Present Truth

A magazine dedicated
to the restoration
of New Testament Christianity
in this generation

Sola Gratia Solely by Grace
Solo Christo Solely by Christ
Sola Fide Solely by Faith

NOVEMBER 1974
Vol. 3, No. 5

THE UPSIDE-DOWN GOSPEL

Present Truth

Present Truth is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith.

Editor: Robert D. Brinsmead
Publishing Editor: Norman Jarnes

Publishers: A group of Christian scholars and businessmen without denominational sponsorship who have united to uphold the objective gospel amid the present deluge of religious subjectivism. Multitudes are being caught up in the popular and frantic effort to find satisfaction in some sort of religious experience. *Present Truth* is a voice in this barren wilderness of groveling internalism, a voice which boldly proclaims those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded—namely:

1. *Sola gratia.* God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole *ground* of our salvation.

2. *Solo Christo.* Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole *basis* of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God.

3. *Sola fide.* The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal. He who is thus justified by faith and filled with God's Spirit will glory only in Christ's cross and make God's saving work in Christ the central affirmation of his Christian witness. Though he will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things, he will continue to repent rather than glory in the feeble attainments of his own Spirit-filled life.

4. *Sola Scriptura.* The Bible and the Bible only is the Christian's objective and infallible rule of faith and practice, alone sufficient that he may "be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

Present Truth is not only committed to the task of upholding these founding principles of the Reformation, but it believes that we today must allow these principles to call all that we do and all that we teach into question. These principles call all traditions into question and all statements about the truth into question—even the ones set forth in this magazine. Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began.

To Contributors: Since truth is above the preferences and prejudices of any denomination, the editors welcome contributions from anyone and will judge them on their merit alone. If you wish a manuscript returned, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

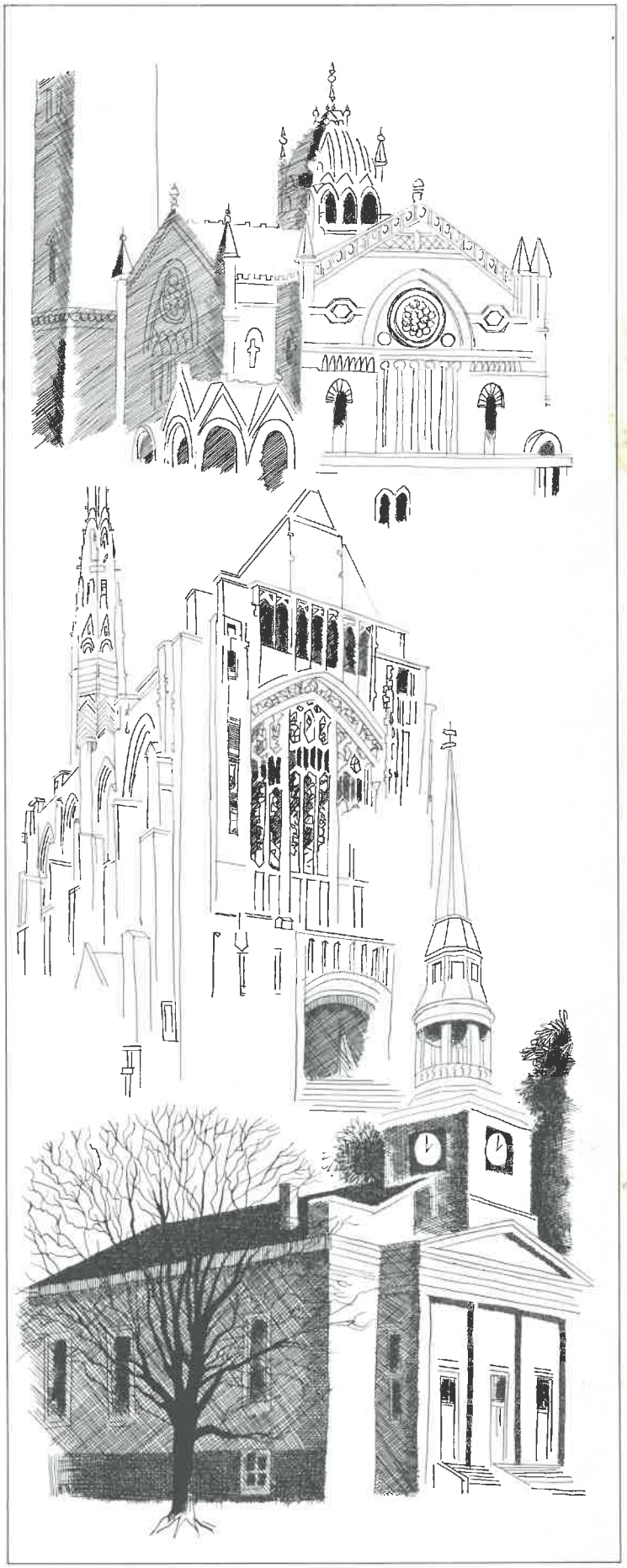
Subscriptions are free upon personal request. Simply send your subscription request, together with your name and address, to the following *Present Truth* address nearest you:

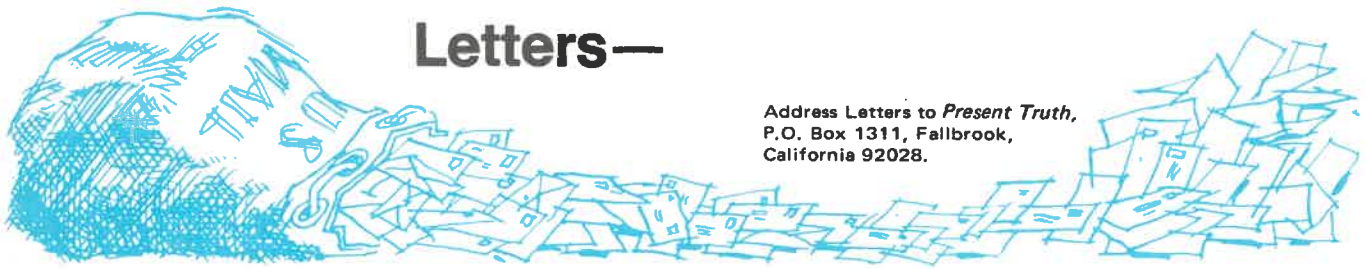
P.O. Box 1311
Fallbrook, California 92028
U.S.A.

P.O. Box 333
Tweed Heads, N.S.W. 2485
Australia

Present Truth is supported solely by freewill offerings. Gifts are tax deductible in the U.S.A. Published by New Reformation Fellowship.

Moving? Please send your change of address four weeks in advance. Always enclose your address label when writing on any matter concerning your subscription.





Letters—

Address Letters to *Present Truth*, P.O. Box 1311, Fallbrook, California 92028.

Eschatology

Sir / Bravo! Your September eschatology issue is nothing less than a masterpiece! *Present Truth* truthfully is a great present for anyone! It's interesting to see Pre-Trib reactions to our book, *The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin* [see *Present Truth*, Sept., 1974, p. 28]. The September *Moody Monthly* reviewed it and, though disagreeing with some things, did state at the end of the review that our book is "well worth acquiring by those interested in the history of eschatology." And *The Witness* (oldest and largest Darbyist Brethren magazine in England) reviewed it in its April issue and actually stated: "What he has succeeded in establishing is that the view outlined was first stated by a certain Margaret Macdonald." Which is quite an admission considering that many Pre-Tribs teach that the apostle Paul was first! When Darby said he merely rediscovered "old" truths, he really meant truths three or four months old!

D.M.
Missouri

Sir / I was raised and reared in the Calvinistic faith and, until I was twenty-five years old, was warned by parents and church alike to beware of those people called "dispensationalists." I remember bringing a Scofield Bible into my Dutch home for the first time after I was saved and had learned some of the great eschatological truths as taught by Scofield. (My oldest sister did not dare to even touch a Scofield Bible!) Thank God for a wonderful salvation and indwelling Holy Spirit, who has shown me the great truths of "things to come"! That Calvinistic doctrine goes a long way, but it has proved to be as dry as dust when carried to its limit. I am a dispensationalist—not by training but by choice and His leading. However, I thank God for my devout heritage and Christian Reformed background with catechism, Christian school, confession of faith at the age of eighteen, the law, the creeds, etc. But thank God for the day He opened my eyes to the glorious truths of the premillennial, pretribulational truths of prophecy!

J.B., Baptist Minister
California

Sir / Certain of your viewpoints in your September issue are deeply disappointing. Concerning the future destiny of Israel, the posterity of Noah demands the existence of the descendants of Shem as a people apart, and this is clearly seen from Isaiah 19:24, 25, where Israel is seen as a third with Egypt and Assyria in the midst of the land and is spoken of as "Mine inheritance." You would also find it profitable to look into Isaiah 66:8 in this connection, where a miraculous rebirth of the nation is depicted following the rapture of the church. With regard to the identity of antichrist, he is described in Revelation 17:8-11 as a historic personage mortally wounded in battle by the sword, who is resurrected and shown to be one of seven kings. He cannot even be remotely identified with the papacy as you indicate. This presages an unpromising augury for your venture.

