. The End-Times and the Nations

Without question, the United States is the number one world power. With the events predicted for the tribulation and Second Advent drawing ever nearer, is it possible that our country is exempt from these major world events? Let us note the major geopolitical events predicted for the end times and then see if we may possibly find clues as to the future of the United States.

It appears that there are three major wars raging on this earth between the Rapture and the Second Advent.

1b. The Conquests of Antichrist:

1c. The confederation of the ten kingdoms:

The final stage of the world's kingdoms will be a revival of the Roman Empire in the form of a ten-nation confederacy.

1d. The remarkable image of Daniel 2:

1e. King Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a great image, portraying the four major world kingdoms between Nebuchadnezzar's time and the establishment of the millennial kingdom.

2e. The final kingdom is Rome.

Rome's last stage, symbolized by the feet comprised of iron and clay, will be annihilated by Christ's kingdom.

Dan. 2:35, 44 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. . . And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

2d. The ravaging beasts of Daniel 7:

1e. Daniel's vision involved four beasts, each representing a world kingdom from Daniel's day until Christ, the Son of God, would replace the false Christ, the man of sin.

2e. The fourth beast with no counterpart in the animal kingdom combines the worst features of the preceding three.

3e. The ten horns out of its head are ten kings.

Dan. 7:20, 24 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. . . And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.

4e. The emergence of another horn means that another dictator arises who will subdue three kings and seven will voluntarily subject themselves to his rule.

5e. The ten horns correspond to the ten toes on the image revealed in Daniel 2 and involve a ten-nation confederacy emerging out of the former Roman Empire.

2c. The coming of the world ruler:

1d. His designations:

1e. The Roman prince, apparently ruling from Rome: Dan. 9:26

2e. Antichrist: 1 Jn. 2:18

3e. The little horn: Dan 7:8, 24, 26-27

4e. The willful king: Dan. 11:36

5e. The beast out of the sea: Rev. 13:1; cf. Isa. 17:12-13

2d. His dominion:

1e. For three and one half years he rules over ten nations.

1f. A strong power from the East prevents him from extending his rule worldwide.

2f. Apparently a revived militaristic and expansionistic Russia will keep Antichrist at bay.

2e. For the last half of the tribulation Antichrist "shall devour the whole earth."

> Dan. 7:23, 25 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. . . And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

2b. The Chastisement of Russia:

1c. In the middle of the tribulation period Russia and her satellites will invade Israel: Ez. 38-39

While at least eight different times have been suggested for the invasion of Israel by Gog and Magog, this writer finds the middle of the tribulation period to be the most likely period for the attack.[1]

1d. Until the middle of the tribulation period there will be Western and Eastern powers, much like the situation in recent years before the

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[1] Mal Couch, editor. *The Gathering Storm—Understanding Prophecy in Critical Times*. Springfield, MO: The 21st Century Press, 2005. See chapter 9, "What is 'Gog and Magog' in Regard to Bible Prophecy?"

collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the crumbling of world Communism.

2d. The invaders will be totally destroyed by eight distinct divine judgments, as graphically pictured in Ezekiel 38:17-23.

2c. The power vacuum caused by the demise of the Kings of the North prompts Antichrist to extend his rule.

3b. The Campaign of Armageddon: Dan. 11:40-45

Even though Antichrist is world ruler, there will be challenges to his rule. A series of battles will erupt, and this campaign is named after Armageddon (Rev. 16:16), a fertile valley in northern Israel, the place where the bloodiest battle will be fought. The blood will be up to the horse's bridle (approximately four feet) for the space of two hundred miles (Rev. 14:20). If taken literally—and there is no reason to do otherwise—this river of blood will fill the low places of Israel. With liquid seeking its own level, the river would flow in the Valley of Armageddon toward the Mediterranean Sea and part of it south in the Jordan Valley, turning the saline Dead Sea a livid red.

While the battle rages in northern Israel, all the world's armies will also be gathered to successfully battle against Jerusalem: Zech. 12:1-2; 14:1-2

1c. Daniel gives the sequence of the human attacks against Israel:

1d. The action by Egypt: Dan. 11:40a

2d. The attack by Russia: Dan. 11:40b

3d. The advance of Rome: Dan. 11:41-43

4d. The approach of the Asiatics: Dan. 11:44 (200 million; Rev. 9:16)

5d. The advent of Christ with His heavenly army Dan. 11:45, cf. Rev. 19:14-20

3A. The Evaluation of the United States in Prophecy

1b. The attempts to discover America in prophecy:
Some expositors are more, some less, dogmatic that America is mentioned in prophecy.

1c. Some identify Babylon with the USA.

Logsdon suggests that "the wealthy, powerful, wicked, God-forsaking endtime nation, spiritually called Babylon in prophecy" is the USA.[2]

2c. Some identify the nation of Isaiah 18 as the USA:

Isaiah 18:1 Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the river of Ethiopia:

1d. The land in question is the land overshadowed with wings. Since our America's emblem is the eagle, our nation must be in view.

2d. Only gross spiritualizing can lead to that conclusion.

The land is said to be beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, something hardly true of the USA. Besides that, the eagle was the symbol of Rome and is presently a symbol of Germany, Austria, Spain, and Poland. Wikipedia lists over 20 nations whose national symbol is the eagle.

What is more, Isaiah 18:1 does not even contain a reference to eagles but insects. Merrill F. Unger notes that the land in view is apparently "ancient Ethiopia or modern Sudan. The reference to the buzzing of the wings evidently describes one of its most pestiferous insects (or all of them) for which the country was notorious."[3]

3c. Some see a reference to the United States in Ezekiel 38:13.

"The merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof" protest against the invasion of Israel by a northern power. It is suggested that Tarshish is England and America is one of the young lions, or "colonies" of England. To find England or the United States in this passage involves blatant eisegesis, first reading these nations into the text.

Maxwell Coder has well said, that "many attempts have been made to find America in the prophetic Scriptures. All of them have been rejected by conservatives as violating sound rules of exegesis."[4]

2b. The absence of America in prophecy.

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[2] S. Franklin Logsdon, *Is the USA in Prophecy?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969, 55.

[3] Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament.* Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002, 1190.

[4] Maxwell S. Coder, *The Final Chapter.* Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1984. (Chapter 7: "The United States and Other Nations," 81-90).

There are various suggestions why the United States is not specifically mentioned in the prophetic Scriptures.

1c. By the time of the rapture, America has passed out of existence. Does this mean Australia, Japan or South Africa that are also not mentioned have passed out of existence?

2c. America has been conquered by Russia or some other nation.

This scenario, while suggested by many, is demonstrably false. **If the USA were conquered by a nation today, that victorious nation would be a world power tomorrow. But according to Daniel 2 and 7, there can be four and only four world empires** between Nebuchadnezzar's time (606 B.C.) and Christ's kingdom. These four kingdoms are identified as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Also, until the middle of the tribulation period there are two major centers of power on earth: the Western Confederacy and Russia with her confederates. Russia and China, who always wanted to be world powers, will be unsuccessful. The USA, which could have been a world empire, refused to exercise its absolute power in the days following World War II and since the collapse of Communism in 1990.

3c. America is not mentioned because prophecy is primarily concerned with Israel and its immediate neighbors. Because of this, says John Walvoord, "it is not surprising that geographical areas remote from this center of Biblical interest should not figure largely in prophecy." [5] The only exception to this appears to be Gog and Magog, whose point of origin is identified three times literally as "the uttermost parts of the north" (Ez. 38:6, 15; 39:2).

4A. The Existence of America Until the Rapture

While our nation is not mentioned specifically in prophecy, we may nevertheless infer God's destiny for the USA by contemplating the course of our country. There appear to be some discernible reasons why God has raised our country and will most likely preserve it until the rapture. Two reasons were mentioned earlier, one reason was intimated.

1b. The United States promotes missionary activity.

We saw that the very first settlers testified that they came here as the Mayflower Compact states, "for the glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian faith." In the New England confederation of 1643, the uniform testimony is "whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the

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[5] Walvoord, John F. *The Nations in Prophecy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967. (Chapter XVI, "America in Prophecy)."

same end, namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity with peace."

God has honored America for its missionary efforts. God needs a lighthouse for the world's unsaved right until the rapture, after which the 144,000 witnesses will be ministering.

2b. America protects the chosen people.

Ever since Roger Williams encouraged the persecuted Jews of Europe to settle in his colony, America has been a refuge for Jews. Of the world's 17 million Jewish people, 7 million live in the USA. With our national efforts the modern state of Israel was established. Its continuation has been assured by the consistent support by the USA. God promises to bless those who would bless Israel (Gen. 12:3). God is blessing us and will bless us because of our special relationship to His special people. After the rapture, when our country becomes anti-semitic, Antichrist will sign a treaty of protection with Israel. Until then it seems to be God's design for America to help Israel.

3b. America provides a home for the politically and religiously persecuted all around the world.

The Statue of Liberty best represents one aspect of America which appears to point toward our destiny as a home for the world's oppressed. It may well be that God has raised the USA in part to be a "Mother of Exiles." Such a refugee nation appears to be needed until the rapture.

God will not let America's sins go unpunished. But the well-deserved and long-delayed judgment will not come until the righteous have been removed. As He removed Noah and his family before He brought the flood and as He removed righteous Lot before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, so God will remove the believers through the rapture before He sends His judgment upon the earth, including our beloved nation.

5A. The Endurance of America in Days to Come

It is possible to trace in general outline the future of our country. Though no direct reference is found in the prophetic Scriptures to the U.S.A., various features relating to the future of America can be discerned.

1b. Preservation until the rapture:

It bears repeating that God's providential design for America seems to have been to make it a home for the oppressed, hope for the world's unsaved and helper of Israel. (Gen. 12:3). Until the rapture God protects and uses our nation to help Israel. Also until the rapture the United States is the main sending country for missionaries. After the rapture the 144,000 will be God's witnesses and Antichrist will be the protector of Israel.

2b. Pandemonium after the rapture:

With millions of American Christians gone, our country will become a third-rate nation with its institutions collapsing and its societal structures in total shambles. Furthermore, America will experience a time of unprecedented trouble, turmoil and tribulation, a "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to the same time (Dan. 12:1). Since the "indignation of the Lord will come upon all nations" (Is. 34:2), this dreadful time would include the USA.

3b. Persecution of Israel:

America's pro-Israel stand will change dramatically after the rapture, when all the Christian influence will be gone from our nation. All nations will persecute the Jews. Christ predicted that they would be "hated of all nations" (Matt. 24:9), which sadly also includes the United States. As a result, every last Jew will return to Israel (Ezek. 37:21; 39:28).

4b. Participation in the Roman Empire:

After the rapture the center of Western power will be Rome. The U.S.A. may well become a territorial extension of the revived Roman Empire, seeing that America's religious, cultural and political roots lie in Europe.

5b. Perplexity at Gog and Magog:

The world's nations, including the USA, will stand by in utter amazement when the hordes of Gog and Magog attack Israel (Ezek. 38:13; 39:21).

6b. The preaching of the 144,000 and an angel:

Through the 144,000 witnesses and the ministry of an angel, people in every nation and tribe on earth will hear the gospel during the Tribulation period. Americans thus will have a final opportunity to be saved (Rev. 7:9; 14:6).

7b. The punishments of the Tribulation:

Vast numbers of the world's people perish in the judgments of the Tribulation period. Through two judgments alone, half the world's population and, presumably, half of America's population perishes. As a result of the pale horse "the fourth of the part of the earth dies (Rev. 6:8). Through the judgment of the sixth trumpet "the third part of men" are slain (Rev. 9:15). By the end of the tribulation the population of the world and that of the United States are devastated, for the gruesome prediction is that "the inhabitants of the world are burned, and few men left" (Is. 24:6).

8b. Participation in Armageddon:

All the world's armies will be gathered at Armageddon to fight against Antichrist's forces and finally against the descending Savior and the saints. American armies will be represented and they, like all the other armies, in their insane invasion of Israel, will be suddenly and dramatically destroyed by Christ (Rev. 16:16; Rev. 19:19; Zech. 12:3; 14:1-2).

9b. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem:

Saved Americans who survive the Tribulation period will join other nations on a yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship the Savior and to present gifts to Him (Is. 60:6-9; Zech. 14:16-17).

10b. Prosperity in the Kingdom:

Spiritual and physical well-being will characterize the world's nations, including the United States. God's Spirit will be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28, 32). All the desert areas of the earth will be healed, including America's deserts and "Bad Lands" (Is. 35:6). God's peace, like a mighty river, will flow from Jerusalem to all the nations, including the United States (Is. 66:12).

11b. Prominence in the New Jerusalem:

Americans will most likely be among the nations on the new earth to seek out the Lord in the capital of the universe, responding to His rule and reveling in His glory.

> And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it (Rev. 21:24).

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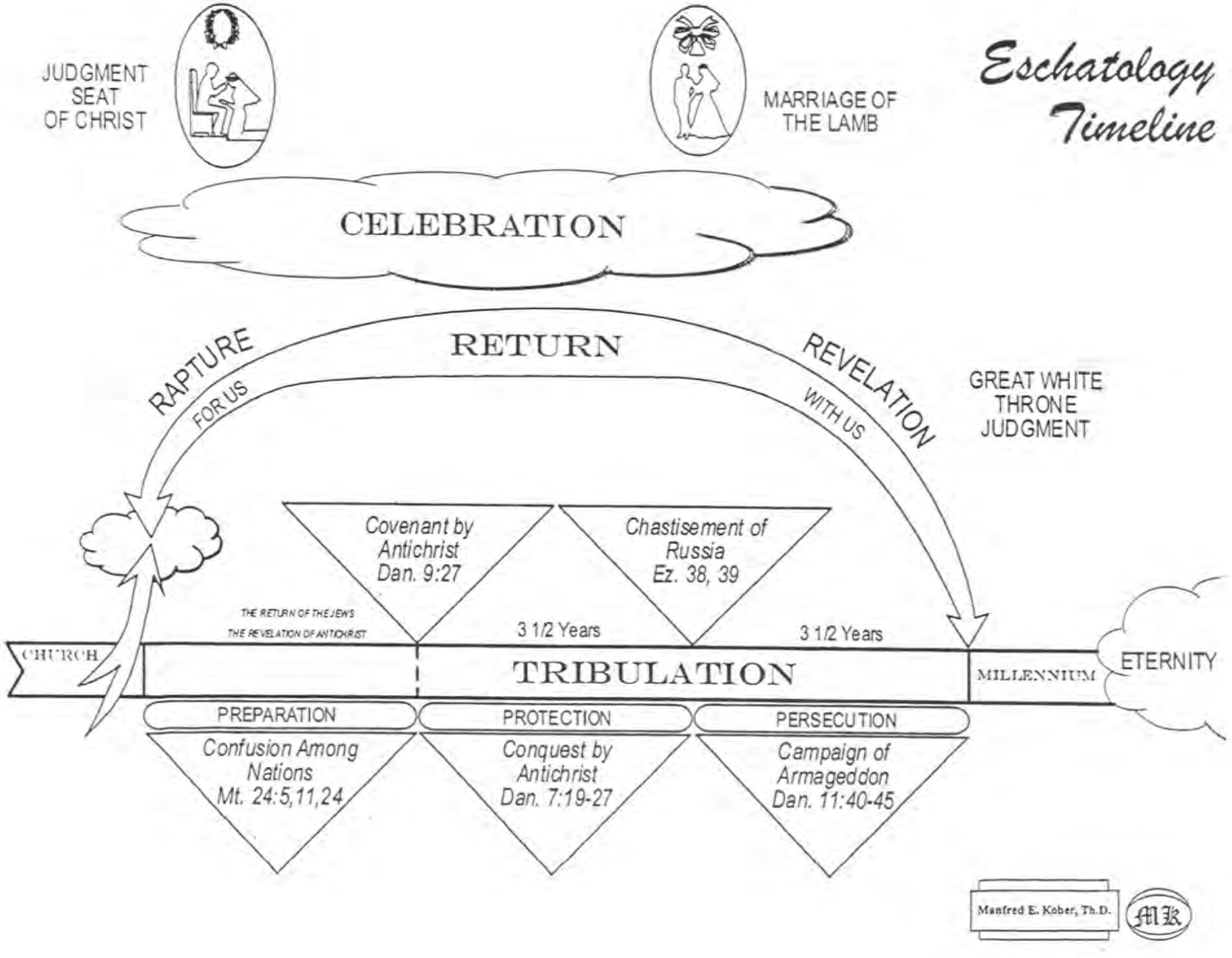
Eschatology Timeline



Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

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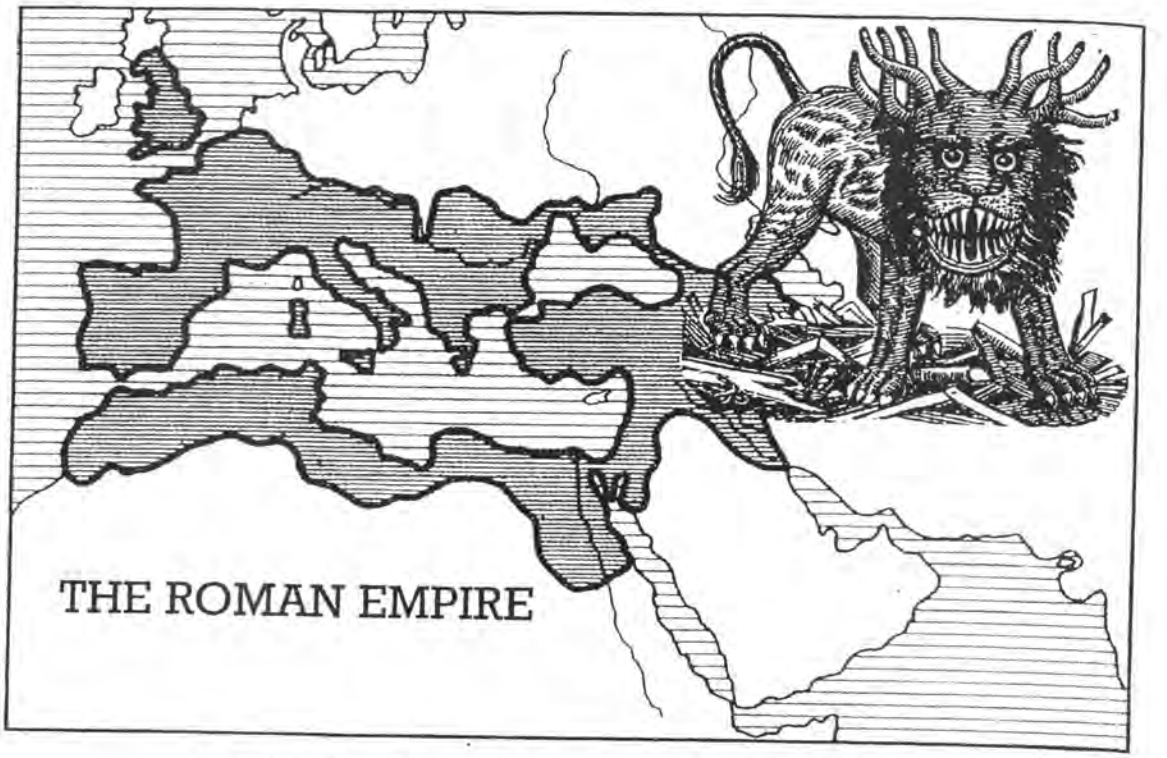
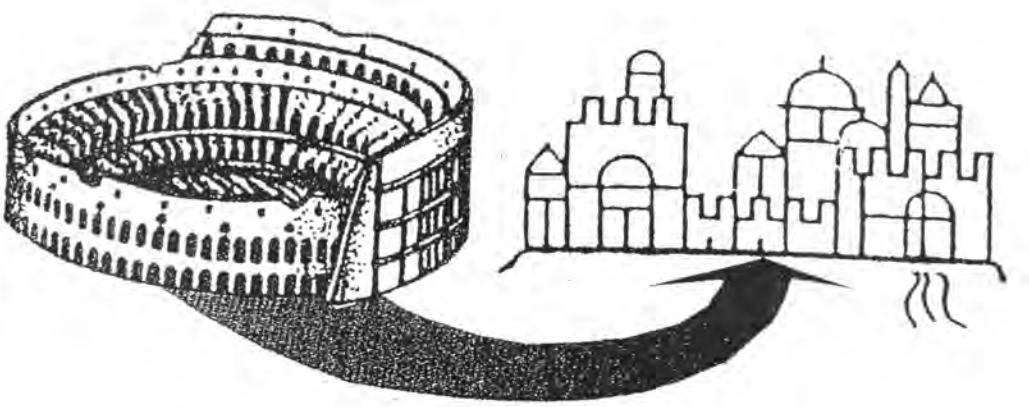


The revived Roman Empire under antichrist's rule is pictured in Daniel 7 as a terrifying beast.



At the mid-point of the tribulation, antichrist moves his headquarters from Rome to Jerusalem. (DAN 11:44-45)

The Problematic Development of Progressive Dispensationalism

Faith Pulpit March/April '97 By *Manfred Kober, Th.D.*

In recent years major changes have occurred within dispensationalism. A new system, known as progressive dispensationalism, has caused major concern among traditional dispensationalism

I. The Periods of Dispensationalism

Several periods of development within dispensationalism have been suggested.

1. The foundational period: IX85 -1920 (John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882).

2. The classical period: 1920-1950 (C.I. Scofield, 1843-1921, Lewis Sperry Chafer, 1871-1952).

3. The defining period: 1950-1990 (Alva J. McClain, John F. Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, Charles C. Ryrie).

4. The progressive period: 1990 and on (Darrell L. Bock, Craig A. Blaising, Robert L. Saucy).

II. The Principles of Dispensationalism

Dispensationalists see God's dealing with mankind in distinguishable stewardships to accomplish His sovereign purpose. The sine qua non, as succinctly delineated by Ryrie, is the following:

1. A clear distinction between Israel and the Church.

2. The consistent use of literal interpretation.

3. A concerted emphasis on the glory of God as the underlying purpose for His actions. (Dispensationalism Today [1965], 43-44).

Traditional dispensationalism have always clearly and consistently distinguished Israel and the Church and God's program for each. An explanation of traditional dispensationalism may be found in my colleague's article, "Progressive Dispensationalism: A Traditional Dispensational Critique" (Myron J. Houghton, Faith Pulpit, January 1995, 1).

III. The Proponents of Progressive Dispensationalism

1. Craig A. Blaising, until recently at Dallas Theological Seminary (Systematic Theology), presently at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY.

2. Darrell Bock, at Dallas Theological Seminary, (New Testament).

3. Robert L.. Saucy, Talbot Theological Seminary (Systematic Theology).

IV. The Publications of Progressive Dispensationalism

Besides the publication of numerous periodical articles, progressive dispensationalism have stated their views to date in three major works:

1. Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, 1992 (edited by Bock and Blaising)

2. Progressive Dispensationalism, 1993 (written by Bock and Blaising).

3. The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism, 1993 (written by Saucy).

V. The Purpose of Progressive Dispensationalism

The movement arose out of the Dispensational Study Group which first met on November 20, 1986, in connection with the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta, Georgia. Five years later, at the 1991 meeting, the actual label "progressive dispensationalism" was introduced. The purpose of the study group appears to be to clarify dispensational issues in order to bridge the gap between dispensationalism and covenant theology. Related to this effort of the rapprochement with a totally different theological approach was a rejection of the sine qua non of traditional dispensationalism, thus permitting a conscious movement toward covenant theology.

The new dispensationalism appear to desire the following:

To develop further the system of dispensationalism. A remaking of dispensationalism to their theological presuppositions, in part adopted from European theologians. To discover similarities between dispensationalism and covenant theology. A rapprochement with a totally dissimilar system. To delineate the progressive fulfillment of God's plan in history. A rejection of God's distinctive purposes for Israel and the church. It is a sad commentary on the present situation that whereas premillennialism (out of which dispensationalism gradually emerged) arose in America primarily through early Bible conferences held in opposition to the postmillennialism and liberalism of the day, progressive dispensationalism, in following the ecumenical spins of the times, is seeking common ground with amillennialism.

VI. The Propositions of Progressive Dispensationalism

Ryrie notes that in contrast to his listed sine qua non of dispensationalism "progressive dispensationalism teaches that Christ is already reigning on the throne of David in heaven, thus merging the church with a present phase of the already inaugurated Davidic covenant and kingdom; this is based upon a complementary hermeneutic which allows the New Testament to introduce changes and additions to Old Testament revelation; and the overall purpose of God is Christological; holistic redemption being the focus and goal of history'" (Dispensationalism, 164).

Interestingly, to date the progressive dispensationalism have neither been successful in their attempt to define dispensationalism nor to state what its essential principles are. By highlighting the basic tenets of progressive dispensationalism, Ryrie shows how far this system, which he rightly labels, "revisionist dispensationalism," has departed from traditional or authentic dispensationalism:

1. The kingdom of God is the unifying theme of biblical history.

2. Within biblical history there are four dispensational eras.

3. Christ has already inaugurated the Davidic reign in heaven at the right hand of the Father which equals the throne of David, though not yet reigning as Davidic king on earth during the millennium.

4. Likewise the new covenant has already been inaugurated, though its blessings are not yet fully realized until the millennium.

The concept of the church as completely distinct from Israel and as a mystery unrevealed in the Old Testament needs revising, making the idea of two purposes and two peoples of God invalid.

A complementary hermeneutic must be used alongside a literal hermeneutic. This means that the New Testament makes complementary changes to Old Testament promises without jettisoning those original promises.

The one divine plan of holistic redemption encompasses all people and all areas of human life, personal, societal, cultural, and political (Ryrie, ibid., 164 [emphasis in the original]).

VII. The Problems of Progressive Dispensationalism

1. Hermeneutical Problems.

Progressive dispensationalism denies that consistent literal interpretation is a defining essential of dispensationalism. Craig Blaising maintains "that consistent literal exegesis is inadequate to describe the essential distinctive of dispensationalism" ("*Development*

of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalism," Bibliotheca Sacra 145, No. 579 [July-September, 1988], 272). Progressive dispensationalism further introduces a new method of interpretation, called "complementary hermeneutics," by reading into Old Testament promises much more than they contain. Progressive dispensationalists teach that "the New Testament does introduce change and advance; it does not merely repeat Old Testament revelation. In making complementary additions, however, it does not jettison old promises. The enhancement is not at the expense of the original promise." (Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, 392-93.) The Old Testament promises concerning Christ's rule relate to a future millennial kingdom when He would rule on the throne of David. Complementary hermeneutics insists that the New Testament revelation complements the Old Testament promise by revealing Christ presently ruling on the Davidic throne in heaven. The problem of this new method of interpretation is that its limits are not clearly spelled out. Furthermore, who determines how much New Testament truth should be read back into literal Old Testament promises? Does not this destroy the concept of literal interpretation? The apparent reason why the revisionists would like to see the kingdom established now is out of a desire to show their appreciation for this aspect of covenant theology; while at the same time they want to maintain a future fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in the Millennial Kingdom.

Robert L. Thomas, in his incisive study, "A Critique of Progressive Dispensational Hermeneutics," deplores the departure of progressive dispensationalism from traditional historical-grammatical interpretation. He notes that progressive dispensationalism practices "a selective use of passages seemingly in support of their system--avoiding others that do not." He cites ample illustrations of this method and concludes that "thorough-going grammatical-historical interpretation does not condone this kind of superficial treatment of text, particularly when they are critical to support a doctrine being propounded" (Ice and Demi, eds., When the Trumpet Sounds, 423-424).

2. Messianic Problems

Traditional dispensationalists have always understood that the Davidic rule of Christ would be in Jerusalem on the literal throne where his ancestor David ruled. Progressive dispensationalism believes this but also teaches that the Lord already rules on the throne of David in heaven, a rule which began at His ascension. This view ignores the clear scriptural distinction between Christ's present rule on the Father's throne in heaven (Hebrews 12:2) and His future rule on His throne on earth (Revelation 3:21). Traditional dispensationalists reject the notion that Christ's present rule in heaven constitutes an inaugural fulfillment of the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7:14. No wonder John F. Walvoord concludes with other classic dispensationalists "that progressive dispensationalism, as it is called, is built upon a foundation of sand and is lacking specific scriptural proof' (Willis and Masters, eds., Issues in Dispensationalism, 90).

Progressive dispensationalists have manufactured out of thin air an artificial view that Christ's rule is present and yet future at the same time. This "already/not yet" dialectic is borrowed from George E. Ladd whose slippery slope of subjective hermeneutics led him from a premillennial to a modified covenant theology position. His form of realized

eschatology, in turn, was borrowed from European theologians like C.H. Dodd.

3. Ecclesiastical Problems

By magnifying the continuity of various dispensations, revisionists are minimizing the distinctiveness of the church. Their mystery concept of the church is not that it was unrevealed in the Old Testament but it was unrealized. As a corollary, God has no separate program for the church. The church is simply a sub-category of the Kingdom. It is called a 'sneak preview" of the Kingdom and a "functional outpost of God's Kingdom" (Progressive Dispensationalism, 257). The church is the Kingdom today. In fact, David Turner calls the church 'the 'new Israel'" (Blaising and Bock, eds., Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, 288). It is not surprising, therefore, that Bruce Waltke observes that Turner's "position is closer to covenant theology than to dispensationalism" (Ibid., 334). With their theological neutering of the church, the revisionists are clearly de-emphasizing the pretribulational rapture, God's distinct event involving the church.

