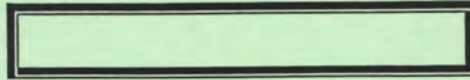


# Important Issues Facing Fundamentalists



**Inerrancy:** Bloody Battlefield or Biblical Booby-trap?

**Spiritual Gifts:** Essential, Expedient or Extra-Biblical?

**Separation:** A Fundamentalist Folly or Divine Duty?

**Theological Thievery:** Efforts to Rob Believers of the Rapture

**Sign of the Times:** Sensationalism, Speculation and Sanity in the Last Days

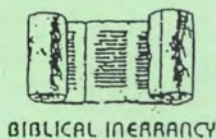
**Lordship Salvation:** A Forgotten Truth or a False Doctrine?

**Eternal Security:** A Definite Doctrine or a Dreadful Delusion?

**Infant Salvation:** Biblical Basis or Sentimental Supposition?

**The Literalness of Hell:** Scriptural Support in Light of Dangerous Denials.

**God's Hand in History:** The Untold Story of the Unraveling of the Iron Curtain



# MISSIONS SUNDAY

## God's Providence in the Collapse of Communism



Sunday, Sept. 2, 2007

Guest Speaker: *Dr. Manfred Kober*



9:30 a.m. Sunday School

*God's Hand in History:* The Untold Story of the Collapse of Communism

10:40 a.m. Morning Service

Message: *Before We Forget:* Suffering Saints in Communist Countries

6:00 p.m. Evening Service

Slide Presentation: *Eastern Europe Before and After the Wall*

(Recent Pictures of the Dramatic Changes in Eastern Europe)



Erich Honecker



MIKHAIL GORBACHEV



RONALD REAGAN



## Calvary Baptist Church

113 N. Hartman  
St. Charles, Iowa 50240

**Pastor Doug Helton**

(641) 396-2747



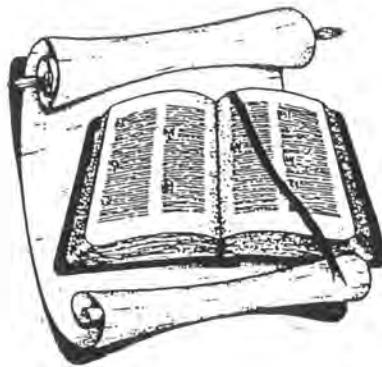
God's Hand in History:  
The Collapse of Communism

*A Warm Welcome to Everyone!*

# INERRANCY: Bloody Battlefield or Biblical Booby-trap?



בְּרֵאשִׁית



בְּחִיבּוֹתַי אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֹהִים  
 לִשְׁמוֹעַ בְּנִי אֵלֹהִים יִשְׁמָעוּ  
 וְיָדוּעַ לְךָ שְׂחָרְיָהוּ וְשִׁנְיָהוּ  
 בְּן וְדָוִד, שִׁחַשְׁי אֱלֹהֵי  
 וְגַם אֱלֹהֵי שְׂחָרְיָהוּ דְּדָוִד  
 יִהְיֶה עֲזָרְךָ עַל אֵינִי שְׁלֵם, וְ  
 לֹא עָלִית אֶת־לְבָבִי שֶׁלֹּ  
 וְיִתְעַבְרָן אֶת־לְבָבִי

INERRANCY: *Bloody Battlefield or Biblical Boobytrap?*1A. THE SUBJECT OF INERRANCY:

## 1b. The denials of inerrancy:

## 1c. The liberals:

"Every Christian believes that the Bible is an inspired writing, but every sensible Christian knows that there are varying degrees of inspiration. The Book grew out of the religion of a people. Originally it was not so much a guide for their living as a statement of their experience. . . . Many people are more troubled than helped by the miracle stories. That is unfortunate; they should fortify faith rather than weaken it. Many of them are interwoven with a belief in demonology and that is confusing. All of them were written a considerable time after the occurrence and that does not aid accuracy in detail." (Roy L. Minich, What the Church Has to Offer, pp. 26, 28).

## 2c. The Neoevangelicals:

"'The Bible is infallible, as I define that term, but not inerrant. That is, there are historical and scientific errors in the Bible, but I have found none on matters of faith and practice' (Stephen T. Davis, The Debate about the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), p. 115)," (cited by Ryrie, What You Should Know about Inerrancy, p. 29).

## 2b. The definition of inerrancy:

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of 1913 defines inerrancy thusly:

**In-er'ran-cy** (-ăn-sī), *n.* [Cf. *L. inerrans* not wandering.]  
Exemption from error; infallibility.

The absolute *inerrancy* of the Bible. *Century Mag*

**In-er'rant** (-ănt), *a.* [*L. inerrans, -antis*, not wandering.  
See *IN-* not; *ERR.*] 1. Inerratic. *Obs.*

2. Free from error or mistake; unerring; infallible.

An *inerrant* gift for tone color. *R. Burton.*

## 3b. The demands of inerrancy:

Inerrancy is one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith and needs to be taught and defended (Jude 3):

1. *Inspiration of the Bible*

2. *Virgin Birth of Christ*

3. *Deity of Christ*

4. *Substitutionary Atonement*

5. *Physical Resurrection and Return*

2A. THE SCRIPTURES ON INERRANCY:

Their Divine Origin

2 TIMOTHY 3

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

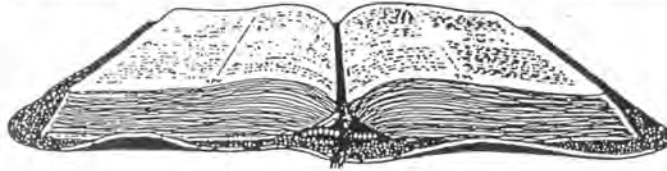
Their Human Origin

2 PETER 1

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.



# INSPIRATION

2 Timothy 3:16

3A. THE SPECIFICS OF SCRIPTURE:

1b. Divine writing: Deut. 9:10

10 And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.

2b. Human research: Luke 4:1-4

CHAPTER 4

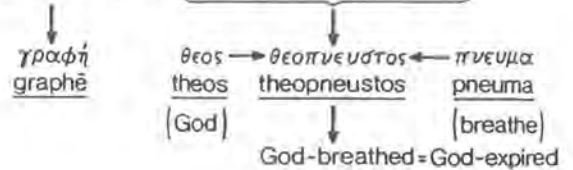
AND Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

## ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD



## CHRIST



3b. Emotional outbursts: Rom. 9:1-3

CHAPTER 9

I SAY the truth in Christ, I lie not, <sup>4</sup>my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

<sup>2</sup> That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

<sup>3</sup> For <sup>4</sup>I could wish that myself were <sup>2</sup>accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen <sup>1</sup>according to the flesh:

4b. Heathen philosophy: Tit. 1:12

<sup>12</sup> One of themselves, *even* a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians *are* always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

5b. False statements: Gen. 3:5

<sup>5</sup> For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

The content of Genesis 3:5 may be false, but the record is true. This is actually what Satan spoke.

4A. THE SAVIOR AND INERRANCY:

1b. The Scriptures are infallible in every place:

John 10:34-35

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, Is it not written in <sup>1</sup>your law, <sup>2</sup>I said, Ye are gods?

<sup>35</sup> If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

Ps. 82:6

<sup>6</sup> <sup>1</sup>I have said, *Ye are* gods; and all of you *are* children of the most High.

2b. The Scriptures are inerrant in the minutest details:

Mat. 5:18

<sup>18</sup> For verily I say unto you, <sup>1</sup>Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.



JOT AND TITTLE

Jesus once said to his disciples: 'I tell you this: so long as heaven and earth endure, not a letter, not a stroke, will disappear from the Law until all that must happen has happened' (Matt. 5: 18). The 'letter' to which Christ referred is the *yod*, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and the 'stroke' is the tittle, the small projection on some Hebrew letters (88). The same passage in the Authorized and Revised Versions refers to 'one jot or one tittle'.

3b. The Scriptures are accurate in the very tense of verbs:

Mt. 22:32

32 "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

John 8:58

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, 'I am.

4b. The Scriptures are to be believed in their entirety:

Lk 24:25

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Mat. 22:29

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, "not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

## 5A. THE SKEPTICS AND INERRANCY:

1b. The proof from prophecy:

Amazing and specific prophecies were fulfilled literally hundreds of years later, attesting to the supernatural and inerrant character of the Revelation. The case in point is Isaiah's prediction of the Persian King, Cyrus. Approximately 680 B.C. Isaiah predicted that a king by the name of Cyrus would deliver the nation Israel (Isaiah 45:1-4). One hundred fifty years after the prediction, naming Cyrus specifically by name, the prophecy was fulfilled in 538 B.C.

2b. The proof from archeology:

1c. The problem of Pontius Pilate:

Archeology has confirmed almost innumerable times the complete accuracy of Scripture, although that is not the main purpose of archeology. Bible critics used to ridicule the New Testament for containing fictitious names, such as that of Pontius Pilate, who does not appear in any contemporary records. The Bible was in error, we were assured. And then the spade of the archeologist uncovered a slab of stone 3 feet high with a 4-line inscription. The second line mentions Pontius Pilate in letters so large, that even Helen Keller could have read them. Nobody questions the historicity of this infamous procurator any more.

368

Caesarea

(Vilnay, Israel Guide)

The Roman amphitheatre is on the sea-shore, south of the Crusader wall. It was built in the second century and its remains were unearthed in 1961. Various debris and a fragment of a Roman inscription were brought to light (fig.). It mentions Emperor Tiberius and Pontius Pilate. This is the first archaeological evidence of the famed procurator of Judaea under whose rule (26-36 A.D.) Jesus' crucifixion took place. He persecuted the Jews and specially kindled their hatred by desecrating the Temple and looting its treasure.

THE PONTIUS PILATE INSCRIPTION.

1. Zeile: [CAESARIEN]S[IBUS] TIBERIEUM
2. Zeile: [PON]TIUS PILATUS
3. Zeile: [PRAEF]ECTUS JUDA[EA]E
4. Zeile: [D]E[DIT]

*Pontius Pilatus, Präfekt von Judäa, hat den Einwohnern von Caesarea dieses Tiberieum geschenkt.*



2c. The reference to Sargon:

1d. The critical charge:

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 20

**I**N the year that <sup>A</sup>Tartan came unto 'Ash-dôd, (when Sâr-gôn the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ash-dôd, and took it;

1e. The prophet Isaiah (20:1) refers to an Assyrian king by the name of Sargon. In the list of Mesopotamian kings, no such name appears.

2e. The absence of Sargon's name from ancient records made it easy for some critics and historians to doubt his very existence.

2d. The archeological support:

1e. In 1843 Paul E. Botta excavated Sargon's palace near Nineveh. Numerous bricks had Sargon's name stamped upon them. Various inscriptions boasted his military might.

2e. Sargon's palace north of Nineveh at Khorsabad was named by him Dur-sharrukin or Sargonsburg, after himself. In Sargon's so-called "display inscription," a resume of the events from the first to the fifteenth years of his reign are given:

I besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,290 of the people who dwelt therein. 50 chariots I gathered from among them, I caused others to take their [the deported inhabitants'] portion, I set my officers over them and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king. (Jack Finegan, Light From the Ancient Past, p. 175)

Sargon II is now better known than almost any other Mesopotamian king.



DUR SHARRUKIN,  
SARGON'S PALACE,  
8TH CENTURY B.C.



THE BIBLE IS INCONSISTENT AND CONTRADICTIONARY !!



"HAVE YOU READ THE BIBLE?"



NO, BUT I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT IT.



MOBIL



# What the Church Has to Offer

ROY LINDEN MINICH

Published for

The Department of Evangelism, Division of Church  
Extension and Evangelism, Board of Home Missions  
of the Congregational and Christian Churches

THE PILGRIM PRESS  
BOSTON CHICAGO

person of Jesus. It always costs to restore a broken fellowship. Calvary is an illustration of how far God is willing to go to do it. Here are some significant words written by Charles E. Burton: "Instantly we see that God is more than a manufacturer, creating a universe. He is more than a great king interested in men in mass, if at all. He is more than just and holy. He is as tender as a mother, as gentle, as forgiving, as self-sacrificing as Jesus. Whatever else, therefore, the Cross of Christ is or does, it makes us see the heart of the heavenly Father. It introduces us to God."

Perhaps Jesus told the story of the Prodigal Son primarily to give us a description of the Father. We are accustomed to think about the two sons, one hurt by undisciplined desires and the other by a mean spirit. But Jesus may have been trying to show us how much the Father was hurt by their sins, how patient he was with their weaknesses and how forgiving when they wished to come home. He suffered for both. He bore the greater part of the loss in both cases. He could not rest until they were usefully engaged in the Father's house. If that is what God is like, I shudder when I think of Calvary.

## How to Believe in Jesus

At the beginning, Jesus did not ask his disciples to believe anything. Beliefs after all are but unsuccessful attempts to define past experiences. We find religion and come to know Jesus, if at all, where and as the disciples found him, namely, by following Jesus as an example in living. To be a Christian is to enroll in his school, to enlist in his army, and to walk with his friends. To his first disciples he said, "Come and see." They went and saw. They never tried to write a creed but they lived a life. Jesus suggested that they live one day at a time.

Father. He knew that his power came from God. "I can of my own self do nothing."

## And Then a Cross Appears

Why should the best man who ever lived be so cruelly hurt? To begin with, goodness is no exemption from pain. In fact the higher life is developed the more sensitive it becomes. The brutish man feels no pain save that localized in his own body. The Christian cannot escape the pain of humanity. Jacob Riis could not sleep thinking of the Bowery and its needs. There is a story about a man who felt compelled to discipline his son by requiring him to sleep on the attic floor. But when the time came to go to sleep, the father left his own comfortable bed and slept on the floor beside his son. Justice required that the son be disciplined; love insisted that the pain be shared. The Cross is the place where we see the justice and love of God meet. In Christ, God enters our life to become a fellow sufferer.

Many of the historical theories of the Atonement have left me cold. I cannot think of the Cross as Jesus paying man's debt to the Eternal. Suppose in some court an innocent spectator offered to pay the fine or serve the sentence of a guilty offender. We might admire the generosity of the man who made the offer, but we should lose our respect for the judge who would permit it. Neither can I think of the Cross as a place where the wrath of God was appeased. We do violence to our thought of God when we think that some good man must suffer to make him less angry. An earthly father does not beat one child because someone else has angered him. Surely God is not like that. The suffering of Jesus was not to produce a spirit of forgiveness in God, but the forgiving spirit of God made him willing to suffer in the

111

may indwell any man or all men. Shall we say that the Holy Spirit is that part of the great indwelling spirit of the universe which we allow to live in our bodies?

It would appear clear that the early Christians did not think of the Holy Spirit as a person. God was not three persons, but he used three separate ways of life and forms of activity recognizable by men. These activities of God were so wide and varied that they could not be defined in a single term. It may help you to think of the Trinity not as three persons, but as three aspects of one personality, or as one person known in three different ways. Every human father is at least three different people to his growing children. Henry David Gray in his *A Theology for Christian Youth* has suggested that since man may come to God by the three familiar roads of nature, personality and worship, why should it be startling or difficult to believe that God should come to man in three ways such as Creator, Redeemer and guiding Spirit? That he comes in three ways does not mean that he is three different gods. The same spirit which indwells creation was in Christ and comes to us as a guiding light which we call the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God at work in our hearts.

## How Does It Affect Us?

The Holy Spirit enables us to follow Jesus' way of life. If we follow our plan of living we shall walk our own way. If the same spirit lives in us as lived in Jesus we shall naturally walk his way. After Paul had completely surrendered his will to Christ he no longer knew whether it was his spirit or the Spirit which directed his living. We do not make ourselves new men by changing our habits, nor do we manage ourselves into earthly good and heavenly bliss by modern psychology. The fruits of the Spirit come only when the Spirit is present.

112

grants mercy. At the end man comes to know a God who is an indwelling spirit, best exemplified by the life and teaching of Jesus, and naturally described by the term "Father." Let no one be distressed by these changing conceptions of God and righteousness which are to be found in the Bible. These changes are a proof of man's growing religious experience. That some parts of the Bible have been outgrown spiritually and morally is a profound reason for optimism concerning the human race.

Every Christian believes that the Bible is an inspired writing, but every sensible Christian knows that there are varying degrees of inspiration. The Book grew out of the religion of a people. Originally it was not so much a guide for their living as a statement of their experience. The recipients of some divine inspiration could not keep the imprint of their backgrounds, beliefs and environments out of the records of those experiences. Truth is always partly hidden and partly revealed by the form through which it is conveyed.

It was inevitable that there should be differences of value in different parts of the Bible. It records both the different degrees of darkness and the varying clarity of light through which truth has been seen. It had to be written in the language of its time and employ familiar forms of thought. That some accounts suggest a flat earth is no detraction from an eternal truth contained in the passage. Belief in demons was once a part of the framework of common thought. That belief would of course creep into the records. Why should any sensible reader allow an outgrown category of thought to rob him of a permanent truth or cast a shadow over an abiding experience? Our own grandchildren will no doubt find some of our forms of thought outmoded, but whatever within our experience has truth, they too can share.

different characters, each of whom gives one or more of the traditional answers in explanation of human suffering. But Job is not satisfied; he grows increasingly bitter. He even hurls defiance against God himself. At the end there is no answer, but there is an enlarged vision of the Eternal — and a new peace.

Many people are more troubled than helped by the miracle stories. That is unfortunate; they should fortify faith rather than weaken it. Many of them are interwoven with a belief in demonology and that is confusing. All of them were written a considerable time after the occurrence and that does not aid accuracy in detail. A miracle was once the explanation given to anything not clearly understood and so was used when more complete knowledge would have provided a different explanation. Modern psychology, with the new light it has given on the relationship between the mind and functions of the body, was unknown. It may be fair to suggest that some of the occurrences once described as miracles would not be so reported today. There is the additional consideration that Jesus may have known and used some natural laws the existence of which we have not yet discovered. Miracles are situations we cannot explain; it does not follow however that they were unexplainable. But after all these things have been said the fact still remains — for which we are truly thankful — that Jesus did do some miraculous things. The impact of his personality was great beyond our understanding. His physical being was the medium through which the power of the Eternal passed. Some of the things he said were as miraculous as the things he did. He himself was the greatest miracle of them all.

Perhaps it might be well to offer some suggested inter-

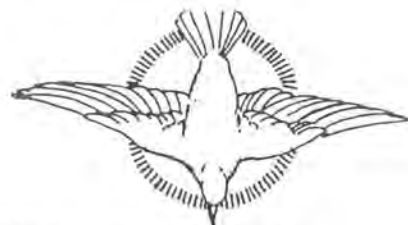
The Bible should be read with alert imagination. There are parables there. They are stories told to teach some religious truth. It is not always easy to recognize a parable. If the story is detached, the character unidentified and the conversation addressed to the hearer or reader rather than to the characters in the story, then we are quite likely reading a parable. In that case we know that we must be alert for some religious truth and not get lost in some detail of the story. No one knows, or cares, whether Jesus was telling the story of an actual family when he was speaking about the Prodigal Son. We are not concerned about the details of whether a man could or could not live on the diet of swine. We know the story is not about swine or even foolish boys, but primarily about a yearning Father. Suppose we read the Book of Jonah as a story meant to convey some religious truth. That would get us away from silly arguments about the possibility of a man being swallowed by a whale or remaining alive three days in its body. It would help us to see something very important in this book. We should discover, among other things, that man has a missionary responsibility and that when he turns his back on his obvious duty he gets hurt.

There are few books in the Old Testament of greater value than the Book of Job. Many people are re-reading it now. It is really a play set in poetic form. We do not know that Job ever lived. The author is not writing history; he is trying to answer a question. It is an old question asked by each succeeding generation. "Why do good people get hurt?" The author sets the stage by taking a man of unquestioned goodness, strips him of every blessing including family and health, and then tries to explain why it all happened. He clearly introduces

one is the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Some say that Jesus blessed food and thus multiplied it. Others believe that by the aid of a generous youth he shamed a great crowd of selfish people into sharing what they already had. In either event it was a miracle. People do not naturally divide and share their special privileges. Or shall we think of the Storm at Sea? Some good Christian people believe that Jesus so spoke to the angry waves that they became still, and a few fishermen escaped the threat of death. That was a help to them but has no especial significance for all the shrieking cargoes that have been plunged into the sea since that day. Other equally good Christians believe that when Jesus said, "Peace, be still," he was speaking to the storm of fear in the hearts of the disciples. When their fear subsided the storm did not look so terrifying. The miracle of bringing courage to men in need is something which can have meaning to every man in any storm at any time. Do not miss the thing we are trying to suggest, namely, that it is our privilege to so interpret the miracle stories that they may be most helpful to us in Christian living.

It may help you in reading the Gospels to remember that they are four portraits of Jesus. They are not biography as we would write it. The writers were not interested in a factual account of his life; they were trying to share an impression of a personality. Their whole thought centers in the wonder of this man and his life. They include in their accounts collections of his sayings, descriptions of his work, some of his illustrations when teaching, and give the reasons for the growing opposition to his ministry. They give in dramatic detail the tragic incidents of the end of his life and with glad surprise the accounts of his resurrection. The Acts of the Apostles is

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS: *Essential, Expedient or Extra-Biblical*



American Christianity in our day is characterized by an undue emphasis on spiritual gifts on the one hand and a great misunderstanding of these gifts on the other hand. In light of the confusing and controversial positions, it is necessary to keep a balanced approach.

### 1A. THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE GIFTS

All of us are dismayed by the sad spectacle of evangelicalism in disarray in matters of spiritual gifts.



#### 1b. Position #1

The Pentecostal viewpoint is that all gifts are still bestowed today. To claim that some gifts have ceased with the Apostles, say our Pentecostal friends, is tantamount to denying miracles. One might "as well say that salvation ceased with them" (Harold Horton, The Gifts of the Spirit, p. 30). Spiritual gifts are given not to every believer but only to those Christians who are baptized in the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation (Ibid, p. 23).

#### 2b. Position #2

Some of our friends contend that all gifts have ceased, not just the so-called sign gifts. One friend writes, "It is the writer's belief that the present preoccupation with 'finding your gift' is an erroneous and dangerous trend, which if brought to its logical conclusion denies the sufficiency and authority of the Scriptures. There is no justification for the claim that every believer receives a gift at salvation or that gifts may be divided into the temporary and permanent." ("Seeing Gifts in Their Context," Baptist Bulletin, February 1984, p. 7).

Is it really erroneous and dangerous to attempt to discover one's spiritual gift? We will see below.

Gene Getz has popularized the concept that there are no spiritual gifts for today. He regrets having taught for years "that Christians must search for and try to discover their spiritual gifts in order to function in the body of Christ." (Building Up One Another, p.9. italics in the original). In an unpublished study paper he proffers the following hypothesis: "All spiritual gifts in the primary sense have ceased. They were divinely bestowed abilities given to the New Testament Christians by the Holy Spirit so that the body of Christ could function without a corpus of revealed truth. . . The Bible puts an emphasis on becoming a mature Christian in order to become a functioning part of the body-not to personally search and seek for one's spiritual gift or gifts." (Unpublished paper, "Spiritual Gifts," p. 2).

#### 3b. Position #3

Some evangelical friends teach that every Christian has one and only one spiritual gift. Over against this view, we would maintain that the

Scriptures seem to teach that each believer has at least one gift but the Word of God does thereby not preclude the plurality of gifts for certain individuals. The Apostle Paul definitely evidenced a wide spectrum of gifts including that of apostleship (Rom. 1:1), healing (Acts 19:11-12), tongues (1 Cor. 14:18), various miracles (2 Cor. 12:12), evangelism (Acts 14:21 ff.), prophecy (Eph. 3:5 ff.), as well as several other gifts.

4b. Position #4

Many theologians differentiate between temporary and permanent gifts. Certain temporary gifts were for the establishment of the church, others for evidence of the truthfulness of the apostolic message. Permanent gifts are seen for the edification of the church today. Merrill Unger summarizes the purpose of the temporary gifts thusly:

"Such miraculous sign-gifts were the special endowment of the apostles, as the God-ordained founders of Christianity. To the Corinthians Paul declared, 'The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles' (2 Cor. 12,12, NASB). These supernatural gifts, which he exercised and was able to transmit to others served not only to establish Christianity but to vindicate his apostleship. Paul performed the same kind of signs and wonders on his first missionary tour for the same reasons (Acts 14:3)" (The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, pp. 138-139).

5b. Position #5

Some leading evangelists adopt a neutral stand towards sign gifts. These gifts are possible today but one should not make too much of them. For example, Billy Graham writes with ambivalence about these gifts. "The sign gifts--healings, miracles, and tongues--probably attracted as much attention in the first century as they do today. They also sometimes caused confusion and abuses just as they do today. . . And if God chooses to give these gifts to some today, we should always pray that they will be used 'for the common good' (1 Cor. 12:7) and the furtherance of the kingdom of God." (The Holy Spirit, p. 179).

In a similar vein, Harold Lindsell urges evangelicals to "stress the infrequency of the sign gifts, while acknowledging that they do appear here and there from time-to-time" (The Holy Spirit in the Latter Days, p. 193).

Which of these five positions is right? Are all or is none?

2A. THE CESSATION OF SOME GIFTS

While Pentecostals would take issue with us at this point, it is not difficult to demonstrate that certain gifts have ceased. It is true that not any one text states that there are permanent and temporary gifts. However, the principle of temporary gifts can be inferred from the following biblical features.

1b. The qualifications of an Apostle in Acts 1:21-27



When a successor was chosen to Judas, the qualifications of an apostle were clearly stated. He had to be an individual who had been with Christ from his baptism, accompanied Him for three years, witnessed His resurrection and as apostle ("one sent"), been personally commissioned by the Lord. Which Mormon apostle claims to have been around since the baptism of our Lord in A.D. 29?

2b. The observation of the writer to the Hebrews:

In Heb. 2:3-4 the writer reflects on the apostles who as first generation Christians had their message authenticated by special sign gifts: "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Among those gifts were most likely the ability to speak in tongues and the gift of healing. All these authenticating gifts had ceased when Hebrews was written before A.D. 70.

3b. The transitory character of gifts in 1 Cor. 13:8:

Paul wrote that certain gifts would cease: "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they shall be rendered inoperative; if there are tongues, they shall cease on their own account; if there is knowledge, it shall be rendered inoperative" (literal translation). The strong inference of the verse is that at the time when someone causes prophecy and knowledge to pass away (the same passive verb is used for both gifts) at that time the use of tongues will have ceased. The time is the foundation of the church, which is built on apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). With the conclusion of the New Testament canon in approximately A.D. 96, no further prophetic revelations were given (Rev. 22:18).

Adherence to strict exposition of Scripture rather than subjective experiences brings one to the unavoidable conclusion that certain evidential and establishing gifts belong exclusively to the first century. Though Pentecostals consider us a "harmful class of 'unbeliever'". . . who "dispensationalize or spiritualize or naturalize" the gifts (Horton, p. 196), biblical testimony bears out our position on temporary gifts.