G.R.
New York

Sir / Your September issue on eschatology is a very complete presentation of "Reformation" doctrine. Premillennial pretribulationists go back to the "truths" given to J.N. Darby, while you go back to "truths" given to Martin Luther. And in both cases the assumption is made that New Testament purity of doctrine has been restored. If you would forget being "Protestant" and become, instead, a New Testament Christian, you would learn that "the Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16 are those of the circumcision who, like the apostle Paul, believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah. A learned Hebrew Christian once said, "If you want a boiled potato, you start with a potato. If you want a fried potato, you start with a potato. If you want a baked potato, you start with a potato. And if you want a spiritual Israelite, you start with an Israelite." A Gentile can become a child of Abraham by faith, because Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised! But a Gentile can never become an Israelite, or even a "spiritual Israelite," except by also being circumcised! And this, of course, is not mandatory; in fact, it is even discouraged, because the believing Gentile is only under the obligations of the decrees in Acts 15. Strange, that you take the Bible literally only when it happens to agree with your preconceived notions, and spiritually when it does not. By the way, have you spiritualized the curses to the church as you have the blessings?

Thank you, anyway, for a comprehensive summary of the Reformation doctrines that underlie the organized antagonism to futurism. You are committed to follow the children of Rome rather than primitive New Testament faith.

W.L., Minister
New York

Sir / Your September issue is a great boost for historicism. However, I feel you are veering to amillennialism. One hundred precent historicism includes the premillennial coming of Christ (cf. Elliott, Guinness, Tanner, Cachemaille, T.R. Birks, et al.). I sincerely hope you are not advocating amillennialism. You are against futurism, and that is a Heaven sent break!

E.P.
New Jersey

Sir / I received your September issue of *Present Truth* entitled "Justification by Faith and Eschatology," and I must say that I am very interested in the presentation you are giving to this subject. Of particular interest is your reference to Ribera and Alcazar. I have tried for almost twenty years to verify my information concerning them. To me, this is a tremendous find.

H.H., Church of God Minister
Canada

An Indictment

Sir / What a blessing it is that truth can still be found! I have been so fed up with an Arminian type of evangelism, with all its stress upon an "experience and rededication," and an endless line of sensational figures in revivalism, that I almost despaired of any voice from the Lord. *Present Truth* is a voice crying in this wilderness of cheap, shallow conception of sovereign truth. Your contention that current Protestant evangelism is a far cry from Reformation theology seems to be an indictment, but true.

D.C.
Kentucky

Sir / *Present Truth* magazine is outstanding, and you are to be commended for your efforts in challenging the seemingly popular religious trends of today.

G.W., Attorney at Law
New York

Sir / Your articles provide stimulation of thought regarding both the basis of our faith and one's personal walk, that we might "walk, not as unwise men, but as wise." I especially like to see exposure of works from men such as Luther, Spurgeon and John Owen, whose legacies to us we often overlook amidst the flood of contemporary books on "how to live the Christian life."

L.L.
North Dakota

Objective Ground

Sir / Mr. Charles Hodge agrees with your position on subjective and objective profession controversy. In volume 2, page 537 of his *Systematic Theology*, he says: "It is another fatal objection to this scheme that it subverts the whole gospel plan of salvation. Instead of directing the soul to Christ, to his righteousness, and to his intercession; that is, to what is objective and out of itself, as the ground of its hope toward God, it turns the attention of the sinner *in upon himself*." "To call on men to trust for their acceptance before God on the ground of what they are made by this inward change, is to call upon them to build their eternal hopes upon a foundation which cannot sustain a straw." The whole discussion is "children's bread" for true saints.

D.M., Minister
Louisiana

Likes Illustrations

Sir / The illustrations in *Present Truth* are a significant contribution to the readability of the articles. The illustrations frequently, if not always, capture the spirit of what's being said. It would be hard for me to select a favorite, but as a new father, I am especially appreciative of the illustration of Ezekiel 16:1-6 on page 15 of your July, 1974 issue. It brings to me a new and deeper apprehension of God's mercy and grace as I consider this truly striking Old Testament picture of salvation. Many thanks to your illustrator for his contribution to the format of *Present Truth.*

R.M.
North Carolina

Disappointed

Sir / I have no time for a magazine or any other reading matter that gives me neither information, inspiration nor aspiration. You say your purpose is to bring back New Testament Christianity. That is exactly what the Pentecostals have said of that movement for fifty years, and time will tell which of you is right. I have tried to read your magazine with an open mind, but it almost always leaves me disappointed and depressed. There is no help in it for everyday, practical Christian living. I have no patience with the dogmatism, pessimism and bigotry that I find in its pages. New Testament Christianity is practical. It enables people to live victoriously and joyously, to love God and other people, and to face the problems and responsibilities of life with faith and fortitude. In a word, it is salvation in this life as well as for the future.

L.Y.
Missouri

For Such a Time as This

Sir / During these days of much religious confusion, it is good to receive such an outstanding magazine as *Present Truth.* It is indeed helpful in my ministry! Surely God Himself raised up this particular Christian publication "for such a time as this." One receives and can read many religious magazines, but what we want and need is *truth.* We want to uphold "the whole council of God." We need to uphold "Christ alone, Word alone, faith alone, grace alone" and "the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible." Thank you for printing Spurgeon's sermon on "Indwelling Sin" and Luther's "Preface to the Epistle to the Romans" in the May, 1974 issue. I was richly blessed. Long live *Present Truth*!

P.A., Lutheran Minister
Australia

A New Reformation

Sir / Each issue of *Present Truth* has spoken to some vital need of truth in our day. Every article has been a blessing and help in my life and ministry. How we need a Reformation of truth! When the light of truth dims, the darkness of error and deception floods in. I pray that your goal will be reached—restoration of New Testament Christianity in this generation!

W.K., Baptist Minister
Louisiana

A Question

Sir / I want to express my appreciation for your magazine and the doctrinal clarity that is being revealed to a religious world that is theologically confused and in the dark. It is encouraging to see your efforts to rightly handle the Word of truth.

As a seminary student preparing myself to serve God effectively, I feel the need to be taught how to both maintain the truth (as you are striving to do) and also to "seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:8-11). In certain letters to the editor I detect bitterness in the hearts of men whom I presume to be brothers in Christ. How can a servant of God maintain the balance between doctrinal purity and spiritual unity?

K.B., Seminary Student
Illinois

Editorial:

We Challenge You to Read It!

This issue of *Present Truth* carries on from the last one, which introduced the discussion on the spirit of antichrist. We follow G.C. Berkouwer's line of reasoning[1]—that the church should always take the Biblical warnings of the presence of antichrist with radical, heart-searching seriousness. Instead of merely gaping off to the future in a lot of futuristic speculation, we should watch and pray so that we may detect the enemy's present activity.

It is therefore our contention that the spirit of antichrist has always been present in the church to pervert the truth and substitute a clever counterfeit gospel. We do not deny that antichrist was especially manifested in the past apostasy of the church (the view of the Reformers) or that he may give a supreme manifestation of his work in the future. What we contend for is the need to see how the enemy is working to pervert the gospel *now.* This is not a matter of pointing the incriminating finger at others, but a matter of each of us inquiring, "Lord, is it I?"

Professor Geoffrey Paxton's article, "The Evangelical's Substitute," is the feature article of this issue. It is a very disturbing article to the evangelical conscience. It is not an easy reading devotional to put you to sleep with the feeling that all is well. It is a bold appeal to turn most of our evangelical preaching upside down. We challenge you to read it!

The editor has included a paper on the *ordo salutis* (the order of salvation) which is another appeal to turn much of our preaching upside down. In the middle of this article the editor took "a pleasure stroll" (Luther) into the area of election—but I hope not to the displeasure of my Reformed friends (one of whom is Paxton himself). Yet I took courage when another Reformed friend, who is one of my reading counselors, said, "It's different from the way I have viewed the subject, but go ahead. I think you ought to publish it."

One of the reasons why I included a brief discussion on election and the extent of the atonement is because some of our appreciative Reformed readers have expressed surprise (perhaps regret) that a magazine with such a strong objective stance has expressed views contrary to the Augustinian position on a restricted atonement. I think I owe an explanation of my own views on this subject. Obviously it won't satisfy everybody. Only the grace of God has kept some of the best saints from coming to blows over this subject. So we will all have to be patient and tolerant, or perhaps say philosophically, "If two minds think alike on everything, one is redundant."

The type of reader who will throw our magazine down the moment he runs into anything that will challenge a single point of his sacred traditions is not the sort of reader that we are trying to reach. Some write to us saying that they would really appreciate the magazine if only we did not on occasion quote Karl Barth, George Ladd, Carl Henry or even the R.S.V.!

Does faithfulness to the truth of the gospel demand that we be as narrow as that? Shouldn't we judge truth on its own merits irrespective of who said it? It seems that some have the idea that they must first examine a man's "evangelical pedigree." If they are satisfied he obtained his degree at the right place and never has been known to eat with publicans and sinners (liberals and sectarians), then they can safely swallow what he says—hook, line and sinker.