4. Definitional Problems

Progressive dispensationalists are neither able to give a clear definition of a dispensation nor make a convincing case for their number of dispensations. They subscribe to four primary dispensations. The first is the patriarchal, beginning with creation and continuing to Sinai. It is strange that the revisionists do not see the pre-fall stewardship that God sustained with Adam and Eve as a separate dispensation. Ryrie correctly notes, 'To lump pre-fall conditions, post-fall conditions and the Abrahamic covenant under common stewardship arrangement or dispensation is artificial to say the least" (Dispensationalism, 166). The second dispensation is labeled the Mosaic (from Sinai to Christ's ascension). The third is called the Ecclesial (from the ascension to Christ's second coming). The fourth dispensation is the Zionic which is divided into (1) the millennial kingdom and (2) the eternal state The practical fusion of the millennium and the eternal state evidences a disregard for the uniqueness of the kingdom age, an emphasis which had always been an integral part of premillennial dispensationalism and which is now an area in which the revisionist dispensationalists have given ground in order to appeal to covenant theologians.

VIII. The Prospects for Progressive Dispensationalism

1. The infiltration of seminaries.

Several seminaries, which since stood forthrightly for traditional dispensational distinctions, have a certain number of faculty espousing the progressive position. Ernest Pickering rightly warns that the dissemination of deviant dispensational doctrines it "not compatible with historic dispensationalism. They move toward covenant theology which identities the Church with Israel. It would not he surprising to see more and more former dispensationalists embracing the covenant system as some already have" (Dispensations, 15).

It is sad to observe what has occurred at Dallas Theological Seminary, the stronghold of dispensationalism, where many of the instructors here at FBBC&TS have studied. While _ number of traditional dispensationalists still teach at DTS, their system has not just been modified but totally chanced by Bock, Blaising and their followers. And yet, Donald Campbell, in a letter of May 28, 1992, to the alumni tries to assure the graduates of DTS that all the faculty "are dispensationalists as defined by our Doctrinal Statement." But the progressives do not agree, it seems, with this aspect of the doctrinal statement, which they have signed: "The church which is the body and bride of Christ, which began at Pentecost ...is completely distinct from Israel." (Catalog 1995-1996, 140, italics added).

Sadly, there is no sounding of an alarm over a method of biblical interpretation which, according to a former faculty member there, "shakes the very foundation of dispensational hermeneutics, which includes consistent literalistic interpretation of the Old Testament" (Waltke in Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church, 348. The new president of Dallas Theological Seminary Chuck Swindoll, has not helped matters at all. In an interview in Christianity Today prior to his stepping in the presidency, he announced that he would no longer emphasize dispensationalism "I think dispensations is a scare word. I'm not sure we're going to make dispensationalism a part of our marquis as we talk about the school."

When asked whether he thought the term dispensationalism would disappear Swindoll replied, "It may and perhaps it should." (Oct. 25. 1993, 14, italics in the original). The very distinctive that has made Dallas Theological Seminary such a unique school is now de-emphasized. Who would have thought that Dallas Theological Seminary would ever downplay the system of theology that has made it distinct while at the same time giving encouragement to a group of scholars who take the school toward covenant theology ?

Primarily through men trained at Dallas Theological Seminary other schools have adopted this radical departure from traditional dispensationalism. At these institutions whole generations of pastors will be moved away from literal interpretation toward confusing complementary hermeneutics. The students will be exposed to de-emphasis of church age truth and an unclear eschatological framework. Dispensational distinctions are giving way to an unwarranted and unnecessary accommodation with amillennialism.

As an example, in these schools where progressive dispensationalism has taken root, classic dispensationalists like Walvoord are charged with using "a 'hyperliteral' approach to apocalyptic imagery" (Turner, Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church, 227). Walvoord's description of a literal New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22 is countered by Turner with the observation that the gates of the city could not possibly be made from one pearl, neither could the streets be made of gold. "The absence of oysters large enough to produce such pearls and the absence of sufficient gold to pave such a city (viewed as literally 1380 miles square and high) is viewed as sufficient reason not to take these images fully literal!" (ibid.).

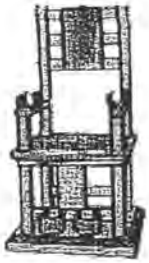
2. The ignoring by laymen.

It must be said to the credit of traditional dispensationalism that in its simplicity it is understood by lay people and unlocks the Scriptures for them. Who knows how many millions of American believers have been blessed by the helpful notes of the Scofield Bible. In contrast to Ryrie's clear and concise writings, the progressive dispensationalists write in such a scholarly and technical style that their books are difficult to read and thus will only reach a limited group of scholars. One can appreciate Thomas Ice's frustration when he says that Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church is "difficult [to] read because of its erudite technical style. . . It is sometimes hard to get a grip on what is precisely being said, even after reading a passage several times" ("A Critical Examination of Progressive Dispensationalism,_" Biblical Perspectives, Vol. V, No. 6, November-December, 1992, 1).

3. The surrender to covenant theology.

One wonders whether the revisionists really espouse a modified dispensationalism or whether they are not closer to a modified form of covenant theology. Thomas Ice's warning is well-placed that "these. . .men are in the process of destroying dispensationalism" (Ibid., 1). Eventually much of eschatology will give way to a vague anticipation of the future. According to Bock, progressive dispensationalism is "less land-centered and less future-centered" (Christianity Today, March 9, 1992, 50). The future blessings that are predicted for Israel in the millennial kingdom are suddenly reinterpreted. According to Carl Hoch, the privileges of ethnic Israel "were restricted to Israel before the death of Christ and the creation of the Church" (Braising and Bock, eds., Dispensationalism, etc., 125). It is difficult to see why there is a need for a Millennium. Revisionist dispensationalism, with its de-emphasis on the distinctiveness of the church and the uniqueness of the Millennium has not simply made slight corrections in dispensational theology but significant changes, so significant that it is doubtful whether they can be considered dispensationalism at all as they are more and more warmly embraced by their covenant friends. No wonder Walter E. Elwell concludes, "The newer dispensationalism looks so much like nondispensationalist premillennialism that one struggles to see any real difference," ("Dispensationalism of the Third Kind," Christianity Today, September 12, 1994, 28). Ron Clutter reports on the general sentiment of the 1987 meeting of the Dispensational Study Group, chaired by Craig Blaising. There was common agreement that moderate dispensationalism and moderate covenant theologians are closer to each other than either to classic dispensationalism or classic covenant theologians. "It seems both are moving toward each other in rapprochement" ("Dispensational Study Group discussion." Grace Theological Journal, Vol. 10 No. 2, Fall 1989, 161).

It is true that each generation of theologians needs to apply biblical truth to the people of the day. However, in so doing they dare not surrender major areas of doctrine which the progressive dispensationalism are in danger of doing. The biblical injunction to rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2: 15) is important in the area of dispensational theology and especially in light of progressive dispensationalism which appears to be rapidly moving toward covenant theology. May God grant us His discernment in these difficult and challenging times.



CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AND THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

By Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

At the dawn of a new millennium the astute and alarmed observer can witness the ever-increasing attack on ethical maxims and precepts. Abortion, the murder of an unborn child, continues unabated and is still the number one killer in the United States. Homosexuality is ever more militant in its efforts to penetrate politics and culture. The legalization of euthanasia or mercy killing is receiving ever-increasing support. Pornography continues to invade America's homes through television and computers.

America's moral mess appears to be the result of humanistic philosophy and liberal theology as well as misguided sentimentality. However, the discerning believer has reason to conclude that behind this departure from ethical norms and the denial of biblical principles lies ultimately the strategy of Satan, the god of this age, hell-bent on undermining any vestiges of biblical ethics which have been an integral part of American culture and society since the inception of our nation.

Even secular ethicists notice the decline of and attack on moral standards in America and refer to it as "the second cold war." This war is waged against biblical Christianity with unbridled ferocity.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that an all-out attack against capital punishment seems to be underway. The execution of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh has brought the ethics of execution into sharp focus. There is a growing abhorrence to the death penalty for capital crimes. Even voices inside Christendom deplore the death penalty for any crime. The pope, in his encyclical EVANGELIUM VITAE, issued in 1995, expressed his misgivings about capital punishment. Again at St. Louis in January, 1999, the pope appealed for an end to the death penalty on the grounds that it was "both cruel and unnecessary" (Avery Cardinal Dulles, "Catholicism and Capital Punishment," *First Things*, No. 112, April 2001, 35). Following the pope, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference argue for an abolition of capital punishment. During their meeting in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 2000 "the 290 Roman Catholic bishops repeatedly stressed their opposition to the death penalty" (Patricia Rice, "Bishops Urge Clinton to End Federal Executions," *St. Louis Post Dispatch,* Nov. 17, 2000, A8). The liberal mainline denominations are ever more vocal in their denunciation of capital punishment. Then too, European countries where capital punishment has been eliminated no longer extradite prisoners to the USA, if their crime might result in capital punishment in America. Officials of the European Union chastise America for not abolishing capital punishment. Amnesty International is highly critical of America, calling capital punishment *per se* a human rights violation (Stefanie Grant, "A Dialogue of the Deaf? New International Attitudes and the Death Penalty in America," *Criminal Justice Ethics*, Vol. 17, June 22, 1998, 1-19).

Is America unchristian because some states execute criminals? Should capital punishment be abolished because a cacophony of voices demands it? For the Bible

believer, the final authority in matters of faith and practice must be the changeless principles in the Word of God rather than the changing preferences of culture and society. Society as a whole and Christendom by and large have departed from the Word of God and the God of the Word. In their apostasy they are in direct rebellion against divine revelation.

The question we must ask ourselves is, "What does the Word of God say on a given issue such as capital punishment?" America's Founding Fathers were guided by the Word of God. We can do no better than return to it as the source of our authority. As a nation or as individuals we should be willing to stand with clear scriptural principles rather than submit to changing societal guidelines.

The Scriptures do not leave us in doubt about the sanctity of life, the seriousness of sin, especially that of murder, and the necessity for capital punishment.

I. The Origin of Life Before the Fall.

A. The Genesis record begins with the revelation that human life is a direct gift from God (Gen. 2:7-9). It is divinely imparted and maintained. God infused in man a living soul and provided a perfect environment so man could flourish.

B. Further, the Genesis record discloses that death is a definite penalty for sin (Gen. 2:17). For Adam and Eve death was an awful possibility, were they to disobey. For mankind (and animals) death is an abnormal condition. When Adam disobeyed God, death ensued for all of mankind ever since (Rom. 5:12).

II. The Sanctity of Life After the Fall (Gen. 4; 6)

A. The destruction of life is condemned by God. Cain's murder of Abel originated of envy and anger (Gen. 4:5-8) and occasioned severe judgment (Gen. 4:10-12). Cain was cursed and ostracized.

B. The destroyer of life was to be preserved from harm. Cain had forfeited his life but because he was created in God's image, God protected him against human vengeance (Gen. 4:15). This sanctity of life was remembered but violated by the murderer Lamech (Gen. 4:23-24).

C. The desecration of life ultimately led to total destruction (Gen. 6:1-12). The dissolution of society before the flood resulted in utter depravity so that not a single individual (with the exception of Noah and his family) did and thought that which was moral: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). Evil desires resulted in evil deeds. The whole earth was filled with violence, including wanton murder (Gen. 6:11-13). God's remedy was to mete out universal capital

punishment. John Murray's words are very much to the point: "It is the irony of man's perversity and the proof of God's veracity that the desecration of life's sanctity should be visited with the judgment of dissolution: 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground' (Gen. 6:7)." (*Principles of Conduct*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1957, 108-109).

It is against this background that the institution of capital punishment after the flood becomes understandable. God had protected Cain, the first murderer, because even he was a creature in God's image. But capital punishment is intimated in that he feared the natural vengeance, which his conscience told him he deserved (Gen. 4:14c). Later Lamech displayed his audacity and arrogance in boasting about a murder. Finally, the human race, characterized by violence and debauchery, violated the sanctity of human life to such a degree that the only remedy was death through the flood. To prevent a future disintegration of society, God instituted capital punishment.

III. The Maintenance of Life After the Flood

After the flood, God introduced gracious provisions for the enhancement of life in the form of three institutions.

A. The Propagation of Life (Gen. 9:1, 7) Mankind is commanded to populate the earth.

B. The Preservation of Life (Gen. 8:22; 9:2b, 3) After the divine promise of no further deluge, man is assured that regular seasons and the consumption of animal meat would enhance his life.

C. The Protection of Life (Gen. 9:2a, 5, 6) Man is protected in a two-fold way: in regard to ferocious animals (Gen. 9:2a, 5a) and in regard to his fellow-man (Gen. 9:5b-6). In the former case, a ferocious animal that kills a man is to be slaughtered. In the latter case, an individual who murders another person is to be put to death. At this epochal point in human history, God instituted capital punishment: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (**Gen. 9:6**).

Inherent in this short passage is contained the penalty for murder—death by execution. Further, the reason for the death penalty is given: man is created in God's image. In the words of John Murray, "An assault upon man's life is a virtual assault upon the life of God. So aggravated is this offense that the penalty is nothing less than the extremity." (*Principles of Conduct*, 111). The clause "by man shall his blood be shed" is best understood as a mandate rather than a statement of fact. In Numbers

35:10-34 God requires that the murderer be put to death at the hand of the avenger of blood.

With the introduction of capital punishment God institutes civil government. The dispensation of human government begins with the entrusting of the civil sword to the charge of man. Earlier, God spared Cain's life because even a murderer like Cain was of inestimable value since he was created in God's image. When murder became universal and violence filled the earth, God set limits for the proliferation of murder, first through capital punishment by way of the flood and then through capital punishment by human government.

IV. The Protection of Life Under Law

A. The Mandate of Capital Punishment Under Moses. Under the Mosaic law the mandate of capital punishment was reiterated: "He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall surely be put to death" (Ex. 21:12). And further, the mandate was applied not simply in case of murder but for twenty-one separate crimes. Norman Geisler lists these 21 offenses:

1. Murder (Exod. 21:12)
2. Contemptuous act against a judge (Deut. 17:12)
3. Causing a miscarriage (Exod. 21:22-25)
4. False testimony in a potentially capital crime (Deut. 19:16-19)
5. Negligence by the owner of an ox that kills people (Exod. 21:29)
6. Idolatry (Exod. 22:20)
7. Blasphemy (Lev. 24:15-16)
8. Witchcraft or sorcery (Exod. 22:18)
9. False prophecy (Deut. 18:20)
10. Apostasy (Lev. 20:2)
11. Breaking the sabbath (Exod. 31:14)
12. Homosexuality [sic, cf. Lev. 20:13]
13. Bestiality (Lev. 20:15-16)
14. Adultery (Lev. 20:10)
15. Rape (Deut. 22:25)
16. Incest (Lev. 20:11)
17. Cursing parents (Deut. 5:16)
18. Rebellion by children (Exod. 21:15, 17)
19. Kidnaping (Exod. 21:16)
20. Drunkenness by a priest (Lev. 10:8-9)
21. Unanointed individuals touching the holy furnishings in the temple (Num. 4:15)

(*Christian Ethics*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989, 200).