### 3A. THE CONTINUATION OF SOME GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are divinely bestowed abilities for service. They are dispersed by the Father (Rom. 12:3), the ascended Lord (Eph. 4:7-11) and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:9). To each believer "is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (NASB, 1 Cor. 12:7). Like God's work in creation and salvation, the dispensing of gifts is so crucial, that it involves all three members of the Godhead. Does every believer today have at least one gift? Based on the following factors, this conclusion cannot be avoided.

1b. The indications from Scripture:

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Eph. 4:7)

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. 12:11)

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Pet. 4:10) (see also 1 Cor. 12:7 on page 3)

2b. The implications of the baptism of the Spirit:

In the immediate context of the bestowal of spiritual gifts we find reference to the baptism of the Spirit. Every believer is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and the same Spirit bestows on every believer a gift (1 Cor. 12:11). Every baptized believer is gifted. If baptism by the Spirit is for today, then so are the gifts from the Spirit. At the moment of salvation the Spirit immerses the believer into the body, He implants him into a special place in the body, He imparts to him a gift (or gifts), and He impels him by His power to be active as a part of that body.

3b. The inference from the metaphor of the body:

In 1 Cor. 12 Paul describes the church as a physical body. The Holy Spirit gives each new believer a special place in the body and a special faculty to function in that body. For the body to function efficiently, gifted individuals are essential. Without spiritual gifts, spiritual growth in the body is impossible (Eph. 4:12, 16). Without gifts the body is unfunctioning, uncooperative and unproductive. Without gifts there is no concord, care and concern (1 Cor. 12:25-26).



Those who argue that all gifts have ceased emphasize that maturity is what counts. It is true enough that the Scriptures speak of personal maturity (2 Tim. 3:17). It is also true that they emphasize the maturity of the body. In A.D. 63 the Holy Spirit still pleads through Peter that everyone use his spiritual gift, that of speaking or serving, to minister to others and to magnify the Lord (1 Pet. 4:10-12). In obedience to our ascended Lord we will employ our gifts to edify the saints and exalt our Savior.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE G

CORINTHIAN ACCOUNT A.D. 55		ROMAN ACCOUNT A.D. 57		EPHESIAN ACCOUNT A.D. 63		PETRINE ACCOUNT A.D. 66			
1 COR. 12:8-10		1 COR. 12:28-30		ROM 12:3-8		EPH. 4:7-11		1 PET. 4:10-11	
TEMPORARY:	8	6	1	2	0				
PERMANENT:	1	3	6	2	2				
WISDOM	APOSTLES	PROPHECY	APOSTLES	SPEAKING					
KNOWLEDGE	PROPHETS	MINISTRY	PROPHETS	MINISTERING					
FAITH	TEACHERS	TEACHING	EVANGELISTS						
HEALING	MIRACLES	EXHORTATION	PASTOR-TEACHERS						
MIRACLES	HEALING	GIVING							
PROPHECY	HELPS	RULING							
DISC. OF SPIRITS	GOVERNMENTS	MERCY							
TONGUES	TONGUES								
INTERP. OF T.	INTERP. OF T.								

"A MORE EXCELLENT WAY, . . . LOVE"  
1 COR. 12:31-13:1

"LET LOVE BE WITHOUT DISSIMULATION"  
ROM. 12:9

"SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, . . . EDIFYING, . . . IN LOVE"

"AND ABOVE ALL THINGS HAVE FERVENT LOVE"  
1 COR. 13:4

# 1 Corinthians 13:8

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Gift	Greek Verb	Tense	Voice	Meaning
<b>Prophecy</b>	καταργέω KATARGEIO	FUTURE	PASSIVE	SUDDEN REMOVAL, ABOLISH
<b>Tongues</b>	παύω PAUO	FUTURE	MIDDLE	GRADUAL PASSING AWAY
<b>Know - ledge</b>	καταργέω KATARGEIO	FUTURE	PASSIVE	SUDDEN REMOVAL, ABOLISH

## 1 Corinthians 13

**Prophecy**

**Tongues**

**Knowledge**

καταργέω

παύω

καταργέω



v. 9-10

v. 11

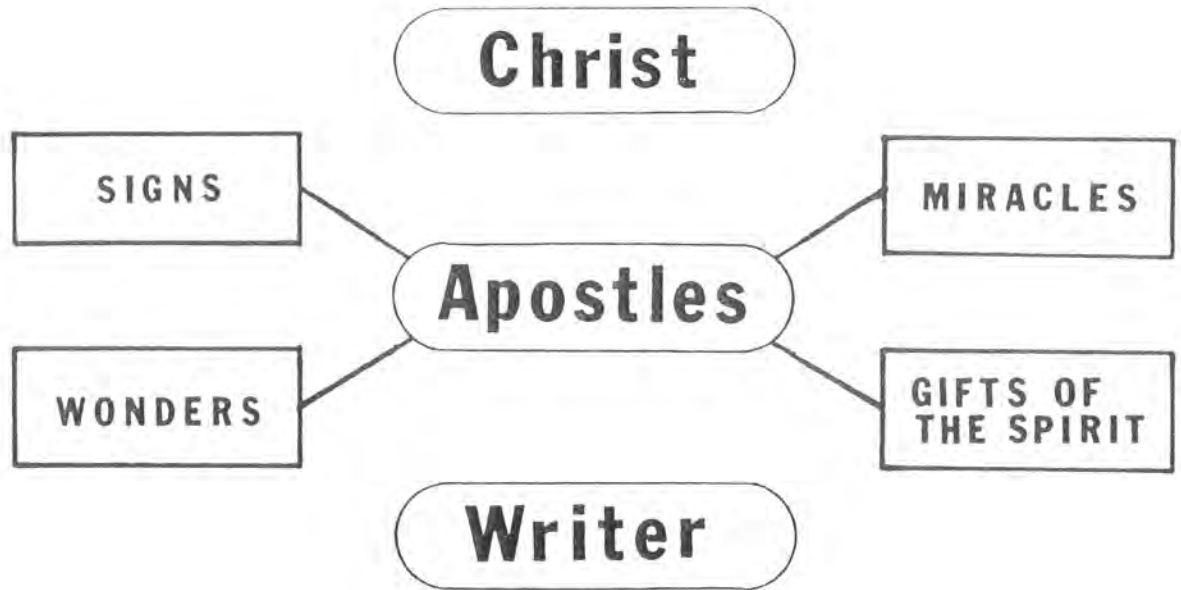
v. 12

**'SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE'**  
 2 Cor. 12:12

3 <sup>3</sup>How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which <sup>2</sup>at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us <sup>1</sup>by them that heard *him*;

4 God also bearing *them* witness, both with <sup>4</sup>signs and wonders, and with divers <sup>3</sup>miracles, and <sup>2</sup>gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

**Heb. 2:3-4**



**BOOK OF HEBREWS**



**Readers**

**MK**



# THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE GIFTS

	CORINTHIAN ACCOUNT A.D. 55	ROMAN ACCOUNT A.D. 57	EPHESIAN ACCOUNT A.D. 63	PETRINE ACCOUNT A.D. 66
* 1 COR, 12:8-10 *	* 1 COR, 12:28:30 *	* ROM 12:3-8 *	* EPH, 4:7-11 *	* 1 PET, 4:10-11 *
*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
TEMPORARY: 8	6	1	2	0
PERMANENT: 1	3	6	2	2
WISDOM	APOSTLES	PROPHECY	APOSTLES	SPEAKING
KNOWLEDGE	PROPHETS	MINISTRY	PROPHETS	MINISTERING
FAITH	TEACHERS	TEACHING	EVANGELISTS	
HEALING	MIRACLES	EXHORTATION	PASTOR-TEACHERS	
MIRACLES	HEALING	GIVING		
PROPHECY	HELPS	RULING		
DISC. OF SPIRITS	GOVERNMENTS	MERCY		
TONGUES	TONGUES			
INTERP. OF T.	INTERP. OF T.			
	"A MORE EXCELLENT WAY, . . . LOVE"	"LET LOVE BE WITHOUT DISSIMU- LATION"	"SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, . . . EDIFYING, . . . IN LOVE"	"AND ABOVE ALL THINGS HAVE FERVENT LOVE"
	I COR, 12:31-13:1	ROM, 12:9	EPH, 4:15-16	1 PET, 4:8

# Faith Pulpit

Faith Baptist Theological Seminary  
Ankeny, Iowa

David R. Boylan, Ph.D., Interim President  
George G. Houghton, Th.D., Academic  
Vice President



## Confusion in the Charismatic Camp

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

April 1994

One startling religious phenomenon of the twentieth century is the rise of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement with its emphasis on the "charismata," or spiritual gifts. The movement had its beginning in the early 1900's, a rather recent date in terms of church history. And yet, by the end of this century, charismatics have infiltrated all mainline denominations and have made strong inroads into Roman Catholicism and evangelical churches. Discerning evangelicals are concerned with a number of problem areas.

Doctrinal and denominational differences are often ignored in light of the charismatics' common experience of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues. Because of their lack of biblical orientation, the charismatics display a confusion in certain major areas of biblical theology.

### I. Confusion About the Experience of Spirit Baptism

A basic tenet of the charismatic movement is the insistence on a second work of grace with a resultant empowerment to perform supernatural feats. This distinctive belief of the charismatics involves insistence on two baptisms of the Holy Spirit, one at the moment of salvation for every believer (I Cor. 12:13) and one subsequent to salvation, whereby the Holy Spirit baptizes the individual with power (Acts 1:5). As evidence of the second baptism, the individual is able to speak in tongues. As Basham, a charismatic evangelist, observes about this post-salvation experience: "The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the doorway into the supernatural realm of the Christian life." Basham agrees with another charismatic teacher that "speaking in tongues is the

prayer part of the baptism of the Holy Spirit" (*A Handbook on Tongues, Interpretation and Prophecy*, p. 34).

We believe it is illegitimate to make Spirit baptism or tongues speaking a second work of grace, as if God had not given us all we need in Christ at salvation. Even if there were a second work of grace, why should the evidence of this experience be the ability to speak in tongues? Why not the ability to teach, to show mercy, to help? The gift of tongues is listed by Paul as the least of all gifts in the order of importance (I Cor. 12:28), and he further clearly states that not everyone has the gift of tongues. In I Cor. 12:30, Paul literally asks, "All don't speak in tongues, do they?" Obviously, Paul expects a negative answer. The charismatics insist on just the opposite.

### II. Confusion About the Exaltation of the Holy Spirit

The charismatic movement elevates and exalts the third member of the Trinity. The Savior's teaching on the Church Age ministry of the Holy Spirit is clear. "He shall not speak of himself. . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-14). It is only reasonable that the Spirit-led believer would want to do what the Spirit Himself does, and that is to magnify Christ. How distorted the emphasis of the charismatics is can be seen by a stroll through any charismatic bookstore. Sometime ago I browsed in just such a store in Des Moines. I counted fifty volumes directly dealing with the Holy Spirit and not a single doctrinal volume on the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder this unbiblical emphasis leads to unbiblical practices.

### III. Confusion About the Endurance of Gifts

Our charismatic friends insist that since the person of the Spirit and His power have not changed, neither have His gifts. All His gifts are still bestowed today. This position is untenable, however, in light of the clear statements of God's Word that certain foundational and evidential gifts have ceased. Indeed, by the time the book of Hebrews was penned, just before A.D. 70, gifts identified as "signs and wonders and . . . divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" had ceased (Heb. 2:3-4). The early sign gifts did not occur apart from apostolic contact (Acts 8:14-17). And certainly the gift of apostleship no longer exists. The qualifications of an apostle were that he had to have been a companion of Christ from His baptism and a witness of His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). Would anyone suggest that people living among us today have existed since the time of Christ? The charismatic insistence that all spiritual gifts must exist today is contradicted by the statement of Scripture concerning the qualifications of apostles.

The gift of tongues, supposedly an evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, can also be consigned to the period of the early church. Paul clearly shows the temporary nature of tongues in I Cor. 13:8. He teaches that at the time that prophecies and knowledge shall have been rendered inoperative (passive form of *katargeo*) tongues would have ceased on their own account (middle form of *pauo*). When did prophecy cease? It ceased with the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and the conclusion of the New Testament canon (Rev. 22:18-19). When God had established His church and

# Faith Pulpit

FAITH BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Robert L. Domokos, D.Min., *President*  
George G. Houghton, Th.D., *Vice-President*  
Robert G. Delnay, Th.D., *Dean*



## Spiritual Gifts: Essential, Expedient or Extra-Biblical?

By Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

April 1988

American Christianity today is characterized by an undue emphasis on spiritual gifts on the one hand and a great misunderstanding of these gifts on the other hand. All of us are dismayed by the sad spectacle of evangelicalism in disarray in matters of spiritual gifts.

### 1. The Controversy Concerning The Gifts

#### A. Position #1

The Pentecostal viewpoint is that all gifts are still bestowed today. To claim that some gifts have ceased with the Apostles, say our Pentecostal friends, is tantamount to denying miracles. One might "as well say that salvation ceased with them" (Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 30).

#### B. Position #2

Some individuals contend that all gifts have ceased, not just the so-called sign gifts. One friend writes, "It is the writer's belief that the present preoccupation with 'finding your gift' is an erroneous and dangerous trend, which if brought to its logical conclusion denies the sufficiency and authority of the Scriptures. There is no justification for the claim that every believer receives a gift at salvation or that gifts may be divided into the temporary and permanent" ("Seeing Gifts in Their Context," *Baptist Bulletin*, February 1984, p. 7).

Is it really erroneous and dangerous to attempt to discover one's spiritual gift?

Gene Getz has popularized the concept that there are no spiritual gifts for today. He regrets having taught for years "that Chris-

tians must search for and try to discover their spiritual gifts in order to function in the body of Christ." His suggestion is that all spiritual gifts in the primary sense have ceased (*Building Up One Another*, p. 9, italics in the original).

#### C. Position #3

Some evangelical friends teach that every Christian has one and only one spiritual gift. Over against this view, we would maintain that the Scriptures seem to teach that each believer has at least one gift but the Word of God does thereby not preclude the plurality of gifts for certain individuals. The Apostle Paul definitely evidenced a wide spectrum of gifts including that of apostleship (Rom. 1:1), healing (Acts 19:11-12), tongues (1 Cor. 14:18), various miracles (2 Cor. 12:12), evangelism (Acts 14:21 ff.), prophecy (Eph. 3:5 ff.), as well as several other gifts.

#### D. Position #4

Many theologians differentiate between temporary and permanent gifts. Certain temporary gifts were for the establishment of the church, others gave evidence of the truthfulness of the apostolic message. Permanent gifts are seen for the edification of the church today. Merrill Unger observes:

"Such miraculous sign-gifts were the special endowment of the apostles, as the God-ordained founders of Christianity. To the Corinthians Paul declared, 'The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles' (2 Cor. 12:12, NASB)" (*The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, p. 138).

#### E. Position #5

Some leading evangelicals adopt a neu-

tral stand toward sign gifts. These gifts are possible today but one should not make too much of them. For example, Billy Graham writes with ambivalence about the gifts of healings, miracles, and tongues: "If God chooses to give these gifts to some today, we should always pray that they will be used 'for the common good' (1 Cor. 12:77) and the furtherance of the kingdom of God" (*The Holy Spirit*, p. 179).

In a similar vein, Harold Lindsell urges evangelicals to "stress the infrequency of the sign gifts, while acknowledging that they do appear here and there from time-to-time" (*The Holy Spirit in the Latter Days*, p. 193). Which of these five positions is right? Are all? Are none?

### 2. The Cessation of Some Gifts

While Pentecostals would take issue with us at this point, it is not difficult to demonstrate that certain gifts have ceased. It is true that not any one text states that there are permanent and temporary gifts. However, the principle of temporary gifts can be inferred from the following biblical features.

#### A. The qualifications of an Apostle in Acts 1:21-27:

When a successor was chosen to Judas, the qualifications of an apostle were clearly stated. He had to be an individual who had been with Christ from His baptism, accompanied Him for three years, witnessed His resurrection and as apostle ("One sent"), been personally commissioned by the Lord. Which Mormon apostle claims to have been around since the baptism of our Lord in A.D. 29?

# The Nature of Gifts

## Establishing Gifts

WISDOM 1 COR. 12:8  
KNOWLEDGE 1 COR. 12:8  
PROPHECY 1 COR. 12:10  
DISCERNING OF SPIRITS 1 COR. 12:10  
APOSTLES 1 COR. 12:28 & EPH. 4:11  
PROPHETS 1 COR. 12:28 & EPH. 4:11

## Evidential Gifts

HEALING 1 COR. 12:9,28  
MIRACLES 1 COR. 12:10,28  
TONGUES 1 COR. 12:10,28  
INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES 1 COR. 12:30

## Edifying Gifts

MINISTRY ROM. 12:7  
TEACHERS ROM. 12:7 & 1 COR. 12:28  
EXHORTING ROM. 12:8  
GIVING ROM. 12:8  
RULING ROM. 12:8 & 1 COR. 12:28  
MERCY ROM. 12:8  
FAITH 1 COR. 12:9  
HELPS 1 COR. 12:28  
EVANGELISTS EPH. 4:11  
PASTOR-TEACHERS EPH. 4:11

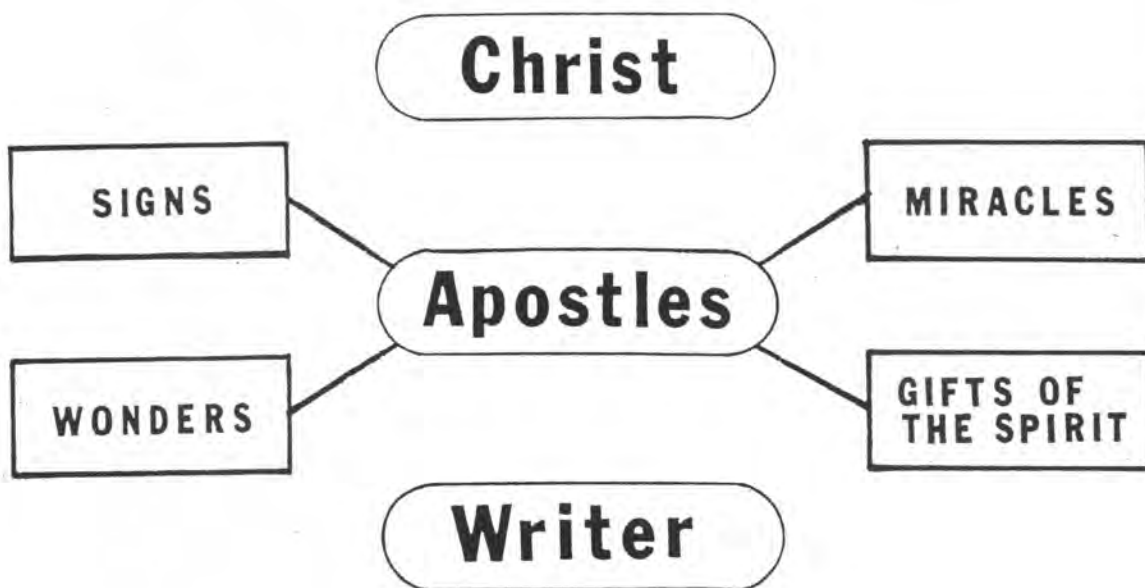
# 'SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE'

2 Cor. 12:12

3 <sup>v</sup>How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which <sup>a</sup>at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us <sup>v</sup>by them that heard *him*;

4 God also bearing *them* witness, both with <sup>a</sup>signs and wonders, and with divers <sup>c</sup>miracles, and <sup>d</sup>gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Heb. 2:3-4

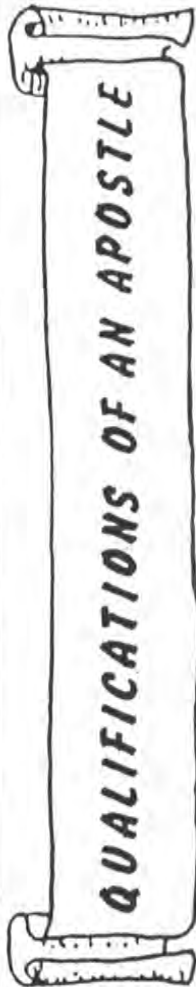


BOOK OF HEBREWS



Readers

MK



## QUALIFICATIONS OF AN APOSTLE

### ACTS 1

21 Wherefore of these men which have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthi'as.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthi'as; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

## TO QUALIFY AS AN APOSTLE THE PERSON MUST HAVE...

1. **Been with Christ since His baptism.**
2. **Accompanied Him for three years.**
3. **Witnessed His resurrection.**
4. **Received a personal call.**

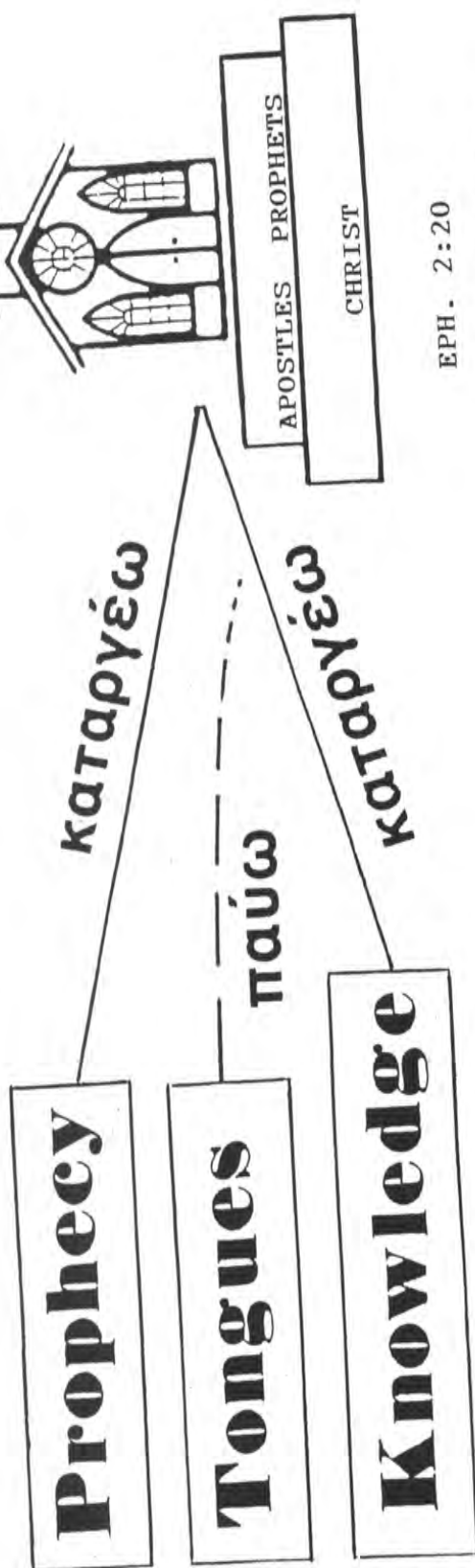
# 1 Corinthians 13:8

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Gift	Greek Verb	Tense	Voice	Meaning
<b>Prophecy</b>	καταργέω KATARGEO	FUTURE	PASSIVE	To Render Inoperative
<b>Tongues</b>	παύω PAUO	FUTURE	MIDDLE	To Cease (on their own account)
<b>Know - ledge</b>	καταργέω KATARGEO	FUTURE	PASSIVE	To Render Inoperative



# I Corinthians 13



EPH. 2:20

REV. 22:18-19

v. 9-10

PARTIAL  
VS.  
PERFECT

v. 11

CHILDISH  
VS.  
MATURE

CHILD

v. 12

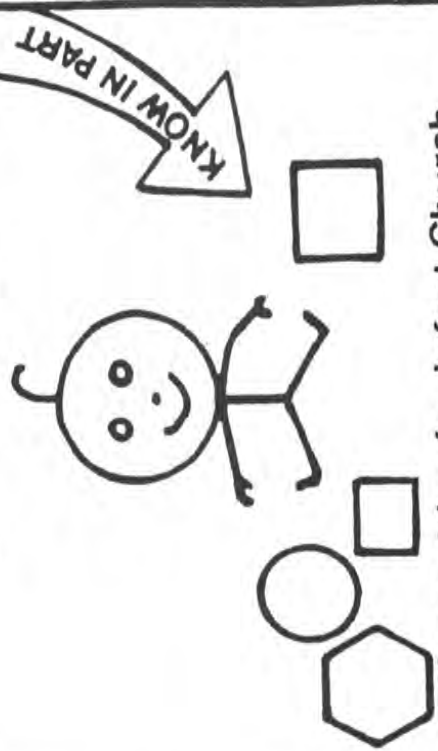
DARKLY  
VS.  
CLEARLY

MIRROR







# Infant Church




Necessities for Infant Church




Incomplete Revelation



Knowledge  
Prophecy  
Tongues



Now we see in a mirror darkly

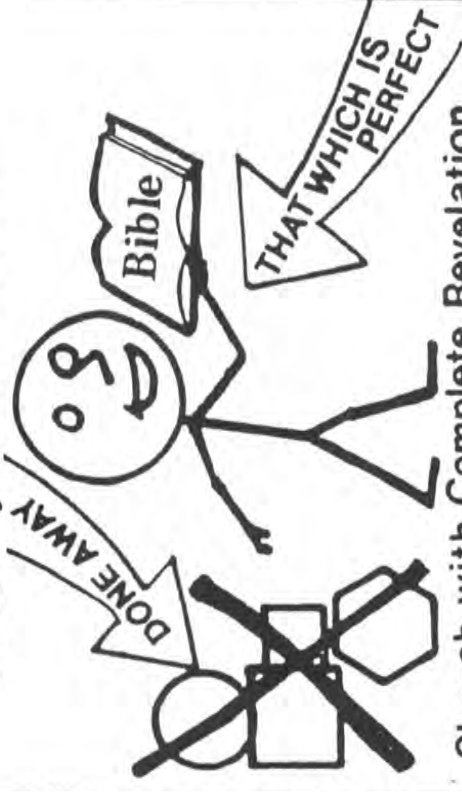


Mirror


## "DARKLY"

### Infant Church


# Post-Apostolic Church




Church with Complete Revelation




Complete Revelation



HOLY BIBLE



Unnecessary gifts



Face to Face

## "DISTINCTLY"

### Post-Apostolic Church

# The Confusion of Tongues

WILLIAM G. BELLSHAW

"The Bible is our only rule of faith and practice." Such is the historic contention of Bible believing Christians. When anything intrudes itself between the Bible and the believer, doctrinal error usually results. Neglect of God's Word often manifests itself in a deep hungering for some significant experience to fill that void which results from this spiritual vacuum. We are living at a time when in many circles a desire for such an experience has led people into error. An experience which seems genuine has been thrust into the lives of many Christians causing them to misapprehend the message of God's Word concerning the Holy Spirit's ministry among men. This does not mean that the Christian life is not experiential. But it does mean that all of our experiences should be founded upon the solid testimony of God's authoritative Word.

In the last few years a number of Bible students have been bestowing the gift of tongues upon the church. Some even feel that the Holy Spirit has bestowed this gift upon them, and that they have spoken in tongues. These events remind us that we must again search the Word of God so that neither our practices nor our desires will be outside of the limits of the Bible.