Our *modus operandi* is this: The great New Testament teaching of the righteousness which is of faith is a mighty, revolutionary religious principle. Many may shout it as a slogan, but few will allow this New Testament principle to call all that they teach and all that they do and all their traditions into question. It is good to go back and see how the Reformers rediscovered this principle and turned the religious world upside down in their day. We too must be courageous and honest enough to rethink the great doctrines of the Bible. We can't even accept the idea that the Reformers said the last word either. We may have to plow some new ground. Truth has nothing to fear from candid investigation. Loyalty to truth does not demand that we react to every new thought like old ladies to a fresh breeze. Prejudice, guilt by association, and flattery are not the plummet, rule and square by which we can gauge truth's sacred edifice.

"Come . . . let us reason together . . ."

R.D.B.

[1] G.C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 260-290.

The Evangelical's Substitute

Geoffrey J. Paxton

Introduction

The great work of Satan is imitation. The Scriptures teach that the one whose essence is darkness masquerades as an angel of light. Take the great confession of Peter as an example (Matt. 16:13-20). Jesus made it clear that Peter did not get this sort of information out of his own head or from any other man. It came from God, who had greatly privileged Peter in giving it to him (cf. Matt. 16:17). And yet, no sooner had Peter made that great confession than Satan entered his heart and, under the guise of great concern for the well-being of the Saviour, attempted to divert the Son of God from His God-given task (cf. Matt. 16:22). More instances could be cited, but let this one be sufficient. The work of Satan is imitative perversion.

At least one important consequence of this fact must be made clear at this point. It does not matter how holy a thing appears. It does not matter how much enthusiasm is evidenced in the discharge of a religious act. A thing is right in the sight of God only if it faithfully reflects the Biblical norm. Our trouble is that we have baptized certain things, such as emotional intensity, as infallible evidences of the Spirit's operation. We have apparently forgotten that the work of Satan par excellence is the work of cheap and godless imitation. We have forgotten that he adopts many different forms and guises in his inflexible opposition to God. While he is against God, he presents himself to be for the cause of God.

In this article we wish to discuss one of the vilest of Satan's imitative perversions today—namely, his provision of an alternative set of actions as a substitute for the glorious, once-for-all redemptive acts of God in Jesus Christ. Satan has so worked that he has provided an alternate "holy" history in the place of that one and only holy history, which is the history of Jesus Christ the Lord. Even more tragic than the diabolical substitution of Satan is that many evangelicals have so enthusiastically embraced this imitation as the way of salvation that the real way of salvation seems to be foreign and offensive. The situation is the more difficult to air because of the great show of piety and religious zeal that adorns the substitute way. Still, air it we must!

Geoffrey J. Paxton is an Anglican clergyman and principal of the Queensland Bible Institute, Brisbane, Australia.

Part 1

Our first question is: *Where* does this substitute "holy" history take place? Our answer in this context is simple and straightforward: *In the professed believer.* Satan seeks to attack God through the creatures of God and, in this particular instance, *in the professedly believing creature.* The essence of his attack is to dethrone God through the enthronement of the creature. It must also be made clear that in this dethronement of God and the enthronement of the professed believer, Satan perverts man. Satan is anti-God and therefore anti-man.

The attempt at dethroning God may take an overtly atheistic form such as in the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx; or it may take a religious form. It is the latter form that is the focus of our attention in this article.

Our second question is: *How* does Satan seek to effect this diabolical substitution? How does he effect that *alternative* way which in reality is expressive of darkness and not light, of death and not life?

Before we seek to answer this question, let us spend some time explicating the *true* holy history which God accepts, the history that saves and is expressive of the character of God as true God and Lord of the universe.

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the holy history which God acknowledges is that which took place when God Himself came to earth in His Son Jesus Christ. This holy history consists essentially and definitively in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. We call this *"holy* history," for such it is. From first to last it is perfectly expressive of the character of God. It took place in space and time, and is not a myth or a philosophic ideal. It is something that is concrete and "observable" after the fashion of other historical events such as the battle of Waterloo.

This history is also unique. It is unrepeatable. It happened only once. It can never happen again. The very nature of this history excludes the necessity and possibility of repetition. In this holy history God is seen to be God.

It must not be forgotten that the very nature of antichrist is to deny, in whatever fashion, that such a holy history has taken place. We say "in whatever fashion" because the essential aim is the denial of this history and not what form that denial takes. The attack that John fought against (see 1 John) was a sophisticated and very "spiritual" denial of the flesh-and-blood reality of the saving history of Jesus.

If John championed the reality of this holy history, then the writer to the Hebrews championed the uniqueness and unrepeatable nature of that history. As James Denney rightly observed, "the epistle may be said to give a description of the person and work of Christ as constituting the perfect religion for man." – James Denney, *The Death of Christ* (Tyndale Press, 1961), p. 120. This flesh-and-blood reality of history is the perfect religion for man. Man's response to this is not the perfect religion. The perfect religion consists in Jesus Christ, who definitively revealed God (Heb. 1:1-3), who is unique and who is superior to angels (Heb. 1:4-2:4), Moses (Heb. 3:1-6) and all priests before and after him (Heb. 4:14-5:10; 7:11-28).

The Epistle to the Hebrews stresses the uniqueness

of Christ's sacrifice. At the very beginning of the Epistle the note of finality is struck: Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, *"having made purgation of sins."* Heb. 1:3. Later the author tells us that Christ was manifested *once* at the end of the age to do away with sin (Heb. 9:26). Then, with no apology for repetition, the writer states the "once" nature of Jesus' sacrifice (Heb. 9:28). That the writer obviously wants to stress this uniqueness is clear from Hebrews 10:12-14:

> . . . but when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God . . . by *one* sacrifice He has made perfect *forever* those who are being made holy.

Hence, those who believe that this is so have confidence and holy boldness to enter "the holiest of all" by the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19). What a Saviour! This, and no other, is that history which God recognizes and delights in.

Notice that in Hebrews 10:14 the writer says, ". . . by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." What is the meaning of this statement? Listen to the wise reply of Denney:

> The Word cannot mean that he has made them sinless, in the sense of having freed them completely from all the power of sin, from every trace of its presence. It means obviously that he has put them into *the ideal religious relation to God.* Because of his one offering, their sin no longer comes between them and God *in the very least.* — *Ibid.,* p. 127 (italics supplied).

Believers are ideally related to God. Their standing with God can never be improved upon. All this, and nothing less, is because of that unique holy history of Jesus of Nazareth. All praise to God!

More could be said about that history, but we do not say more in order to stress what we have already said—namely, that this history, and this history alone, is the acts of God which save and bring the believer into the *ideal* relationship to God. There is never a moment and never a day when the believer cannot confidently rely on the acts of God for perfect acceptance with God forever.

Part 2

We must now come back to our question: *How* does Satan seek to effect the diabolical substitute for this unique holy history? True, he effects it, in this instance, *in the professed believer.* But *how?* The answer is not complex, though its reality is a tragedy. The method Satan uses is that of seeking to make the history (the Christian-life experiences) of the believer a saving history. What Satan has done is to bring about a great change of emphasis in our thinking and preaching which shifts the focus from the unique saving history of Jesus (the experiences of Jesus) to the history (the experiences) of the believer. The *saved* is presented as the *Saviour.* The *object* is presented as the *subject. Man* is presented as *God.*

To be more explicit still, we shall mention the following:

1. New-birth centered preaching
2. The *believer's* crucifixion
3. The *believer's* resurrection life

1. New-birth Centered Preaching

Because of the "sacredness" of the new birth in present-day evangelicalism, we had better state a few things at the outset. First, we deny neither the *necessity* nor the *reality* of the new birth. Both are Scriptural. Second, we do not deny that we must preach the new birth. What we *do* deny is that the new birth is the gospel. What we *do* repudiate is that a man is saved by the new birth. What we *do* deny is that the new birth is *central* in evangelical preaching. The type of preaching which dangles a problem-free and successful life before the congregation for forty minutes, only to thrust forth the possibility of a new birth as the solution to the unhappy life which the hearers are said to have, is far from the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this type of preaching the heart of the believer becomes a substitute for the Bethlehem manger. With oftentimes great emotion and zeal, a Satanic substitute has been effected. The new beginning, so lusted after by selfish man, becomes salvific. The substitute "holy" history has begun.