B. The Meaning of the Sixth Commandment. The sixth commandment of the decalogue is "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13), which emphasizes the

importance of the sanctity and protection of life. Some have understood "kill" in terms of all forms of life-taking, and use the passage as an argument against capital punishment. They reason that the execution of a criminal is as morally repugnant as the murder perpetrated by the criminal. This misguided philosophy of moral equivalence is seen in the sentiment of this bumper sticker recently observed: *Why do we kill a killer to show that killing is wrong?*

The Hebrew word *radzah* means murder and refers to the willful and violent assault on the life of another. The misunderstanding of "kill" further ignores the context. In Exodus 21 a variety of sins are listed for which the death penalty is commanded. God clearly distinguishes between a willful act of murder and an accidental killing. The manslayer, who slew his neighbor unwittingly, could flee for protection to a city of refuge. On the other hand, the manslayer who was a murderer was to be executed by the avenger of blood (Num. 35:9-28).

Then too, it must not be forgotten that God commanded Israel to put her enemies to death during the conquest of Canaan: "Thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them" (Deut. 7:2).

Walter Kaiser succinctly summarizes the meaning and application of the sixth commandment. The verb "kill"

> carries the idea of murder with premeditation and deliberateness—and that is at the heart of this verb. Thus this prohibition does not apply to beasts (Genesis 9:3), to defending one's home from nighttime burglars (Exod. 22:2), to accidental killings (Deut. 19:5), to the execution of murderers by the state (Gen. 9:6), or to the involvement with one's nation in certain types of war as illustrated by Israel's history. It does apply, however, to self-murder (i.e., suicide), to all accessories to murder (2 Sam. 12:9), and to those who have authority but fail to use it to punish known murderers (1 Kings 21:19). (Frank E. Gaebelein, Gen. Ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990, Vol. II, [Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Exodus*, 425]).

The sixth commandment in no way abrogates the institution of capital punishment. Exodus 20:6 deals with the *prohibition of murder* and is complementary to Genesis 9:6 which concerns the *punishment for murder*. Both passages stress the gravity of the crime of murder which is seen as a violation of the sanctity of human life.

V. The Value of Life in the New Testament

A. The continuation of capital punishment:

The fuller New Testament revelation continues the divine emphasis on the value of life and the reprehensibility of murder. Several factors argue for the enduring nature of capital punishment.

1. There is no alteration in the image of God. Even unsaved individuals retain vestiges of the image of God (James 3:7).
2. There is no alleviation of the crime of murder. Murder destroys that image of God and the murderer, now as in the days of Noah, forfeits his life.
3. There is no abrogation of the penalty for murder. The standards of Genesis 9:6 are never repealed or replaced in the New Testament, but rather, are reiterated.

   The Noahic covenant was given at a crucial stage of God's progressive revelation and its features are still in effect. God promised fruitful seasons (Gen. 8:22), set the rainbow as a sign that He would no longer destroy mankind in a deluge (Gen. 9:15-17) and gave man permission to eat meat (Gen. 9:3). The institution of human government with the sanctioning of capital punishment continues as well.

B. The obligation of capital punishment:

As a matter of fact, the right for capital punishment is assumed, intimated and repeated in the New Testament. It is important to note the teachings of Christ and that of the apostles on the subject.

1. The comments of Christ.

   Abolitionists sometimes argue that John 7:53-8:11, the incident of the woman taken in adultery, demonstrates Christ's opposition to capital punishment and His forgiving love. After all, did not Christ say to the woman, "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11)? It is significant that Christ claimed never to have broken the Mosaic law (Matt. 5:17). The law of Moses demanded that there had to be two or three eyewitnesses for the death penalty to be carried out (Num. 35:30). There were, in the end, none who claimed to be eyewitnesses or at least, none who condemned her (John 8:10-11). Besides that, Christ's directive that a stone should be thrown (8:7) does not argue for his opposition to capital punishment.

   In fact, Christ did not object to the execution of criminals anywhere in His teachings (Mk. 15:7; Lk. 23:19, 25). Further, He reaffirmed

the principle of capital punishment in the Sermon on the Mount: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law: but I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment" (by capital punishment; Matt. 5:21-22). Most significantly, Christ did not oppose capital punishment in His own case (Jn. 19:11). Norman Geisler incisively comments:

> Jesus recognized the God-given authority over life which human governors possess. Pilate said to Jesus, "Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). The implication here is that Pilate did possess divinely-derived authority over human life. As a matter of fact he used it (Jesus was sentenced to death) and Jesus submitted to it (*Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971, 242).
>
> Those who consider capital punishment unchristian should consider the fact that Christ, in this exchange with Pilate, recognized the legitimacy of the government to take human life not just for premeditated murder but also insurrection against the state and, by implication, for other heinous crimes.

2. The conviction of the apostles.

   a. The Apostle Paul acknowledges that the government has the authority of capital punishment (Acts 20:10-11). Paul does not exempt himself from the severity of the law: "For if I be an offender or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die." With these words Paul acknowledges that some crimes are worthy of death, that the government has the right to put people to death and that the guilty has no right to protest against the death penalty.

   b. Paul affirms that the government has certain unique rights, including that of taking human life. Charles Ryrie has a succinct summary of Paul 's teachings on the prerogatives of human government in Romans 13:1-7:

> (1) human government is ordained by God (v. 1), yet it is a sphere of authority distinct from that of the home or the church; (2) human government is to be obeyed by the Christian because it is of God, because it opposes evil (v. 4), and because our consciences tell us to obey (v. 5); (3) the government has the right of taxation (vv. 6-7); and

> (4) the government has the right to use force (v. 4), and this, of course, is the principle which impinges on our subject. The question is: what is included in its right to "bear the sword"? (*Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1991, 27).

This right to bear the sword is clearly stated in **Romans 13:4**, the key New Testament passage for capital punishment: "For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." The sword to which Paul refers is not merely a symbol of governmental authority.

> Evidence that this "sword" (*machaira*, Greek), must refer primarily to capital punishment is seen in the fact that it refers not to the dagger worn by Roman emperors—a sign of office—but to the sword worn by the superior magistrates of the provinces, to whom belonged the right of capital punishment. The sword is not so much a symbol of capital punishment as it is the *instrument* of capital punishment. As such, therefore, it symbolizes the right of government to use force. (William H. Baker, *Worthy of Death*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1973, 72, italics in the original).

The state possesses unique prerogatives not possessed by individuals such as making treaties, passing of laws, levying taxes, and punishing criminals. On a personal basis, the individual is admonished with phrases such as "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17), "Avenge not yourselves" (12:19), and "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor" (13:10). The government functions as a representative of God in a completely different context: it acts in an official rather than a personal capacity.

c. Peter assumes the governmental right of capital punishment. In 1 Peter 2:13-14 Peter echoes Paul's words of Romans 13:4: "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise of them that do well." Baker correctly notes that:

> Though Peter makes no specific reference to the sword, his words, "for vengeance on evil doers," probably can be understood exactly the way *Paul*

> meant them in Romans 13:4. Peter uses the word *ekdikesin* (vengeance) from the same root at Paul's word, *ekdikos* (avenger), in Romans 13:4. It is reasonable to assume that Peter attached the same significance to the word; that is, "retribution," and ultimately capital punishment, especially since Peter was familiar with the writings of Paul and regarded them as Scripture (2 Pe 3:15-16) (*Worthy of Death*, 73).

The Bible delineates three purposes of government:
1) To protect the good (Rom. 13:4a)
2) To punish the evildoers (Rom. 13:4b; 1 Pet. 2:13-14)
3) To promote peace and order (1 Tim. 2:2)

As can be seen, two of these purposes are found in the key passage of Romans 13:4. A government that refuses to follow these divine directives, including the execution of criminals, is derelict in its duty.

VI. The Opposition to Capital Punishment

The arguments for and against capital punishment are numerous. According to Michael Meltsner, "one observer has counted 65 pro and 87 contra. So many considerations are advanced on both sides of the question that one suspects few people undertake the demanding task of sifting the evidence before taking a position. . .[an individual's position] seems to come as much from the gut as the head" (*Cruel and Unusual The Supreme Court and Capital Punishment*, New York: Random House, 1973, 57).

A. The abolitionists of capital punishment.

The Bible believer deplores the concerted effort to abolish capital punishment. One is inclined to concur with William F. Buckley who bemoans the fact that "abolitionists gain strength every day, and agitation on the subject crops up in the media and in the mail weekly" ("Execution Day Ahead?" *National Review*, Vol. 51, No. 7, April 16, 2001, 63).

The execution of Timothy McVeigh has ignited a heated debate on capital punishment. On April 19, 1995, he bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City and sent 168 innocent men, women and children to their deaths. With total lack of remorse, he characterized the 19 children he murdered as "collateral damage." The case of McVeigh challenges the dogma of death penalty opponents as no other execution in recent memory. And yet the abolitionists of capital punishment are undeterred in their efforts to eliminate all executions. Liberal columnist Richard Cohen joined many others in trying to prevent the execution of McVeigh, who

died by lethal injection on June 11, 2001. He asserts that "McVeigh's true punishment would be the refusal of the government to play by his rules. He's dirt. He kills. We don't" ("Case Proves Again What's Wrong With Death Penalty," *The Des Moines Register*, Feb. 19, 2001, 9A).

But as many have asked, If capital punishment was not appropriate for Timothy McVeigh, what was? If McVeigh should not have been executed, who should be? Opponents of capital punishment propose numerous arguments for its abolition. The informed believer can and should counter these arguments.

B. The arguments against capital punishment:

Most objections to the death penalty can be grouped under eight major headings: the social, penal, legal, constitutional, moral, humanist, spiritual and dispensational arguments.

1. The social argument:
   a. The argument: **capital punishment does not restrain crime**. The death penalty is not a deterrent.
   b. The answer: Logic shows that capital punishment, for one, deters the murderer from committing other crimes. Further, studies indicate that the death penalty deters others from committing murder. In the words of columnist Charley Reese, "the recidivism rate for executed murderers is zero" ("Bring Back Public Hangings," *Conservative Chronicle*, Vol. 16, No. 21, May 21, 2001, 20).

      District attorney Paul Shafer writes, "There is no known deterrent other than capital punishment to prevent these persons incarcerated for life from killing their guards in an attempt to escape" ("Death Penalty," *The National Observer*, December 17, 1974, 12).

      Even a life sentence without a chance of parole is no guarantee that serious crimes will not be committed. Vernon Crittendon, public information officer at San Quentin State Prison, reports that of 85 violent death row inmates at his institution, 45 attacked some 70 wardens and staff members at San Quentin during the past 18 months (Fox News, "The O'Reilly Factor," May 31, 2001. Confirmed in a phone conversation with Mr. Crittendon on June 13, 2001).

      While opponents of capital punishment argue that there is little reliable evidence that the death penalty is a deterrent to murder, various studies indicate otherwise.

One early study by an Illinois economics professor indicates that every execution would deter 156 murders. He admits the number is an estimate but after exhaustive statistical research concludes that "a single execution would be likely to deter somewhere between 50 and 200 murders" ("Study: Executions a Deterrent," *The Des Moines Tribune*, Nov. 30, 1976, 1).

Other studies point to capital punishment as a deterrent:

> In 1971, when we had no executions, there were an estimated total of 17,630 murders in our country as compared with approximately 9,000 in 1960—a 96 percent increase. [But with only a 15% increase in population.] (Daniel F. McMahon, "Capital Punishment," *NCOA Journal*, San Antonio, TX, April 1973, 10-11).

The most thorough study done to date in the United States, covering the years 1977-1996, has just been released by three economics professors at Emory University, in Atlanta, Georgia. This is their conclusion: "An increase in any of the three probabilities—arrest, sentencing, or execution—tends to reduce the crime rate. In particular, each execution results, on average, in 18 fewer murders" (Paul H. Rubin, Hashem Dezhbakhsh and Joanna Melhop Shepherd, "Does Capital Punishment Have a Deterrent Effect?" New Evidence from Post-moratorium Panel Data. Web address: ssrn.com).

Opponents of capital punishment may argue its deterrent factor but they dare not ignore the above study. It should be pointed out, however, that the execution of the criminal is primarily a divinely sanctioned punishment for some heinous crime. On the other hand, God said that capital punishment will indeed deter crime: "(and the people) shall hear and fear and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you" (Deut. 19:20; cf. Deut. 13:11; 17:13).

2. The penal argument:
   a. The argument: **capital punishment does not rehabilitate the criminal.**
   b. The answer: capital punishment is not rehabilitative or remedial but retributive. There is a difference between chastisement, the source of which is love (Heb. 12:6), and punishment, the source of which is justice. The biblical

connection is not punishment and rehabilitation but punishment and justice. As Geisler well notes: "The prime reason for capital punishment...is that justice demands it. A just order is disturbed by murder and only the death of the murderer can restore that justice" (*Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, 247).

Modern man no longer believes in God or in unchangeable moral law. Thus the idea of justice is foreign to much of our society. With no existing law which the criminal has broken, the abolitionist therefore argues for rehabilitation and reformation of the murderer. Furthermore, there is a real danger that a community which is too ready to forgive the criminal may end up condoning the crime.

The concept of retributive justice is rooted in the very character of God and the nature of the gospel. God's Son took our rightful punishment upon Himself. The cross demonstrates the divine justice in punishing sin and divine mercy in pardoning those who place their faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).

3. The legal argument:
   a. The argument: **capital punishment does not render justice.** The poor suffer while the rich go free. Blacks are more likely to be executed than whites.
   b. The answer: Injustice in the application of capital punishment reflects on the administration of the law rather than the institution of capital punishment. Renowned penologist Ernest van den Haag puts things in focus. What if the selection of criminals slated for execution is capricious? Could that be an argument against the death penalty?

      > Guilt is personal. The guilt of a convict who has been sentenced to death is not diminished because another, as guilty, was sentenced to a lesser punishment or was not punished at all. Equality is desirable. But justice is more desirable. Equal justice is most desirable, but it is *justice* that we want to be equal, and equality cannot replace justice. (Ernest van den Haag, "New Arguments Against Capital Punishment?" *National Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, February 8, 1985, 35, italics in the original).

Gordon H. Clark discounts the argument that only the poor (or blacks) are convicted and the wealthy (or whites) escape:

> Actually the courts are so lenient and the public so permissive that nearly everybody escapes. If the objection were true, however, the answer would not be to abolish capital punishment and let the number of murderers keep on soaring, but it would be to put honest judges on the bench and in the box jurors who are more compassionate toward the victim than toward the criminal. (Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973, 84).

To quote Professor van den Haag again:

> Out of the approximately 20,000 homicides committed annually in the United States, fewer than 300 lead to a death sentence. . .Still, if there really were discrimination in sentencing, opposing it would not logically lead one to oppose the execution of the murderers discriminated against, let alone the death penalty as such. . .Suppose the police racially discriminated in handing out parking tickets. . .Would distributive discrimination argue for abolishing parking tickets. . .? To be sure, the death penalty is a more serious matter. But why should discrimination in distribution *ever* lead us to abolish what is being distributed? (*National Review*, February 8, 1985, 33-34, italics in the original).