## The Place of Tongues in the New Testament

When investigating any doctrine in the Bible, it is important to observe where the information is found, and where it is not found. It is significant to notice any indication which might be given in the context concerning the relative importance of the doctrine in comparison with other doctrines of the Word of God. This point is especially true with reference to the gift of tongues. Several points clearly indicate the place of tongues in the New Testament.

*References to the gift in the New Testament.* The gift of tongues is specifically mentioned in only two books of the New Testament. There are three passages in Acts which mention this gift (Acts 2:1-13; 10:1-11; 18:24-19:7). These verses are primarily descriptive in nature. They relate experiences of early disciples when tongues were manifested. The second book containing references to the gift is 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 12-14). These chapters are primarily expository in nature. They indicate such things as the relationship of the gifts to the body, the atmosphere in which they are to be exercised, and the rules for the exercise of the gifts in the church.

It is also important to notice that apart from these two books, no other New Testament book specifically mentions the gift of tongues. If it were the normal thing to expect the manifestation of this gift, certainly Paul would have given instructions for its use in such epistles as Ephesians (which deals with the body of Christ), Philippians (which deals with the Christian's walk), and the Pastoral Epistles (which deal with order in the church). Yet in these books no reference is made to this gift. This in itself should give cause for a careful consideration of the place of tongues in the church today.

*Lists of the gifts in the New Testament.* Two lists of gifts appear in the New Testament in which the gift of tongues is included (1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30). The other lists of gifts do not include tongues. In the passage

where it is mentioned, as well as the gift of interpretation, the gift of tongues is mentioned last. The gifts in the list in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 evidently are given in the order of their eminence because of the use of *first, secondarily, and thirdly*. It seems strange, in the light of this arrangement, to see the prominence given to this gift in some circles today.

*Comparison of the gifts in the New Testament.* An entire chapter in 1 Corinthians is devoted to a comparison between two of the gifts mentioned in the lists of gifts. Chapter 14 clearly demonstrates the superiority of prophecy over tongues. This estimate of tongues validates the conclusion which was drawn from the order in which the gifts were listed in chapter 12. Though tongues is a sovereignly bestowed gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11), it was to be kept in its proper place with respect to the other spiritual gifts. It is not to be depreciated nor exalted above that position which is Biblical.

## The Nature of Tongues in the New Testament

The question is often asked: "Are the references to tongues in Acts and Corinthians similar in nature or are they not?" That is, are there two different kinds of tongues referred to in the New Testament? Some respond that the passages in Acts speak of known languages, and the references in 1 Corinthians are to ecstatic utterances which do not correspond to any known language. Most believe that the tongues of Acts were known languages, and the proof of this view is abundant and clear (Acts 2:6-11). However, there is a divergence of opinion with regard to 1 Corinthians. Ample evidence is available to demonstrate that both books refer to the same gift, that is, the ability to speak in known languages.

*The words involved.* The terminology of 1 Corinthians and Acts is most significant, and it should be studied with care.

The word "*unknown*." The sixfold occurrence of the word *unknown* in 1 Corinthians 14 (vv. 2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 27) is not a part of the original text, but was added by a translator hoping to clarify the passages involved. Instead, this insertion has caused much misunderstanding. It has led some people to believe that these sounds had never been uttered before as intelligible languages. Therefore, when reading the text of this chapter, the word *unknown* should be omitted.

The word "*tongue*." The uniform usage of the word *tongue* in the New Testament is that which signifies a language used by inhabitants of the world. The only exception to this rule is the use of the word to designate the physical organ called *the tongue*. Therefore, there must be some compelling reason to understand this word in some other sense than the uniform meaning of the word in the New Testament. Such a compelling reason does not exist since exactly the same words to describe this phenomenon are used in Acts and 1 Corinthians. Differences in grammatical construction do appear, but the basic vocabulary is the same. No qualifying words are used to distinguish these references or to show that there is any difference between the phenomenon found in Acts and 1 Corinthians.

*The ability involved.* It is also reasonable to assume that, if this is a gift of the Holy Spirit, it would be something which could not be duplicated by human means at the disposal of the early church. If these

tongues are ecstatic utterances, they could be duplicated fraudulently. Gibberish can be uttered by anyone, and a second person could feign interpretation of that unintelligible vocalization. Therefore, it is reasonable that this gift would consist of the ability to speak in a foreign language without the opportunity to learn that language by ordinary means. This is truly a gift of the Holy Spirit.

*The context involved.* The settings in which this gift was exercised lend further weight to the viewpoint that these were known languages which were uttered. In Acts 2 people had come from many foreign countries (Acts 2:5, 9-11). In Acts 10 Cornelius was a foreigner (Acts 10:1). In Acts 19 Paul was in a foreign country. In Corinth Paul's ministry was to a seaport community which was a melting pot for peoples from many parts of the world. It was a city where many languages were spoken. Therefore, the ability to speak a foreign tongue without previous acquaintance with that language would arrest the attention of these people, and commend that message as a supernatural one.

A recognition of the true nature of the gift of tongues will do much to demonstrate the spuriousness of so-called exhibitions of this gift today.

#### **The Purpose of Tongues in the New Testament**

The heart of this study of the Biblical teaching concerning the gift of tongues concerns the divine purpose behind tongues. A detailed and accurate study of the Word must be undertaken if one is to guard against error. Why was this gift given to some believers?

*The purpose enunciated.* The Bible specifically states that the gift of tongues is intended to serve as a sign (1 Cor. 14:22). The word *sign* (*semeion*) has a particular significance in the New Testament. Primarily it speaks of a token which has behind it a particular message to be conveyed. A clear use of this word is found in John 20:30-31. Certain miracles are recorded in John's Gospel, not because of the wonder they produced, but because of the message they taught (v. 31). Therefore, the gift of tongues was a supernatural bestowment which was to perform a specific function, it was a sign. The object of this specific function of tongues as a sign is unbelievers. In particular, Jewish unbelievers (note the "this people" of 1 Cor. 14:21). This is demonstrated by verse 21 where the background for the pronouncement of verse 22 is found in the Old Testament. Probably the passage which Paul had in mind was Isaiah 28:11-12. That there was a large number of Jews in Corinth is made evident by a simple reading of Acts 18:1-17, which contains the history of the founding of the church at Corinth.

It is also clear from the Acts of the Apostles that whenever the gift of tongues was exercised Jews were present. A careful reading of the passages involved will demonstrate this statement. Therefore, one must conclude that the gift of tongues was designed to be a sign to unbelieving Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22). This statement is not to be construed as referring only to unsaved Jews. It would also include Jews who had doubts about the message preached by the early disciples concerning Christ and His program for this new age. This use of the word translated "believe not" is found in John 20:27 (there it is the word "faithless").

*The purpose explained.* The exact message to be conveyed to the unbelieving Jew by means of this sign is

clearly indicated in both Acts and 1 Corinthians. Before the list of gifts is given in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul indicates one of the major problems encountered in the city of Corinth. The first three verses of this chapter point out that there was a problem in discerning which utterances came from God, and which ones did not. The apostle gives them some help in discovering which voices were authoritative and which were not. These people did not have a complete New Testament before them in order to demonstrate the validity of a message which purported to come from God. There needed to be some method by which statements could be judged.

Other statements in chapter 14 confirm the viewpoint that tongues were given to authenticate the messenger of God and his message. In verse 21 it is stated that speaking with tongues would cause people to hear and believe the word proclaimed, but "for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord." The authority of Paul's message is reasserted at the end of this chapter (v. 37).

Peter in his sermon delivered at Pentecost makes this fact abundantly clear. In Acts 2:32-36 he contends that that "which ye now see and hear" (an evident reference to the tongues of v. 4) authenticates Peter's claim that Jesus is the promised Messiah. This is the major thrust of his message which the Jews rejected. "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

The second occasion when tongues were exhibited in Acts also bears out this meaning of the gift. After Peter preached to the ones gathered at Cornelius' house that the Gentiles were objects of God's salvation as well as the Jews (Acts 10:34-35, 43), "they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:45). That this was God's message is demonstrated by the sign of tongues. The tense of the verb *heard* (v. 46) speaks of continuous action in past time. So because of the sign, they did not doubt the message, but rather it was authenticated before them.

Much the same situation exists in Acts 19. A new message was being proclaimed by Paul to certain disciples of John the Baptizer. To authenticate this message, the gift of tongues was experienced (Acts 19:1-17).

When Paul came to Corinth he proclaimed to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:5). They considered this to be a blasphemous message, but God authenticated it to them by giving to believers in Corinth the gift of tongues.

The viewpoint expressed in this section is further confirmed by Hebrews 2:4: "God also bearing them [the first generation Christians of v. 3] witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." The people involved in these signs and gifts of the Holy Spirit are clearly indicated by the context.

Many have suggested that speaking in tongues is a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is concluded by some that if one does not speak in tongues he has not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That all the Corinthian believers had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated by 1 Corinthians 12:13. However, all did not speak with tongues. This is the

way the question of 1 Corinthians 12:30 is to be understood. Paul phrases the question so as to convey the idea that the expected answer to the question is no. This baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a work of the Spirit subsequent to the salvation of the believer. Rather it is an act which vitally joins the individual to the body of Christ. The conclusion is that if all cannot have the sign, then it cannot be a sign of that which is universal among believers.

### **The Permanence of Tongues in the New Testament**

There is no question concerning the validity of the gift of tongues. That such a gift did exist is evident. However, is this gift still given to believers by the Holy Spirit today? Some answer in the affirmative. The evidence of God's Word is the final source of authority. The experience of those who say they have the gift of tongues is not the basis of judgment as far as this question is concerned.

The previous section dealing with the purpose of tongues indicates that this gift is a temporary gift. Since the New Testament was not complete, this gift was needed to validate the message which was being preached. After the canon of the Bible was completed, this gift was no longer necessary. Such is the explicit testimony of 1 Corinthians 13. The words of verse 9 assert that tongues will cease. When will this be? The succeeding verses answer the question. It is important to note that Paul places the emphasis in the next verse on the twofold use of the word *part*. Literally he said, "For in part we are knowing, and in part we are prophesying." The incomplete nature of the revealed Word of God is thus emphasized. But there is a time when it will be completed. Paul refers to the finished product as "that which is perfect" (v. 10). Though some may refer the word *perfect* to Christ, this interpretation cannot be sustained. This adjective (used as a noun) is in the neuter gender. Therefore, it is a reference to the finished (perfect) or completed Word of God. If it referred to Christ, it would be in the masculine gender.

With the completion of the New Testament there no longer was a need for men to be used as instrumentalities to give forth God's authoritative message. This is now contained in the written Word. Men now simply proclaim it. The gift of tongues authenticating these messages also was no longer necessary. All of the things relating to this partial testimony will be made idle or rendered inoperative (the literal meaning of "shall be done away"). The gift of tongues and related gifts were for the first years of the church's history (v. 11), while God was still in the process of revealing His Word to mankind (v. 12).

It is not unusual to view some gifts as temporary in nature. The gift of apostleship obviously is a temporary gift. No student of the Word would claim to possess the gift of apostleship, because it is obvious to all that after the early history of the church, no more apostles were chosen.

### **The Practice of Tongues in the New Testament**

Certain regulations were given by Paul to control the exercise of the gift of tongues. If much of what goes on today under the guise of speaking in tongues were compared with this section of Paul's writings, little

would need to be said about the validity of it. The principal chapter containing these regulations is 1 Corinthians 14. It will be sufficient just to enumerate briefly some of these instructions.

First, the gift is to be exercised by two or three people, but no more than that number. The obvious intention of the last part of this verse (v. 27) is to regulate the speaking so that no more than one will be speaking at a time. If there is only one interpreter, that would preclude two people speaking simultaneously.

Second, an interpreter must be present when someone is using this gift. By some method those who have the gift are to ascertain whether or not an interpreter is in attendance at the service. If an interpreter is not present, the speaker is to keep silent (v. 28).

Third, women are not to participate in this experience (v. 34). This indicates that the gift of speaking in tongues was not given to women, since they could never exercise it. The interpretation is sometimes given that this verse means a woman is not to break into a service and interrupt the proceedings of the meeting. On occasion one will teach that the verb *speak* means to chatter. Such a position is untenable. The context in which verse 34 is found eliminates this view. A regulation is given in verse 28 which contains exactly the same verbs as are found in verse 34 ("keep silence" and "speak"). No one would contend that verse 28 means that the person involved here is not to interrupt the proceedings of the meeting, or to chatter. It can only mean absolute silence.

Because of the abuse of this gift in the church of Corinth, Paul had to set forth some particular regulations so as to curb the more enthusiastic members of the congregation. Because of a failure to observe these instructions, it is evident that most groups which contend they have the gift of tongues have never been given this spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit. Certainly He would not bestow it upon those who were continually abusing it.

### **Conclusion**

It has been the purpose of this study to expound as accurately as possible the Biblical teaching concerning the gift of tongues. The position has been that this gift was sovereignly bestowed upon the early church for the purpose of authenticating their messengers and messages. However, with the completion of the New Testament such a sign gift is no longer needed. Therefore, the temporary nature of the gift of tongues has been presented as the Scriptural teaching on this topic.

Other things could be mentioned of a nonexegetical nature which have a definite bearing on this subject. The excesses of the tongues movement, their abuse of great Biblical truths, their overemphasis of a Scriptural doctrine which has been assigned its proper place in the Word, and the pride and presumption which is sometimes the hallmark of its adherents are all topics which are relevant areas for investigation. However, the final authority is, What does God's Word teach? Let this be the primary standard by which the tongues movement is judged.



## SEPARATION: A Fundamentalist Folly or Divine Duty?

### 1A. THE PATTERN OF SCRIPTURAL SEPARATION:

The Bible represents God as a God of light in whom is no darkness (1 John 1:5). Light cannot coexist with darkness. The Bible presents God as separating light from darkness through the Word. The system of separation spans the Scriptures:

--The Bible commences with God separating physical light from physical darkness: (Gen. 1:3-4)

--The Bible concludes with God separating spiritual light from spiritual darkness. Saints enter the eternal city; sinners are consigned to the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15; 22: 6-8).

### 2A. THE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURAL SEPARATION:

#### 1b. The predicament:

It should not be necessary to demonstrate that the Scriptures teach separation. However, in contemporary evangelicalism, separation is ridiculed and rejected even by those who once were in fundamentalist ranks. The concept of separation is a scriptural one. We dare not dodge or deny the doctrine!

#### 2b. The passages of separation:

The following is adapted from an unpublished paper by G. Archer Weniger, "What the Bible Says About a Godly Attitude Toward Heresy."

In these days of theological confusion and ecclesiastical compromise, what is the Biblical position for an evangelical to assume toward heretics and false religious teachers? Are we to patronize them, associate with them, accept their sponsorship, increase their numbers, send them converts, add to their prestige, follow their leadership, identify our churches with them, and obliterate important Biblical distinctions with them? The Bible's answer is clear.

1. Try them....I John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
2. Mark them...Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them." Verkuyl says, "and to keep away from them."
3. Rebuke them..Titus 1:13, "This witness is true. Wherefore, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith." Verkuyl says, "Correct them sternly."

4. Have no fellowship..Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Verkuy1 says, "Expose them."
5. Withdraw thyself..II Thessalonians 3:6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us."
6. Receive them not .II John 10-11, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Verkuy1 says, "Do not extend him your greeting." To our day false teachings are fostered by misplaced hospitality.
7. Have no company with him . II Thessalonians 3:14, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Berkeley Version says, "Do not get mixed up with him, so he may grow ashamed."
8. Reject them..Titus 3:10, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, reject."
9. Be ye separate..II Corinthians 6:17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."
10. Put them out..I Corinthians 5:7, "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."

### 3A. THE PROBLEM OF BIBLICAL SEPARATION:

#### 1b. The system of fundamentalism:

In the latter days of the last century, and especially in the early years of this century, a fundamentalist-modernist battle raged in the United States. Many churches withdrew from main-line denominations because these denominations had become liberal and denied certain fundamentals of the faith. Bible believers insisted that a denial of the central doctrines was a departure from the Christian faith. They formulated the fundamentals and became thus known as fundamentalists, declaring and defending these doctrines to be the statement of the fundamentals:

1. *Inspiration of the Bible*
2. *Virgin Birth of Christ*
3. *Deity of Christ*
4. *Substitutionary Atonement*
5. *Physical Resurrection and Return*

2b. The statement of the fundamentals:

Robert Lightner writes correctly about these fundamentals of the faith:

"These are still the criteria by which to establish whether an individual or an organization is orthodox or heterodox. Other doctrines might be listed as equally essential to the faith. What is believed about these, however, will reveal what is believed about other Biblical truths. They are determinative! A glance at these five historic fundamentals of the faith reveals that they all center around two crucial doctrines, the very two which liberal church unionists of our day deny in any orthodox sense--the doctrines of Christ, the living Word and the Bible, the written Word." (Church Union--A Layman's Guide, p. 126).

3b. The spirit of fundamentalism:

Many evangelicals can give whole-hearted endorsement to the five fundamentals but are not fundamentalists. They have a belief in these doctrines, but are not willing to do battle for them. They declare the fundamentals but do not defend them against heresy and apostasy. A life of comfort is to be preferred over a life of conflict. But the believer is in enemy territory. He is engaged in a battle. Fighting for the truth is not optional but an order:

1 Tim. 6:12: "The good fight of faith. . ."  
 Jude 3: "Earnestly contend for the faith."

4b. The skepticism toward separation:

- 1c. Because of the extreme positions of some.
- 2c. Because of the great ignorance of the nature of liberalism.
- 3c. Because of the ignorance of the biblical teaching on separation.
- 4c. Because of the compromise of many evangelicals.

4A. THE PURPOSE OF BIBLICAL SEPARATION:

The late National Representative of the GARBC, Dr. Paul R. Jackson, has spelled out the ultimate need for the practice of separation:

"Separation, as I have so often explained, is to the whole ministry of the Word of God and the service of Jesus Christ what sanitation and sterilization are to surgery. When you go into surgery you are not at all prejudiced against the

practice of surgeons, and others that enter that room, to scrub and scrub and scrub! You want every germ destroyed. If there is any possible chance of an infection you may be the victim of it, and you are well satisfied for sanitation at its ultimate and absolute to mark those who minister to you. But, as a matter of fact, no matter how long the surgeon scrubs, it will do you no good until he finally takes hold of the scalpel and the other instruments to perform the surgery. Unless he ministers to you in the other spheres of medical attention, the sanitation is valueless to you. Cleanliness is only the necessary condition and atmosphere in which the real ministry of the surgeon takes place. It is not an end in itself, but it is an essential condition to the rightful end.

If we make Biblical separation an end in itself, or major upon it to the neglect or exclusion of other great Biblical doctrines, we have failed those to whom we minister, as the surgeon would fail who sterilizes but never operates. But, on the other hand, let us never forget that we also fail if we do not preach and practice this doctrine of separation, as the surgeon will fail, no matter how skillfully he operates, if he neglects proper sanitation in the operating room. We must be clean in order to carry out the total ministry of the Word." (GARBC Information Booklet #12, "The Position, Attitudes, and Objectives of Biblical Separation," pp. 1-2)

#### 5A. THE PRINCIPLES OF SEPARATION:

##### 1b. Separation from apostasy and unbelief:

An apostate is an unbeliever who has formerly professed the truth but has departed from it. A heretic is a believer who brings doctrinal disunity.

Many passages could be cited to support separation from apostasy. A few must suffice:

Eph. 5:11  
2 Cor. 6:14-17  
1 Tim. 6:5  
2 Tim. 3:5  
2 John 9-10

Dr. Ernest Pickering, in his classic book, Biblical Separation: A Struggle for a Pure Church, suggests that it is not all that difficult to identify an apostate group. The believer is not simply asked to separate from apostate individuals who hold false doctrines, but from groups who espouse the same doctrines. Dr. Pickering suggests the following:

A body is apostate when:

(1) Men and women in its leadership deny the verities of the Christian faith. If such are welcomed into places of leadership, the body has departed, though individuals within it may yet be sound.

(2) Official periodicals and media presentations promote views contrary to the orthodox Christian faith.

(3) Official schools of the body employ faculty members and/or utilize visiting speakers who teach views that are at variance with essential Christian doctrines.



(4) No effort is made by the leadership of the group or the majority of its constituency to expunge the offending parties.

Sometimes objection is raised that to ascertain what constitutes essential doctrine and to determine when a group is actually apostate requires the making of a judgment. Yes, it is true. Judgments are to be made here as in many other areas of the Christian walk. But this does not invalidate the principle of separation. Because the act of separation requires a judgment does not imply that the judgment is wrong or that the action is wrong. God has given ample spiritual guidelines to help the Spirit-taught believer make those judgments.

2b. Separation from heresy and immorality:

Many evangelicals would concur that separation from apostasy is necessary. Some evangelicals, however, reject the idea of separation from other believers. Paul Lightner's comments are much to the point:

An even more difficult truth for many to accept and obey is that Holy Scripture commands separation from Christian brethren who persist in walking in disobedience. As in the case of separation from apostasy and false teachers this does not mean each believer is to set up his own beliefs as equivalent to God's truth. God's Word and the essentials of the faith constitute that from which there can be no deviation, and these must be the norm by which our views are to be judged.

Though difficult to understand and sometimes even more difficult to obey, God's Word addresses itself to the question of a believer's fellowship with another believer who persists in disobedience and specific sins. The Corinthian Christians were told bluntly to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" in their assembly who was guilty of gross sin and who refused to confess it (1 Cor. 5:13). The "wicked person" is described as one who is called a brother and is guilty of fornication, covetousness and drunkenness, among other things (1 Cor. 5:9-11). Again to the saints at Thessalonica the Apostle wrote definitely: "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6).

Here the issue was doctrinal. Professed believers seem to be in view in Paul's words to the Christians at Rome: "Mark them who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). The Apostle insisted that his inspired messages concerning the Lord Jesus Christ allowed for no deviation. Christ is crucial to Christianity; in fact, without the Christ of Scripture Christianity does not exist.

6A. THE PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL SEPARATION:

1b. The importance of separation from error and fighting for the truth:

Jude 3 "Contend for the faith"

2 Tim. 1:13 "Hold fast to the form of sound doctrine"

Col. 1:23 "continue in the faith"

1 Cor. 15:58 Abound in the "work of the Lord"

2b. The imperative for separation:

Commands of Scripture to separate are not completely obeyed until the believer exhibits humility and love. Right after Paul's exhortation against false doctrine he said, "Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5).

Humility needs to characterize those who seek to restore one, "overtaken in the fault" whatever that doctrinal or moral fault might be (Gal. 6:1).

A bitter and harsh attitude, the prideful and holier-than-thou spirit are wrong. But just because these attitudes are sometimes associated with some who practice separation does not make the doctrine of separation unbiblical. What is needed desperately in our day is an obedient spirit to the Word of God, a commitment to His truth, and a balanced ministry which has a concern for the lost and a concern for the truth. Ignoring separation is ignoring Scripture. May God grant us a balanced ministry.



# **THEOLOGICAL THIEVERY**

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



**Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.**

## THEOLOGICAL THIEVERY

INTRODUCTION .....	1
I. THE THEFT OF THE BELIEVER'S HOPE .....	1
A. The significance of the theft .....	1
B. The seriousness of the theft .....	2
1. The prediction of the battle .....	2
2. The nature of the battle .....	3
3. The focus of the battle .....	3
II. THE THIEVES OF THE BELIEVER'S HOPE .....	4
A. The subversives .....	4
1. George Eldon Ladd .....	4
2. Robert H. Gundry .....	4
3. Arthur D. Katterjohn .....	4
4. Bill Bright .....	4
5. Billy Graham .....	5
6. Marv Rosenthal .....	5
B. The subtlety of the thieves .....	6
1. The origin of the error .....	6
2. The refutation of the error .....	7
III. THE THRUST OF THE BELIEVER'S HOPE .....	7
A. The support for the believer's hope .....	7
1. The return to the Father's house: John 14:1-7 .....	7
2. The reason for the Christian's comfort: I Thess. 4:13-18 .....	8
3. The revelation of a concealed truth: I Cor. 15:51-53 .....	8
4. The removal before the Tribulation: Rev. 3:10 .....	9
B. The stand for the believer's hope .....	10
1. The thrust of the Pauline warnings in the Thessalonian Epistles .....	10
2. The truth of the Lord's coming in the Thessalonian Epistles .....	11

# ***THEOLOGICAL THIEVERY***

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

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-tribulation 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-tribulation 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-tribulational 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 Premillennial 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 accomplish 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 1 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).

Taking this promise at face value, one can certainly conclude that Christ has promised His Church deliverance from the time of tribulation by prior removal to the Father's house. Since there are no intervening events before this can occur, the rapture can be said to be at any moment as far as the believer is concerned. The views of the post-tribulational, mid-tribulational, and pre-wrath rapturists completely destroy the idea of imminency and watchfulness. Only the pretribulational rapture position retains both the any-moment aspect and the eager expectancy emphasis so prominent in the New Testament. The Lord may return today!

#### B. The stand for the believer's hope

How important is the belief in the any-moment return of Christ? Should the pretribulational return of Jesus Christ ever be made a test of fellowship? The Bible is clearer on this point than even most pre-tribulationists would admit. Should pre-tribulationism be made a test of fellowship? Two significant passages in

1 Thess. 3 have a bearing on this question:

v. 6: Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

v. 14: And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

Most forcefully, Paul commands separation from those who do not follow the doctrines that he taught them in person and by this epistle. What were the main problems that perplexed the believers at Thessalonica? What is the main doctrinal content of 1 and 2 Thessalonians? It is obvious that the main thrust of both of the Thessalonian Epistles is the return of the Lord in its twofold aspect: the rapture at which Christ returns **for** His saints, and the revelation at which He appears **with** His saints. Each chapter in 1 and 2 Thessalonians mentions the return of the Lord.

It is described as:

- \*\* a deliverance from wrath...1 Thess. 1:10
- \*\* an incentive to holiness...1 Thess. 3:13
- \*\* a hope of salvation...1 Thess. 5: 8-9
- \*\* an encouragement for steadfastness...2 Thess. 2:1
- \*\* a crown of rejoicing...1 Thess. 2:19
- \*\* the rapture of the Church...1 Thess. 5: 8-9
- \*\* a rest for the godly...2 Thess. 2:1

\*\* a cause for patience...2 Thess. 3:5

Paul insists that believers separate from those who are incorrect in their view of the return of Christ. Three times he assures believers that they are not appointed to the wrath which will come upon the entire earth (1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 5:9; Rom. 5:9). He calls this truth of the rapture a comforting hope (1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11). A post-tribulation return is not a cause for comfort and confidence but for concern and consternation. But if the Bible taught post-tribulationism, we would believe it. Our view is not based on an escapist mentality. Since the Bridegroom promises to deliver His Bride before the Tribulation, we gratefully believe His promise. The promise constitutes the greatest hope the Lord left with His own. What the resurrection of Christ is for the foundation of the Christian faith, the rapture of the Church is for the fulfillment of the Christian faith. One is the crucial cornerstone for correct doctrine, the other for correct decorum. Because of the centrality of this truth, we are commanded to separate from every brother who errs on this doctrine. We do not quibble with anyone's interpretation of the identity of the two witnesses or twenty-four elders in the Revelation, but we do question the doctrinal orthodoxy of those who deny the any-moment, pretribulation return of Christ.