Note the following points:

a. The expression, "Let Jesus come into your heart," is not a Biblical way of preaching. The new birth was not the *kerygma* of the New Testament, and certainly it did not hold the place it has in much evangelical preaching. Why do we not seek to be more Biblical in our preaching instead of following our sacred (and determinative!) tradition?

b. Although the new birth is a necessity and a reality, the new birth does not save a man. A man is not saved by being born again. Much evangelical preaching says he is, but the Bible nowhere says so. To express this slightly differently, *a man is not saved*

by Jesus coming into his heart. Much evangelicalism says he is, but the Bible nowhere says he is. A man is saved by the once-for-all coming of Jesus into the world—into the manger at Bethlehem. There are not two salvational comings. There are not two incarnations.

c. We need to study (or just read thoughtfully) the exposition which Jesus gave to Nicodemus. Jesus told Nicodemus that it was not enough to be *nice;* he needed to be *new.* To be least in the New Order (the Samaritan woman of John 4?) is far better than being the greatest in the Old Order. The climax of Jesus' exposition came in His statement concerning the uplifted Saviour and the necessity of faith and trust in that Saviour (cf. John 3:14-21). The eyes of Nicodemus were not turned to his own heart but to the uplifted Saviour. Nicodemus was urged to place his trust in that salvational history, not to commence a saving history. Brethren, why do we not follow the way of Jesus? Why *do* we follow the way of those who have led us astray?

d. If we preach the law of God, then only the gospel of the uplifted Saviour will make any sense. If we preach "the gospel of the changed life," then the law of God will be treated as nonsense. The primary concern of Biblical preaching is not the way God can make a dissatisfied sinner happy but the way—the only way—the rebellious sinner can make a dissatisfied Judge happy. The Bible stresses that man is beholden to God, not that God is beholden to man.

What we do deny is that the new birth is the gospel. What we do repudiate is that a man is saved by the new birth. What we do deny is that the new birth is central in evangelical preaching.

2. The Believer's Crucifixion

A common notion in much evangelical preaching is that the believer becomes acceptable to God, receives the Holy Spirit or gains deliverance from sin by the crucifixion of the self. This is saving crisis number two in the substitute "holy" history of the believer. Auto-crucifixion becomes salvific—i.e., it makes a man acceptable with God.

We have no hesitation in unequivocally asserting that the Bible knows absolutely nothing of this nonsense—except (and this is an important qualification) insofar as it frequently denies it. In Scripture there is only *one* crucifixion for the *total* acceptance of the believer with God *forever.* Such a crucifixion (of the holy Son of God) is a crisis crucifixion (for it bore the judgment of God). It is not the crucifixion of self by the self, but it is the crucifixion of Christ by the sinful self of man. In fact, it was the crucifixion *for* self—for me!

The popular notion of the crucifixion of self (by the self!) makes a half crucifixion out of the total crucifixion of Chirst. This is the *best* that such nonsense can present. At *worst* it totally denies the crucifixion of Christ. Just as the new-birth centered preaching detracts from the unique *coming* of Jesus, so the saving crucifixion of the self detracts from the unique *crucifixion* of Jesus There are not two comings that save, nor are there two crucifixions that make us acceptable with God. Concerning the notion of auto-crucifixion, note the following:

a. When we say that the New Testament knows nothing of the crucifixion of the believer, we of course mean this in the sense of the evangelical notion we are discussing. The Bible does recognize a crucifixion of the believer—but it is an "is" and not an "ought," an accomplished fact and not a task to be imposed. Also, the crucifixion of the believer that the Bible recognizes is that crucifixion which has taken place *in* the crucifixion of Jesus. The crucifixion of the believer is not *in addition to* or alongside of the one unique crucifixion of Jesus. So Paul could say, "I *have been* crucified with Christ . . ." Gal. 2:20. Further, Paul could take the crucifixion of the Colossians for granted and urge them to do likewise (Col. 2:20-3:4). *All* believers have, by the grace of God, been involved in the crucifixion of the holy Son of God. It is *this* crisis experience, and this alone, that God acknowledges. It is *this* experience of crucifixion, and no other, that puts the believer into the ideal relationship with God.

b. Romans 6:1-11 clearly teaches that an understanding of the "is" nature of the believer's crucifixion is fundamental for a proper understanding of the believer's existence. In this passage the believer is not called to another crucifixion but to the constant taking into account in all his life of the one true crucifixion. When we follow Paul's injunction, at least two things follow. First, our eyes are affixed to the unrepeatable experience of Jesus and not to any experience we may or may not have. Second, *all* our actions, etc., take on the nature of *obedient response* to the definitive saving history of Jesus. Note well: All the activity of the believer is responsive to (not creative of) the unique pleasing of God which came about by the saving activity of Jesus Christ.

c. When the call of Scripture comes to take up the cross and follow Jesus, it is (1) a call to repentance and (2) a call, therefore, to take up the cross of Jesus. It is *my* cross insofar as I, by faith through the grace of God, make *the* cross of Jesus my own. The believer is not called to take up another cross. Also, this

taking up the cross of Jesus and making it my own is a constant, day-to-day thing. We need to daily take up the cross.

d. Along a homiletical line, the constant taking up the cross of Jesus by the believer should not be preached as a "thing in itself." It should always be preached in the context of the gospel. In fact, this is true of all the exhortations of the Bible. To isolate them and make them a "thing in itself" is to distort the unique perspective of justification and sanctification in Scripture.

e. What we have said is true of *all* true believers. There is a book in circulation among evangelicals which announces that a small, elite group of believers have "found the secret." The secret, apparently, is a crisis experience by which they have entered into a fuller relationship with God. In the name of the Saviour and in interests of the truth of Scripture, we make the following points about such believers:

(1) Their crisis experience made them not one whit more acceptable to God than they were when they reached out their beggarly hand to grasp the saving arm of the Saviour. Whatever their experience was, it was not that which made them acceptable with God.

(2) If they were not found more acceptable with God because of their crisis experience, they ought not to be thought of as more acceptable by other believers who have had no crisis experience.

(3) Because God gives His Spirit on the merits of the saving work of Jesus of Nazareth, the crisis experience of such men did not entitle them to a greater portion of the Spirit. To assert that such did give them greater power, etc., is to assert that the bounty won by Jesus was not as great as it could have been. We challenge evangelicals everywhere to give an exposition of subsequent crisis experiences which does not detract from the utter sufficiency of the unique crisis experience of Jesus.

(4) Whatever the "secret" was that such men found, if it was not the secret hidden from the foundation of the earth and now made clear in the gospel of the saving history of Jesus, then it is not a Biblical secret. And if it is not a Biblical secret, then we should not look for it!

We come back to our assertion: There is *one* saving coming, and there is *one* saving crucifixion. Let us not have two of either.

3. The Believer's Resurrection Life

Just as Satan has attempted to replace the holy and saving coming of Jesus to Bethlehem's manger with the coming of the Spirit into the heart of the believer in new birth, and just as he has sought to substitute the crucifixion *of* the believer for the crucifixion of Christ *for* the believer, so Satan has attempted to substitute the holy life *of* the believer for the holiness of Christ *for* the believer.

The apostles went everywhere preaching the resurrection of Jesus with great power. This Christ event changed lives. But a lot of modern evangelism preaches the "gospel" of the changed life itself. This is Satanic substitution. It substitutes what no believer can do (i.e., find acceptance in the sight of God through a holy life) for what every believer ought to do (i.e., live a holy life). Satan seeks to substitute the life of faith (*in* the believer) for the Object of faith (the holy life of Christ *for* the believer).

Let us make something quite clear: We believe that the Scriptures call all believers to a life of holiness in Christ. We believe that without such no man shall see the Lord. What we do *not* believe is that *that* is the life which is the ground of our acceptance with God. What we do *not* believe is that *that* life is to be our confidence now or ever in the sight of God and our brethren. The hope and confidence of the believer is the life of Christ which He lived out precept by precept *for* us nearly two thousand years ago, which life is now in heaven at God's right hand.

Perhaps it would be helpful if we set out the reasons why the life of the believer here and now, however glorious, cannot (and should not) be seen as that which finds us acceptance with God:

a. To begin with, the former (i.e., the life of the believer) is the life of faith (sanctification), while the latter (i.e., the life of Christ) is the Object of faith (justification). Any theology which confuses justification and sanctification is bad theology. Indeed, insofar as evangelical theology does this, it is the theology of antichrist. It confuses the act of eating with the food which is eaten, the grasp of the drowning man with the Lifeboat of God—Jesus Christ our Lord. Such a theology substitutes the "thank you" of the beneficiary for the Gift of the Benefactor. Such a theology has the world of the Bible upside down and has man looking out from heaven and God with His arms outstretched for man the almighty to fill!

b. To substitute the life of faith for the Object of faith, the life *of* the believer for the Life *for* the believer, is to substitute an imperfect title for a perfect one. The best life of faith is as ineffectual as the worst life of faith when it comes to gaining

acceptance with God.

c. To substitute the life *of* the believer for the Life *for* the believer is to substitute a visible righteousness for one that is hidden. Nothing visible to the believer and the world finds the privileged place as the ground of God's good pleasure toward us. Paul makes this clear when he says that the real life of the believer is not the one seen on earth but the one hidden with Christ at the right hand of God. It will not appear until Christ appears from heaven (see Col. 3:3, 4). Nothing visible is worthy to be the ground of God's good pleasure toward us—no holy feat, no statistics, no impressive ecclesiastical programs or structures, nothing at all! The eye of the believer should be fixed on Christ by faith if he would find unshakable confidence before God and man. Remember the words of Paul: ". . . we walk by faith, not by sight . . ."

d. To substitute the life *of* the believer for the life of Christ *for* the believer is to use God's gift to us to rob Him of His glory. Notice, we have called the life of the believer a gift, for such it is. It is a gracious donation of God in the Spirit. But it is insulting God to offer it to Him for our justification. It is substituting the partial gift for the full one. The present life of the believer in the Spirit is an anticipation of the last day. The new life of the believer is the eschatological era breaking into our existence here and now. Such a life is a down payment and the first fruits of the final harvest (Eph. 1:14; Rom. 8:23). How foolish it is to substitute the part payment for the full payment and the first fruits for the full harvest!

e. Also, to substitute the life of the believer for the One who is believed is to confuse the Persons of the Trinity. The life of faith is that which is created by the Spirit. The great Object of faith is the life of Christ for the believer. It is bad theology which substitutes the work of the Spirit for the work of the Son. Indeed, the Spirit's real work is to show us that work of the Son which has no substitute. The true Spirit never puts Himself in the place of Christ. To do so is the essential nature of the spirit of antichrist.