Abolitionists charge that the death penalty is overused, especially in Texas where one-third of the executions have taken place in the United States in recent years. Van den Haag shows:

> We are not ready to do without it, yet hesitate to use it: There are many convicts on death row, but only a few are actually executed. Between 1973 and 1995, 5,760 death sentences were imposed; as of 1995, only 313 had been executed, and only some 400 have been executed since ("The Ultimate Penalty...And a Just One: The Basics of Capital Punishment," *National Review*, Vol. 53, No. 11, June 11, 2001, 32).

"The leniency of the American judicial system is further seen by the fact that the average prison time served by a convicted murderer is 5 years and 11 months" (Charley

Reese, "Bring Back Public Hanging," *Conservative Chronicle*, 20).

The Bible demands fair and equal treatment: "You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor" (Lev. 19:15).

If capital punishment is applied unequally, then effort should be made to apply it equally, not abolish it. Geisler's comments are to the point:

> A disproportionate number of capital punishments is not in itself a proof of inequity, any more than a disproportionately high number of minorities in professional basketball is proof of discrimination against majority ethnic groups. This is not to say that one group of people is more sinful than another, but simply that conditions may occasion different social behavior. However understandable and regrettable this may be, a society cannot tolerate violent social behavior, and it must protect its citizens. (*Christian Ethics*, 198).

As Walter Berns has succinctly summarized: "To execute black murderers or poor murderers because they are murderers is not unjust; to execute them because they are black or poor is unconscionable and unconstitutional" (*For Capital Punishment*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1979, 187).

Related to the argument that capital punishment is capriciously applied is the protestation that human error leads to the execution of innocent individuals.

By way of response it may be said that no person should be executed without the due process of the law. Furthermore, there were slightly more than 700 people who were executed in this country since the Supreme Court authorized the death sentence in 1977. Among the experts, there is no consensus that any of them were innocent.

Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor told the Minnesota Women Lawyers in July 2001 that she is leaning toward eliminating the death penalty because of the possibility that innocent people have been executed. She

noted that six death row inmates were freed in 2000 and 90 have been exonerated by new evidence since 1973.

Cal Thomas astutely assesses the situation: "The exoneration of some death row inmates is not an argument in favor of eliminating capital punishment but a testimony to the fairness of a system skewed toward protecting the accused, sometimes to the detriment of justice" ("Justice O'Connor and the Death Penalty," *Conservative Chronicle*, Vol. 15, No. 29, July 18, 2001, 29).

Cal Thomas proceeds to chide Justice O'Connor for projecting on condemned killers an inalienable right to live yet refusing to project a similar view on innocent pre-born babies in the process of exiting the birth canal.

What of the likelihood of human error in executions? Gordon Clark puts this controversial subject into perspective:

> Yet if just one innocent man is executed. . . ? Then consider: Do you prefer 10,000 murders to save one innocent man rather than one tragedy to save 5000 lives? But of course this type of argument is superficial and irrelevant. God gave the right of capital punishment to human governments. He intended it to be used wisely and justly, but he intended it to be used (*Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, 84).

The fact that mistakes will be made by fallible human beings in the application of the death penalty does not argue for the doing away with it. Geisler's analogy is very much to the point: "Doctors make fatal mistakes, and so do politicians, but these mistakes are not good reasons for doing away with the practice of medicine or government" (*Ethics: Alternatives and Issues*, p. 249).

4. The constitutional argument:
   a. The argument: **Capital punishment does not respect the Constitution.** The death penalty, it is asserted, is a violation of the Eighth Amendment which prohibits "cruel and unusual punishments." This worn argument, gaining momentum once again in recent months, looks upon capital punishment as a vestige of primitive people and a violation of our enlightened Constitution. As Meltsner, an abolitionist of capital punishment, explains it: "Progressive abandonment

of the death penalty marked the advancement of civilization. Capital punishment had always been associated with barbarism; its abolition with such democratic values as the sanctity of life, the dignity of man, and a humane criminal law" (*Cruel and Unusual*, 171).

Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. points out in Furman v. Georgia that all capital punishment is cruel and unusual because it degrades the human dignity both of the victim and executioner of the death penalty

Brennan insists that "the authors of the 'cruel and unusual' clause of the Eighth Amendment intended to forbid all punishments that do not comport with human dignity, and that the death penalty does not comport with human dignity because it is too severe, and that it is too severe because it causes death" (Berns, *For Capital Punishment*, 162-163).

b. The answer: The Eighth Amendment provides that "excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." By cruel punishments they meant those which were especially of medieval barbarities such as disembowelment, the rack, the thumb-screw, pressing with weights, boiling in oil, drawing and quartering and burning alive.

By unusual punishment the Founding Fathers seemed to have meant "capricious," that is, "not guided by no rules which permit prediction" (Ernest van den Haag, *Punishing Criminals Concerning a Very Old and Painful Question*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975, 227).

As capital punishment is presently administered, it is not cruel, that is, it is not a particularly painful death nor undeserved death. Neither is capital punishment unusual, insofar as legislators and governors have collaborated in the frustration of the administration of capital punishment. The answer is to expedite not to eliminate executions.

It is interesting to note that in the United States of America, arguably the most enlightened nation on this planet, a large percentage of its citizens favor capital punishment—an impressive 85% in the summer of 2001—despite the fact that capital punishment has almost no articulate supporters in the public among the intelligentsia.

Could it be that this American position on the death penalty reflects not a spirit of barbarism but a sense of biblical orientation, something passed on to us, like the Constitution, from our Founding Fathers?

5. The moral argument:
   a. The argument: **Capital punishment does not reflect love.** Love and capital punishment are mutually exclusive.
   b. The answer: If love and capital punishment are contradictory, then the sacrifice of the Savior was a contradiction. The principle for the substitutionary atonement is that only life can atone for life (Lev. 17:11). God's love was manifest in the death of His Son as a substitute for the sinner (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Jn. 15:13).

      God is not only a God of love (1 Jn. 4:8) but of light (1 Jn. 1:5), spirit (Jn. 4:24), truth and life (Jn. 14:6). In whatever God does, His love and justice are in perfect harmony (Rom. 9:20; Gen. 15:25). God always does and demands that which is right.

      As a God of light or righteousness, He cannot countenance sin but as a God of love He provided forgiveness for man's sin. Forgiveness, however, does not automatically remove any temporal penalties for sin. A Christian who jumps off a bridge will not escape death at the bottom though his sins have been forgiven. Similarly, an inmate on death row who trusts in Christ as Savior must still subject himself to the divine requirement that in taking another's life one forfeits his own life.

      Even from a purely secular perspective, capital punishment is not in conflict with a loving attitude. Compassion is not decisive, as van den Haag demonstrates:

      > Felt with a man to be executed it may also be felt with his victim: If the execution spares future victims of murder, supporters of the death penalty may claim compassion as their argument (*Punishing Criminals,* 209).

6. The humanist argument:
   a. The argument: **capital punishment does not rectify evil.** Two wrongs don't make a right. Capital punishment is legalized murder and brutalizes the community. Opponents of capital punishment imply that no murder is so heinous that it should be punished with the death penalty.

b. The answer: The Bible prohibits the taking of life but permits the execution of the murderer. Thus, the avenger of blood who apprehends and brings the criminal to justice is not guilty of blood (Num. 35:27). Then too, there is a world of difference between a murder and an execution. Individuals are appointed to be God's instruments of justice (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Their activity is a legal one rather than a personal one. As van den Haag incisively observes:

> When an offender is legally arrested and imprisoned, we do not speak of "legalized kidnapping." Arrest and kidnapping may be physically indistinguishable... Punishment differs because it has social sanction. . . Not the physical act but the social meaning of it distinguishes robbery from taxation, murder from execution (*Punishing Criminals*, 223-224):

The Bible believer would add that in the case of murder, the act is an outrage against God. The death penalty is carried out in obedience to God.

In reality the humanistic opponents to capital punishment are opposed to the taking of any human life for whatever reason, but their attitude is paradoxical, as Charley Reese demonstrates:

> As for those who profess sympathy for the killers, I think they are sick. They show no sympathy for innocent life. . .most of them have zero sympathy for the 100-percent innocent children who are slaughtered in abortion clinics (*Conservative Chronicle*, 20).

7. The spiritual argument
   a. The argument: **capital punishment does not rescue the sinner from hell.** Our efforts should be the sinner's salvation rather than his execution.
   b. The answer: There is ample time between the apprehension and execution of the criminal. On the average, eight years and ten months elapse between sentencing and execution. Besides, there is no proof that a man serving a life sentence is more likely to turn to Christ for salvation than one with a death sentence. The observations of John Jefferson Davis go to the heart of the matter:

> Rather than foreclosing the possibility of salvation, the reality of the death penalty forces the one convicted to think about his eternal destiny and consequently can even be seen as beneficial. . .The death penalty

> reminds the murderer, in a way that life imprisonment cannot, of the grim but inescapable truth that "it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27) (*Evangelical Ethics Issues in the Church Today*, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1985, 207).

One writer spells out the biblical hope that exists for death row convicts:

> The repentant thief was facing the death sentence when he met Christ. He acknowledged his sin, recognized Jesus Christ for Who He is—the sinless Son of God—and trusted in Him and His once-and-for-all, vicarious atoning sacrifice. At that very moment, Jesus Christ forgave him and promised him: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43) Although the convict still faced the consequences of violating the law here on earth, God forgave him of his sin when he genuinely repented and trusted in Christ for salvation. (Roberto-Jose M. Livioco, "Capital Punishment: A Crime, a Cure or a Consequence?" *Foundation*, March-April 1999, Vol. 20, No. 2, 34-35).

8. The dispensational argument:
   a. The argument: **Capital punishment does not realize the New Testament ethic.** It is based on a sub-Christian or pre-Christian concept of justice, which is superceded by a New Testament morality of forgiving grace.
   b. The answer: Neither the Lord nor the apostles abrogated capital punishment. To the contrary, as has already been seen, they asserted the governmental right to execute criminals. While it is true that the Mosaic law has ended, capital punishment, introduced thousands of years before the giving of the law, continues as a governmental function. Charles Ryrie notes that the New Testament does not contain a replacement ethic for capital punishment:

      > Dispensational distinctions do recognize that the law of capital punishment for certain crimes was done away with in Christ, but this does not include capital punishment for murder. If the New Testament gave replacement for the standard of Genesis 9:6, then the Genesis command would no longer be valid. But since it does not, the dispensational teaching concerning the end of the law is irrelevant to Genesis

9:6, and the principle of that verse apparently still applies today. (*Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues*, 30).

C. The antagonism toward capital punishment:

Opponents of capital punishment may be well intentioned but are misinformed and mistaken. Their abolitionist attitude is based on a number of erroneous perspectives in conflict with biblical revelation.

1. An insensitivity toward the image of God.

A murderer destroys someone in God's image. In God's estimate, the worth of an individual is so great that anyone who tampers with his sacred right to live forfeits his own life. Not the humanist who would save the life of the murderer but the biblicist who would opt for capital punishment has the highest regard for human life.

2. An ignorance of the Word of God.

Biblical revelation clearly calls for the execution of criminals guilty of capital crimes. We dare not change God's Word to fit our human sensitivity. For example, David Hoekema argues strongly for the abolition of capital punishment, concluding that "There are compelling reasons not to entrust the power to decide who shall die to the persons and procedures that constitute our judicial system" ("Capital Punishment: The Question of Justification," *The Christian Century*, March 21, 1979, Vol. 96, No. 10, 342).

How can a professor at a Christian institution dismiss Romans 13:4 which declares precisely what he denies, that government has the right and duty to take the life of the criminal?

3. An indifference to the glory of God.

Whatever God does, allows, or commands will ultimately bring glory to Himself. Whether we understand God's rationale or not, we bow to His omnipotent will and thus uphold His glory and honor.

As a holy God He is outraged by sin. As a just God He has decreed punishment for sin. As a gracious and merciful God, He can forgive sin through Jesus Christ, but man, nonetheless, will suffer the temporal consequences of sin. Murder is an attack on the holiness of God. God desires fair punishment of the murderer by human government which He ordained. He desires vindication

and not vindictiveness. When legal authorities acquiesce to God's command they bring glory to God.

I am currently corresponding with an individual incarcerated in a penitentiary in another state. His crimes are many, including manslaughter. Through a prison ministry he trusted in Christ as Savior. With his spiritual eyes opened, he knows he deserves death. He is aware of the enormity of his sin but deeply grateful for the forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Because of legal leniency, he looks forward to parole after eight years. He desires to serve the Lord the rest of his life but he would have been prepared to meet Him sooner, had the state demanded the extreme penalty. My friend has learned something that many fail to understand: God can forgive sin, but He cannot justify sin. God demands capital punishment for capital crimes.

Written for the Baptist
Bulletin, Nov. and Dec. 2001

Biblical Principles on Capital Punishment

1. The preservation of life, Genesis 1-2.	DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S CARE
2. The protection of the murderer, Genesis 4.	DISTANCING OF THE MURDERER FROM SOCIETY
3. The prelude to capital punishment, Genesis 6.	THE DELUGE UPON THE WICKED
4. The punishment for murder, Genesis 9.	DIRECTIONS FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT
5. The prohibition of murder, Exodus 20.	DENUNCIATION OF WILFUL KILLING
6. The permission to government, Romans 13.	DISCHARGING OF DIVINE RESPONSIBILITY
7. The presence of the King, Revelation 19.	DISPATCHING OF ALL UNBELIEVERS

Arguments Against Capital Punishment

1. The Social Argument:

Capital punishment does not **restrain crime.**

2. The Penal Argument:

Capital punishment does not **rehabilitate the criminal.**

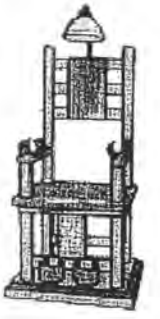
3. The Legal Argument:

Capital punishment does not **render justice.**

4. The Constitutional Argument:

Capital punishment does not **respect the US Constitution.**

5. The Moral Argument:



Capital punishment does not **reflect love.**

6. The Humanist Argument:

Capital punishment does not **rectify evil.**

7. The Spiritual Argument:

Capital punishment does not **rescue the sinner from hell.**

8. The Dispensational Argument:

Capital punishment does not **realize the New Testament ethic.**

MKOBER

Manfred Kober

From: Manfred Kober
Sent: Wednesday, December 26, 2007 6:02 PM
To: 'letters@dmreg.com'

December 26, 2007

Letter in response to DMR editorial, Fri., Dec. 21, 2007, 20A
"Let's make it a trend: Abolish death penalty"

Des Moines Register
Letters to the Edito

Dear Sirs:

In your editorial you suggested that the 36 states which have the death penalty on their books should abolish it. In your lengthy column you proffer all the various reasons why capital punishment should be universally abolished. Permit me to point out just three of the fallacious reasons in your edtiorial

For one, you suggest that capital punishment is barbaric. In fact, capital punishment is biblical. God places such high value on human life that a murderer, who takes the life of a person who is made in the image of God, forfeits his life. God introducted capital punishment in the days of Noah, asserting that "whosoever sheddes man's blood, by man shall his blood by shed" (Genesis 9:6). The same divine injunction is repeated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 13:4, noting that the government which is to protects its citizens agains evil doers does not carry the sword of capital punishment in vain.