For almost two thousand years now the Church has received comfort and courage from Christ's promise to return for His Bride, to rapture her and rejoice with her at the wedding. No one can rob the Church of this hope. But thieves and robbers have penetrated the sheepfold in an attempt to steal that which is the believer's fondest hope. It is a biblical hope derived not from superstition or sentimentality, but from Scripture. Let us declare it and defend it. It is that truth which is presently under attack, therefore we will contend for it. It was Martin Luther who put our obligation ever so well:

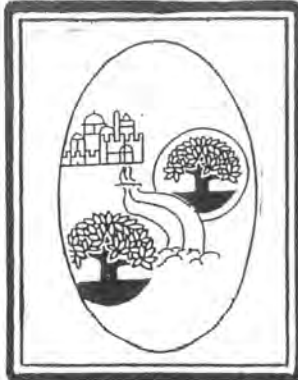
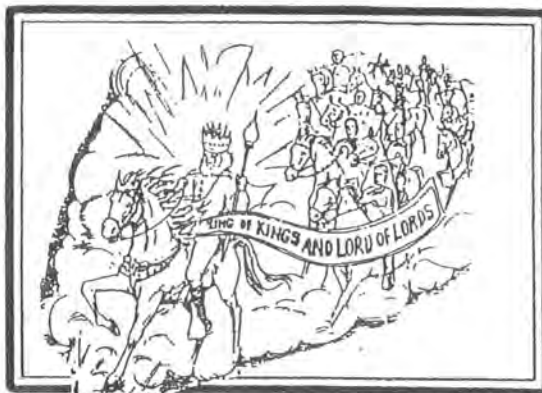
If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battle front besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

---

The above monograph is an updating and expansion of an article with the same title by this author, published in the October and the November 1977 issues of the *Baptist Bulletin*.



# Present Trends and Prophetic Truths



**Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.**  
5907 Meredith Drive Des Moines, IA 50322  
(800) 247-3456 Mkober@RDFilms.com





## THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES: Present trends and prophetic truth

It appears that at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are surrounded by numerous signs of the times. Devastation, earthquakes, deadly tsunamis, destructive hurricanes and dreadful terrorism prompt many believers to question whether we live in the last days. Discerning students of prophecy realize that between now and the rapture, when Christ returns for Church Age believers and takes them to the Father's House (John 14:1-4), no specific prophecy needs to be fulfilled. The rapture could occur at any moment. However, as one observes the natural catastrophes, religious alignments and political upheavals in the world today, it becomes apparent that events and conditions, predicted for the seven-year tribulation following the rapture, already cast their long shadow today.

While dedicated disciples are interested in understanding the significance of the signs of the times, a large segment of Christendom, like Judaism at the time of Christ, is totally oblivious to the prophetic significance of current events.

### 1A. A Callous Indifference to the Signs of the Times:

#### 1b. The nature of the signs of the times:

Students of the prophetic word use the term "signs of the times" for extraordinary natural or world events pointing to the fulfillment of prophecy, either presently or in the near future.

#### 2b. The neglect of the signs of the times:

##### 1c. The neglect at Christ's first coming:

##### 1d. The disparagers of the Savior:

In Matthew 16:1-4, the Jews of Christ's day displayed their indifference and ignorance of the signs of the times related to Christ's first coming.

Mt. 16:1-4 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, [It will be] fair weather: for the sky is red. 3 And in the morning, [It will be] foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O [ye] hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not [discern] the signs of the times? 4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded an irrefutable sign from the Savior that He was their promised Messiah. Christ



refused to grant their request (except for pointing at His future resurrection) because they were literally surrounded by ever more precise signs.

The religious leaders were steeped in the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament. They knew that Christ would be of the human race (Gen. 3:15), of the nation of Israel (Gen. 22:18), of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), of the family of David (2 Sam. 7:12-16), born of a virgin (Is. 7:14). They also could have calculated the time of His sacrificial death (Dan. 9:25-26). The interrogation of Matthew 16 took place in A.D. 32, the very year for which Daniel predicted that the Messiah would be cut off.

Micah 5:2 predicted the place of His birth, Bethlehem of Judea. When Herod consulted the chief priests and scribes during the visit of the wise men, they correctly pointed to Bethlehem as the birthplace of the King of the Jews (Mt. 2:4-6).

Their incredible indifference is seen in that not one of these religious leaders traveled four miles south to Bethlehem to check out the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy and the magi's premonition.

The spiritual leaders of Israel refused to examine the account of Christ's birth and rejected the evidence of Messiah's presence.

#### 2d. The disciples of the Savior:

When Christ responded to the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16, He was indirectly indicating that His own disciples should be alert to the signs of the times and thus anticipate the suffering of the Savior, a needful admonition as seen by Peter's incredulous response to Christ's announcement of His impending death (Mt. 16:21-23).



As mentioned, the religious leaders viewed the signs of the times with indifference and ignorance. The disciples, no less, evidenced infidelity and ignorance. One of the saddest commentaries on their unbelief is given by Luke. As the Lord and the disciples left Caesarea Philippi (Mt. 16) on their way to Jerusalem, the Savior reiterated, "The Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men" (Luke 9:44). But the disciples (a) did not understand His words; (b) it was

hidden from them; (c) they did not perceive the meaning of His words; and (d) no one asked Him to explain (Lk. 9:45).

2c. The neglect today:

As the signs of the times were ignored by en large at Christ's first coming, so various religious groups neglect the study of prophecy; and do not display any alertness to the signs of the times and anticipation of the rapture.

- 1d. The liberals discourage the study of prophecy. Symptomatic for the sentiment of liberals are the comments of Rev. H. C. Read, pastor of New York's Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. Some years ago he spoke at the First United Methodist Church in Des Moines, Iowa.

Here are his comments about the Bible and prophecy:

[The Bible] is a collection of ancient religious documents. . . through which the Word of God comes to us. . . I believe in the Second Coming, but I cannot possibly know when or how. I believe the end of the world is in the hands of God, and the end is not chaos, it is Christ. In the apocalyptic age we live in, the mainline churches should be offering hope, and not in some crude and selfish way (*The Des Moines Register*, April 16, 1983, p. 9A).

In a cavalier manner, Read dismisses the possibility of specific prophecies and labels a detailed study of the Word as "crude and selfish."

- 2d. The Amillennarians deny a future hope:

That branch of Christendom which denies a visible, physical 1000-year reign of Christ on earth after the tribulation, as clearly taught in Revelation 20, postulate that when Christ comes back, the dead are raised. They and the living are judged, unbelievers consigned to hell, and believers are welcomed to heaven. At that time eternity will commence. There is no hope for a sin-cursed earth being healed from the result of Adam's sin through the presence of the Savior, who will rule righteously from the throne of David in Jerusalem over the earth.



In fact, one branch of amillennialism, known as the preterists, insist that the book of the Revelation was written before A.D. 70 and all of the predictions of Revelation 4-19, usually associated with the tribulation period, were fulfilled with the destruction of the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70.

Gary DeMar, one of the most vocal spokesmen for this aberrant view, attacks the dispensational pretribulational view held dear by millions of fundamentalists and evangelicals in his books with such titles as *Last Day Madness* (1990) and *End Time Delusion* (1992).

- 3d. The Postmillenarians dismiss prophecy as having no present relevance:

Their belief that the world is getting better and better every day in every way anticipates a period of economic prosperity or evangelization of the world, preparing the way for the eventual return of Christ. Lorraine Boettner, well-known Reformed theologian, wrote of the eventual Christianizing of the world in his standard volume, *The Millennium*. This writer questioned Dr. Boettner during his annual visits with him, to see whether he still clung to his overly optimistic view of the Christianizing of the world. Dr. Boettner admitted that while progress seemed slow, given another 10,000 to 20,000 years, Christ would come back to a world where mankind would be ready to accept Him. That which appeared to most believers as signs of the times, seemed to him but aberrations in a steady progress toward the salvation of mankind.

- 4d. Some Evangelicals deplore the controversy surrounding end-time events.

They shy away from prophetic teaching because of the multiplicity of opinions concerning the details of prophecy. While there may be differences in interpretation concerning end-time events, the serious Bible student will make every effort to glean prophetic truths which give him help and hope in these tumultuous times.

- 2A. The Contemporary Increase of the Signs of the Times:

Dedicated students of Scripture see a dramatic increase in prophetic portents in recent times. Several positive statements can be made about the future.

## 1b. Suppositions concerning the future:

1c. Prophecy taken literally makes it possible for believers to discern a general outline of things to come.

2c. A normal interpretation of prophecy leads to a pretribulational and premillennial return of Christ.

3c. The rapture precedes the tribulation:

Proof texts for a pretribulational rapture can be categorized under two headings:

1d. Exemption from the wrath to come:

Three times the Holy Spirit reveals through the Apostle Paul that the believer is not appointed unto the wrath of the tribulation (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

2d. Expectation of the any-moment return of the Savior  
e.g. (Phil. 3:20; Tit. 2:13).

4c. The believer looks for the Savior rather than for signs.

5c. No prophecy needs to be fulfilled before the rapture can occur.

6c. The date of the rapture is fixed in God's eternal counsel.

7c. Future events predicted for the time after the rapture cast their shadow before the rapture.

## 2b. Portents of the future:

A portent is something of prophetic significance, foreshadowing coming events.

1c. Illustrative events:

Christ predicted for the time after the rapture "wars and rumors of wars. . . famines, and pestilence and earthquakes in divers places" (Mt. 24:6-7). Certainly similar political upheavals and natural calamities exist in the world today, but those predicted in the tribulation are unprecedented in severity. For example, one-fourth of the world will be slain as a result of the destruction occasioned by the pale horse (Rev. 6:7) through wars, hunger, pestilence and wild beasts. Similarly, volcanic eruptions today are nothing

JUDGMENT  
SEAT  
OF CHRIST



RAPTURE FOR US

CHURCH

compared to the fiery mountain which will be cast into the sea and kill a third part of the individuals of the sea.

Revelation 8:8b-9 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

2c. Imagined events:

It is ever a temptation to read current events into biblical texts. Nahum's "chariots with flaming torches" (2:3) are hardly gasoline-powered automobiles. Nor is modern-day transoceanic travel and scientific knowledge predicted by the angel to Daniel in Daniel 12:4.

Here is the angel's message:

Daniel 12:4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

The increase in knowledge is related to the context of the passage, namely, the "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to the same time." The knowledge of prophecy, especially related to the tribulation, would increase through the book of the Revelation. The "running to and fro," so frequently misinterpreted, is actually a Hebrew figure of speech, meaning "many shall peruse the content of a book," namely, the book of the Revelation.

The key word in Daniel 12:4 is שׁוּרָה (shut) described by Gesenius as a metaphor, "to run through a book, i.e. to examine thoroughly" (*Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament Scriptures*, 1867, 810).

3c. Incipient events:



Serious students of prophecy who are alert observers of the contemporary geo-political developments are impressed by the multiplication of the signs of the times. Events in society, religion and politics predicted for the tribulation appear to be in their developing stages already now. Never before in the history of the Christian church have there been so many prophetic portents. The breath-taking convergence of the signs of the times cannot help but motivate believers to anticipate the rapture which will precede the culmination of the political and religious alignments. What are some of those arresting developments discernable now which point beyond the rapture to the tribulation?

**1d.** The establishment of the State of Israel:



On May 14, 1948, the modern state of Israel was established, the miraculous revival of a country that had lost its independence through the Babylon conquest in 586 B.C. Prophetically, there is no need for Israel to be back in the land until after the rapture when Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel, an event which commences the seven-year tribulation period (Dan. 9:27). In his vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, the prophet Ezekiel reports God's prediction of a return of Israel to the land in the future:

Ezekiel 37:11-12 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. 12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

The fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy awaits further fulfillment and involves every single Jew on earth, as promised in Ezekiel 39:28:

Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which cause them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.

The fact that there is a partial return taking place before the rapture, leading to the establishment of the state of Israel, is of momentous significance.

**2d.** The existence of the European Union:



During the first half of the tribulation, the ancient Roman Empire will be revived in the form of a ten nation confederacy under Antichrist, the Roman ruler (Dan. 7:24). The ten toes on the spectacular image in Daniel 2, as well as the ten horns of the fourth and fearsome beast in Daniel 7, point to the final stage of the world's empires involving the empire's Roman rule emperor.

Since the early 1950's, an economic union of European nations has taken place. With the admission of Greece, the European Common Market included ten nations. Since then, other nations have joined what has evolved some years ago into a political entity, the European Union (EU). In the summer of 2005, ten other nations joined this political

entity, now numbering 25 nations, all situated generally within the borders of the old Roman Empire. Elections are held every four years to select delegates to the governing body of the EU, the European Parliament (EP), with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium and Strassbourg, France. The only thing lacking in this unwieldy conglomerate of nations is a strong political leader.

When on January 1, 2001, twelve nations adopted the new and common currency, the Euro, the news media heralded this event as **the** major step toward ultimate political union. The stage in Europe is set for a strong leader to step in and exert his dictatorial powers over the extraordinary colossus of the EU. Of course, all that is required for the emergence of the revived Roman Empire is the subjugation of ten independent European nations by a Roman ruler.

In 2005, the world witnessed a dress rehearsal for such a scenario when Silvio Berlusconi, the prime minister of Italy and Italy's richest citizen, became president of the EU for six months. It is not difficult to imagine that the EU eventually will play a central part in a resuscitated Roman Empire.

**3d.** The emergence of the ecumenical movement:

For the first three and a half years of the tribulation, Antichrist will tolerate a false religious system, pictured as a harlot in Revelation 17 and centered in Rome. The one-world church will apparently be comprised of Roman Catholics, apostate Protestants and non-Christian religions.



Such a religious union had its beginning with the formation of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. The WCC is presently comprised of 340 denominations in 120 countries, boasting a combined membership of 400 million. The theological spectrum of this religious body is so broad, it encompasses every form of heresy and apostasy. Especially significant are its efforts to unite all of the world's religions.

The late pontiff, John Paul II, has spearheaded Roman Catholic overtures toward pagan religions by sponsoring in 2002 the Assisi interfaith prayer meeting with representatives of virtually every pagan religion, including the Dalai Lama, Shintoists, Confucians and witch doctors. In an especially memorable visit to Benin, West Africa, the



pontiff told the leaders of the voodoo religion, which began in central Benin, in Parakou, that Catholicism and their religion shared many things, such as a deep respect for one's ancestors.

#### 4d. The exertion of Russia:

The Propet Ezekiel predicts a Russian invasion of Israel in the battle of Gog and Magog (Ez. 38-39), which we believe will take place in the middle of the tribulation. It is said to occur at a time when Israel has been regathered from the nations and lives in peace in settlements without walls. Only one time in Israel's future will these conditions exist prior to the Second Advent, and that is during Antichrist's protection of Israel, spanning the first half of the tribulation.



Ezekiel foretells a decimation of the invaders through eight distinct divine judgments. The reasons for the invasion are spelled out in Ez. 38:10-12 and involve Russia's hatred for Israel, a desire for Israel's riches, and an effort to gain a strategic position in that area of the world.

Interestingly, since Israel became a nation in 1948 (and Russia a world power in 1949), the Arabs have launched five wars against this fledgling nation to exterminate it. In each case, the Russians have supplied arms and military advisors to Israel's enemies.

While Russia does not seem to be a strong military power at present, the situation could change very suddenly and drastically. Russia's head of state is Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer. *The Omega Letter Intelligence Digest* reports that after being elected President in March 2000, Putin set about the undoing of the democratic reforms of the past several decades, by stacking the Kremlin with former KGB colleagues—by March 2000, 17 of the top 24 Kremlin jobs were filled by former KGB Secret Police officers (*The Omega Letter Intelligence Digest*, Line 41, Issue 5, Feb. 5, 2005).

The reemergence of the "undead" hardliners is rapidly transforming Russia into a dictatorship. The Austrian news magazine *Profil* quotes Vladimir Ryshkov, a member of the Russian parliament, or Duma, as saying that Russia is "a cemetery of lost freedoms" ("*Russland: Friedhof der verlorenen Freiheiten*," *Profil*, 04/05). Ryshkov adds that

public criticism of Putin is equivalent to political suicide. A free mass media in Russia is a thing of the past.

The Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal in their index of economic freedoms moved Russia to place 124 out of 161, a descent of 10 positions in one year. What is more, the organization Reporters Without Borders places Russia's freedom of the press in the position of 138 out of 167. The prestigious German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, writes incisively that Russia is an ambivalent nation, "gravitating between imperialistic euphoria and national inferiority complexes." Internally, the Russian leaders are restoring patriotism based on a Soviet-type military build-up. Externally, the hardliners wish to dupe the world by presenting a softer image (*Der Spiegel*, 1/2006, January 5, 2006, "Russland: Bär mit Balalaika," 86-88, translated by this writer).

International experts on Russia sound warnings. In an extensive article in the *International Herald Tribune*, Kremlinologists warn of Russia's "slide into authoritarianism . . . Russia is emerging from a 20-year cycle of decay and is rebuilding a strong central state" (Monday, April 10, 2006, Steven R. Weisman).

Adding to the political convulsions is the fact, revealed by *National Review*, that "Russia is a dying country—literally: more abortions than live births, lesser male life expectancy than Bangladesh" (Mark Steyn, "Future Shock," *National Review*, Vol. 57 No. 18, Oct. 10, 2005, 60).

These unsettling statistics are well-known to the hardliners. Who knows what convulsions will yet rock modern Russia and what secret plans for a foreign adventure the Kremlin is harboring to deflect from its internal problems? A Russian invasion of the oil rich Middle East is not difficult to imagine; in fact, it is predicted by Russian leaders

Former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev made no secret of Russia's goals: "Our aim is to gain control of the two great treasure houses on which the West depends—the energy treasure house of the Persian Gulf and the mineral treasure house of central and southern Africa" (*American Legion Magazine*, "Quote of the Month," Aug 9, 1987, Vol. 123 No. 2).

A Russian invasion of the Near East is predicted for the tribulation. Such an invasion has been contemplated ever since Tsarist Russia, long before there were Communists. The attack on Israel almost became reality when Russia began to move its troops to the south in the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Only an urgent call on the red telephone by President Richard M. Nixon to the Kremlin leaders prevented the Russian armies' advance toward Israel.

The alert believer who observes the present posturing of Russia and knows of prophetic predictions for Russia is justified in considering the menacing Russian bear as a sign of the times.

5d. The endeavors of the UNO:



The United Nations Organization, established in San Francisco in 1945, assumes the role of a supra-national government. The world has witnessed its greed for power, but also its dereliction of duty, such as the liberation of Iraq, failing to hold Saddam Hussein responsible for the failure to abide by 14 binding UNO resolutions.

The UNO makes no secret of its aim to establish a one-world government. Prophetically, this will take place after the rapture. As mentioned above, during the first three and one-half years of the tribulation, Antichrist will revive the ancient Roman empire by exerting his rule over ten nation competitors (see Dan. 7:24). For the last half of the tribulation, he is absolute world ruler, empowered by Satan, demanding everybody's political allegiance and religious worship (Rev. 13:1-10).



**666**

In effect, the UNO will see its dream fulfilled in the autocratic rule of the Pseudo-Christ.

Signs of the times abound. The establishment of the State of Israel, the existence of a United States of Europe, the emergence of a one-world church, the efforts of Russia in the Near East and the endeavors of the UNO for world rule are pointing to the culmination of these trends in the tribulation. Interestingly, all these prophetic portents emerged at virtually the same time in the 1940's. It has been noted previously that there has never been a time when so many world trends with prophetic significance came together. Believers should be greatly encouraged by these

developments as they anticipate the rapture which precedes the culmination of these trends.

After considering the callous indifference to the signs of the times and the contemporary increase in the signs of the times, it is fitting to comment on the judicious interpretation of the signs of the times.

### 3A. A Careful Interpretation of the Signs of the Times:

#### 1b. Avoid newspaper exegesis:

As tempting as it is, the serious student of prophecy will avoid identifying present developments as fulfillment of prophecy. With some well-intentioned believers, reports of a locust plague across North Africa suggest the judgments of the tribulation period. When buses and taxis in Israel have the prefix 666 on their license plates, connections are made by some to Antichrist. The use of bar codes in commerce and implanted information chips are related to the mark of the beast. Large flocks of migratory birds which visit Israel each year are identified by some as the vultures predicted in Ezekiel 39 and Revelation 19.



It is well to remember that no prophecy is being fulfilled today. Alarming developments simply point beyond the rapture when a Christ-rejecting world will experience long-delayed and well-deserved punishments. The redeemed rejoice in the prospect of the rapture and the subsequent reunion with the Lord.

#### 2b. Abandon date setting:

Believers who set dates for end-time events lose credibility and bring reproach on themselves as false prophets. Great harm has been done to the serious study of prophecy by such date-setters as Edgar Whisenant and his booklet "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 88" and Harold Camping's dogmatic book, 1994.

Jack Van Impe's 1996 book, *2001. On the Edge of Eternity*, predicts that the millennium will begin shortly after the year 2000. His videotape, "2001: Countdown to Eternity," is advertised with the following words, "Discover for yourself how our Millennial Kingdom is predicted to begin shortly after A.D. 2000." On his telecast on Sunday, August 12, 1997, he opined that "the apocalyptic times started in 1948 and will find culmination somewhere around 2001, probably no later than 2014."

The informed interpreter of Scripture realizes that date setting is wrong. One would think that the date-setters would learn a lesson in humility from their disappointed predecessors or their own erroneous earlier prophecies.

In Acts 1:6-7 Christ leaves His disciples with the reminder that it is futile to guess and forbidden for them to know the times or seasons of His return and the subsequent establishment of the Kingdom.

3b. Adhere to what is revealed:

Sensationalism and speculation arouse interest, gain crowds and sell books and tapes. However, the careful student of prophecy will make every effort to stay within the bounds of Scripture.

Jack Van Impe asserted on his telecast of September 7, 1997, without any Scriptural support, that "The Bible predicts there will be a war with China anywhere between 2003 and 2006." He has taught that Russia will invade America by way of Canada and repeatedly has identified King Juan Carlos of Spain as the Antichrist.

Hal Lindsey, the best-selling author of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, though like Van Impe basically correct in his eschatology, is ever given to sensationalism. On the Fox News Network program, "Prophecies of the Millennium," which aired on July 30, 1997, Lindsey offered the following startling and strange prediction, namely, "The prophet [John] who wrote the book of the Revelation, says, 'I looked, I saw and heard.' A first-century man was propelled up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and he actually saw a war of technical marvel. . . an intercontinental ballistic missile warhead reentering the earth's atmosphere; poison water, radioactivity, every city on earth virtually destroyed."

Predictions about the future which are void of clear biblical support are useless and impossible. Salem Kirban, a life-long student of prophecy, wrote a book in 1966 entitled, *I Predict*. He clearly stated that his predictions are not to be considered as inspired but simply prognostications based on his understanding of the Scriptures and signs of the times. The predictions included a human head transplant for 1986 and the move of our nation's capital to New York City. Not a single one of his predictions has come to pass.

Mark Steyn, cited above, shows the impossibility of accurate predictions in the political realm:

We're not very good at projecting half-a-century out. In fact, we're not very good at projecting half-a-decade out. There weren't a lot of people in 1913 predicting that by 1918 the Russian, German, Austrian, and Turkish empires would all be gone. And there weren't many experts in 1987 predicting that by 1992 the Berlin Wall, the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet Union would all have collapsed.

*National Review*, October 10, 2005, Vol. 57, No. 18, 60.

The future is God possession.

4b. Accept literal interpretation:

Prophecy comprises an important part of the biblical canon. At the time of its writing, prophecy comprised about 25% of the Scriptures. Seventeen Old Testament books and one New Testament book are strictly prophetic. Half of the biblical prophecies have been fulfilled. Their fulfillments were literal. It is very reasonable to insist that unfulfilled prophecy will likewise find literal fulfillment. For example, 500 years before Christ, Zechariah predicted that Christ would enter into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech. 9:9). That is exactly how He made His triumphal entry (Mt. 21:4-7). Zechariah further predicted that Christ would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, the precise amount Judas received for his despicable deed.

Many of Zechariah's predictions still await future fulfillment. Christ would return physically, with the nail prints visible (Zech. 12:10). He would descend to the Mount of Olives after the tribulation (14:4).

5b. Anticipate a glorious future with the Savior:

Saints should live in eager expectancy of the rapture and eventually a 1,000-year reign with Christ on earth. As they anticipate the eternal future with the Savior, they are guided by certain chronological and prophetic considerations:

- 1c. The believer recognizes God as the God of eternity who is in sovereign control of history and not bound by a human calendar (Psalm 90:1,2; 31:15)

God is not thwarted by human activity nor coaxed by unbiblical predictions.

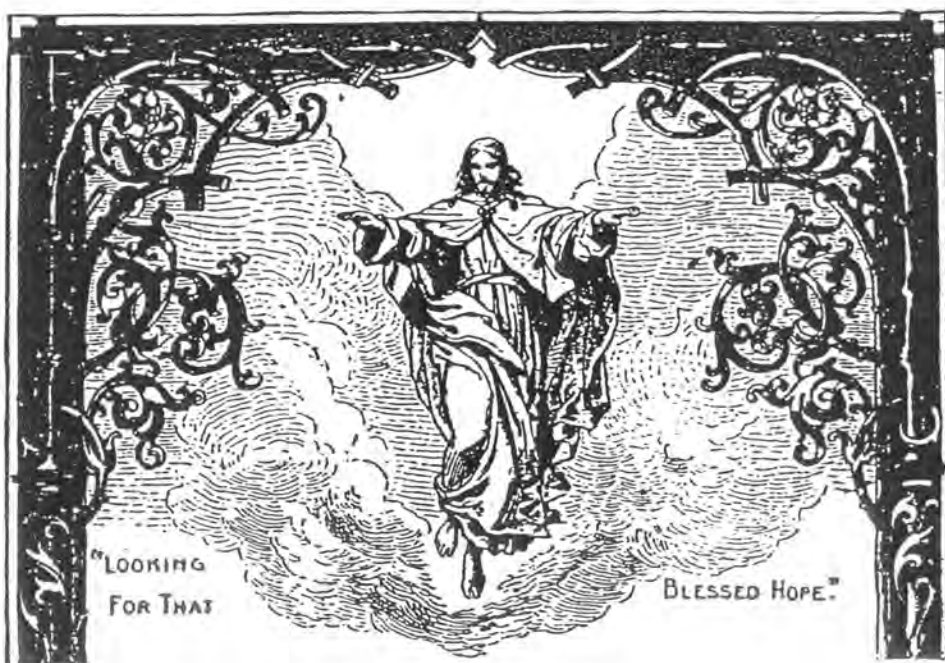
- 2c. The believer refuses to be guided by neither an anticipation of the terrifying apocalypse nor technological advance, but by the triumphant appearance of the Bridegroom to gather the world's believers to glory before the judgments of the tribulation (Titus 2:12; 1 Thess. 4:18; 5:9).