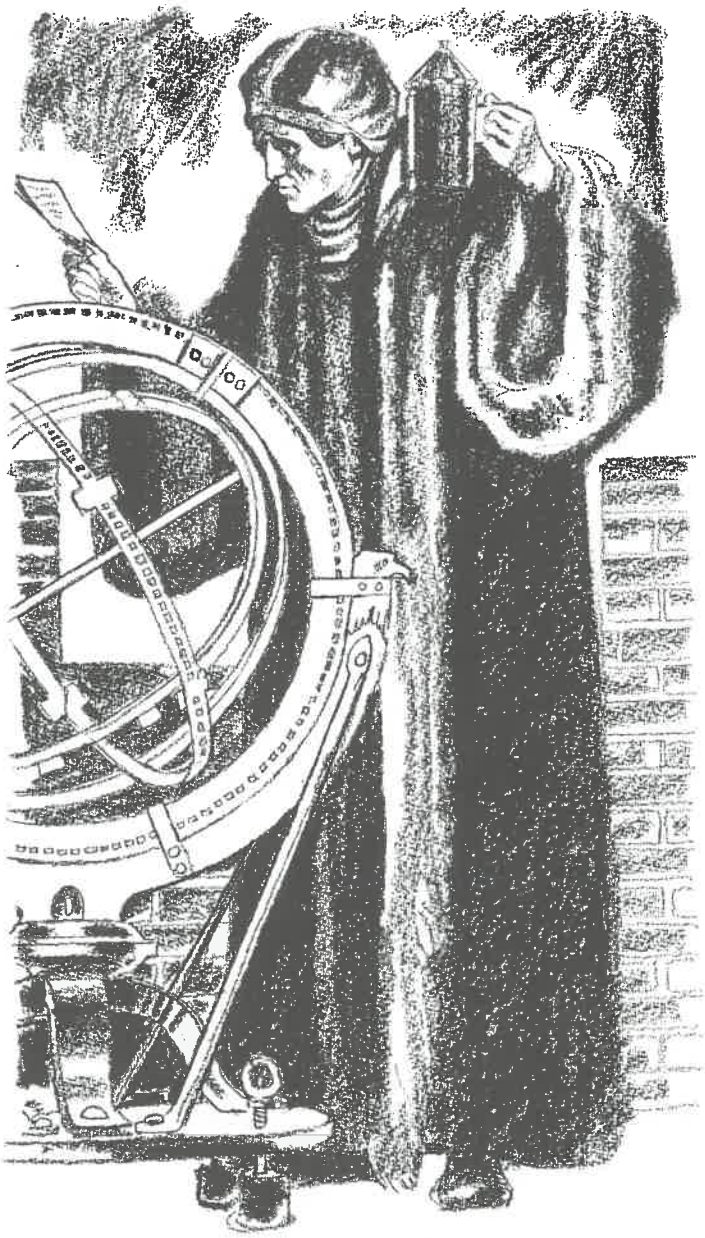
f. Finally, to substitute the life of the believer for the life of Christ is no work of true faith. Faith is never affixed to anything on earth. Faith is vertical. It looks to the right hand of God alone. Think of those things which are on earth—the life of the believer, the church, inwrought holiness, the work of the Spirit (yes, the Spirit!)—all these things are on earth, and as such they cannot constitute the Object of faith. There is not the slightest depreciation of the Third Person of the Trinity meant here. The Spirit has been sent by Christ to all who believe to lead them to Him day by day and to whet their appetite for the Banquet of love. The Spirit never turns the eyes of the believer away from heaven.

This is why it is so foolish to offer the life of the believer on earth for the life of Christ in heaven. When Christ ascended to heaven, He took the acceptable Life of the believer with Him. In a very real sense we can reiterate the words of Jesus in this context: ". . . he that loses his life . . . shall find it." Those who wish to hold on to it here and now will have lost it there and then, and those who will lose it now on earth will have it there and then. We do not have our reward here and now as the hypocrites in Matthew 6:1-18. Only those who are hungering and thirsting will be filled. Those who think that they are filled here and now need to beware lest they hunger and thirst there and then.

Evangelicalism needs to take stock. There is strong evidence to show that the believer has been turned into the "Christ" who has satisfied the righteous demands of God. Another way to say this is that the Spirit has been turned into Christ and Christ has been turned into the Spirit. The Spirit's work *in* the believer is offered in the place of the work of Christ *for* the believer. Brethren, these things ought not to be. There is one saving coming, one saving crucifixion and one saving Life. This is the coming, dying and rising of Jesus Christ—not that of the believer. We challenge evangelicals to defend much of their popular and influential theologies and the truth at the same time. Such cannot be done, because the former is, in all too many instances, an attempted negation of the latter. What we surely need to hear about is the Substitute *for* the evangelical and not the substitute work *of* the evangelical.

The *Ordo Salutis*

Robert D. Brinsmead



In 1543 Nicolaus Copernicus enunciated an astronomical principle which revolutionized the study of science. Copernicus discovered that this earth was not the center of the universe, nor did the sun revolve around the earth. It would be hard to overestimate the revolutionary impact of this single discovery, which completely reversed the order of scientific thinking.

About the same time as Copernicus, there lived a monk who enunciated a religious principle which swept the consciousness of Western man with tempestuous fury and changed the course of history. The monk, of course, was Luther, and his theological principle was "the Copernicus revolution in theology." For in the thinking of the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages, not only was the earth the center of the universe, but man was the center, the starting point of theology.

While it was Copernicus who changed the scientific order and put the sun at the center, it was Luther and other Reformers who revolutionized the whole order of salvation by putting God at the center and by making God the starting point.

This *ordo salutis* (order of salvation), as it was called, was the supreme and vital heartthrob of the Reformation. If we today overlook this dynamic principle, we utterly betray the spirit of the Reformation, even though we may talk ever so much about faith, grace and the Spirit-filled life.

We would be guilty of idolizing a human instrumentality if we contended that Luther was always correct or always consistent. But no one saw more clearly than the great Reformer that the greatest heresy consists in altering the *ordo salutis* so that man becomes the starting point and man becomes the center. This is why Luther raged with holy (and, alas, sometimes unholy) fury against the Enthusiasts, for irrespective of how correct they may have been on some points, theirs was *a* gospel of how man comes to God or how man comes to the Spirit instead of *the* gospel of how God comes to man.

Do We Need Another Copernicus Revolution in Theology?

In answer to the preceding question, we say, Yes! Who could deny that man—his needs, his happiness, his problems, his experience, etc.—is the center of the current religious scene?

When God is not the starting point and center, even the gospel itself is turned into "a new law." Take for instance that scripture which is an evangelical favorite: ". . . what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30. How easily it lends itself to a perversion of the whole *ordo salutis*—". . . what must *I do* . . . ?"

Books and tracts and mini-tracts which spell out "what must *I do*" to get saved are legion. For instance, one says:

> Here are the things you must do to get saved:
> 1. You must repent.
> 2. You must believe.
> 3. You must choose.

A poor fellow tries this 1, 2, 3 program, and when it doesn't work too successfully, he reads another formula which seems to add the missing ingredient. So let's try again:

> Here are the things you must do to get saved:
> 1. You must seek the Lord.
> 2. You must repent.
> 3. You must believe.
> 4. You must choose.

This 1, 2, 3, 4 program still doesn't turn on the lights, so he desperately begins to look about for the missing ingredient. At last he finds what promises to be a "foolproof formula" to unlock heaven's gates. So here we go again:

> Here are the things you must do to get saved:
> 1. You must seek the Lord.
> 2. You must repent.
> 3. You must believe.
> 4. You must choose.
> 5. You must surrender.

"Ah, *surrender* . . . So that's the missing ingredient in this cake called salvation! That's the missing number of the combination lock that will break open the Christian's secret of a happy life!" Is it?

Maybe another guru of victorious living fame comes along and says, "You've got all the right points, but you must rearrange the firing order as follows: 1, 4, 5, 2, 3."

Enough! . . .