Secondly, you insist that capital punishment "is not a proven deterrent." Well, all sorts of statistics to the contrary could be marshalled. Did your editorial writer miss the article in the Nov. 18 issue of the New York Times entitled, "Does Death Penalty Save Lives? A New Debate"? The article refers to a dozen recent studies which show that "executioons save lives. For each inmate put to death. . . 3 to 18 murders are prevented." Mocan, an economist at Lousiana State University, who is personally opposed to capital punishment, shows in his study that each execution saves five lives. Would the editors of the Register rather have five innocent individuals perish so that the life of a criminal guilty of heinous crimes would be spared?

Finally, you deplore the fact that capital punishment is revenge. Capital punishment, like any other punishment meted out by government, is not revenge but retribution. There actually are some crimes so revolting that capital punishment is called for. This is not murder (as you suggest) but the putting to death of an inidvidual who deserves this ultimate punishmentl In this case the death penalty removes a murderer who has forfeited his life and at the same time deters at least five further murders. There is nothing barbaric or uncivilized about that.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Several reasons to keep the death penalty

In a Jan. 28 letter to the editor, Patti Brown argues for the abolition of the death penalty on the grounds that "there simply is no remedy for the execution of someone who may be innocent." As secretary of Iowans Against the Death Penalty, she feels that the execution of one innocent man is enough reason to abrogate capital punishment. Brown and her organization overlook several factors.

With modern DNA testing, a criminal's guilt can normally be established beyond the shadow of any doubt. Few convicted criminals are ever executed. As of 2007, some 1,099 individuals have been executed since the Supreme Court reinstituted capital punishment in 1977. There is no consensus among the experts that any of them were innocent.

That mistakes will be made by fallible human beings in the application of the death penalty does not argue for the doing away of it. Doctors make fatal mistakes and so do politicians, but these mistakes are not a good reason for doing away with the practice of medicine or government.

A desire to abolish the death penalty shows a low view of the will of the Creator. He commanded that a murderer be put to death (Genesis 9:6), and it fails to acknowledge that capital punishment serves as a deterrent. Finally, it minimizes the wickedness of criminals who deserve to pay the ultimate penalty for their heinous crimes.

— **Manfred Kober,**
Bondurant.

Letter to the Editor

Response to "Fallible system shouldn't include death penalty"
DMRegister Jan. 28, 2008 P.6A

Dear Editors of the Des Moines Register,

In a January 28 letter to the editor of the Register Patti Brown argues for the abolition of the death penalty on the grounds that "there is simply no remedy for the execution of someone who may be innocent. As secretary of Iowans Against the Death Penalty, she feels that the execution of one innocent man is enough reason to abrogate capital punishment. Ms. Brown and her organization overlook several factors.

For one, with modern DNA testing, a criminal's guilt can normally be established beyond the shadow of any doubt. Few of the convicted criminals are ever executed. As of 2007, some 1099 individuals have been executed since the Supreme Court reinstituted capital punishment in 1977. There is no consensus among the experts that any of them were innocent. Furthermore, the American judicial system is extremely lenient as seen by the fact that the average prison time served by a convicted murderer is 5 years and 11 months.

The fact that mistakes will be made by fallible human beings in the application of the death penalty does not argue for the doing away with it. Doctors make fatal mistakes, and so do politicians, but theses mistakes are not good reason for doing away with the practice of medicine or government.

It seems that Ms. Brown would eliminate capital punishment even in a case where the murderer, like Gary Gilmore, freely admits his guilt and asks to die. A desire to abolish the death penalty indicates three things. It shows a low view of the will of the creator-God. He commanded that a murderer be put to death (Genesis 9:6). Further, it is fails to acknowledge that captial punishment serves as a warning and deterrent. Studies demonstrate that each execution saves about 10 innocent lives. Finally, it minimizes the wickedness of criminals who deserve to pay the ultimate penalty for their heinous crimes. If Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber, who sent 168 innocent individuals to their horrible deaths, should not have been executed, who should be?

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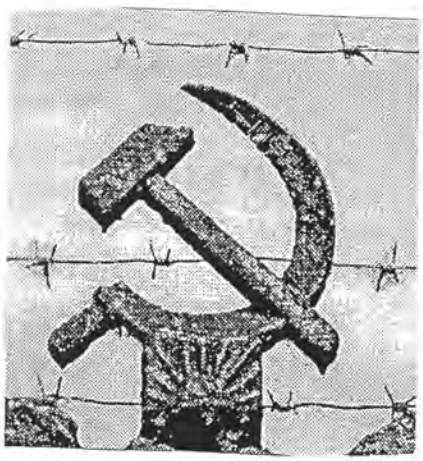
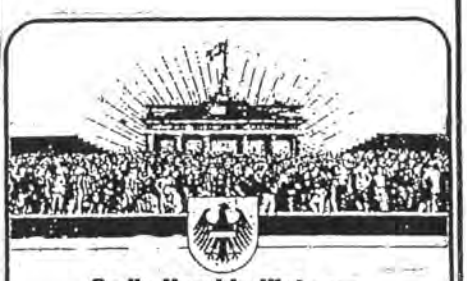
God's Hand in History:

The Untold Story of the Collapse of Communism and the Iron Curtain



Erich Honecker

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV



God's Hand In History:
The Collapse of Communism

RONALD REAGAN

1911-2004

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

God's Hand in History:

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM and THE IRON CURTAIN

EASTERN EUROPE

An Irresistible Tide

With Moscow's apparent acquiescence, reformers in Bulgaria and protesters in Czechoslovakia follow East Germany in pressing for democracy

1A. THE DREADFUL ERECTION OF THE IRON CURTAIN

2A. THE DEADLY EFFICIENCY OF THE FORMIDABLE BARRIER

3A. THE DRAMATIC EXODUS OF EAST GERMANS TO THE WEST

4A. THE DEDICATED EVANGELICALS AT PRAYER

5A. THE DESPERATE EFFORT OF THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT

6A. THE DELIGHTFUL EXPLOSION OF FREEDOM

7A. THE DIVINE EVIDENCE IN THE DEMISE OF COMMUNISM

The Berlin Wall: 1961-89

WORLD: An irresistible tide is sweeping the East bloc as reformers in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia follow the East German lead in pressing for democracy

Thousands of demonstrators shake the remaining hard-line regimes.

GOD'S HAND IN HISTORY:
THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM

In this age filled with turmoil, terrorism and tragedies, many Americans are fearful about their own destiny, that of their country and the world. Instead of facing the future with fear and doubt, the believer should face the future with fortitude and confidence. Though it might not seem that way at times, God is very much in control of the course of human history, as He is of our personal destiny.

One of the most splendid proofs for God's sovereignty in human affairs is afforded by the dramatic disintegration of world Communism. The sudden and unanticipated liberation of millions of enslaved people serves as a vivid illustration of the ability of God to reverse totally and suddenly a most dreadful situation as He worked out His sovereign plan and that, apparently, in response to fervent prayers. The dramatic and complete collapse of Communism serves as an illustration of God's firm control of world events. Be the human condition or world situation ever so bleak or desperate, God is able to reverse a seemingly hopeless situation at any time He so chooses. God is concerned what transpires in our life and nation and is competent to act. This allows us to have faith in the future. The untold story of the collapse of Communism fortifies that faith.

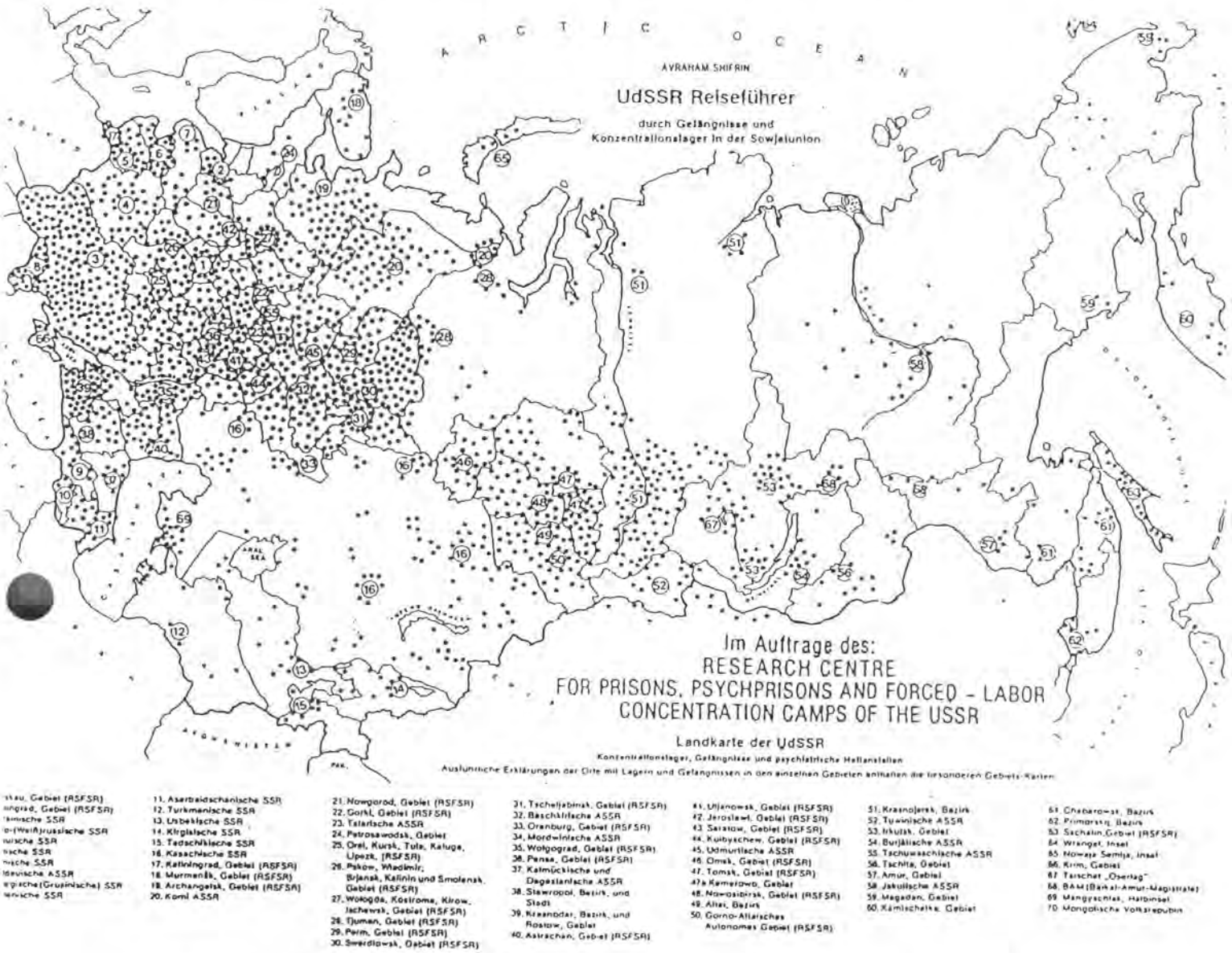
1A. The Dreadful Erection of the Iron Curtain

In the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union, an ally of the United States during the war, became a major world power. Its military enslavement of Eastern Europe resulted in the formation of a monstrous empire with the aim of exploiting its satellites for slave labor.

The oppressive Communist regime of Stalin continued the state terrorism of Lenin and made an effort to eradicate all opposition. Whole nationalities such as the Kazakhs, Kulaks and Tartars were eliminated. Under Khrushchev, 10 million Ukrainians died of starvation when their fields were burned. Scattered over the vast country were concentration camps, penal institutions and psychiatric hospitals for that vast segment of the population considered to be enemies of the State. Avraham Shifrin, who was incarcerated in a number of these penal institutions, wrote an important volume, *The First Guidebook to Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Soviet Union*, demonstrating that there were over 2,000 concentration camps. At one time or another, some 65 million Soviet citizens suffered in these camps. Alexandr Solzhenitsyn wrote from personal experience and prodigious

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn

research about his experiences in his acclaimed work on penal camps. His horrifying three-volume *Gulag Archipelago* became an immediate best-seller.



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12. Turkmenische SSR
13. Usbekische SSR
14. Kirgisische SSR
15. Tadschikische SSR
16. Kasachische SSR
17. Kaliningrad, Gebiet (RSFSR)
18. Murmansk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
19. Archangelsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
20. Komi ASSR

21. Nowgorod, Gebiet (RSFSR)
22. Gorki, Gebiet (RSFSR)
23. Tatarische ASSR
24. Petrosawodsk, Gebiet
25. Orel, Kursk, Tula, Kaluga, Upezk, (RSFSR)
26. Pskow, Wladimir, Brjansk, Kalinin und Smolensk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
27. Wologda, Kostroma, Kirow, Jaschewsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
28. Tjuman, Gebiet (RSFSR)
29. Perm, Gebiet (RSFSR)
30. Swerdlowsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)

31. Tscheljabinsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
32. Baschkirische ASSR
33. Oranburg, Gebiet (RSFSR)
34. Mordwinische ASSR
35. Wolgograd, Gebiet (RSFSR)
36. Pensa, Gebiet (RSFSR)
37. Kalmückische und Dagestanische ASSR
38. Stawropol, Bezirk, und Stadt
39. Krasnodar, Bezirk, und Rostow, Gebiet
40. Astrachan, Gebiet (RSFSR)

41. Uljanowsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
42. Jaroslawl, Gebiet (RSFSR)
43. Saratow, Gebiet (RSFSR)
44. Kuibyschew, Gebiet (RSFSR)
45. Udmurtische ASSR
46. Omsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
47. Tomsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
47a Kemerowo, Gebiet
48. Nowosibirsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)
49. Altai, Bezirk
50. Gorno-Altaisches Autonomes Gebiet (RSFSR)

51. Krasnojarsk, Bezirk
52. Tuwinische ASSR
53. Irkutsk, Gebiet
54. Burjätische ASSR
55. Tschuwaschische ASSR
56. Tschita, Gebiet
57. Amur, Gebiet
58. Jakutische ASSR
59. Magadan, Gebiet
60. Kamtschatka, Gebiet

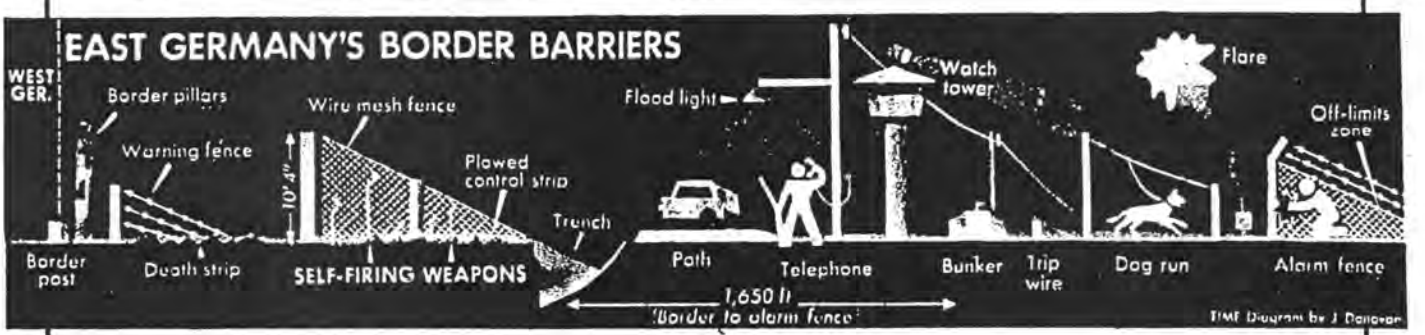
61. Chabarowsk, Bezirk
62. Primorskij, Bezirk
63. Sachalin, Gebiet (RSFSR)
64. Wrangel, Insel
65. Nowaja Semlja, Insel
66. Krim, Gebiet
67. Taischet „Obertag"
68. BAM (Baikal-Amur-Magistrale)
69. Mangyschlak, Halbinsel
70. Mongolische Volksrepublik

Internally, Khrushchev and his successor Brezhnev repressed any form of dissent. Outwardly they expanded the Communist empire to ever more countries, especially the African continent. Many of us remember the adage concerning Khrushchev: "Khrushchev is a man of peace, this we all recall; a piece of this and a piece of that, until he has it all!" We further recall his shoe-banging temper tantrums in the United Nations and his threats against the United States of America, vowing that our grandchildren would live under Communism.