- 3c. The believer realizes that each additional day on this earth brings him one day closer to the rapture. This hope should produce personal purity (1 John 3:3) and ethical productivity (Eph. 5:16).

- 4c. The believer remembers that the Bridegroom is completing an eternal home for His own in heaven (John 14:1-4) and is consummating the Church on earth (2 Peter 3:9), not willing that



any of His own should perish. When the last building block is added to the city in heaven and the last believer is added to the Church on earth, the Savior will return. And that might be this very day.



## The Rapture: The Believer's Greatest *Hope*

### *A Comforting Hope*

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

I Thessalonians 4:18

### *A Blessed Hope*

"Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing . . ."

Titus 2:13

### *A Purifying Hope*

"An every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

I John 3:3

### *A Sure Hope*

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed."

II Peter 1:19

# Major Movements as Prophetic Portents

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES:

### CELEBRATION

1. The Establishment of the State of Israel
2. The Emergence of a One-World Church
3. The Existence of the European Union
4. The Efforts of Russia
5. The Endeavors of the UNO

RAPTURE  
FOR US

RETURN

WITH US



Russia



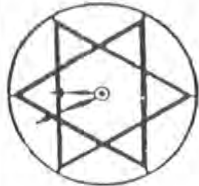
European Union

Covenant by Antichrist Dan. 9:27

THE RETURN OF THE JEWS  
THE REVELATION OF ANTICHRIST

CHURCH

PREPARATION



Israel

TRIBULATION

PROTECTION



Ecumenical Movement

PERSECUTION



United Nations Organization

MILLENNIUM

ETERNITY

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.



## ETERNAL SECURITY: *A Definite Doctrine or a Dreadful Delusion?*



### 1A. THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

Can a true believer ever lose his salvation by either sinning or ceasing to believe or in any other way?

### 2A. THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM:

#### 1b. The teachings of Calvin:

John Calvin (1509-1564), the Swiss Reformer, emphasized in his teachings the sovereignty of God. His followers set up the so-called 5 points of Calvinism or T-U-L-I-P:

1. Total Depravity
2. Unconditional Election
3. Limited Atonement
4. Irresistible Grace
5. Perseverance of the Saints



In his famous Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536) he systematized biblical truth and taught forcefully the perseverance of the saints. The Westminster Confession of Faith expresses clearly the Calvinistic viewpoint: "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved" (Chapter XVII, Section 1).

#### 2b. The teachings of Arminius:

James Arminius (1560-1609) was trained in strict Reformed theology, but he weakened in his position while a professor at the University of Leiden in Holland. His system, known as Arminianism, taught that man is not totally depraved, that he cooperates with God in salvation and that a believer may lose his salvation. Arminius admitted: "I never taught that a true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith and perish; yet I will not conceal that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect" (Works, I:254).

### 3A. THE CONTEMPORARY DENIALS:

#### 1b. The Roman Catholic position:

Mortal sin removes man from grace. Salvation depends on continued obedience.

#### 2b. The Lutheran position:

Salvation is contingent upon man's continued activity of faith.

3b. The Arminian position:

Salvation depends on man's will to believe and his good works.

4A. THE CRUCIAL DISTINCTION:

1b. Assurance:

Assurance is what man knows.

Every believer is saved, but not everyone is sure.

2b. Security:

Security is based upon what God does.

To put it differently:

- - security is based on the work of God: the blood of Christ.

- - assurity is based on the word of God: belief in Christ.

The Council of Trent (1546) declared that "The believer's assurance of pardon for his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence."

Cardinal Bellamy called assurance "a prime error of the heretics."

3b. Scriptures:

1c. Job knew he was saved:

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:" (Job 19:25-26)

2c. John said we could be sure of our salvation:

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (I John 5:13)

5A. THE BIBLICAL PROOF:

Abundant proof may be adduced from the Scriptures for eternal security. We will be selective for the sake of time and space. We will high light two works by each member of the Trinity which guarantee our salvation.

1b. The work of God the Father:

1c. The purpose of the Father:

It is God's purpose to glorify those whom He has made the special objects of His favor.

1d. The span of salvation:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the

# Shall NEVER Perish

firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8:28-30)

God has foreknown, predestinated, called, justified and glorified every believer. If one of those is true of the believer, all are true in this unbreakable chain. The words are in the past tense, guaranteeing that these works are as good as accomplished.

## 2d. The strength of security:

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:31-39)

1e. There is no chance that God is against us: v. 31.

2e. There is no charge because God is the justifier: vs. 33-34.

3e. There is no change in God's love: vs. 35-39.

## 2c. The power of the Father:

While "the perseverance of the saints" emphasizes man's part, it is actually God who perseveres. His infinite power keeps the believers secure.

### 1d. The power:

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5)

### 2d. The promise:

Even if the time should come in a Christian's life that he can no longer believe, God's promise is clear.

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." (2 Tim. 2:13)

Other passages speak equally forcefully about God's keeping power. Jude says that "he is able to keep you from falling." (v. 24) and Matthew 18:14 teaches that God is not willing that even one should perish. The syllogism would be thus:

God is able to keep us (Jude 24).  
God wants to keep us (Matt. 18:14).  
Therefore God will keep us (Perry Lassiter, Once Saved, . . .  
Always Saved, p. 34).

2b. The work of Christ the Son:

1c. The promise of the Son:

Perhaps the strongest prooftext for eternal security is John 10:28-29:



"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Our Lord said that we are secure in His hand as well as in the Father's hand and that no one can remove the believer from the safe position. The "no one" would apply to the individual himself. An old, sweet Christian saint was asked whether she was not afraid that she might some day slip out of the Father's hand. "No," she replied, "because I am part of His hand."

2c. The prayer of the Son:

A two-fold aspect of Christ's prayer assures us of our salvation. Christ in his intercession prays in a preventive ministry (John 17) and in his advocacy prays in a curative ministry (1 John 2:1). Dr. Ryrle has well stated the case for the intercession of the Son:

"His prayer in chapter 17 illustrates the preventive aspect. There He prayed that we might be kept from the evil one (v. 15), that we would be sanctified (v. 17), that we would be united (v. 21), that we would be in heaven with Him (v. 24), and that we might behold His glory (v. 24). Because of His unceasing intercession for us He is able to save us completely and eternally (Heb. 7:25)." (Basic Theology, p. 331).

In verse 24, Christ prays that we would be with Him in heaven. In John 11:42 Christ assures us that his prayers are always heard by the Father. All prayer prayed in the will of God will be answered by the Father. The Son always prayed in the will of God, therefore, this prayer, that we will be with him forever in glory will surely be answered.

Christ secured our salvation by His provision on the cross. When He cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30) He meant His death paid for sin in full. All we can do is accept His salvation, but we cannot add to His salvation. But Christ also secured our salvation, as we have seen by His prayers. Hebrews 7:24-25 says:

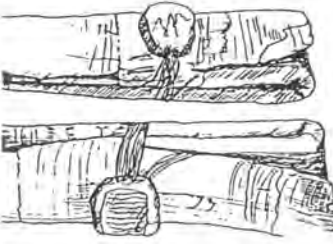
"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

As the unchanging and unchangeable Priest, Christ is praying for us. Therefore, He can save us to the uttermost--that is completely, totally, eternally!

3b. The work of the Holy Spirit:

Every believer has residing in him the Holy Spirit. Christ promised that He would abide with us forever (John 14:16). Two ministries of the Spirit especially relate to our eternal security, the earnest and the sealing of the Spirit.

1c. The sealing of the Spirit:

A hand is shown holding a scroll. The scroll is partially unrolled, and a circular seal is visible on the edge. The drawing is a simple line drawing with cross-hatching for shading.


"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. 1:13-14)

"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. 1:21-22)

Lewis Sperry Chafer, commenting on these two passages, observes:

"Nothing could be more final than this. The Spirit Himself is the seal. His blessed presence in every true child of God is the divine mark of ownership, purpose and destiny. The Spirit Who was sent to abide in us will not withdraw. He may be grieved, or quenched (resisted), but He abides. This He does as the divine guaranty that there shall be no failure in any purpose of God and the sealed one will reach his eternal glory and the eternal blessedness of 'the day of redemption.'" (Salvation, p. 125)

2c. The earnest (II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14)

A money bag with a dollar sign (\$) on it. The bag is tied at the top and has several coins or small pieces of money scattered around it. The entire illustration is enclosed in a decorative, scalloped border.

Well stresses Charles Ryrie the significance of the earnest in relation to the believer's security:

"The principal idea in the earnest is pledge. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart is the pledged guarantee on the part of God that he will receive all the promised future blessings of his salvation. The fact that God gives the earnest of the Spirit binds Him to complete fully the salvation which He has begun in the heart. Even in human affairs, once earnest money has been given, the purchaser is pledged to go through with a transaction. What a sure guarantee is the presence of the Spirit, God's earnest, that He will never fail any of His promises connected with our salvation!" (The Holy Spirit, p. 26)

6A. THE SINNING BELIEVER:

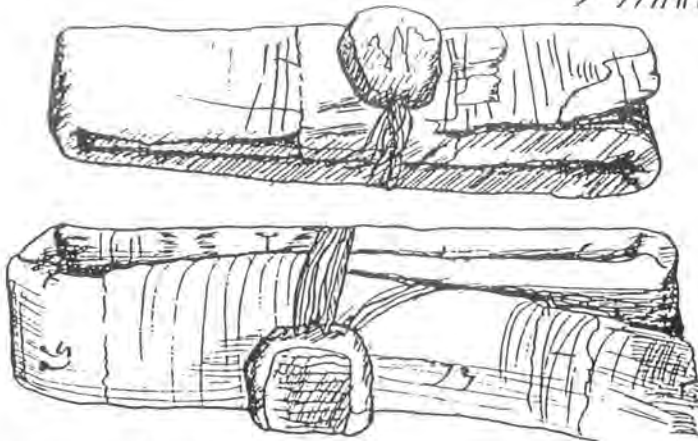
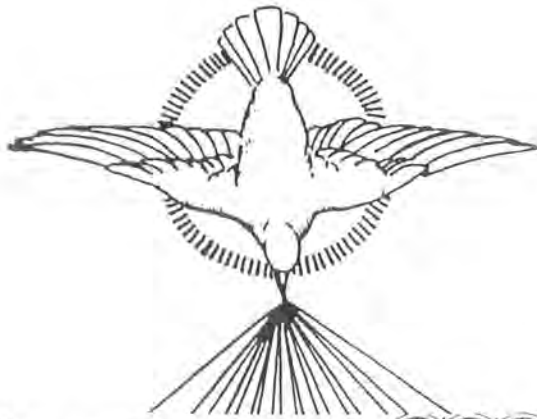
The Bible teaches eternal security, but sometimes a problem arises with this teaching. Some individuals get the impression that they can sin with impunity and immunity. The Word of God is clear that a believer will never lose his

salvation, but if he persists in sinning he will lose much nonetheless:

- 1b. He can lose fellowship (1 John 1).
- 2b. He can lose joy (Ps. 51:12).
- 3b. He can lose rewards (1 Cor. 3:11-12).
- 4b. He can lose his health (1 Cor. 11:30).
- 5b. He can lose his life (1 Cor. 11:30)

(G. Michael Cocoris, "The Doctrine of Eternal Security," Biblical Research Monthly, April/May 1982, p. 10).

A believer cannot lose his salvation but that is not an endorsement or an encouragement to sin. Sin will lose fellowship but not relationship, rewards but not redemption.



sealed papyri from the Jewish colony at Elephantine.



# SALVATION

FROM ETERNITY PAST  
TO ETERNITY FUTURE

Eph. 2:7

Glorification

Justification

Calling

Rom. 8:28-30

<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

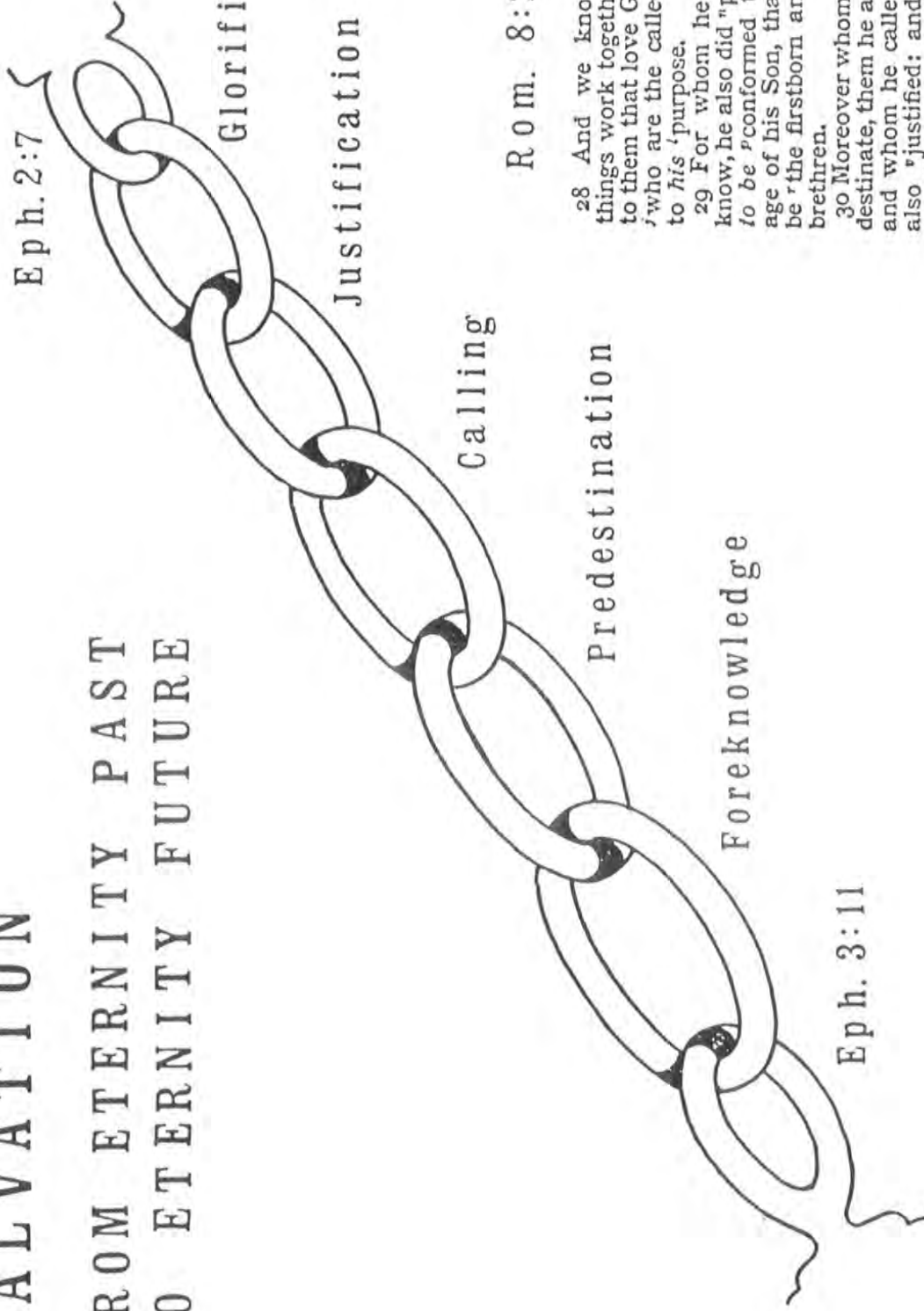
<sup>29</sup> For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

<sup>30</sup> Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Predestination




Foreknowledge

Eph. 3:11



# THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND ETERNAL SECURITY

(SIX SUPPORTS FOR THE SINNER'S SECURE SALVATION)

MEMBER OF	THE WORK	SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT
<p><b>THE FATHER</b></p> 	<p><b>THE FATHER'S PLAN</b></p> <p><b>THE FATHER'S POWER</b></p>	<p>"... called according to his promise. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate... Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. <b>Romans 8:28b-30</b></p> <p>Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <b>1 Peter 1:5</b></p>
<p><b>THE SON</b></p> 	<p><b>THE SON'S PRAYER</b></p> <p><b>THE SON'S PROMISE</b></p>	<p>Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. <b>John 17:24 (Rom. 8:34)</b></p> <p>And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. <b>John 10:28-29</b></p>
<p><b>THE HOLY SPIRIT</b></p> 	<p><b>THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT</b></p> <p><b>THE SEALING BY THE SPIRIT</b></p>	<p>"...ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. <b>Eph. 1;13b-14</b></p> <p>And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. <b>Eph. 4:30</b></p> <p>Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. <b>1 Cor. 1:22</b></p>



# INFANT SALVATION: *Sentimental Supposition or Biblical Basis?*

## 1A. Introduction to Infant Salvation:

There are four major positions held in Christendom concerning the question of the destiny of those who die in infancy.

1b. Infants who die in infancy without being baptized are excluded from heaven.

This is the general position of the Roman Catholic Church. Dead unbaptized infants were said to go to a place called Limbo, although in recent years Catholic theologians have questioned the existence such a place of relative torment.



2b. Infants who die in infancy unbaptized may or may not be suited for heaven.

A number of Lutheran theologians subscribe to this position.

3b. Infants who die in infancy are damned.

A handful of Calvinistic theologians espouse this position, while most Calvinists reject this extreme view. In fact, Loraine Boettner shows that only Calvinism provides the justification for infant salvation:

The doctrine of infant salvation finds a logical place in the Calvinistic system; for the redemption of the soul is thus infallibly determined irrespective of any faith, repentance, or good works, whether actual or foreseen. It does not, however, find a logical place in Arminianism or any other system. Furthermore, it would seem that a system such as Arminianism, which suspends salvation on a personal act of rational choice, would logically demand that those dying in infancy must either be given another period of probation after death, in order that their destiny may be fixed, or that they must be annihilated (Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 144-145).

4b. Infants who die in infancy are saved and enjoy the presence of Christ, the angels and saints in heaven.

[An excellent treatment of the subject is *Heaven for Those Who Can't Believe* by Robert P. Lightner (Regular Baptist Press); for an expansion of these four major views above, see Myron J. Houghton, "The Destiny of Those Who Die in Infancy," *Faith Pulpit*, May/June 1999.]


## 2A. The Importance of Infant Salvation:

1b. Its importance for the world:

Since the days of Adam and Eve, more people have died in infancy than adulthood. Were these dead infants saved?

One writer has well commented on the issue:





My conviction is that infants, the unborn, and those who throughout life suffer severe mental handicaps are saved, based partly on Luke 18:15-17. People were bringing babies (Gk. *brephe*, infant/baby) to Jesus, and He insisted on accepting them, "for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." This especially hits home when you consider the infant mortality rates, abortions, and miscarriages, compared to the percentage of believers in each generation. Children may, in fact, make up the majority of those who spend eternity with Christ. (That doesn't mean they'll still be babies in heaven; I believe we'll all be humans in their ideal state, whatever that looks like—1 John 3:2) (<http://faith.propadeutic.com/infants.html>, accessed 11/09/07).

2b. Its importance for the weeping:

The believer is enjoined to have compassion with those who grieve, and this certainly includes parents who are bereft of an infant. Is there biblical hope one can share with grieving parents?

Rom. 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

3b. Its importance for our witness:

It is incumbent upon believers to answer those who seek spiritual guidance. What Christian has not been asked about the biblical teaching on infant salvation? Can we give some helpful and comforting guidance to the many parents who lost an infant child?

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

3A. The Implications of Infant Salvation:

1b. Infant similarities with adults:

1c. All infants have a sin nature:

The inherited sin nature of the human parents puts the infant in the category of an unsaved individual.

Psalms 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

2c. All infants need grace:

Salvation is entirely based on the unmerited, illmerited and unmeritable favor of God.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

## 3c. All infants need God's election:

God chooses from the beginning individuals as the special objects of His favor and then assures their ultimate salvation (Eph 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13).

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

## 4c. All infants need redemption:

Living infants are not saved but, despite their apparent innocence, are children of Satan and thus stand under the wrath of God. They are, like adults, in desperate need of redemption.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

## CRADLE SONG.

Ah Jesu Christ, my Lord most dear,  
As Thou wast once an infant here,  
So give this little child, I pray,  
Thy grace and blessings day by day:  
Ah Jesu, Lord divine,  
Guard me this babe of mine!

## 2b. Infant differences from adults:

## 1c. Infants have not knowingly sinned:

All the wicked of all the ages are raised at the Great White Throne judgment. Twice it is stated that they are judged according to their works (Rev. 20:11-15). Infants have not knowingly committed sins.

## 2c. Infants have not rejected Christ:

Men are condemned for rejecting Christ. Since His substitutionary death, the problem is no longer the **SIN** question but the **SON** question (2 Thess. 1:8-9). Infants are incapable of rejecting Christ.

## 3c. Infants do not need to believe:

One is inclined to agree with M'Clintock and Strong: "the mere want of *faith* is not *damnable*, but unbelief only, or the guilty destitution of faith" ("Infant Salvation," *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, IV, 578, italics in the original).

Unlike the scholastics who posited faith in infants, infants cannot possess faith, which presupposes knowledge and then an acting on understanding. Infants can neither be characterized by faith nor disbelief.

Collins has well-stated the issue:



It is clear "that all elect children shall be saved by God's mysterious working in their hearts although they are incapable of the response of faith. They have no claim, in themselves, to salvation, but are, as in the case of saved adults, subjects of the sovereign election of grace, and the purchase of the redeeming blood of Christ" (G. M. M. Collins, "Infant Salvation," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 560).



Lewis Sperry Chafer has summarized the conviction of most conservative Bible scholars:

Infants are saved in and through the death of Christ for them, that Christ's sacrifice provided righteous freedom on God's part to save all for whom Christ died and that, since He died for all mankind, God is free to save whom He will and upon such terms as He may elect to impose. As infants cannot possibly respond to the terms of faith imposed upon the adult portion of the race, God may and does act directly in behalf of those who die in infancy. No unrighteousness can be found in this outworking of God's purpose and will (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 7, 197).

#### 4A. The Inferences from Scripture:

There are five major lines of argument that may be used to demonstrate that those who die in infancy are saved:

##### 1b. The comprehensiveness of the atonement:

Christ died for all, not simply for the elect: He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9) including infants. There are two classic passages, one from the New Testament, the other from the Old Testament, that demonstrate clearly that Christ died for everyone.



**2 Peter 2:1** But there were **false prophets** also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying **the Lord that bought them**, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (False teachers who will never be saved reject Christ's redemption of them.)

**Isaiah 53:6** **All we** like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us **all**. (Every individual has gone astray and but Christ bore the iniquity of everyone.)

##### 2b. The character of God:

###### 1c. God is a loving God:

1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Jonah 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Matthew 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Psalms 36:6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep; O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.

###### 2c. God is a just God:



Genesis 18:25 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?

This question can be answered with an emphatic "yes!" He is not only kind but just in saving dead infants because the penalty for their inherited sin nature has been paid by Christ.

### 3b. The comments of the Savior:



JESUS BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

Matthew 19:13-14 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Mark 10:13-14 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Luke 18:15-17 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

Matthew 18:3-5 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

Matthew 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

John Sproule has the following observations on these references from Matthew 18:

1. Little children (not just those in His immediate presence in the Matthean account) are very precious to our Lord.
2. Child-like trust, *characteristic of little children*, identifies the quality of individuals who shall be great in the kingdom of heaven.
3. It is not God's will that any little child should perish. It would be difficult to believe that Christ had in mind only those few children who were in His immediate presence when He made the statement recorded in Matt. 18:14.
4. Little children are said to have *their angels in heaven* (Matt. 18:10). They are represented before God. This also supports the belief that infants or children who die enter into eternal life with God (unpublished Bible conference notes, 5, italics in the original).



Jesus blessing little children.

#### 4b. The case of David:

When David's son, Absalom, died, he had no hope of ever seeing him again. When his infant son of Bathsheba died as a punishment for David's offense, David was comforted and by his comfort and conduct he evidenced his firm conviction that he would see his child again.

We agree with Sproule:

In conclusion, II Samuel 12:22, 23 is strong implicit evidence that David believed that his infant son was eternally secure with God. Further, if such was true of that particular infant then why is it not also true for all such infants? (op. cit., 4)

In conclusion, 2 Samuel 12:22-23 gives strong evidence that David believed his infant son was eternally secure with God. If such is true of that particular infant, why is it not true for all such infants?

#### ABSALOM'S DEATH



**David's Certainty at Seeing His Infant Son Again  
Who Apparently Went to be with the Lord  
And David's Mourning for His Son Absalom Who was Apparently an Unbeliever**

**2 Samuel 12:16-17** David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

**2 Samuel 12:22-23** And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

**2 Samuel 18:32-33**

And the king said unto Cushai, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushai answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!



DAVID LIES ON THE GROUND ALL NIGHT.



DAVID MOURNING FOR ABSALOM.

The fact is that, if it please God, infants can be saved while they are yet in the womb of their mother. The case of John the Baptist and that of Jeremiah are very instructive that God on occasion saves individuals prior to their birth.

Luke 1:15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. While this is certainly not the norm of God's dealings with men in relation to salvation, it is evidence that both individuals who have already their inherited sin nature from their parents are redeemed prior to birth.

5b. **The conclusion from Scripture:**

1c The absence of instructions how to secure the salvation:

Since the Bible is silent on the fate of infants, this suggests that we need not worry about their destiny.

There is a lack of warnings concerning infants being lost in contrast to innumerable warnings to individuals who face eternal condemnation unless they come to Jesus Christ.

Strong, in his *Systematic Theology* (p. 662), cites Hovey who very fittingly comments on the silence of the Scriptures concerning the fate of the infants:

Though the sacred writers say nothing in respect to the future condition of those who die in infancy, one can scarcely err in deriving from this silence a favorable conclusion. That no prophet or apostle, that no devout father or mother, should have expressed any solicitude as to those who die before they are able to discern good from evil is surprising, unless such solicitude was prevented by the Spirit of God. There are no instances of prayer for children taken away in infancy. The Savior nowhere teaches that they are in danger of being lost. We therefore heartily and confidently believe that they are redeemed by the blood of Christ and sanctified by his Spirit, so that when they enter the unseen world they will be found with the saints.

2c. The age of accountability:

George Zeller has an important contribution relating to the so-called age of accountability:

The "**age of accountability**" is a term not found in the Bible, but it is an expression that has been used to refer to the age that a person reaches when he is able to understand the gospel (or whatever revelation God has given to him) and when he is held accountable before God for believing or rejecting that gospel (or whatever revelation God has given to him). It is obvious that an infant has not yet reached that age. It is evident also that there are certain people who have such serious mental disabilities that they will never be accountable in this way. But most people have been given by God the mental capability, when they reach a certain age, whereby they are able to make a decision for or against the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are able to say YES or NO to God.





It is wrong for us to set an arbitrary age for every person: "The age of accountability is reached for every person when they have their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday." It is wrong to make such statements. Children develop mentally in different ways, and therefore the age of accountability is known only to God. Our responsibility is to instruct and train up and teach our children from their youngest days, and trusting God to do the work in their hearts, in His time and way, which only He can do.