This sort of "gospel" deserves to be mocked. We do not deny the need for man to earnestly seek the Lord, repent, believe, choose or surrender. No man will be in the kingdom of God who refuses to "do" these things. These are absolutely necessary to the reception and enjoyment of salvation. What we repudiate is a "gospel" which starts and centers on the activity of man. It implies that when a man does these things, God will respond by giving salvation. It

implies that man's activity *initiates* this whole process of salvation, that it is up to man to "get the ball rolling," that by doing these things successfully he causes God to open up the vaults of grace.

This type of "gospel" utterly reverses the *ordo salutis.* It puts a burden on our backs that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. It places man in an utterly impossible situation. Why? Because a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, is completely incapable of seeking God. Says the Word of God, ". . . there is *none* that seeketh after God." Rom. 3:11. Are those words clear enough? How can a man clear drowned in sin, who by very nature knows and loves nothing but sin, choose righteousness and holiness, things which his nature knows absolutely nothing about? How can men believe on Him whom they have not heard, and how can they hear who by nature are, in spiritual things, as deaf as adders?

People who would laugh a person to scorn for teaching that a man can get salvation by obedience to the laws of Moses, teach that men can obtain salvation by following these "evangelical laws" of the New Testament. Alas, the inner motions of obedience to spiritual laws are far more impossible than obedience to mere external laws!

"In the Beginning God . . ."

What is needed here to lift us out of this groveling humanism is another Copernicus revolution in the current religious scene. We need to get back to the *ordo salutis* of the Bible. The first words of God's Book are a great thunder clap against all the efforts of man to lift himself up to God. They say, "In the beginning God . . ." Gen. 1:1.

In salvation God is *cause*—the sole cause. Man is the *response.* The devil's constant aim is to pervert this *ordo salutis.* He makes man's activity the *cause* and God's activity the *response.*

For instance, even urging men to *choose* Christ (although proper in its place) may very easily lend itself to this diabolical perversion. Thus we have:

Cause	Response
Man's act of choosing	God's act of granting salvation

This *ordo salutis* dethrones God and puts man in His place. This is what the Bible calls the spirit of antichrist—i.e., man in the place of God and Jesus Christ.

The gospel is the good news, not of man's act of choosing Christ, but of God's act of choosing man.

> But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth . . . — 2 Thess. 2:13.

> . . . according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love . . . — Eph. 1:4.

> Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit . . . — John 15:16.

If God chose the elect from the beginning, it cannot mean that He chose them in response to their faith or holy lives. That would be to alter the whole *ordo salutis.* He chose them in order that they might believe and live holy lives. God is the sole cause of the call. It is true that men are called upon to choose Christ and the way of salvation, but this must never be understood as *cause.* It can be nothing more than an appeal to *respond* to the gospel fact that they have been chosen from the beginning.

The same is true in the matter of seeking and finding the Lord. When Adam (the man who represents all men) lost himself in the darkness of his self-chosen estrangement from God, it was not his voice which was heard crying, "God, where art Thou?" Rather, it was the voice of the faithful Shepherd calling, ". . . Adam, . . . where art thou?" Gen. 3:9. That is the story of the Bible. As Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven," God goes after man

> . . . with unhurrying chase,
> And unperturbed pace,

and thanks be to divine Love, His hot pursuit after this runaway man is not in vain. Not content (because it was not sufficient) to send His most trusted servant Gabriel to seek and find this man, the mighty God leaves throne and glory, empties His divine treasury, abandons all and comes after man in the Person of Jesus Christ—in the words of the Gospels, "to seek and to save that which was lost." Thanks be to God, He did not return to heaven until He could cry in triumph, "Mission accomplished!"

It is true that the Bible exhorts us, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found . . ." Isa. 55:6. This, however, is never the *cause* of salvation but an invitation to respond to "the gospel of your salvation." Eph. 1:13. We could not choose God unless He first chose us. We could not seek God unless He first sought us. We could not find God unless He first found us. That is the sense in which we are to

understand human activity.

"In the Beginning Was the Word"

Who could miss the starting point of the New Testament message or miss seeing how clearly parallel it is to Genesis 1:1? Says the evangelist, "In the beginning was the Word . . ." John 1:1.

The starting point of salvation is not predestination or election. When we move predestination to the center or the starting point of our scheme of systematic theology, we spoil the fabric of divine revelation. Even some of God's great saints have proposed that in the order of divine decrees, God first elected who would be saved and then (in order of thinking if not in time) He appointed Christ to become the Redeemer of those whom He had elected. But great difficulties and inadequacies confront this scheme of systematic theology:

1. If God elected prior to His appointment of Jesus Christ as Redeemer of the elect, then there must be a higher (and prior) cause of our election than Jesus Christ. This would not be election *in* Christ but a prior election *outside* of Christ.

2. This scheme of systematic theology leads to the conclusion that Christ assumed His redemptive role because God *elected.* This is the wrong *ordo salutis,* as we will now show.

> In the beginning was the Word. . . . *All things* were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. — John 1:1, 3.

> . . . for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. — Col. 1:16, 17.

This means that before *predestination,* before God chose us, there stands Jesus Christ, the eternal Word. There was nothing planned or chosen before Him. All that was chosen and planned was both chosen and planned by Him and for Him.

In the beginning, therefore, stands the Word—the *Logos,* or divine Reason. He must be the starting point and center of all true theology. This means that Christ is the *reason* for all of God's actions. Everything God does is *because* of Christ. God predestinated us to salvation because of Christ. He chose us because of Christ. Christ was the grounds of all God's actions.

Just as God justifies on the grounds of the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ, so God elects on the grounds of Christ's mediatorial work, known of God from the beginning. So the apostle Peter could write to the church, ". . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father . . ." 1 Pet. 1:2. This is not election in view of and because of our foreseen faith and evangelical obedience, but it is election because of God's foreknowing the obedience and death of Jesus Christ. So in another place Peter declares, ". . . Him, being delivered [to the death of the cross] by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God . . ." Acts 2:23.

We say, therefore, that before election stands Jesus Christ. In the beginning stands the *Logos,* the divine Reason and grounds of all God's actions.

Particular Election

We have already seen that Christ is the *reason* for God's electing His people. But we must also see that Christ is the *modus operandi* of that election. Says the apostle, ". . . according as He hath chosen us *in Him* before the foundation of the world . . ." Eph. 1:4. And not only is this true of election, but the apostle goes on to declare that *in Christ* God accepted us (v. 6), redeemed us and forgave us (v. 7).

The words "in Christ," as used here, do not primarily refer to what takes place through our faith-union with Christ, as many commentators have assumed; but a careful reading of Ephesians 1:1-13 will show that the apostle is talking about what God did for us in Christ before we came to faith (see v. 13). The words "in Christ," therefore, simply mean *in the Person of Christ.*

Just as God's *reason* for choosing, accepting, redeeming and forgiving us was Jesus Christ, so His *method* of choosing, accepting, redeeming and forgiving us was Jesus Christ. He would do all these things for us in the Person of Jesus Christ.

From the beginning God the Father has had no dealings with any man save Jesus Christ. How could we see His face and live? If the holy Father would communicate with us by one word or glance, we would be devoured by the fire of His infinite holiness. Therefore the Father judges no man (John 5:22)—no man except Jesus Christ. ". . . there is . . . one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus . . ." 1 Tim. 2:5. God knows Him and will deal only with Him.

For the moment let us lose sight of all men and

look only at this one Man. God elected this one Man:

> Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth . . . — Isa. 42:1.

> . . . Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, *elect,* precious . . . — 1 Pet. 2:6.

Here is "the Man of God's own choosing." This is *particular election*—the election of one Man. He was chosen because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Heb. 1:9). Of all other men the Bible declares, ". . . there is none righteous, no, not one . . ." Rom. 3:11. But Jesus is called "the holy *One* of Israel." Isa. 17:7. Among all of God's people, only One is holy.

God can deal with this Man and have fellowship with Him because He sees in Him the undimmed reflection of divine perfection. God cannot talk to sinners, for His eyes are too pure to behold evil. But here is a Man whom God is able to talk to. Jesus comes to the Jordan to be baptized. The Father speaks directly to a Member of the human family. What does He say? ". . . This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17.

Here Christ is accepted and presented as the second Adam, the new Head and Representative of the race. As the new Representative of the race, He is qualified to act for those whom He represents. He is able to assume all their obligations and debts, and act as if their sins were His sins.

Then we see Jesus on the cross, not as the accepted Man, but as a cursed, rejected Man. God sees no sin except that which is upon Him. God therefore punishes one man until the penalty of sin is exhausted and the justice of the law is fully satisfied.

A man who has paid for the crimes chargeable to him is released from prison. So God released this Man from the prison house of death. In the resurrection we see Jesus as the accepted Man, received into glory, seated on God's right hand and given the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33).

We say, therefore, that God has found one Man holy, one Man obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. God has punished one Man—and as yet only one Man knows what it is to fall into the hands of the living God with sin upon His head.[1] With one Man God is well pleased, and He has therefore elected this one Man to glory and has seated Him on His own right hand in heavenly places.

[1] This is not to deny that the wrath of God will fall upon the Christ rejecters, but it is to remind ourselves that the day of final rewards and punishments is always spoken of in the New Testament as eschatological—i.e., "the wrath to come." 1 Thess. 1:10.