In the Soviet satellites the puppet regimes, all under the thumb of the slave masters in the Kremlin, made sure that the disenchanted citizens were unable to

leave their "worker's paradise." To prevent the escape of citizens from the Communist to free nations, Soviet puppet regimes began building around 1949 a formidable barrier, extending between slave and free nations. This border, some 2,500 miles in length, dubbed by Winston Churchill the Iron Curtain, was deadliest between East and West Germany.

The city of Berlin provided the only escape route for East German citizens as they walked from the eastern part of the city, under Russian control, to the western part of the city, occupied by American, French and British forces. In 1961, because of ever more repressive measures of the Communist regime, a veritable flood of escapees, numbering 2,500 per day, voted with their feet for freedom. To stop this hemorrhaging to West Berlin, an island of freedom located inside a Communist sea, the so-called German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) began building the infamous Berlin Wall. The construction of this barrier effectively closed off the last escape valve from this Communist prison.



BY far the most visible and redoubtable monument to the cold war remains the 840-mile barricade of barbed wire, minefields, watchtowers and armed police that has constituted the frontier between divided Germany for two decades. In spite of the political *détente* that is expected to arise from the recent state treaty signed by the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, East German authorities are reinforcing the deadly barrier. In recent months, for example, workmen have been methodically replacing the barbed wire fences with new gratings; their mesh is too fine to climb.

Such grim improvements in the barrier are clearly designed to discourage East Germans, 871 of whom escaped last year, from interpreting *détente* as a license to flee to the West. Other recent innovations will relieve East German border guards of any problem of conscience they might have. Although guards are under orders to shoot to kill would-be escapees on sight, some have apparently looked the other way or deliberately avoided hitting their compatriots. The East Germans have now equipped sections of the barrier with automatic self-firing weapons, mounted on three levels so that anyone seeking to jump the fence will trigger a shower of bullets.

Where there are no self-firing weapons, second and third fences have been laid behind the frontier barrier with buried mines and a deep concrete-plated ditch between them. This type of fortification is intended to prevent a favorite escape maneuver: crashing through the barricade with a heavy car. Along certain sections of the border, the fences farthest away from the frontier are now equipped with electrified barbed wire that, when touched, alerts nearby border-control posts by optical and acoustical signals. Floodlights along populated sections of the frontier have long afforded West Germans a permanent panorama of escape attempts. Although such attempts have become suicidal, they are expected to continue. From now on, however, the new double barricades will help hide the spectacle from Western eyes.

TIME, JANUARY 22, 1973

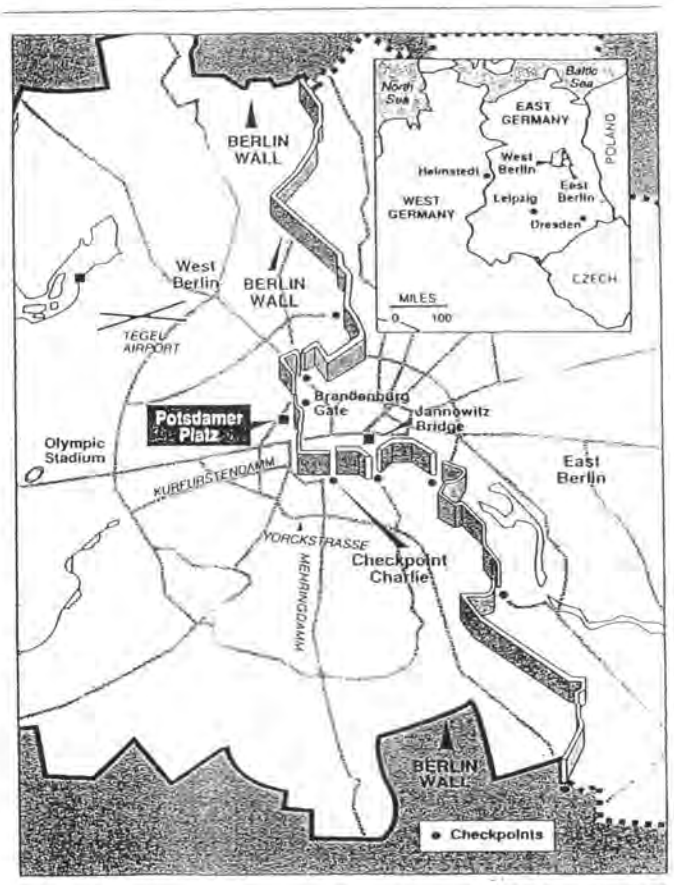
2A. The Deadly Efficiency of the Formidable Barrier

In subsequent years the Berlin Wall, as well as the 800-mile-long barrier between East and West Germany, were fortified more and more. Despite this deadly barrier, desperate individuals still attempted to escape their Communist slave masters. Many times their valiant efforts resulted in death. At least 380 individuals lost their lives in this fashion, either along the 35-mile barrier separating East and West Berlin or the 840-mile-long border, like an ugly scar disfiguring the German countryside.

In Berlin, the crude wall initially constructed of concrete blocks was replaced with a 10-foot-high wall comprised of concrete slabs and crowned with a round pipe, effectively preventing a hand-hold for anyone attempting to scale the wall. In fact, a second parallel wall, some 100 yards inside East Berlin, made it impossible for anyone to approach the westernmost wall. Individuals found within the space between the two walls, an area brightly illuminated at night, would be shot by ruthless border guards.

As noted earlier, West Berlin was an island of freedom surrounded by a Communist sea. Berlin was actually located 118 miles eastward of the border separating West from East Germany. The wall separated the two parts of the city itself, but the rest of the free city of West Berlin was also surrounded by formidable fortifications comprised of fences, mine fields and watch towers.

The formidable barrier separating the two parts of the country became ever more impenetrable, expanded to a three-mile-wide no-man's land protected with fences, dog runs, watch towers, bunkers, booby traps and mine fields. On the actual border fence for extensive stretches, automatic self-shooting weapons were installed at head level, belly level and leg level.

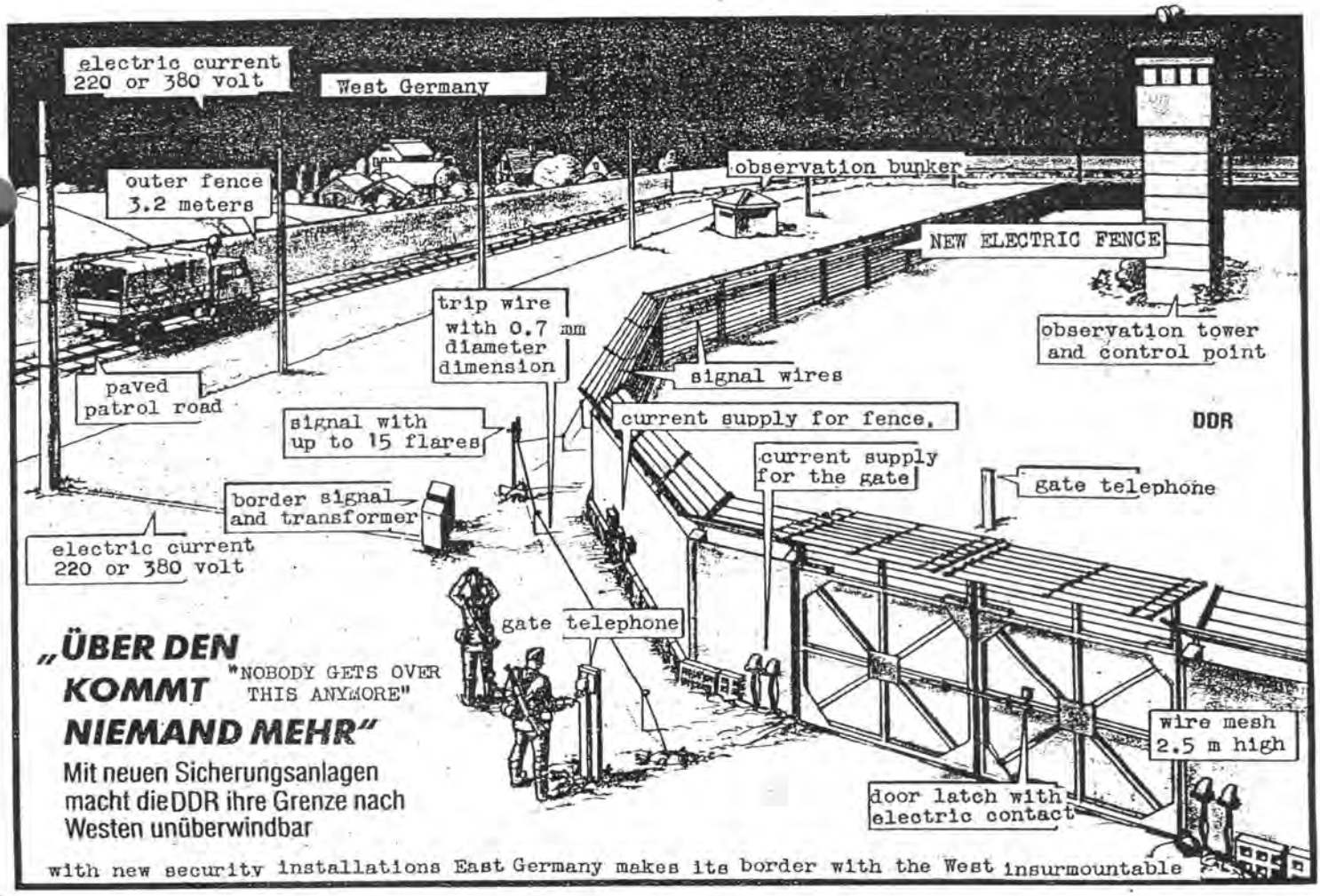


The New York Times/Nov. 13, 1989

The most closely guarded points along the border were the crossing points from West to East Germany for automobiles and trains, three of each. Regular visitors to East Germany, like this writer, could observe the increasingly deadly nature of the border fortifications, making any escape attempt a suicidal venture. Virtually

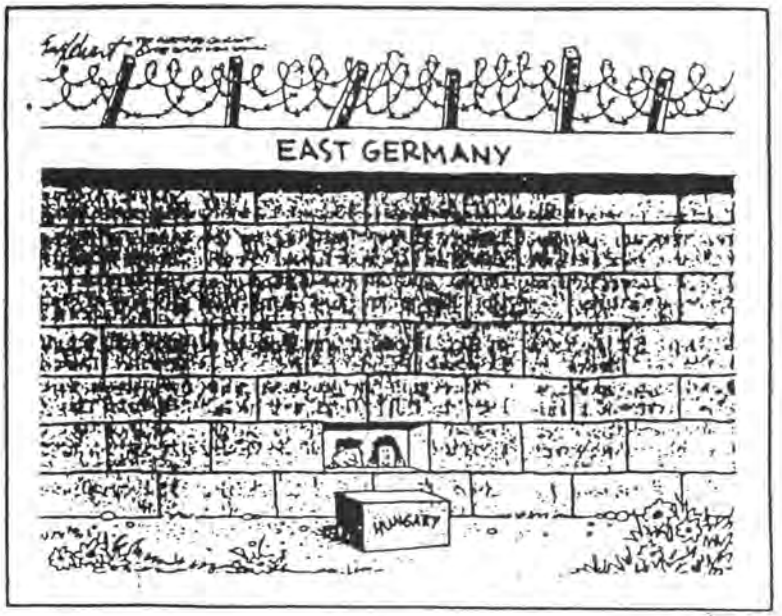
the only East Germans permitted to visit the free western part or Federal Republic of Germany, were citizens who had reached the coveted retirement age, which was 60 for women and 65 for men. They were readily granted visas to visit friend or relatives for three weeks. All the young people, longing for a taste of freedom, had figured out how many years, months and weeks were left until they could make their first trip to free West Germany, a place they only knew from television programs.

Once the state had exacted from its serfs the labor deemed due them, the people could leave, though many, broken in body and spirit, were unable to enjoy their few weeks of freedom.



3A. The Dramatic Exodus of East Germans to the West

In the summer of 1989, while the German Democratic Republic was preparing to celebrate its 40th anniversary, the Communist government of Hungary did something that altered the status quo in Europe in a dramatic way. Having always imposed less stringent travel restrictions on its citizens than did other countries in the Communist camp, the Hungarian government decided, much to the horror of its Communist neighbors, to remove the border posts and barbed wire fences on their western border to Austria. As the Austrian television news filmed, the brave Hungarians removed the hated barrier with wire cutters. As the amazing events unfolded on West German television, East German young people immediately began a virtual migration southward. The East German young people were suddenly overcome with an inordinate desire to vacation in Hungary. Obtaining a tourist visa from their government, they started a mass migration to the Hungarian/Austrian border. Who can blame them for making a break for freedom?



Driving mostly their diminutive Trabant cars, (known as the "car of the philosopher. . .because you think you have a car"), they drove directly to the opening in the Austrian/Hungarian border and leaving their precious cars, for which the average waiting time had been fifteen years, they walked to freedom in Austria. Even as the Hungarian side of the border became the world's largest parking lot, East German young people were given quick and safe passage through Austria on their way to West Germany. Within hours, many were in the free part of Berlin just hundreds of yards away from their vacant apartments in the eastern part of the city.

Refugees stream into Austria

During that fateful summer of 1989, thousands of Germans, mostly well educated young people and professionals, made this trek to freedom. Sometimes the consequences for East Germany were catastrophic. This writer's nephew, just beginning his medical studies, was called upon to work in a hospital where, rightly or wrongly, every doctor and nurse had opted for freedom.

Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung

The German government was enraged because of Hungary's unilateral decision. Hungary, in turn, refused to close the border to Austria but instead sealed its border with Czechoslovakia. The East German government also sealed its southern border with Czechoslovakia, thus trapping tens of thousands of East Germans within Czechoslovakia. They could not return to their homes in East Germany, nor could they continue to Hungary and thence to freedom. The western news media portrayed their desperate plight. By the thousands they attempted to scale the fence at the West German embassy in Prague while frustrated Czech policemen tried to hold them back. Soon the number of refugees exceeded five thousand, with standing room only in a small area, the torrential rains turning the embassy grounds into a muddy mess.

DDR-Flüchtlinge in der Bonner Botschaft in Prag 1989: „Das Politbüro hat gewußt, wie tief es in dem Sumpf sitzt"

With world attention on the heart-wrenching scenes in Prague and East Germany desperately trying to save its face as its 40-year anniversary festivities were approaching, the East German government sent so-called "freedom trains" to Prague, which transported the refugees to West Germany.

Waves of East German refugees toast freedom as Hungary opens gates

Rather than selecting the shortest route, the devious East German officials insisted that the trains go through Eastern Germany, with secret police boarding the trains to confiscate everyone's passport and identification papers. Thanks to the presence of West German government officials on the trains, brutal acts by the Communist bullies were kept to a minimum. As the trains slowed down in major East German cities, numerous alert young people climbed aboard, making for considerably crowded and unsanitary conditions. After an agonizingly slow ride of 24 hours, the trains arrived in Hof, West Germany, where thousands of West Germans welcomed their brothers and sisters from the east, showering them with food and drink, of which they had been deprived for days.

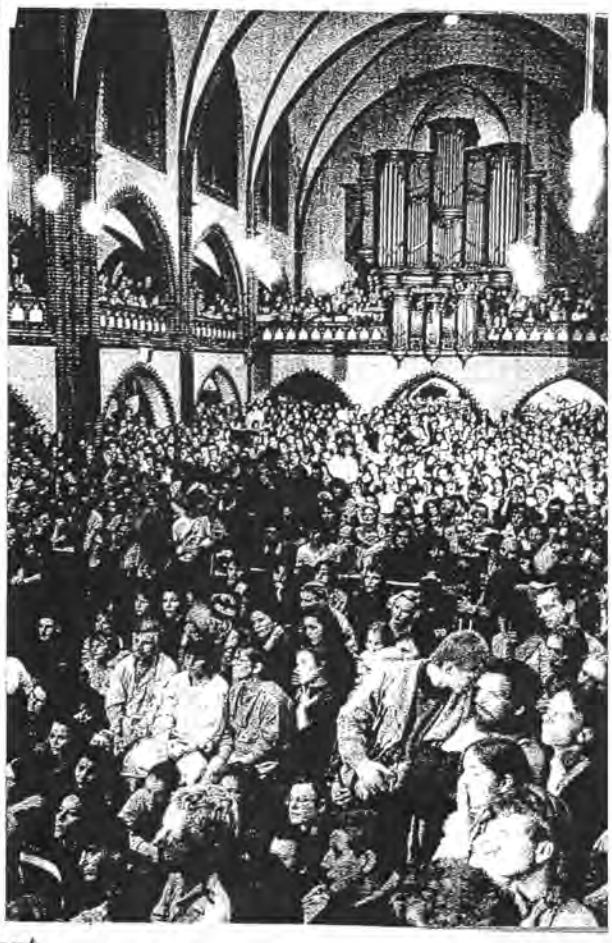
As soon as the first freedom trains left Prague, thousands of other individuals sought refuge in the West German embassy. Thus other freedom trains were dispatched to take another 5,000 refugees to West Germany. As the train slowed down again in cities such as Dresden and Chemnitz, and individuals were anxious to climb aboard as at the first time, Communist police were waiting for them and beat them mercilessly to the ground. Large puddles of blood on the train platform testified to the brutality of the Communist goons against individuals whose only crime was the desire to be free.

When the last freedom train crossed the border into West Germany, the Iron Curtain seemed to close permanently. The Communist dictator Erich Honecker defiantly declared that the Berlin

Wall would stand for another hundred years. Little did he know that God would soon intervene in a marvelous way and secure freedom for millions of oppressed people.

4A. The Dedicated Evangelicals at Prayer

With the 40th anniversary of the East German dictatorship approaching, and no hope in sight for an end to the Communist regime, despite the temporary exodus of tens of thousands of their countrymen, evangelical Lutheran young people gathered at the impressive St. Nikolaikirche in Leipzig, the church where Johann Sebastian Bach was organist in the 18th century. Every Monday night they came together for a prayer vigil, asking God for a change of government. Then with lit candles they solemnly walked around the inner ring of Leipzig. Returning to the church, they vowed to return for prayer the following Monday, if God had not yet granted their request. As the young people gathered each Monday, their numbers swelled, so that they also occupied the neighboring St. Thomaskirche, with loudspeakers communicating the announcements and prayer service to the multitude in the square between the churches.



In numerous other cities throughout the country, individual prayer vigils were held. What started as an effort by evangelical Lutheran students and pastors soon encompassed a large segment of the population. This writer's brother was a pastor in Stollberg at the time, leading the people in his city i a prayer vigil. According to his parishioners, when he spoke, virtually the entire town gathered inside and outside the Lutheran church. Some of the folk reported to this writer that the thousands of listener were so attentive that one could hear a pin drop.

Each Monday vast numbers of citizens met for prayer. They took comfort and courage from each other but many wondered how their government would respond to their ever-swelling numbers.

5A. The Desperate Effort of the East German Government

The many thousands gathered for prayer vigil each Monday knew it was only a matter of time before the government would respond with force to this peaceful challenge. This writer was in the heart of Leipzig in July of 1989. As my family and I were waiting for my brother to finish a business matter, we watched the busy pedestrian traffic, noticing that virtually every other person who passed was

a Russian soldier, German soldier or policeman. When we related our observations to our Leipzig friends over Kaffee und Kuchen, they assured us that the civilian individuals were probably plainclothes policemen. There was great tension in the air. Everyone felt that something dreadful was about to happen.

The Monday night vigils continued and an ever-increasing number of peaceful protesters from all over East Germany traveled to Leipzig Monday night. As the first Monday of October approached, reliable reports suggested that in Berlin directives had been given to the German and Russian army and police to end the vigils once and for all by shooting the protesters. Further, it was known that thousands of wooden coffins had been shipped into the city. All meat lockers had been emptied to make room for the anticipated human corpses. As the masses from throughout the country emerged from the bus and train stations that afternoon, they noticed that along every street leading to the two churches in the center of town, military personnel were stationed. Tanks and troop transport vehicles then moved in on the center of Leipzig where, by some accounts, 50,000 individuals had gathered for prayer. German and Russian police and soldiers, as well as paratroopers, formed a tight cordon around the calm crowd. Most individuals packed into the churches and town square, assumed that when they finished their prayers and began their weekly march with lit candles around the inner city ring, they would probably face their executioners. They sensed that few might leave the city alive that night. After all, they had heard what the Red Chinese had done just a few weeks earlier to the peaceful protesters at Tiananmen Square in Peking.

While thousands of individuals prayed, something occurred for which no one has found an adequate explanation. Someone in Leipzig countermanded the directive from Berlin to shoot to kill. It is unclear who it was that disobeyed the deadly directive. As the worshipers lit their candles to face those who placed a military noose around them, they noticed their executioners had vanished. The military vehicles had been removed. They were free to go on their accustomed circular walk, and then they returned to their homes. The following morning they heard the good news that their prayers of the previous evening, indeed the prayers over the months

Erich Honecker

Egon Krenz

and years, had been answered. During the night their dictator, Erich Honecker, had been replaced. Egon Kreuz, a far less brutal apparatshik, was put in his place. A sovereign God in heaven granted them their fervent request. Little did anyone know how soon and how spectacularly total freedom would come for them.

6A. The Delightful Explosion of Freedom

With the exodus of many thousands of individuals to West Germany by way of Hungary and the freedom trains in the summer of 1989, the desire for the freedom to travel outside the Communist camp became ever greater. The government, always anxious to stay in control, deliberated over how to release the accumulated pressure from a veritable pressure cooker. To counter the unrest among the populace, the government reached a decision to ease travel restrictions. On the evening of November 9, 1989, the government spokesman and member of the Politburo, Günter Schabowski, spoke in a live broadcast international news conference about the decision of the GDR government that day, to allow free travel for East German citizens. "We have decided today to implement a regulation that allows every citizen of the German Democratic Republic to leave the GDR through any of the border crossings." When Schabowski was asked how soon this would go into effect and whether a passport would be needed, he laconically read from the official paper:

Applications for travel abroad by private individuals can now be made without the previously existing requirements (of demonstrating a need to travel or proving familial relationships). The travel authorizations will be issued within a short time. Grounds for denial will only be applied in particular exceptional cases. The responsible departments of passport and registration control in the People's Police district offices in the GDR are instructed to issue visas for permanent exit without delays and without presentation of the existing requirements for permanent exit (*Cold War International History Project Bulletin,* Issue 12/13, 157).

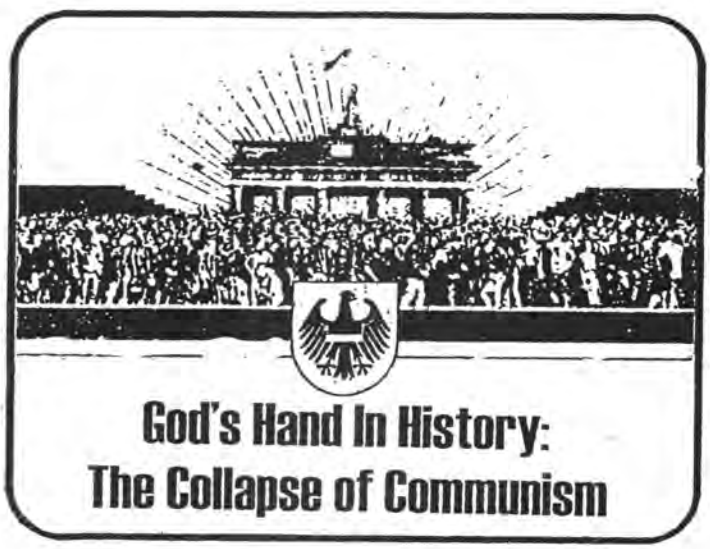
Schabowski had providentially misunderstood the Politburo decision which stipulated that the law would go into effect the following morning, but citizens still had to secure an exit permit at the local police station.

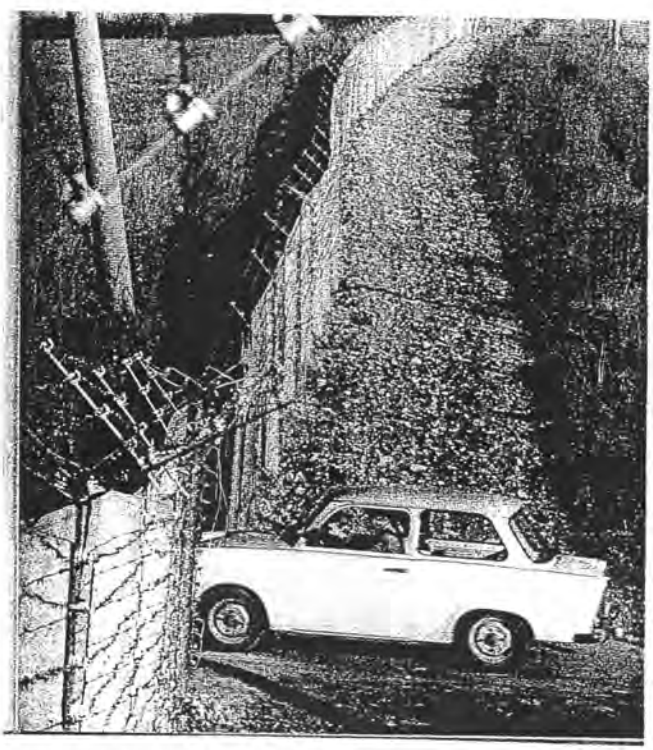
East German citizens heard him say that the law went into effect immediately and failed to realize that an official exit visa would still be required. And so it was that tens of thousands of people immediately went to the Berlin Wall, where border guards had no knowledge of the new decree. Frantically, they called their

German commander, who could not be reached. Likewise, the Russian official in charge of East Berlin was unreachable because of a malfunctioning car phone. Vastly outnumbered by the thousands approaching the three checkpoints in the wall, the border police was told by a lower ranking official to step aside. Border barriers were removed, the crowd surged through to freedom, scaling the wall and commencing a tearful victory celebration. The dramatic scenes will be etched in the memory of anyone old enough to remember. Thus on that fateful November 9, without a shot being fired, without any blood being shed, the wall crumbled.

Günter Schabowski is credited with accidentally beginning the destruction of the GDR border system. It should be noted that Schabowski remains the only high-ranking GDR official to renounce his country's Leninist-style Socialism as fatally flawed. He deeply regretted his own actions:

> What upsets me the most is that I was an accountable representative of a system under which people suffered, also under which repression was aimed at individuals, who were persecuted because of their oppositional stance. Their position was the right one. My position was the wrong one. We were not capable of democracy, but rather tried in the absence of better arguments to get rid of the other opinion with direct violence (http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/G%C3%BCnter_Schabowski. Information accessed 12/16/2006)





7A. The Divine Evidence in the Demise of Communism

Little did President Ronald Reagan know of the ensuing dramatic developments when he viewed the Berlin Wall and threw out this challenge, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" He is credited by many to have started the steam roller that weakened the Soviet system and did not end until German reunification on October 3, 1990. By steadily strengthening the military might of the United States, he forced the Soviet state to spend itself into bankruptcy.

Ronald Reagan, Günter Schabowski, the Hungarian government, millions of praying Christians around the world and thousands of East German young people in their Monday night prayer vigils all were God's providential means to accomplish something that seemed impossible: the destruction of Communism and the resulting freedom for untold millions of enslaved individuals. Who would have imagined early in 1989 that by year's end the wall would be gone? Erich Honecker intoned in January 1989 that the wall would "stand for another 50, or even 100 years!" He was totally oblivious to God's sovereign working. Many believers in Iron Curtain countries, indeed Christians around the world, prayed for freedom for those enslaved by Communism. After 40 years God graciously and sovereignly answered their prayers.

Believers in America have prayed for decades that God would change the spiritual and moral decline of their beloved country. America began as a Christian nation. Its foundations have been undermined by theological and political liberalism, by secularism, nihilism and paganism, as well as hosts of other isms. Is it too late for America? Not at all. We are commanded to pray for our nation and its leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-2), just as Israel was asked to pray for God's help. The direct precept of Second Chronicles 7:14 is to pray. The divine promise is that God would hear. If God is well-pleased, He can answer our prayers for the United States just as suddenly and dramatically as He did in behalf of those living in Communist regimes. Let us pray for His intervention in our nation's moral and political decline, as we trust Him for His daily interposition in our own lives.