Those who die before the age of accountability will be taken care of by the loving and compassionate Saviour who died for them. Those who die after the age of accountability must understand that their decision will determine their eternal destiny. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). ("What We Can Learn From the Bible Concerning Infant Salvation," <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/salvatio/infantsa.htm> Accessed 11/9/07)



"I closely held within my arms  
A jewel rare;  
Never had one so rich and pure  
Engaged my care;  
'Twas my own, my precious jewel,  
God gave it me;  
'Twas mine, who else could care for it,  
So tenderly?

"But the Master came one day  
My gem to take;  
I cannot let it go! I cried,  
My heart would break:  
Nay, but the Master comes for it,  
To bear above  
To deck His royal diadem,  
He comes in love.

"But Master, it is my treasure,  
My jewel rare,  
I'll safely guard and keep it pure,  
And very fair;  
If thou keep'st my gem, He said,  
It may be lost;  
The threshold of My home, no thief  
Has ever crossed.

"And where the heart's rich treasure is,  
The heart will be;  
Thy jewel will be safe above,  
Gone before thee.  
The Master said these words and gazed  
With pitying look,  
While in the early hush of morn,  
My gem He took.

"Close to my heart that morn I held,  
Tears falling fast,  
An empty casket—the bright gem  
Was safe at last.  
Yes, Master, thou may'st keep my own,  
For it is Thine;  
Safe in the house not made with hands,  
'Tis Thine and mine."



#### INFANT SALVATION.

The following epitaph is very striking in reference to this subject; it is found, I understand, in Cambridge churchyard—

"Bold infidelity, turn pale and die!  
Beneath this stone four infants' ashes lie:  
Say, are they lost or saved?  
If death's by sin, they sinned, because  
they're here;  
If heaven's by works, in heaven they can't  
appear:

Reason, ah! how depraved!  
Reverse the sacred page; the knot's untied:  
They died, for Adam sinned; they live, for  
Jesus died!" *W. O'Neill.*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boettner, Loraine. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, pp. 143-148.
- Brookes, James H. "The Dead Babe," *The Truth: or Testimony for Christ*, Vol. XX, October 1894, 538-542.
- Buswell, J. Oliver. *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, II, 161-163.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Book IV, Chapter 16, Part 17-18.
- Chafer, Lewis S. *Systematic Theology*, V, 196-199.
- Hamilton, Alan H. "The Doctrine of Infant Salvation," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July/Sept., 342-256; Oct/Dec, 470-482 (1944); Jan/Mar, 99-109 (1945).
- Hendriksen, William. *The Bible and the Life Hereafter*, 100-104.
- Lightner, Robert P. *Heaven For Those Who Can't Believe*. Regular Baptist Press, 1977. 64 pp.
- Houghton, Myron J. "The Destiny of Those Who Die in Infancy," *Faith Pulpit*, May/June 1999.
- Nash, Ronald. *When a Baby Dies: Answers to Comfort Grieving Parents* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 128.
- Sproule, John A. "Infant Salvation," Unpublished notes, 1979 Bible Conference, Grace Theological Seminary.
- Spurgeon, Charles H. "A Sermon: Infant Salvation," *The New Park Street and Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. VII, Pasadena, TX: Pilgrims Publications, 1969, 505-512.
- Strong, A. H. *Systematic Theology*, 660-664.
- Webb, R. A. *The Theology of Infant Salvation*.
- Zeller, George. "What We Can Learn From the Bible Concerning Infant Salvation," <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/salvatio/infants.htm> accessed 11/09/07.
- "Infant Salvation: Do all babies who die go to heaven?" No author. (<http://faith.propadeutic.com/infants.html>), accessed 11/09/07).

## DEATH IN THE LORD.

"I fall asleep in Jesu's arms,  
 Sin washed away, hushed all alarms,  
 For his dear blood, his righteousness,  
 My jewels are, my glorious dress,  
 Wherein before my God I stand  
 When I shall reach the heavenly land.  
 With peace and joy I now depart,  
 God's child I am with all my heart:  
 I thank thee, Death; thou leadest me  
 To that true life where I would be.  
 So cleansed by Christ I fear not Death,  
 Lord Jesu, strengthen thou my faith!"



Am Grabe stehn wir stille.



THE CRUCIFIXION.

“Blest they who seek,  
While in their youth,  
With spirit meek,  
The way of truth.

To them the sacred Scriptures now display  
Christ as the only true and living way :  
His precious blood on Calvary was given  
To make them heirs of endless bliss in heaven,  
And e'en on earth the child of God can trace  
The glorious blessings of his Saviour's face.

For them He bore  
His Father's frown ;  
For them He wore  
The thorny crown ;  
Nailed to the cross,  
Endured its pain,  
That His life's loss  
Might be their gain.  
Then haste to choose  
That better part,  
Nor dare refuse  
The Lord your heart,  
Lest He declare—  
'I know you not,'  
And deep despair  
Shall be your lot.

Now look to Jesus who on Calvary died,  
And trust on Him alone who there was crucified.”



### INFANT SALVATION.

The following epitaph is very striking  
in reference to this subject ; it is found, I  
understand, in Cambridge churchyard—

“Bold infidelity, turn pale and die!  
Beneath this stone four infants' ashes lie :  
Say, are they lost or saved ?  
If death's by sin, they sinned, because  
they're here ;  
If heaven's by works, in heaven they can't  
appear :

Reason, ah ! how depraved !  
Reverse the sacred page ; the knot's untied :  
They died, for Adam sinned ; they live, for  
Jesus died !”

W. O'Neill.

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

---

INFANT SALVATION.

## A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 29TH, 1861, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

---

"Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well."—2 Kings iv. 26.

THE subject of this morning's discourse will be "Infant Salvation." It may not possibly be interesting to all present, but I do not remember to have preached upon this subject to this congregation, and I am anxious moreover that the printed series should contain sermons upon the whole range of theology. I think there is no one point which ought to be left out in our ministry, even though it may only yield comfort to a class. Perhaps the larger proportion of this audience have at some time or other had to shed the briny tear over the child's little coffin;—it may be that through this subject consolation may be afforded to them. This good Shunammite was asked by Gehazi, whether it was well with herself. She was mourning over a lost child, and yet she said, "It is well;" she felt that the trial would surely be blessed. "Is it well with thy husband?" He was old and stricken in years, and was ripening for death, yet she said, "Yes, it is well." Then came the question about her child, it was dead at home, and the enquiry would renew her griefs, "Is it well with the child?" Yet she said, "It is well," perhaps so answering because she had a faith that soon it should be restored to her, and that its temporary absence was well; or I think rather because she was persuaded that whatever might have become of its spirit, it was safe in the keeping of God, happy beneath the shadow of his wings. Therefore, not fearing that it was lost, having no suspicion whatever that it was cast away from the place of bliss—for that suspicion would have quite prevented her giving such answer—she said "Yes, the child is dead, but 'it is well.'"

Now, let every mother and father here present know assuredly that it is well with the child, if God hath taken it away from you in its infant days. You never heard its declaration of faith—it was not capable of such a thing—it was not baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ, not buried with him in baptism; it was not capable of giving that "answer of a good conscience towards God;" nevertheless, you may rest assured that it is well with the child, well in a higher and a better sense than it is well with yourselves; well without limitation, well without exception, well infinitely, "well" eternally. Perhaps you will say, "What reasons have we for believing that it is well with the child?" Before I enter upon that I would make one observation. It has been wickedly, lyingly, and slanderously said of Calvinists, that we believe that some little children perish. Those who make the accusation know that their charge is false. I cannot even dare to hope, though I would wish to do so, that they ignorantly misrepresent us. They wickedly repeat what has been denied a thousand times, what they know is not true. In Calvin's advice to Knox, he interprets the second commandment,

No. 411.

The New Park Street and Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit,  
Vol. VII, Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena, Texas, 1969.

"showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me," as referring to generations, and hence he seems to teach that infants who have had pious ancestors, no matter how remotely, dying as infants are saved. This would certainly take in the whole race. As for modern Calvinists, I know of no exception, but we all hope and believe that all persons dying in infancy are elect. Dr. Gill, who has been looked upon in late times as being a very standard of Calvinism, not to say of ultra-Calvinism, himself never hints for a moment the supposition that any infant has perished, but affirms of it that it is a dark and mysterious subject, but that it is his belief, and he thinks he has Scripture to warrant it, that they who have fallen asleep in infancy have not perished, but have been numbered with the chosen of God, and so have entered into eternal rest. We have never taught the contrary, and when the charge is brought, I repudiate it and say, "You may have said so, we never did, and you know we never did. If you dare to repeat the slander again, let the lie stand in scarlet on your very cheek if you be capable of a blush." We have never dreamed of such a thing. With very few and rare exceptions, so rare that I never heard of them except from the lips of slanderers, we have never imagined that infants dying as infants have perished, but we have believed that they enter into the paradise of God.

First, then, this morning, I shall endeavour to explain *the way in which we believe infants are saved*; secondly, give *reasons for so believing*; and then, thirdly, seek to bring out a *practical use of the subject*.

I. First of all, THE WAY IN WHICH WE BELIEVE INFANTS TO BE SAVED.

Some ground the idea of the eternal blessedness of the infant upon its *innocence*. We do no such thing; we believe that the infant fell in the first Adam, "for in Adam all died." All Adam's posterity, whether infant or adult, were represented by him—he stood for them all, and when he fell, he fell for them all. There was no exception made at all in the covenant of works made with Adam as to infants dying; and inasmuch as they were included in Adam, though they have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, they have original guilt. They are "born in sin and shapen in iniquity; in sin do their mothers conceive them;" so saith David of himself, and (by inference) of the whole human race. If they be saved, we believe it is not because of any natural innocence. They enter heaven by the very same way that we do; they are received in the name of Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid," and I do not think nor dream that there is a different foundation for the infant than that which is laid for the adult. And equally is it far from our minds to believe that infants go to heaven through *baptism*—not to say, in the first place, that we believe infant sprinkling to be a human and carnal invention, an addition to the Word of God, and therefore wicked and injurious. When we reflect that it is rendered into something worse than superstition by being accompanied with falsehood, when children are taught that in their baptism they are made the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, which is as base a lie as ever was forged in hell, or uttered beneath the copes of heaven; our spirit sinks at the fearful errors which have crept into the Church, through the one little door of infant sprinkling. No; children are not saved because they are baptized, for if so, the Puseyite is quite right in refusing to bury our little children if they die unbaptized. Yes, the barbarian is quite right in driving the parent, as he does to this day, from the churchyard of his own national Church, and telling him that his child may rot above-ground, and that it shall not be buried except it be at the dead of night, because the superstitious drops have never fallen on its brow. He is right enough if that baptism made the child a Christian, and if that child could not be saved without it. But a thing so revolting to feeling, is at once to be eschewed by Christian men. The child is saved, if snatched away by death as we are, on another ground than that of rites and ceremonies, and the will of man.

On what ground, then, do we believe the child to be saved? We believe it to be as lost as the rest of mankind, and as truly condemned by the sentence which said, "Iu

the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It is saved because it is *elect*. In the compass of election, in the Lamb's Book of Life, we believe there shall be found written millions of souls who are only shown on earth, and then stretch their wings for heaven. They are saved, too, because they were *redeemed* by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. He who shed his blood for all his people, bought them with the same price with which he redeemed their parents, and therefore are they saved because Christ was sponsor for them, and suffered in their room and stead. They are saved, again, not without *regeneration*, for, "except a man"—the text does not mean an adult man, but a person, a being of the human race—"except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No doubt, in some mysterious manner the Spirit of God regenerates the infant soul, and it enters into glory made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. That this is possible is proved from Scripture instances. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. We read of Jeremiah also, that the same had occurred to him; and of Samuel we find that while yet a babe the Lord called him. We believe, therefore, that even before the intellect can work, God, who worketh not by the will of man, nor by blood, but by the mysterious agency of his Holy Spirit, creates the infant soul a new creature in Christ Jesus, and then it enters into the "rest which remaineth for the people of God." By election, by redemption, by regeneration, the child enters into glory, by the selfsame door by which every believer in Christ Jesus hopes to enter, and in no other way. If we could not suppose that children could be saved in the same way as adults, if it would be necessary to suppose that God's justice must be infringed, or that his plan of salvation must be altered to suit their cases, then we should be in doubt; but we can see that with the same appliances, by the same plan, on precisely the same grounds, and through the same agencies, the infant soul can behold the Saviour's face in glory everlasting, and therefore we are at ease upon the matter.

II. This brings me now to note THE REASONS WHY WE THUS THINK INFANTS ARE SAVED.

First, we ground our conviction very much upon the *goodness of the nature of God*. We say that the opposite doctrine that some infants perish and are lost, is altogether repugnant to the idea which we have of Him whose name is love. If we had a God whose name was Meloch, if God were an arbitrary tyrant, without benevolence or grace, we could suppose some infants being cast into hell; but our God, who heareth the young ravens when they cry, certainly will find no delight in the shrieks and cries of infants cast away from his presence. We read of him that he is so tender, that he careth for oxen, that he would not have the mouth of the ox muzzled, that treadeth out the corn. Nay, he careth for the bird upon the nest, and would not have the mother bird killed while sitting upon its nest with its little ones. He made ordinances and commands even for irrational creatures. He finds food for the most loathsome animal, nor does he neglect the worm any more than the angel, and shall we believe with such universal goodness as this, that he would cast away the infant soul? I say it would be clean contrary to all that we have ever read or ever believed of Him, that our faith would stagger before a revelation which should display a fact so singularly exceptional to the tenor of his other deeds. We have learned humbly to submit our judgments to his will, and we dare not criticise or accuse the Lord of All; we believe him to be just, let him do as he may, and therefore, whatever he might reveal we would accept; but he never has, and I think he never will require of us so desperate a stretch of faith as to see goodness in the eternal misery of an infant cast into hell. You remember when Jonah—petulant, quick-tempered Jonah—would have Nineveh perish, God gave it as the reason why Nineveh should not be destroyed, that there were in it more than six score thousand infants,—persons, he said, who knew not their right hand from their left. If he spared Nineveh that their mortal life might be spared, think you that their immortal souls shall be needlessly cast away? I only put it to your own

reason. It is not a case where we need much argument. Would *your* God cast away an infant? If yours could, I am happy to say he is not the God that I adore.

Again, we think it would be inconsistent utterly with *the known character of our Lord Jesus Christ*. When his disciples put away the little children whom their anxious mothers brought to him, Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forb<sup>id</sup> them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven," by which he taught, as John Newton very properly says, that such as these made up a very great part of the kingdom of heaven. And when we consider that upon the best statistics it is calculated that more than one third of the human race die in infancy, and probably if we take into calculation those districts where infanticide prevails, as in heathen countries, such as China and the like, perhaps one half of the population of the world die before they reach adult years,—the saying of the Saviour derives great force indeed, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." If some remind me that the kingdom of heaven means the dispensation of grace on earth, I answer, yes, it does, and it means the same dispensation in heaven too; for while part of the kingdom of heaven is on earth in the Church, since the Church is always one, that other part of the Church which is above is also the kingdom of heaven. We know this text is constantly used as a proof of baptism, but in the first place, Christ did not baptize them, for "Jesus Christ baptized not;" in the second place, his disciples did not baptize them, for they withstood their coming, and would have driven them away. Then if Jesus did not, and his disciples did not, who did? It has no more to do with baptism than with circumcision. There is not the slightest allusion to baptism in the text, or in the context; and I can prove the circumcision of infants from it with quite as fair logic as others attempt to prove infant baptism. However, it does prove this, that infants compose a great part of the family of Christ, and that Jesus Christ is known to have had a love and amiableness towards the little ones. When they shouted in the temple, "Hosanna!" did he rebuke them? No; but rejoiced in their boyish shouts. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hath God ordained strength," and does not that text seem to say that in heaven there shall be "perfect praise" rendered to God by multitudes of cherubs who were here on earth—your little ones fondled in your bosom—and then suddenly snatched away to heaven. I could not believe it of Jesus, that he would say to little children, "Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire in hell!" I cannot conceive it possible of him as the loving and tender one, that when he shall sit to judge all nations, he should put the little ones on the left hand, and should banish them for ever from his presence. Could he address them, and say to them, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not?" How could they do it? And if the main reason of damnation lie in sins of omission like these, which it was not possible for them to commit, for want of power to perform the duty, how, then, shall he condemn and cast them away?

Furthermore, we think that *the ways of grace*, if we consider them, render it highly improbable, not to say impossible, that an infant soul should be destroyed. What saith Scripture? "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Such a thing as that could not be said of an infant cast away. We know that God is so abundantly gracious that such expressions as the "unsearchable riches of Christ," "God who is rich in mercy," "A God full of compassion," "The exceeding riches of his grace," and the like, are truly applicable without exaggeration or hyperbole. We know that he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, and that in grace he is able to do "exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or even think." The grace of God has sought out in the world the greatest sinners. It has not passed by the vilest of the vile. He who called himself the chief of sinners was a partaker of the love of Christ. All manner of sin and of blasphemy have been forgiven unto man. He has been able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Christ, and does it seem consistent with such grace as this that it should pass by the myriads upon myriads of little ones, who wear the image of the earthy Adam, and never stamp upon them the image of the heavenly? I cannot conceive such a thing. He that has tasted, and felt, and handled the grace of God, will, I think, shrink instinctively from any other doctrine than this, that infants dying such, are most assuredly saved.

Once again, one of the strongest inferential arguments is to be found in the fact that Scripture positively states that *the number of saved souls at the last will be very great*. In the Revelation we read of a number that no man can number. The Psalmist speaks of them as numerous as dew drops from the womb of the morning. Many passages give to Abraham, as the father of the faithful, a seed as many as the stars of heaven, or as the sand on the sea shore. Christ is to see of the travail of his soul

and be satisfied; surely it is not a little that will satisfy him. The virtue of the precious redemption involves a great host who were redeemed. All Scripture seems to teach that heaven will not be a narrow world, that its population will not be like a handful gleaned out of a vintage, but that Christ shall be glorified by ten thousand times ten thousand, whom he hath redeemed with his blood. Now where are they to come from? How small a part of the map could be called Christian! Look at it. Out of that part which could be called Christian, how small a portion of them would bear the name of believer! How few could be said to have even a nominal attachment to the Church of Christ! Out of this, how many are hypocrites, and know not the truth! I do not see it possible, unless indeed the millennium age should soon come, and then far exceed a thousand years; I do not see how it is possible that so vast a number should enter heaven, unless it be on the supposition that infant souls constitute the great majority. It is a sweet belief to my own mind that there will be more saved than lost, for in all things Christ is to have the pre-eminence, and why not in this? It was the thought of a great divine that perhaps at the last the number of the lost would not bear a greater proportion to the number of the saved, than do the number of criminals in gaols to those who are abroad in a properly-conducted state. I hope it may be found to be so. At any rate, it is not my business to be asking, "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" The gate is strait, but the Lord knows how to bring thousands through it without making it any wider, and we ought not to seek to shut any out by seeking to make it narrower. Oh! I do know that Christ will have the victory, and that as he is followed by streaming hosts, the black prince of hell will never be able to count so many followers in his dreary train as Christ in his resplendent triumph. And if so, we *must* have the children saved; yea, brethren, if not so, we *must have them*, because we feel anyhow they must be numbered with the blessed, and dwell with Christ hereafter.

Now for one or two *incidental matters which occur in Scripture*, which seem to throw a little light also on the subject. You have not forgotten the case of David. His child by Bathsheba was to die as a punishment for the father's offence. David prayed, and fasted, and vexed his soul; at last they tell him the child is dead. He fasted no more, but he said, "I shall go to him, he shall not return to me." Now, where did David expect to go to? Why, to heaven surely. Then his child must have been there, for he said, "I shall go to him." I do not hear him say the same of Absalom. He did not stand over his corpse, and say, "I shall go to him;" he had no hope for that rebellious son. Over this child it was not—"O my son! would to God I had died for thee!" No, he could let this babe go with perfect confidence, for he said, "I shall go to him." "I know," he might have said, "that He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for he is with me; I shall go to my child, and in heaven we shall be re-united with each other." You remember, too, those instances which I have already quoted, where children are said to have been sanctified from the womb. It casts this light upon the subject, it shows it not to be impossible that a child should be a partaker of grace while yet a babe. Then you have the passage, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he hath perfected praise." The coming out of Egypt was a type of the redemption of the chosen seed, and you know that in that case the little ones were to go forth; nay, not even a hoof was to be left behind. Why not children in the greater deliverance to join in the song of Moses and of the Lamb? And there is a passage in Ezekiel, for where we have but little, we must pick up even the crumbs, and do as our Master did—gather up the fragments that nothing be lost—there is a passage in Ezekiel, sixteenth chapter, twenty-first verse, where God is censuring his people for having given up their little infants to Moloch, having caused them to pass through the fire, and he says of these little ones, "Thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire;" so, then, they were God's children; those little ones who died in the red-hot arms of Moloch while babes, God calls "my children." We may, therefore, believe concerning all those who have fallen asleep in these early days of life, that Jesus said of them, "These are my children," and that he now to-day, while he leads his sheep unto living fountains of water, does not forget still to carry out his own injunction, "Feed my lambs." Yea, to-day even he carrieth "the lambs in his bosom," and even before the eternal throne he is not ashamed to say, "Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me." There is another passage in Scripture which I think may be used. In the first chapter of Deuteronomy there had been a threatening pronounced upon the children of Israel in the wilderness, that, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, they should never see the promised land;



nevertheless, it is added, "Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it." To you, fathers and mothers, who fear not God, who live and die unbelieving, I would say, "your unbelief cannot shut your children out of heaven, and I bless God for that. While you cannot lay hold on that text which says, "The promise is unto us and our children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call," yet inasmuch as the sin of the generation in the wilderness did not shut the next generation out of Canaan, but they did surely enter in, so the sin of unbelieving parents shall not necessarily be the ruin of their children, but they shall still, through God's sovereign grace and his overflowing mercy, be made partakers of the rest which he hath reserved for his people. Understand that this morning I have not made a distinction between the children of godly and ungodly parents. If they die in infancy, I do not mind who is father nor who their mother, they are saved; I do not even endorse the theory of a good Presbyterian minister who supposes that the children of godly parents will have a better place in heaven than those who happen to be sprung from ungodly ones. I do not believe in any such thing. I am not certain that there are any degrees in heaven at all; and even if there were, I am not clear that even that would prove our children to have any higher rights than others. All of them without exception, from whosoever loins they may have sprung, will, we believe, not by baptism, not by their parents' faith, but simply as we are all saved through the election of God, through the precious blood of Christ, through the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, attain to glory and immortality, and wear the image of the heavenly as they have worn the image of the earthy.

III. I now come to make a PRACTICAL USE OF THE DOCTRINE.

First, let it be a *comfort to bereaved parents*. You say it is a heavy cross that you have to carry. Remember, *it is easier to carry a dead cross than a living one*. To have a living cross is indeed a tribulation,—to have a child who is rebellious in his childhood, vicious in his youth, debauched in his manhood! Ah, would God that he had died from the birth; would God that he had never seen the light! Many a father's hairs have been brought with sorrow to the grave through his living children, but I think never through his dead babes; certainly not if he were a Christian, and were able to take the comfort of the apostle's words—"We sorrow not as they that are without hope." So you would have your child live! Ah, if you could have drawn aside the veil of destiny, and have seen to what he might have lived! Would you have had him live to ripen for the gallows! Would you have him live to curse his father's God? Would you have him live to make your home wretched, to make you wet your pillow with tears, and send you to your daily work with your hands upon your loins because of sorrow! Such might have been the case; it is not so now, for your little one sings before the throne of God. Do you know from what sorrows your little one has escaped? You have had enough yourself. It was born of woman, it would have been of few days and full of trouble as you are. It has escaped those sorrows; do you lament that? Remember, too, your own sins, and the deep sorrow of repentance. Had that child lived, it would have been a sinner, and it must have known the bitterness of conviction of sin. It has escaped that; it rejoices now in the glory of God. Then would you have it back again? Bereaved parents, could you for a moment see your own offspring above, I think you would very speedily wipe away your tears. There among the sweet voices which sing the perpetual carol may be heard the voice of your own child—an angel now, and you the mother of a songster before the throne of God. You might not have murmured had you received the promise that your child should have been elevated to the peerage; it has been elevated higher than that—to the peerage of heaven. It has received the dignity of the immortals; it is robed in better than royal garments; it is more rich and more blessed than it could have been if all the crowns of earth could have been put upon its head. Wherefore, then, could you complain? An old poet has penned a verse well fitted for an infant's epitaph;—

"Short was my life, the longer is my rest,  
 God takes those soonest whom he loveth best,  
 Who's born to-day, and dies to-morrow,  
 Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.  
 Other diseases often come to grieve us,  
 Death strikes but once, and that stroke doth relieve us."

Your child has had that one stroke and has been relieved from all these pains, and you may say of it, this much we know, he is supremely blessed, has escaped from sin, and care, and woe, and with the Saviour rests. "Happy the babe," says Hervay, "who,

Privileged by faith, a shorter labour and a lighter weight,  
Received but yesterday the gift of breath,  
Ordered to-morrow to return to death."

While another says, looking upward to the skies,

"O blest exchange, O envied lot,  
Without a conflict crowned,  
Stranger to pain, in pleasure bless'd  
And without fame, renowned."

So is it. It is well to fight and win, but to win as fairly without the fight! It is well to sing the song of triumph after we have passed the Red Sea with all its terrors; but to sing the song without the sea is glorious still! I do not know that I would prefer the lot of a child in heaven myself. I think it is nobler to have borne the storm, and to have struggled against the wind and the rain. I think it will be a subject of congratulation through eternity, for you and me, that we did not come so easy a way to heaven, for it is only a pin's prick after all, this mortal life; then there is exceeding great glory hereafter. But yet I think we may still thank God for those little ones, that they have been spared our sins, and spared our infirmities, and spared our pains, and are entered into the rest above. Thus saith the Lord unto thee, O Rachel, if thou weepst for thy children, and refuseth to be comforted because they are not: "Restrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy."