Christ the Representative . . . Of How Many?

On his way to the Diet of Worms, Luther passed through Erfurt and was urged to preach in this city where he spent those agonizing years in the convent cell. A great crowd assembled to hear what this renowned monk had to say. Addressing the expectant assembly, Luther's voice rang out with thrilling power:

> Philosophers, doctors, and writers have endeavored to teach men the way to obtain everlasting life, and they have not succeeded. I will now tell it to you. . . . God has raised one man from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ, that he might destroy death, expiate sin, and shut the gates of hell. This is the work of salvation. . . . Christ has vanquished! this is the joyful news; and we are saved by his work, and not by our own. . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Peace be unto you; behold my hands;" that is to say, Behold, O man, it is I, I alone, who have taken away thy sin, and ransomed thee; and now thou hast peace, saith the Lord. — Quoted in J.H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: American Tract Society), Vol. 2, pp. 240, 241.

The first fact of the gospel is the declaration that God has punished one Man, accepted one Man, elected one Man and taken one Man to glory. The second fact of the gospel is that this one Man is the representative Man. It is this second fact which illuminates the Christ event with the message of our salvation.

That this one Man was the representative Man (i.e., the second Adam) means two things:

1. His doing, dying and rising were not for Himself but for all whom He represented. It was the same as if all whom He represented had lived sinlessly, died, risen again and had been received into glory. The principle is clearly stated by the apostle: ". . . if One died for all, then were all dead . . ." 2 Cor. 5:14.

2. All that God did to this Man and all that He gave to this Man, He did and gave to those whom this Man represented. God will therefore have it published that when He punished the One, He punished *the many;* when He accepted the One, He accepted *the many;* when He raised the One to sit in heavenly places, He raised *the many.* How many?

That question will be answered if we consider three things:

a. If we say, "Christ came to represent only those whom God elected," we have reversed the *ordo salutis.* The New Testament message doesn't say: "In the beginning was election. . . . All things were made by election; and without election was not anything made that was made." Neither does the Bible teach us

that Christ was appointed as our Representative because God first elected us. "In the beginning was the Word . . ." From everlasting He was appointed to be the Redeemer. The representative office of Christ did not appear because of election, but election appeared because of the work of the Mediator. ". . . by Him *all* things [including election] consist." Col. 1:17. He is the "Alpha and Omega." Rev. 1:8.

b. The next thing to consider is this: What does the gospel say about God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ? It declares that it is finished! The gospel is the *good news* of an objective, concrete, historical event. Christ came to the cross in order that God might reconcile the world unto Himself (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:19), and in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, God has set His seal to the fact that He has accomplished this (Rom. 4:25, N.E.B.). On the part of God, reconciliation and redemption are an accomplished fact (Rom. 5:10; Heb. 9:12), an objective reality which is not affected by the subjective attitude of man (Rom. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13). Christ has paid for those sins which He bore, and God has accepted that payment. Therefore we must say that the gospel proclaims that God has in His heart forgiven all the sins which Christ bore. This is why St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God had actually chosen, accepted, redeemed and forgiven them in the Person of Christ even before they came to faith (see Eph. 1:4-13). If God had not already forgiven and accepted men in the Person of Christ, He could not offer those gifts in the gospel; for the gospel is not an offer of something that will come into existence if men respond, but it is the good news that something is already in existence that men might respond.

Therefore, if we preach the gospel to a certain man, we must tell him, on the authority of God's Word, that God has wrought out his complete salvation in the Person of Christ. God will not only answer when this man calls upon Him in faith, but even before he calls, God has answered. That is the gospel.

c. Once we have settled that the gospel is the announcement of the good things that God has done in the Person of Christ, we have only to inquire, Unto how many is this gospel to be presented?

The gospel is to be presented as a general, external call to all. The Scriptures are just too explicit on this point:

> . . . Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. — Mark 16:15.

> . . . Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people . . . a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. — Luke 2:10, 11.

If we have a duty to tell each man the gospel, in the very nature of the case we must tell him that his sins have been borne by Jesus Christ, that he has been chosen and accepted in the Person of his Representative and that, consequently, God now calls upon him to repent and believe the gospel. To tell him any less than this is not preaching the gospel to him. The Bible will let us have none of this tongue-in-cheek general call as if it were not seriously intended for all.

We do not say that it would be unfair for God to provide salvation for some and not the rest. God is under no obligation to save any sinners. It would be an act of perfect justice if God left all to perish in sin. He is in no wise responsible for sin, and man has no claim upon His mercy. The issue here is not the extent of God's justice but the width of His mercy. Neither is the question, What system of theology is most logical in all its parts (as judged, of course, by man's logical apparatus)? but, What comports most nearly to the Biblical revelation of God's character?

> The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works. — Ps. 145:8, 9.

That God has seriously intended all to share in the benefits of Christ's atonement is clear from the blessings of "common grace." The Father in heaven "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. 5:45. ". . . He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Acts 14:17. If all the blessings and good things of life—food, air, friendship, human affection, civil righteousness—may be enjoyed by all, are they not evidence that Christ has died for all? For these bounties which theologians call "common grace" are still grace—undeserved kindness—and grace comes only through (because of) Jesus Christ. He was nailed to the cross that all these blessings might flow to this earth. Every man who lives on this planet lives solely because Christ died. Herein God gives proof of His love for all and of His provision for all through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Furthermore, the moral law, which is a transcript of God's character, requires that we love all men without partiality or hypocrisy. We are commanded to love our enemies. We do not love all unless we desire their best good, even the good that we cherish for ourselves. For this reason we are commanded not

only to give the gospel to all, but to make "supplications, prayers, intercessions . . . for *all* men." Why? "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. 2:1, 3, 4. Any scheme of theology that requires man's love to be broader than God's love is far from adequate.

When the rich young ruler came running to Christ to inquire the way of eternal life, "Jesus beholding him loved him." Mark 10:21. That is to say, Jesus sought his best good and willed to give it to him. Yet he never became one of those followers whom Jesus called "My sheep." Yet Jesus still loved him, and where there is love, there is the will to save the one who is loved. So it is written:

> . . . God so loved the world . . . [and is] . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. — John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9.
>
> . . . God . . . is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. — 1 Tim. 4:10.
>
> . . . He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world. — 1 John 2:2.[2]

God's salvation, poured out to us in Jesus Christ, is like the woman's alabaster box which was broken to anoint the head of Christ. The fragrance filled the whole house. The disciples looked on in astonishment, and some even murmured, "Why was this waste . . . ?" That alabaster box is like God's grace which has been lavished upon the human family in the broken heart of Christ. So few seem to avail themselves of it. There is enough for every sinner and to spare. God is such a prodigious Giver. He gives good measure, pressed down and running over! As nature itself, the handiwork of God, makes more than ample provision for the propagation of life, so where sin abounds, grace does much more abound! As General Booth used to say of God's grace, "There is enough to go around."

Despite any weaknesses or tendencies to subjective humanism, the great Methodist revival was an inevitable reaction to a predestinarian theology gone to seed. John Wesley looked on all men as blood-bought souls. There were none so low or underprivileged but Wesley believed that God loved them and gave His Son to die for them. The message that Christ positively died for all was as a breath of fresh air. The glad tidings set hearts singing, voices ringing and feet running. If we must criticize the theology of John Wesley on any point, let us first acknowledge that here was one of the greatest instruments of evangelism seen since the apostle Paul.[3]

The Human Response

In the gospel, therefore, two great facts are announced and must stand together:

1. God chose one Man. He found one Man righteous, holy and pleasing in His sight. He accepted Him as the new Head of the race to stand in Adam's place, to represent all, even as Adam represented all. He punished this one Man, put Him to death and buried Him out of sight. Then He resurrected this one Man, a *new Man,* and receive Him into glory.

2. This one Man stood before God as *everyman,* and that human nature of everyman was in Him. Therefore when One died, all died in Him (2 Cor. 5:14), and when One was found righteous, all were constituted righteous in Him (Rom. 5:18). That human nature which was lost in Adam has been restored in Jesus Christ, and every man who is sure he too has a human nature may be just as sure that he is included in that redemption. Said Luther in a Pentecost sermon:

> Moreover, who knows whether I am elected to salvation? Answer: Look at the words [of John 3:16], I beseech you, to determine how and of whom He is speaking. "God so loved the world," and "that whosoever believeth in Him." Now, the "world" does not mean SS. Peter and Paul alone

---

[2] G.C. Berkouwer, the Reformed theologian, makes some incisive comments on these "universal" passages of the Bible.