The next and perhaps more useful and profitable inference to be drawn from the text is this: many of you are parents who have children in heaven. Is it not a desirable thing that you should go there, too? And yet have I not in these galleries and in this area some, perhaps many, who have no hope hereafter! In fact, you have left that which is beyond the grave to be thought of another day, you have given all your time and thoughts to the short, brief, and unsatisfactory pursuits of mortal life. Mother, unconverted mother, from the battlements of heaven your child beckons you to Paradise. Father, ungodly, impenitent father, the little eyes that once looked joyously on you, look down upon you now, and the lips which had scarcely learned to call you father, ere they were sealed by the silence of death, may be heard as with a still small voice, saying to you this morning, "Father, must we be for ever divided by the great gulf which no man can pass!" Doth not nature itself put a kind of longing in your soul that you may be bound in the bundle of life with your own children! Then stop and think. As you are at present, you cannot hope for that; for your way is sinful, you have forgotten Christ, you have not repented of sin, you have loved the wages of iniquity. I pray thee go to thy chamber this morning and think of thyself as being driven from thy little ones, banished for ever from the presence of God, cast "where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched." If thou wilt think of these matters, perhaps the heart will begin to move, and the eyes may begin to flow, and then may the Holy Spirit put before thine eyes the cross of the Saviour, the holy child Jesus! And remember, if thou wilt turn thine eye to him thou shalt live: if thou believest on him with all thy heart thou shalt be with him where He is,—with all those whom the Father gave him who have gone before. Thou needest not to be shut out. Wilt thou sign thine own doom, and write thine own death warrant? Neglect not this great salvation, but may the grace of God work with thee to make thee seek, for thou shalt find—to make thee knock, for the door shall be opened—to make thee ask, for he that asketh shall receive! O might I take you by the hand—perhaps you have come from a newly-made grave, or left the child at home dead, and God has made me a messenger to you this morning; O might I take you by the hand and say, "We cannot bring him back again, the spirit is gone beyond recall, but you may follow!" Behold the ladder of light before you! The first step upon it is repentance, out of thyself; the next step is faith, into Christ, and when thou art there, thou art fairly and safely on thy way, and ere long thou shalt be received at heaven's gates by those very little ones who have gone before, that they may come to welcome thee when thou shouldst land upon the eternal shores.

Yet another lesson of instruction, and I will not detain you much longer. What shall we say to parents who have living children? We have spoken of those that are dead, what shall we say of the living? I think I might say, reserve your tears,

bereaved parents, for the children that live. You may go to the little grave, you may look upon it and say, "This my child is saved; it resteth for ever beyond all fear of harm." You may come back to those who are sitting round your table, and you can look from one to the other and say, "These my children, many of them are unsaved." Out of God, out of Christ, some of them are just ripening into manhood and into womanhood, and you can plainly see that their heart is like every natural heart, desperately wicked. There is subject for weeping for you. I pray you never cease to weep for them until they have ceased to sin; never cease to hope for them until they have ceased to live; never cease to pray for them until you yourself cease to breathe. Carry them before God in the arms of faith, and do not be desponding because they are not what you want them to be. They will be won yet if you have but faith in God. Do not think that it is hopeless. He that saved *you* can save *them*. Take them one by one constantly to God's mercy-seat and wrestle with Him, and say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The promise is unto you and to your child, even to as many as the Lord your God shall call. Pray, strive, wrestle, and it shall yet be your happy lot to see your household saved. This was the word which the apostle gave to the gaoler, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." We have had many proofs of it, for in this pool under here I have baptised not only the father and the mother, but in many cases all the children too, who one after another have been brought by grace even to put their trust in Jesus. It should be the longing of every parent's heart to see all his offspring Christ's, and all that have sprung from his loins numbered in the host of those who shall sing around the throne of God. We may pray in faith, for we have a promise about it; we may pray in faith, for we have many precedents in Scripture, the God of Abraham is the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob; but for this good thing he will be inquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them. Inquire of Him, plead with Him, go before Him with the power of faith and earnestness, and He will surely hear you.

One word to all the congregation. A little child was saying the other day—and children will sometimes say strange things—"Papa, I cannot go back again." When he was asked what he meant, he explained that he was here, he had begun his life, and it seemed such a thought to him that he could not cease to be,—he could not go back again. You and I may say the same; here we are; we have grown up, we cannot go back again to that childhood in which we once were; we have therefore no door of escape there. Good John Bunyan used to wish that he had died when he was a child. Then again, he hoped he might be descended from some Jew, for he had a notion that the Hebrews might be saved. That door God has closed. Every door is closed to you and me except the one that is just in front of us, and that has the mark of the cross upon it. There is the golden knocker of prayer: do we choose to turn aside from that to find another,—a gate of ceremonies, or of blood, or of birth? We shall never enter that way. There is that knocker! By faith, great God, I will lift it now. "I, the chief of sinners am, have mercy upon me!" Jesus stands there. "Come in," saith he, "thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" He receives me to his arms, washes, clothes, glorifies me, when I come to him. Am I such a fool that I do not knock? Yes, such I am by nature—then what a fool! O Spirit of God! make me wise to know my danger and my refuge! And now, sinner, in the name of him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, lay hold upon that knocker, lift it, give it a blow, and let your prayer be, ere thou leavest this sanctuary, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" May the Lord hear and bless, for his name's sake!



Faith Baptist Theological Seminary

# Faith Pulpit



Dr. Richard W. Houg, President

Dr. John Hartog III, Seminary Dean

## The Destiny of Those Who Die in Infancy

by Myron J. Houghton, Ph.D., Th.D.

May/June 1999

**Introduction:** In this paper an attempt will be made to show what the Bible teaches about the destiny of those who die in infancy. In order to accomplish this purpose, the major views on this subject will be presented followed by an examination of the biblical material.

**The Major Views:** *Infants who die in infancy unbaptized do not go to heaven:* In Roman Catholic theology there is no official dogma on the destiny of dead unbaptized infants. Nevertheless, the weight of tradition teaches that they go to a place called limbo, which is neither heaven nor hell, a place of natural happiness but without full communion with God. Cf. *LIMBO: UNSETTLED QUESTION* by George J. Dyer (NY: Sheed & Ward, 1964) or *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THEOLOGY*, edited by Karl Rahner (NY: The Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 850-851. *Infants who die in infancy unbaptized may or may not go to heaven:* Although there is no official Lutheran view concerning the fate of dead unbaptized infants, the following information is relevant: (1) infants are born in original sin; (2) faith is absolutely necessary for salvation; (3) infants are capable of saving faith; and (4) faith can be created by (a) the gospel, (b) water baptism (c) the Lord's Supper. Cf. *THE BOOK OF CONCORD*, translated & edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 29, 33, 178, 442-446. Nevertheless, the 17th century Lutheran theologian, John Gerhard said in his *LOCI THEOLOGICI*, IX: 282, "...yet, meanwhile, that, in the case of deprivation or of impossibility, the children of Christians may be saved through an extraordinary and peculiar divine dispensation. ... We neither can, nor ought

to, rashly condemn those infants that die either in their mother's womb, or suddenly for any cause before receiving Baptism; we should rather conclude that the prayers of godly parents, or, if the parents in this matter are neglectful, the prayers of the Church poured out before God for these infants, are mercifully heard, and that they are received into favor and life by God." quoted in English translation in Heinrich Schmid's *THE DOCTRINAL THEOLOGY OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 554. Some Fundamentalists also teach that Scripture does not answer this question and thus they have no hope to offer parents who have lost a new-born baby. *Infants who die in infancy are damned:* Some Calvinists have taught this view while other Calvinists emphatically reject it. *Infants who die in infancy are saved and with Christ in heaven:* This was, by far, the majority view among Fundamentalist writers. One of the best treatments of this subject from this perspective is a book entitled *HEAVEN FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T BELIEVE* by Robert P. Lightner (Schaumburg, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, 1977).

**The Major Reasons for Believing that Infants Who Die in Infancy Go to Heaven:** *The Death and Resurrection of Christ:* While some have tried to argue that infants are morally neutral or even holy, the Bible teaches that death is the penalty for Adam's sin (Romans 5:12, 15, 17) and that death passes upon all mankind, including infants. Thus, infants are considered sinful. Apart from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, no one, not even infants, would be worthy to enter heaven.

The foremost reason why infants who die in infancy go to heaven is because Jesus died for their sin (John 3:16-18). *The Nature and Place of Saving Faith:* Saving faith is not a good work; it is simply trusting in Christ's death and resurrection for salvation (John 3:14, 15). In a very real sense, faith does not save us; it merely attaches itself to Christ's death and resurrection which save us. *God's Special Interest in Infants & Young Children:* Matthew 18:1-14 refers to both those who are little children physically and those who, like these little children, have trust in Christ. These are greatest in God's kingdom; these have angels who have direct access to God; these are the objects of God the Father's care. Mark 10:13-16 refers to Jesus blessing the children; again, it reveals the special love God the Son has for little children. *David's Statement Upon the Death of His Week Old Child:* While his new born son was still alive, David fasted and prayed. When he discovered the seven day old child had died, he washed his face and ate a meal. When his servants express amazement at his lack of grief, he tells them, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:22-23). David's comment cannot refer only to his awareness that someday, he too, would join his child in death, because when his adult son, Absalom, died, David's response was radically different. He did not speak of going to him (cf. 2 Samuel 18:33) but cried out in great anguish. *The Nature of the Great White Throne Judgment:* All of the lost of all ages will someday stand before God's

great white Throne to be judged. Revelation 20:12-13 clearly teach that a vital part of this judgment involves the personal works of these people. Yet infants who die in infancy have no personal works. This gives us reason to believe that they are not present at this judgment and, thus, are not considered lost but part of the redeemed. *Hell, the Punishment for Refusal to Believe:* Condemnation is not merely overlooking the Savior but a stubborn refusal to believe (John 3:18-21). This fact is supported by the use of two different Greek words in John 3:36 (both translated "believe" in KJV). The first word ["He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life"] is the usual word for believe and is also found in verses 16 & 18. The second word, however, ["he that believeth not the Son shall not see life"] is different and means "to disobey." Since infants who die in infancy are not capable of this stubborn refusal to believe, they do not come under this condemnation. *Divine Election:* Under normal circumstances the benefits of salvation provided by Christ's death and resurrection are applied to those who believe and trust in Christ alone for salvation. When the Philippian jailor asked Paul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" he was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). At the same time, those who believe in Christ are called, "elect" (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; Colossians 3:12). Both faith and

election are mechanisms by which the benefits of Christ can be [and under normal circumstance, would be] applied to individuals. However, if infants are not capable of saving faith, election alone becomes the mechanism by which people are "chosen to salvation" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). The very fact of dying in infancy is outward proof that one is elect, chosen by God to live with Him in heaven. R. A. Webb, in his book, *THE THEOLOGY OF INFANT SALVATION*, argues for this view. So does Charles Spurgeon, in *THE NEW PARK STREET and METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT. One Purpose For Hell: To Display God's Righteousness:* If the lost are placed in the lake of fire because their names are not found written in the book of life (Revelation 20:15), the opening of other books and judging them according to their works (Revelation 20:12-13) must have another purpose, namely to display God's righteousness. This is accomplished in two ways: [1] if there are degrees of punishment in the lake of fire, God's righteous justice is evidenced by judging the lost according to their works. As stated earlier in this article, infants who have died in infancy would not have any works for which to be judged. [2] Furthermore, if God's righteousness is to be demonstrated by judging the lost according to their works, they must possess both memory and conscience to understand that they deserve this punishment. Infants who have died in infancy would

have neither memory nor conscience of evil works. All of these reasons support the belief that infants dying in infancy go to heaven but the primary basis for so believing is that Jesus died and rose again for their salvation.



Myron J. Houghton, Ph.D., Th.D.

Dr. Myron Houghton is the Professor of Systematic Theology, Department Chair, and the Director of the Master of Arts in Theological Studies Program at Faith Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, Pillsbury College, and Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary. He also holds masters degrees from SMU, Grace Seminary, and St. Thomas Seminary and two earned doctorates (Dallas and Concordia Seminaries). He taught for 12 years at Denver Baptist Bible College and Seminary before coming to Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in 1983.

---

The mission of the *Faith Pulpit* is to publicize Faith Baptist Theological Seminary and to gain support for the seminary from Christian leaders of like conviction by printing articles of critical thinking on current issues in the spirit of Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The *Faith Pulpit* is published ten times per year by Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, 1900 NW Fourth Street, Ankeny, IA 50021 (515) 964-0601. Permission is hereby given to make copies of articles in full for non-commercial individual or church use. Any other use is prohibited without the express permission of the publisher. Copyright 1999 FBBC&TS

# **Hell: Its Certainty and Conditions**



**Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.**

# HELL:

## ITS CERTAINTY AND CONDITIONS

- 1A. THE PROMINENCE OF HELL:
- 1b. The Doubt in Modern Theology:
  - 2b. The Doctrine in The Inspired Scriptures:
    - 1c. "Hell" is used 31 times in the O.T. (KJV), each time it is a translation of the Hebrew Sheol. Sheol is also translated 31 times as "grave" and 3 times as "pit."
    - 2c. "Hell" is used 22 times in the N.T. (KJV).
      - 1d. Ten times it is a translation of Hades.
      - 2d. Once it is a translation of Tartarus: 2 Peter 2:4
      - 3d. Eleven times it is a translation of Gehenna.
    - 3c. Gehenna alone is correctly translated as hell. With one exception (James 3:6), the word is used only in the synoptics (Mt., Mk., Lk.), and then only by Christ. While Sheol and Hades are general terms for the grave, hell speaks of the place of punishment.
    - 4c. The knowledge of hell comes almost exclusively from the teachings of Christ. The idea of a hell to be shunned and a heaven to be gained is not some superstitious development but Scriptural doctrine, clearly and frequently taught by our Savior.
- 2A. THE PURPOSE OF HELL: MT. 25:41 *Key verse*
- 1b. The Denizens of Hell:
    - 1c. Hell is a designed place for the devil and his demons.
    - 2c. Hell is the designated place for the unsaved, though not originally designed for them.
  - 2b. The Design of Hell:
    - 1c. Sin while committed in time, offends the infinite majesty and holiness of God and thus partakes of an infinite character and demands infinite punishment.
    - \* 2c. Hell is for <sup>①</sup>unremedied, <sup>②</sup>unrepentant, <sup>③</sup>unredeemed sin and involves fallen angels and fallen men.
- 3A. THE PLACE OF HELL:
- 1b. The Designations of Hell:
    - 1c. Sheol: שְׁאוֹל from שָׁוַהּ -- "to make hollow" The English word hell and

the German word Hölle are derived from the Teutonic word hell = a hollow, thus the German word Höhle = cave. Sheol is thus a vast subterranean resting place which is the common receptacle of the dead.

- 1d. <sup>Sheol</sup> Grave: Genesis 37:35; Job 14:13  
 2d. Hell, the opposite of heaven: Amos 9:2; Job 11:8  
 3d. The place of sorrow: Psm. 18:5; 116:3  
 4d. The place of torment: Psm. 9:17

2c. Hades: αἴθερ from ἀόρατον, i.e., that which is unseen or, the unseen place of the departed dead. *believers or unbelievers*

3c. Gehenna: This refers to the Valley of Hinnom SW of Jerusalem where notorious child sacrifices were offered to the god Moloch by Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:3) and Manasseh (33:6). Later it became the Valley of Refuse where a perpetual fire was burned to prevent the valley from being totally contaminated. *Place of Punishment*

OR Valley of Hinnom

4c. Tartarus: 2 Peter 2:4--apparently a subdivision of Gehenna where some fallen angels are chained forever.

5c. Pit: Numbers 16:33

33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. *(unsaved dead)*

6c. Abyss: Luke 8:31

Conclusion: Neither Sheol nor Hades ("grave") are ever used in a good sense but always with a connotation of terror.

## 2b. The Divisions of Hell:

1c. Before the death of Christ, hell appears to have been a realm in the earth, with a deep gulf separating the righteous from the wicked.

1d. The wicked descended into the earth: Numbers 16:33  
 (The sons of Korah went down into the pit.)

2d. The righteous descended into the earth:  
 Ephesians 4:9 Christ descended to the lowest parts (but may simply be a reference to His coming from heaven to earth).  
 1 Peter 3:19 Christ preached to the spirits in prison (phulakē).

3d. The compartment for the righteous involves rest (paradise; Lk. 23:43) and fellowship (Abraham's bosom; Lk. 16:22).

2c. After the ascension of Christ, the righteous are in the third heaven, enjoying the presence of the Lord.

2 Cor. 12:1-4 Paul was raptured into the third heaven.

2 Cor. 5:8 Souls who are absent from the body are present with the Lord.

Rev. 7:9 The redeemed are seen in the third heaven.

## 3b. The Destiny of Hell:

1c. Hell (Sheol and Hades) is the temporary state between death and resurrection for believer and unbeliever.



- 2c. At Christ's ascension, the redeemed left the heart of the earth and ascended to the third heaven (the "harrowing of hades", though many reject the two compartment view).
- 3c. At the conclusion of the millennium the compartment for the wicked is absorbed by the Lake of Fire, Rev. 20:14-15

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

4A. THE PICTURE OF HELL: LK. 16:19-31

1b. Abilities:

- 1c. Seeing: v. 23  
The wicked are able to see the righteous but the righteous evidently are unable to see the torment of the wicked.
- 2c. Speaking: v. 24ff
- 3c. Remembering: v. 28  
His past condition: v. 25  
His former relatives: v. 28

2b. Agony:

- 1c. Physical agony:  
V. 23: "In torment"  
V. 24: "I am tormented"  
V. 25: "You are tormented"  
Note: The only thing on which the rich man and Abraham agree is that the rich man is in agony.
- 2c. Mental anguish:  
V. 28: "I have 5 brethren"

3b. Attitude:

- 1c. Regret: He wants Lazarus, v. 23
- 2c. Remorse: For his brother's fate  
Note: In hell, misery does not love company.  
There is no fellowship in hell:  
1 John 1:3; Mt. 8:11  
There is no light in hell:  
John 1:3; Mt. 8:12  
The unsaved dead remember the unsaved living and do not want them to come to them.

Luke 16:19-31

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Mt. 8:12

12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness. there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

5A. THE PUNISHMENT OF HELL:

1b. It is physical: The rich man's first request, to have his tongue cooled.  
Mt. 8:12; 22:13--"weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth"

2b. It is psychological: The rich man's second request.  
His despair  
His brothers' dilemma  
Lazarus' delight, v. 25 "He is comforted"

3b. It is proportionate:

Mt. 11:22-24

Mt. 10:14-15

14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Go-mor-rha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Si-don at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Ca-per-na-um, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.

4b. It is perpetual:

\* Mk. 9:43-48

The parallel passage,  
Mt. 18:8-9 speaks of  
"the eternal fire" in  
"hell fire."

The idea of the worm and  
the fire are taken from  
Isaiah 66:24

24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

If the believer's presence with God is eternal, so is the unbeliever's separation from God and his punishment: the same word is used in the same passage for the destiny for both the righteous and the wicked:

Mt. 25:46

The decision concerning one's eternal destiny in the presence of God or in torments in hell is made in this life.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

"Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. 4:7)

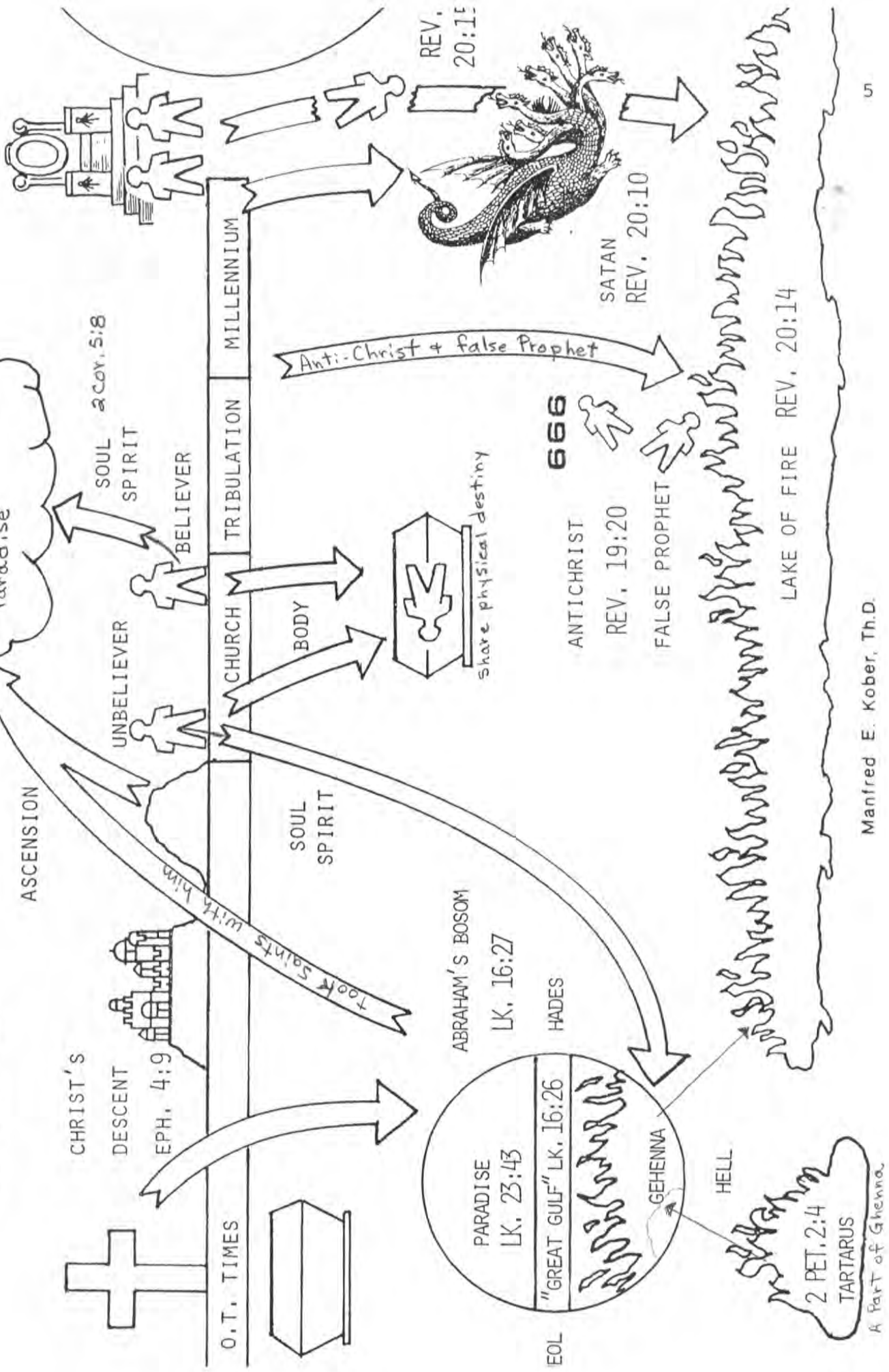
"Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1)

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." (2 Cor. 5:11)

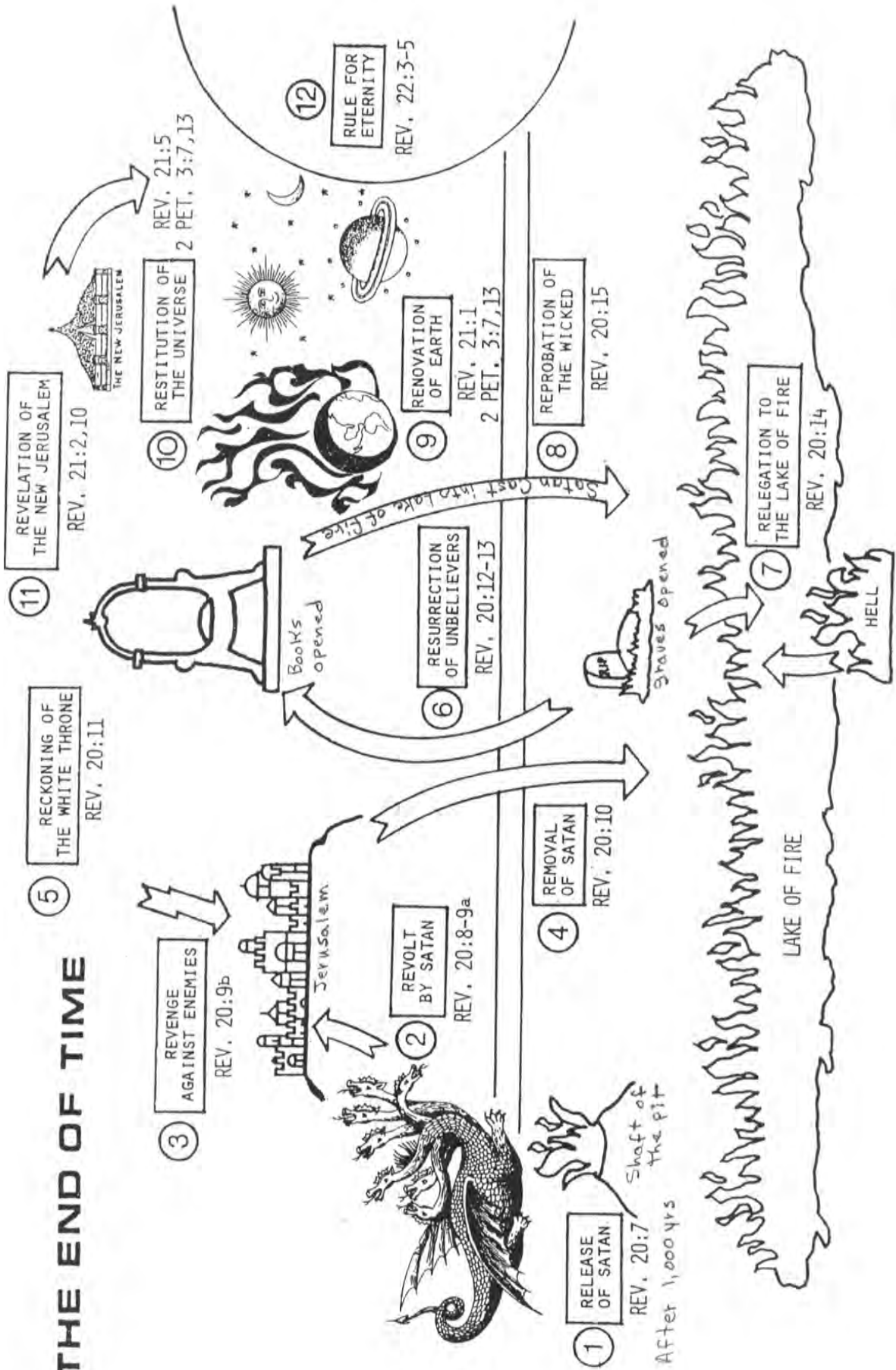


# HELL: ITS DESIGNATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT



# THE END OF TIME



# Billy Graham Believes Catholic Doctrine of Salvation Without Bible, Gospel, or Name of Christ

By Robert E. Kofahl, Ph.D

*Television interview of Billy Graham by Robert Schuller. Part I, an approximately 7-minute-long broadcast in Southern California on Saturday, May 31, 1997. The following is an exact transcript\* of an excerpt close to the end of this broadcast.*

Schuller: Tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity?

Graham: Well, Christianity and being a true believer—you know, I think there's the Body of Christ. This comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the Body of Christ. And I don't think that we're going to see a great sweeping revival, that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time. I think James answered that, the Apostle James in the first council in Jerusalem, when he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name. And that's what God is doing today. He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven.

Schuller: What, what I hear you saying that it's possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and soul and life, even if they've been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you're saying?

Graham: Yes, it is, because I believe that. I've met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and never heard of Jesus. but they've believed in their hearts that there was a God, and they've tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived.

Schuller: [R. S. trips over his tongue for a moment. his face beaming, then says] I'm so thrilled to hear you say this. There's a wideness in God's mercy.

Graham: There is. There definitely is.

*Television Interview of Dr. Graham by Dr. Schuller continued:  
Part II was broadcast on Sunday, June 8.*

*The following is an accurate transcription of a segment.\**

Schuller: You knew....Fulton Sheen. You knew these men. Your comments on both of these men [Fulton Sheen and Norman V. Peale].