> The doctrine of apocatastasis [eventual salvation for all], it must be admitted, has often flourished in reaction against the frequent failure of the church throughout history to take seriously the "universal" passages of Scripture. The depreciation of these passages has sometimes followed from a particular doctrine of election that leaves no room for the universal invitation to salvation, on the ground that salvation could honestly and truly be offered only to the elect. The set-up is clear on this view: there is no universality at all, only strict particularity. And if one encounters a text in the Bible with a general offer of salvation, he explains it away by arguing that the speaker had no way of knowing who were included in the closed number of the elect and thus had to use the word "all". But there was no real offer of salvation to all. Obviously this extreme does as much violence to the seriousness of the proclamation as apocatastasis does. . . .
>
> Often people have tried to counter the claims of universalism by taking these universal words as in fact particular, interpreting them on the basis of the contrast between the elect and the reprobate as applying only to the elect. Such an argument, however, can never convince universalism, because the application to the elect alone cannot be exegeted from the texts. The profound meaning of the fact that the gospel *must* be published to all (Canons of Dort, II, 5) cannot be denied; and this gospel is and remains the glad tidings, the good news. The urgent call of the gospel goes out to everyone indiscriminately, because God's work in Jesus Christ is directed to the world (cf. Matt. 24:14; 28:19). — G.C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 408.

[3] Such tributes have been made to Wesley by A.H. Strong, a staunch predestinarian, and historian Philip Schaff, who is German Reformed.

but the entire human race, all together. And no one is here excluded. God's Son was given for all. All should believe, and all who do believe should not perish, etc. Take hold of your own nose, I beseech you, to determine whether you are not a human being (that is, part of the world) and, like any other man, belong to the number of those comprised by the word, "all". — Quoted in *What Luther Says,* ed. Ewald M. Plass, Vol. 2, pp. 608, 609.[4]

Faith and Election

We have looked at election from the side of the divine *cause.* Now we must look at election from the side of human *response.*

The gospel does not find friends. It makes friends. It does not look for a few special people who are called the elect, *for none are called the elect until they come to faith and are in Christ.* The gospel finds sinners, sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins. It comes to men not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." 1 Thess. 1:5.

This divine power in the Word of the gospel creates faith in hearts that had no faith (Rom. 10:17). It bestirs the heart to seek Christ, to earnestly desire to be reconciled to God. When Christ called Peter to get out of the boat and come to Him across the water, the power to do this was not in Peter but in the Word of invitation. It is utterly wrong to suppose that the sinner's will is free to come to Christ whenever he chooses. Unless God's Word is present to heal, there will be no healing. It is written in the Psalms that God's people "shall be willing in the day of Thy power." Ps. 110:3. The liberating power, even to choose Christ, is in the gospel. That is why man cannot come to Christ unless God speaks to him in the gospel. It is not the sinner's privilege to decide when he will come to Christ. Those who say to the Spirit, who speaks to them in the gospel, "Go Thy way, . . . when I have a convenient season, I will call for Thee" (Acts 24:25), flatter themselves that they have within themselves freedom of will to accept Christ whenever they please. They are making a terrible mistake.

The way to get people to believe in Christ for life eternal is not to keep urging faith as Pharaoh urged the people to make bricks without straw. Preach Christ! Give to them the glad "words of . . . salvation." Acts 13:26. You may urge faith for ever and aye, and people may remain as empty of it as a flour barrel with both ends out. Preach that which will create faith. Proclaim that which will work in them to will and do of God's good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Uplift Him who draws all men to Himself (John 12:32).

Then when this gospel is heard, you may and must urge men to respond. The importance of human responsibility is not nullified by divine initiative; it is magnified. In view of what has happened and what has been given to them in Christ, men are to be urged with radical seriousness:

> Seek ye the Lord while He may be found . . . — Isa. 55:5.
>
> . . . choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . — Deut. 24:15.
>
> . . . repent ye, and believe the gospel. — Mark 1:15.
>
> . . . be ye reconciled to God. — 2 Cor. 5:20.
>
> . . . arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins . . . — Acts 22:16.

We have seen that God has elected one Man. He is the elect One just the same as He is the righteous One. Therefore only those who receive Christ in faith and are joined to Christ in faith-union can be called the elect ones or the righteous ones. This is the human side of election. Faith is not the *source* of election. That is *sola gratia.* Neither is faith the *meritorious cause* of election. That is *solo Christo.* But faith is the *instrumental means* of receiving it (just as it is the instrumental means of receiving righteousness). That is *sola fide.*

This is the reason why the Bible calls no one elect who has not come to faith or who is not in Christ. Outside of Him none are righteous, none are elect and none have paid the awful debt of sin. And those who are in Christ are called to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Pet. 1:10. How? By giving all diligence to abide in Him.

> . . . a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. — Isa. 32:2.

". . . one Man . . ." ". . . for every man." Rom. 5:15; Heb. 2:9. That is *cause.* "Thou art my hiding place . . ." Ps. 119:114. That is *response.*

Unbelief

When human pride finds that no work of man can contribute toward salvation, it makes a last-ditch stand by trying to smuggle in faith as a contribution

[4] This was not the view of the younger Luther, who wrote in his commentary on Romans that Christ did not die for all.

to human salvation. But the New Testament doctrine of election bars this last loophole of human pride. It teaches us that we are not chosen because we have faith, but we have faith because we have been chosen in Christ from the beginning (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13). Faith therefore is *sola dei gloria*—solely to God's glory. ". . . it is the gift of God . . ." Eph. 2:8. God is the sole *cause* of faith.

If the will of God and the grace of God are the reason for faith, what then is the reason for unbelief? We wish to make our point quite clear that we believe there is no reason for unbelief. To give a reason is to excuse it. There is no excuse for it.

God is in no sense the *cause* of unbelief. The divine decrees are in no sense an accessory to sin. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9. When on judgment day the Lord receives some men into glory, He says to them, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . ." Matt. 25:34. Then He banishes others to perdition, saying, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire . . ." But here the expected parallelism breaks down. Let not human logic run ahead of the Word and stub its toe in the dark, but let it follow humbly behind the Word, where all is light. Does the Lord also say to the cursed that their reward was "prepared for you from the foundation of the world"? No! He says, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, *prepared for the devil and his angels . . .*" Matt. 26:41. God did not prepare this end for any man.

> As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for *why* will ye die, O house of Israel. — Ezek. 33:11.

". . . why will ye die . . . ?" God gives no answer. There is no answer! If man could give a reason for sin, it would cease to be sin. Faith is rational, for it is a confession of reality, an acknowledgment of something already in existence. Unbelief is irrational, unreasonable—a denial of reality.

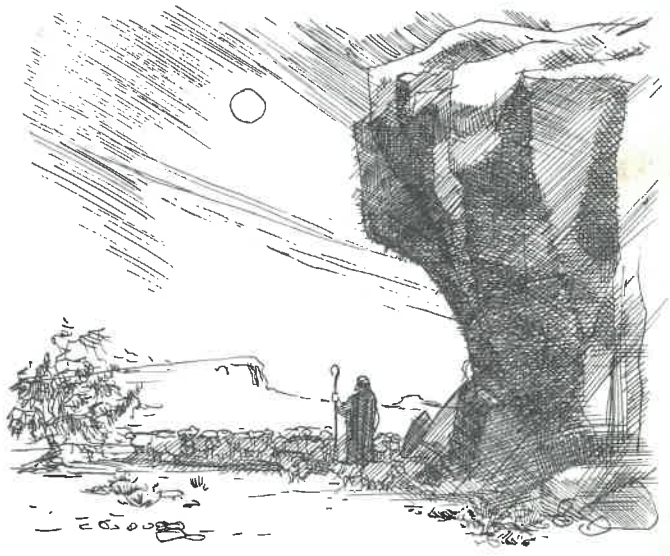
It is even said that Jesus "marvelled because of their unbelief." Mark 6:6. Why a man should ever reject the gospel and resist the Holy Spirit, who brings the gift of faith, can never be known. Such a man is without excuse. Basically, the New Testament (especially John) acknowledges only one S-I-N—it is unbelief. This is the world's sin (John 16:9). It is the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Spirit, for it is a stubborn, unexplainable resistance to the Spirit. It merits the wrath of God unmixed with mercy.

> . . . the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and *that obey not the gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. — 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

Yet shall we say that God, who created man for the praise of His glory and gave to him the awesome gift of individuality, is thus defeated by the unreasonable choice of man? Does man's unbelief mean that "the Word of God hath taken none effect"? Rom. 9:6. No, for even as God used the stubbornness of Pharaoh and the apostasy of the Jewish nation for His own glory (Rom. 9:17; 11:12-36), so the wrath of man shall praise Him (Ps. 76:10). Man's unrighteousness shall "commend the righteousness of God," and the truth of God shall more abound through man's lie (Rom. 3:5, 7). So whether men shall be saved or lost, it must still be true—

> . . . that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. — Phil. 2:10, 11.

> O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. — Rom. 11:33-36.



CHANGE

OF

ADDRESS

Moving? Please send your CHANGE OF ADDRESS four weeks in advance. Give your new address here, clip out the entire corner, including label on reverse side, and mail to the following *Present Truth* address nearest you:

P.O. Box 1311, Fallbrook, California 92028, U.S.A.
P.O. Box 333, Tweed Heads, N.S.W. 2485, Australia

Name .....

New Address .....

City .....**State**.....**Zip Code**.....

Effective Date .....

Always enclose your address label when writing on any matter concerning your subscription.

PRESENT TRUTH
Post Office Box 1311
Fallbrook, California 92028

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New Reformation
Fellowship

THIRD CLASS