Graham: The primary way of communicating is to live the life, let people see that, you're living what you proclaim.... [comments on his friendship and conversations with Fulton Sheen] I lost a very dear friend, and since that time, the whole relationship between me and my work, and you and your work, and the Roman Catholic Church has changed. They open their arms to welcome us and we have the support of the Catholic Church almost everywhere we go. And I think that we must come to the place where we keep our eyes on Jesus-Christ, not on what denomination or what church or what group we belong to.

*Some Historical Background for Understanding  
Billy Graham's Shocking Profession of  
Roman Catholic Style Universalism in 1997:*

Billy Graham's first great city-wide evangelistic campaign was held in Los Angeles in 1949. At that time he made a public promise that he would never have any theological modernists (theological liberals) on his platform. Dr. Graham's first evangelistic campaign in England was held in the summer of 1954. On that tour he was accompanied by Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New York City. Dr. Bonnell was also the president of the Ministerial Association of New York City, which was dominated by modernist ministers and churches. On Dr. Graham's British tour Bonnell was working to persuade him to hold a campaign in New York in 1956 under the auspices of the liberal Ministerial Association. During that time a group of Bible-believing pastors and laymen sent Dr. Graham in England a telegram asking him to hold an

evangelistic series in New York City sponsored by "a committee of twice-born men."

On his return to the States, Dr. Graham announced that he would come to New York in 1956 sponsored by the Ministerial Association of New York City. The committee of Bible-believing men sent a delegation to Dr. Graham begging him not to confuse the line between the gospel of grace and the false gospel of the modernist churches represented in the Ministerial Association. Graham turned a deaf ear to them, and came to New York with the requirement that all churches should be invited to participate in the campaign. In that campaign, the Billy Graham Association trained counselors sent from all sorts of churches, including the Roman Catholic Church. The policy was established of directing each inquirer during the campaign to his or her home church. Some Protestants were sent to modernist churches. Roman Catholics were directed back to the priest of the Roman church nearest to their home address. This policy of cooperation with the Roman Church continues to this day.

Dr. Graham has received honors from Roman Catholic circles, including an honorary degree from a Catholic college. In his last campaign in the British Isles, two leading prelates in the Roman Catholic Church in England sent out pastoral letters encouraging Catholics to attend the Graham meetings. One of these prelates explained to his parishioners that "Billy Graham knows our limits." That is, the Roman Church can count on him not to touch on any theological doctrines that contradict official Romanist teachings. Thus Dr. Graham will not explain that a sinner trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins and eternal life must give up any trust he might have in any other object of faith; that he or she must trust in the Person, Jesus Christ, and Him alone, not trusting in Mary or saints, rejecting any trust in the sinner's good works or religious observances, relying totally on His perfect work of redemption, a substitutionary atonement on the cross, taking the sinner's place under the judgment of God and receiving in His body the total punishment for sin that the sinner deserves, and through repentance and faith receive the perfect righteousness of Christ, imputed by God to the believer, that makes the sinner forever acceptable to a holy God, and immediately a possessor of the gift of eternal life that cannot be forfeited or lost, kept by the power of God throughout all eternity. If Billy Graham were to preach this biblical and complete doctrine of salvation, he would at once lose the support of the Roman Catholic leaders. Multitudes of Roman Catholics would be warned and frightened from attending Billy Graham meetings.

The doctrine that Dr. Graham expressed to Dr. Shuller is exactly what the Pope and the Ecumenical Institute in Rome have been teaching for years. This is the idea that any pagan, practicing idolatrous worship, having no slightest knowledge of the Bible, the gospel of grace, or the Person and name and redeeming work of Jesus Christ—if he is a "good person" and if he is sincere in whatever he may believe—is automatically "redeemed by the blood of Christ." This false doctrine of salvation was clearly and explicitly asserted and defended in debate

about four years ago on radio stations KABC and KRRB by Father Vivian Benlima, then Director of the Office for Ecumenical and Interdenominational Affairs of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, who just returned from a year's study at the Ecumenical Institute. It is the official teaching of the Roman Church.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association was the primary force for the founding of the Lausanne World Evangelism Conferences back in the 1980s. Especially in recent years these conferences have called on all churches, including the modernist ecumenical churches of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church to cooperate with the evangelical churches in evangelizing the world for Christ. At Amsterdam '86, billed as a "school for evangelists" and sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Graham revealed his ecumenical, inclusivist approach to worldwide evangelism. In the final press conference, Dr. Graham was asked by Dennis Costella, a news correspondent for *Foundation* magazine, how he could justify this melding together of such a disparate crowd of theologically disunited religious groups. Dr. Graham responded, "Evangelism is about the only word we can unite on. ... Our methods would be different and there would be debates over even the message sometimes, but there is no debate over the fact that we need to evangelize. ... I think there is an ecumenicity here that cannot [be gotten] under any other umbrella." Therefore, he averred, all the churches must be willing to disagree even on the question of what the Christian message to the world is.

More recently, in the spring of 1994, a group of both evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders signed a document called "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT). This document asserts that there is one Church (including both Protestant and Roman churches), that, therefore, they must work together in evangelizing the world for Christ, and agree that there will be no sheep-stealing, that is, proselytizing of members of one church to depart and join another church. ECT dismayed multitudes of Christians and elicited vigorous criticism from many Christian circles.

There can be little question that Dr. Billy Graham during almost forty years laid the major foundation for ECT. Where will the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association go in the future? Will the leadership that succeeds the founder continue down the same perilous path of compromising and diluting biblical truth until we arrive at total syncretism and universalism? May God forbid and warn His people!

\* Robert E. Kofahl, Ph.D. and the Rev. Harold L. Webb certify the accuracy of the transcripts from Paris I and II, respectively, of the televised interview of Dr. Billy Graham by Dr. Robert Shuller.

Baker's  
 DICTIONARY  
 OF THEOLOGY

EVERETT F. HARRISON  
 Editor-in-Chief

GEOFFREY W. BROMILEY  
 Associate Editor

CARL F. H. HENRY  
 Consulting Editor

BAKER BOOK HOUSE  
 Grand Rapids, Michigan  
 1960

**HEATHEN, THE FATE OF.** By "heathen" in this article we refer to adults who have not heard the gospel of Christ. Whatever their culture or country, their unbelief in Christ is circumstantial; that is, they have had no opportunity to believe. This fact raises the question about their "fate." If Christ is the only way of salvation and these persons do not so much as know of the existence of Christ, are we to conclude that they cannot possibly have salvation, being necessarily lost or damned? If they are damned, is that not unfair and unjust of God inasmuch as they have no opportunity to be saved?

Let us meet the question right where it

emerges: Is it not unjust of God to damn a person who has had no opportunity to be saved? Why is it? Assuming that God does damn such persons, why is it unjust of him to do so simply because they have no opportunity to be saved? If these persons are damned they are damned because they are sinners; they are not damned because they have had opportunity to be saved and have not utilized it. Their opportunity, or the lack of it, has nothing to do with their being damned; they are damned because they are sinners. What is unfair in God's damning sinners? If God damned them because they did not believe the gospel, they could legitimately protest that they had no opportunity to believe the gospel; but, if God damns them for other sins, what does the fact that they did not commit this sin of unbelief in the gospel have to do with it?

Some will say: Granted that God could damn men for the sins they have committed even though they did not hear the gospel and there would be no injustice in that as such. But, does God not have an obligation to offer a way of salvation to everyone? But, we ask, why? Why does God have any obligation to offer salvation to any sinner? Grace, by definition, is undeserved. If it were deserved, it would not be a gospel; it would not be grace. If it is a gospel of grace it must be undeserved. If it is undeserved how can it be said that God owes it to anyone?

All right, some will reply, but inasmuch as God (who did not owe the gospel to anyone) did give it to many, is he not under obligation to offer it everyone? But why? If a person who does not deserve it receives a gift, does another person who does not deserve it thereby gain a right to a gift? If he does gain a right to it, is it still a "gift" or a "gospel"? But, it is further urged, this makes God a respecter of persons. Indeed it does; but the respecter of persons which the Bible condemns is an unfair respecter of persons. God is not an unfair respecter of persons and this is no instance of an unfair discrimination. He gives a gift which he does not owe; that puts him under no obligation to give a gift, the same gift, to everyone to whom he does not owe it. Being a respecter of persons, if it is a fair discrimination, is not evil. Cf. the Parable of The Laborers, Matt. 20:1 ff., which speaks to this very point: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (vs. 15).

All of the above is by way of facing the objections which are commonly made to the doctrine that the "heathen" are lost. Such, we believe, is the teaching of the word of God. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" is the teaching of Rom. 10:17 in which context the necessity of missionaries is being argued. The world by wisdom knew not God but it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to make his wisdom known (I Cor. 1:21). The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, but the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1:17). Christ is the light of the world. All the world is in darkness until he shines into it (John 8:12; 9:5). There is none other name given under heaven whereby men must be saved but the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). He is the way, the truth and the life, no man coming to God but by him (John 14:6).

Christ in teaching this doctrine himself, brings out an aspect of the truth which has not yet been mentioned in this article. In Luke 12:47-48 he tells us that the disobedient man who does not know will be beaten with fewer stripes than the disobedient man who does know. That is to say, that those who do not know the gospel are guilty because of the light which they have and which they have transgressed (cf. especially Rom. 1), but they are not so guilty as those who have had the light of the gospel as well as the light of nature and have sinned against that also. Their light having been so much greater their hardness of heart was so much more developed in resisting it and their guilt is much the more grievous. Therefore, according to Matt. 10:15; 11:22, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah (who are in hell though they sinned only against the light of nature) than for Capernaum and Chorazin (who are in hell with far greater condemnation because they have violated a light so vastly greater than the heathen transgressed).

In conclusion, it may be well to cite the remark of the great Baptist theologian, A. H. Strong: "The question whether the heathen will ever be saved if we do not give them the gospel, is not so serious a one for us as the other question whether we ourselves will ever be saved if we do not give them the gospel." That is to say: Christians have an obligation to evangelize the world. If they do not partici-

pate in that duty, although some persons may be lost through their negligence, they will perish with them and with far greater punishment because they have themselves sinned against the far greater light which they have had. In other words, the "fate" of the "heathen" is inextricably connected with the "fate" of "Christians" in this era.

The view of this article is the general view of the church except that there have always been Christian theologians such as Ulrich Zwingli and John Wesley, who have hoped (more often than they have affirmed) that Christ, the only Saviour of the world, may sometimes, admittedly rarely, work independently of the means of grace. Neo-orthodoxy inclines to a universalistic position which teaches the salvation of the heathen.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1) Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam*, p. 22 f; 87 f;
- 2) W. G. T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Natural Man*, pp. 78 f;
- 3) John Wesley, *Works*, New York ed., Vol. II, pp. 485 f.

JOHN H. GERSTNER

**HEAVEN.** The most frequently used Hebrew word for heaven in the OT is *šamayim*, signifying "heaved up things" or "the heights." In the Greek NT it is *ouranos*, which denotes "sky," or "air." These words refer to the atmosphere just above the earth (Gen. 1:20, etc.); to the firmament in which the sun and moon and stars are located (Gen. 1:17, etc.); to God's abode (Ps. 2:4, etc.); to the abode of the angels (Matt. 22:30). The OT has no word for universe, and to express the idea there is the frequent "heaven and earth." We read of "the heaven and the heaven of heavens" (Deut. 10:14), and of a man's being "caught up into the third heaven" (II Cor. 12:2), but such references are probably to be thought of metaphorically.

What is existence in heaven to be like? Not as for Plato, one in which naked minds will intellectually contemplate the eternal, unchanging Ideas. The whole person survives, in the biblical teaching. Even the body is raised again, so that, if it is no longer flesh and blood (I Cor. 15:50), it nevertheless has a continuity with the present body, a sameness in form if not in material element (see Matt. 5:29, 30; 10:28; Rom. 8:11, 23; I Cor. 15:53). So there is nothing in the Bible (nor in the main creeds of the church) about disembodied spirits in the next world existing *in vacuo*. Yet there is no eating nor drinking



with God because of the quality of their lives, but they would never think of calling God their *Father*.<sup>41</sup> Cornelius is exemplified as one who has "faith" in God, but who was not saved or justified. Such an one is in a different position from one who has no faith. He seems to side with those "respected evangelical teachers" who were questioning the lostness of all those in world religions who never knew of Christ.<sup>42</sup>

In a 1992 book-length treatise of the subject, Clark Pinnock in similar fashion amplified his views. He coined the term "pagan saints" to describe Old Testament believers who did not know of Jesus of Nazareth and never had explicit faith in Him, saints such as Enoch, Daniel, Noah, Abel, Melchizedec, Abimilech, Seth, Jethro, Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, the Queen of Sheba, and Job.<sup>43</sup> So today there is religious faith "neither Jewish nor Christian, which is nonetheless noble, uplifting, and sound."<sup>44</sup> Pinnock understands Paul at Athens (Acts 17:22-31) as "acknowledging the good intentions of the Greeks in worshipping the Unknown God.... Evidently Paul thought of these people as believers in a certain sense, in a way that could be and should be fulfilled in Jesus Christ."<sup>45</sup> He believed that "many people in the other religions worship God, even if in ways that fall conceptually short of the revelation of God's nature which Christ brings."<sup>46</sup> "Religions do not present only the way of human self-justification. At times they also announce the grace and love of God. When they do, this Christian, at least, rejoices."<sup>47</sup>

In a fast-forward to 2001, noted Southern Baptist radio preacher, Charles Stanley, declared that God would not send to hell those who have not heard the gospel. "Would God send somebody to hell because they did not receive Jesus whom they never heard about, never had the privilege of knowing about? And my answer is: No, he would not."<sup>48</sup> **WRONG**

#### ANALYSIS

While it is neither practical nor necessary to investigate every tenet and assertion of the aforementioned new evangelical preachers and teachers, several load-bearing points call for analysis.

#### Heathen Ability

It has been assumed in the foregoing evangelical tenets that the heathen have the ability to make a positive response to natural or general revelation, an assumption based on both exegetical and theological error. Theologically, the doctrine of total depravity precludes any form of natural ability to make any kind of an overture or any form of a proper response to any revelation of God. The natural man is dead in

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>43</sup>Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wilderness in God's Mercy*, pp. 22, 26, 92, *passim*.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-101.

<sup>48</sup>Charles Stanley, "Reconciling God's Love With His Justice," In *Touch Ministries*, July 31, 2001.

trespasses and sins (Rom 8:6; Eph 2:1), unwilling and unable to respond positively to the revelation of God and spiritual things in general (1 Cor 2:14). He is natively hostile toward God, being incapable of subjecting himself to the moral law of God (Rom 8:7). Sin has penetrated and affected the whole of his being: body (Rom 8:10), mind (Rom 8:5-6), heart (Jer 17:9), and will (Jer 13:23). The unsaved person is completely destitute of the love for God which His moral law requires (Matt 22:27-28). Only the sovereign intervening grace of God can change the natural man's disposition to sin and relieve his implacable enmity toward his Creator and Judge.

Simple and straight-forward exegesis of Scripture also reveals that the natural man cannot rightly follow the light of his conscience or the revelation of God in the material creation. He has no desire to know God because he uniformly chooses to worship and serve some aspect of the created order rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25). He is not capable of engaging in a "search" for the true and living God because *no one searches for God* (Rom 3:11<sup>49</sup>). Those who worship sticks and stones are renegades from God, not seekers of Him. Their heathenism is a form of their suppression of the truth by means of unrighteousness (Rom 1:18, 23). Idolatry among the unevangelized is no more a search for God than is homosexuality (Rom 1:26-27) and the other terrible items in the apostle's sin list (Rom 1:28-32). Granted, God's benevolence to all mankind *ought* to cause everyone to grope for and find Him because He is near at hand (Acts 17:25-28); the natural man is virtually drowning in an ocean of God's self-disclosing goodness. But there is a vast difference between what man ought to do and what he actually does. The reason for man's waywardness is his complete inability to do what he should do or, conversely, his inevitable *perversion* of God's revelation due to his total self-interest.

The case of the Gentile Cornelius is often brought up as one responding to God on his own, and the analogy is then made to the heathen responding to the sun or the lightning in his search for God. If Cornelius prayed and was heard (Acts 10:30-33), the unevangelized can also. The examples, however, are not comparable. For one, Cornelius was not an unenlightened aboriginal pagan seeking God by bowing down to fetishes and idols and responding to thunder claps. He was one who had a great deal of knowledge about God, a Gentile military officer attracted to the monotheism and ethics of Israel's divinely-revealed religion but who had not become a full proselyte because he was not circumcised (Acts 11:3). In truth, he was *not* living up to all the light he had or he would have become a believing convert to the revelation of God and had joined the covenant community by receiving circumcision, the sign of the Abraham Covenant (Gen 17:11). Furthermore, the narrative here is shot through with angelic activity, direct revelation, and miracle so that one is compelled to account for it as one of the significant transitions from Old Testament Mosaism to New Testament Christianity, from Israel's favored status to the full inclusion of Gentiles for the first time in God's plan. In other words, major dispensational factors are involved and,

<sup>49</sup>In all the research and sources consulted for this study, I found *no one* even remotely sympathetic to the idea that the heathen can seek for God who attempted in any way to come to terms with this verse.

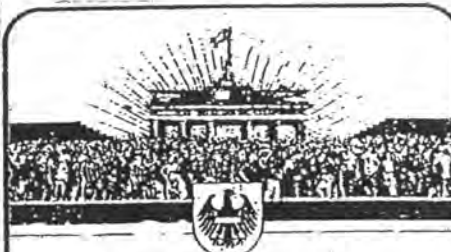
# God's Hand in History:

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**

# God's Hand in History:

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM and THE IRON CURTAIN

**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 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 Khrushchhev, 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.



11. Aserbaidsejanische SSR  
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. Petrowskaja, Gebiet  
25. Orel, Kursk, Tula, Kaluga, Lipetsk, (RSFSR)  
26. Pskow, Wladimir, Rjzensk, Kalinin und Smolensk, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
27. Wolgogr., Kostroma, Kirov, Ischewsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
28. Tjumen, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
29. Perm, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
30. Sverdlow-sk, Gebiet (RSFSR)

31. Tscheljabinsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
32. Baschkirische ASSR  
33. Orenburg, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
34. Mordwinische ASSR  
35. Wolgograd, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
36. Penza, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
37. Kalmückische und Dagestanische ASSR  
38. Stawropol, Bezirk, und Stadt  
39. Krasnodar, Bezirk, und Rostow, Gebiet  
40. Astrachan, Gebiet (RSFSR)

41. Ulanowak, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
42. Jaroslavl, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
43. Saratow, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
44. Kuibyschew, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
45. Udmurtische ASSR  
46. Omsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
47. Tomsk, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
48. Kemerowo, Gebiet  
49. Altai, Bezirk  
50. Gorno-Altaiisches Autonomes Gebiet (RSFSR)

51. Krasnojarsk, Bezirk  
52. Tyumenische ASSR  
53. Irkutsk, Gebiet  
54. Burjatische ASSR  
55. Tschuwaschische ASSR  
56. Tschita, Gebiet  
57. Amur, Gebiet  
58. Jakutische ASSR  
59. Magadan, Gebiet  
60. Kamtschatka, Gebiet

61. Chabarowsk, Bezirk  
62. Primorsk, Bezirk  
63. Sachalin, Gebiet (RSFSR)  
64. Wrangel, Insel  
65. Nowaja Semlja, Insel  
66. Krim, Gebiet  
67. Tschetche, „Osternag“  
68. Baku (Bakalawer-Registrate)  
69. Mängyschak, 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 disenfranchised 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.



**B**Y 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.

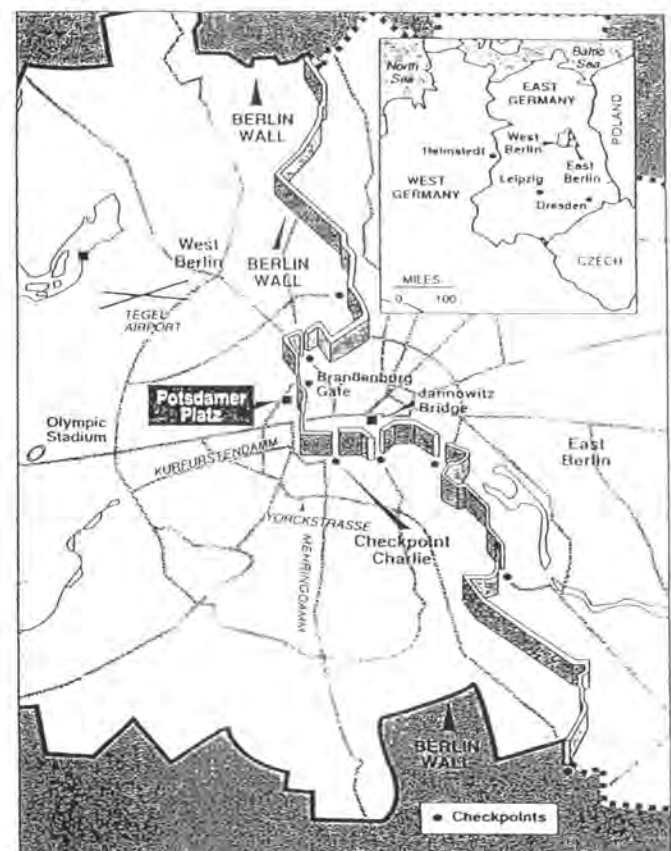
## 2A. The Deadly Efficiency of the Formidable Barrier

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.



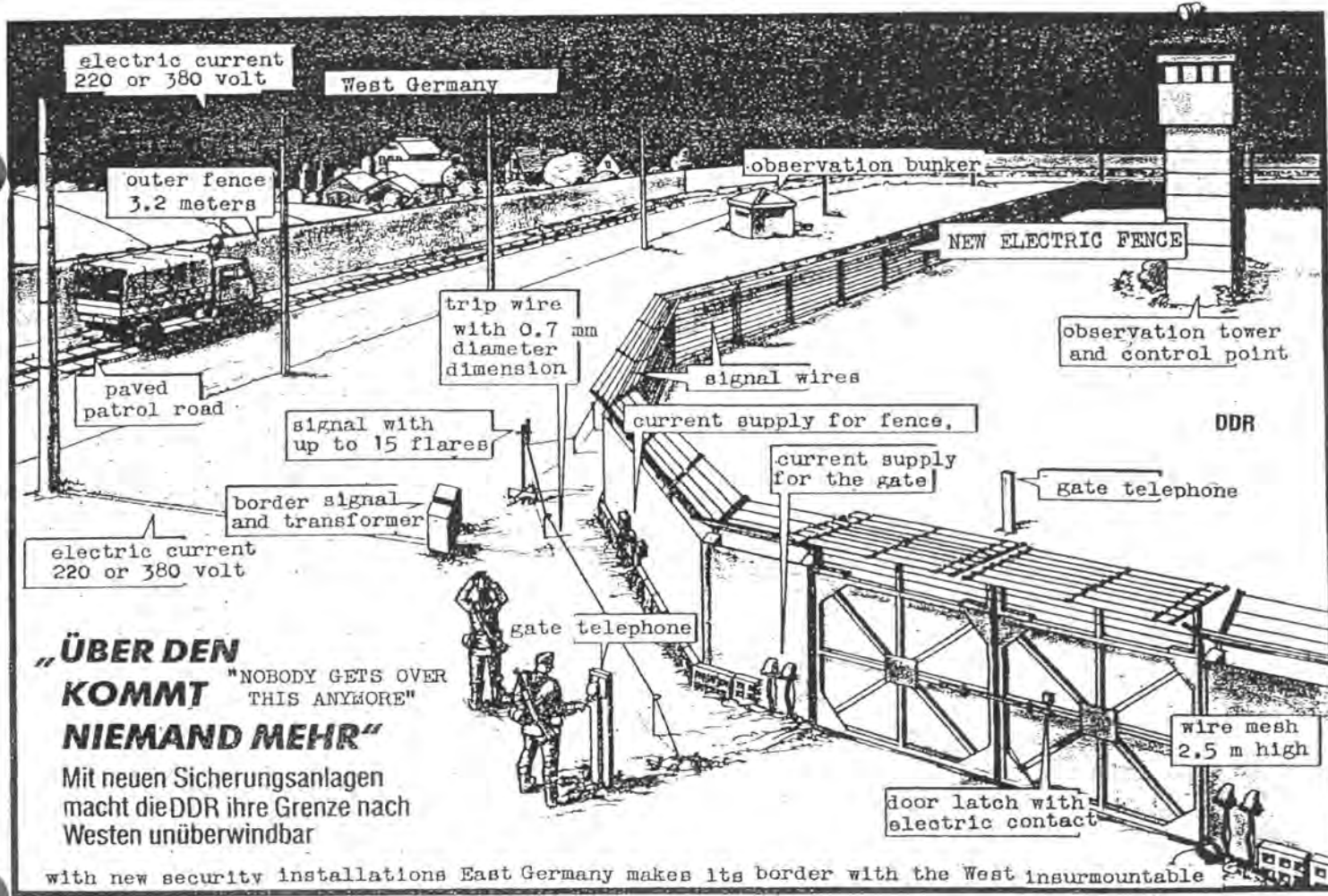
The New York Times/Nov. 13, 1989

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.



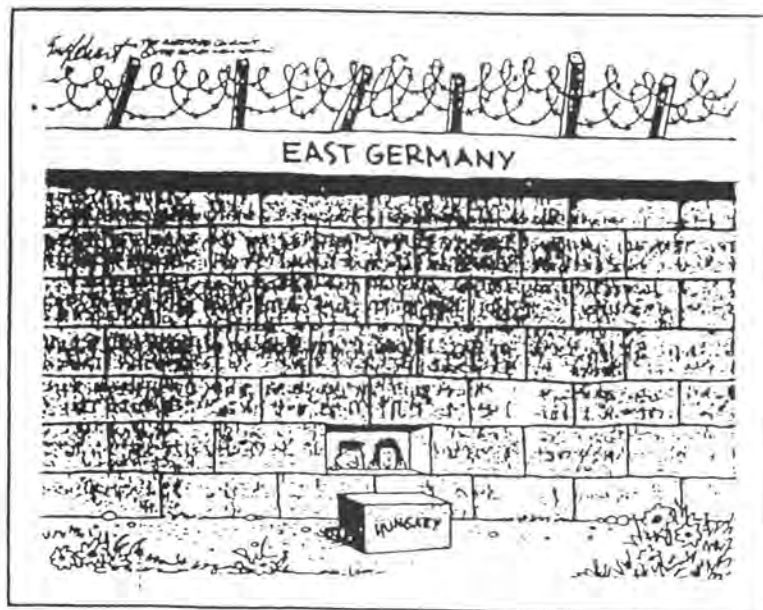
**„ÜBER DEN KOMMT NIEMAND MEHR“**  
 "NOBODY GETS OVER THIS ANYMORE"

Mit neuen Sicherungsanlagen macht die DDR ihre Grenze nach Westen unüberwindbar

with new security installations East Germany makes its border with the West insurmountable

### 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 40<sup>th</sup> 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

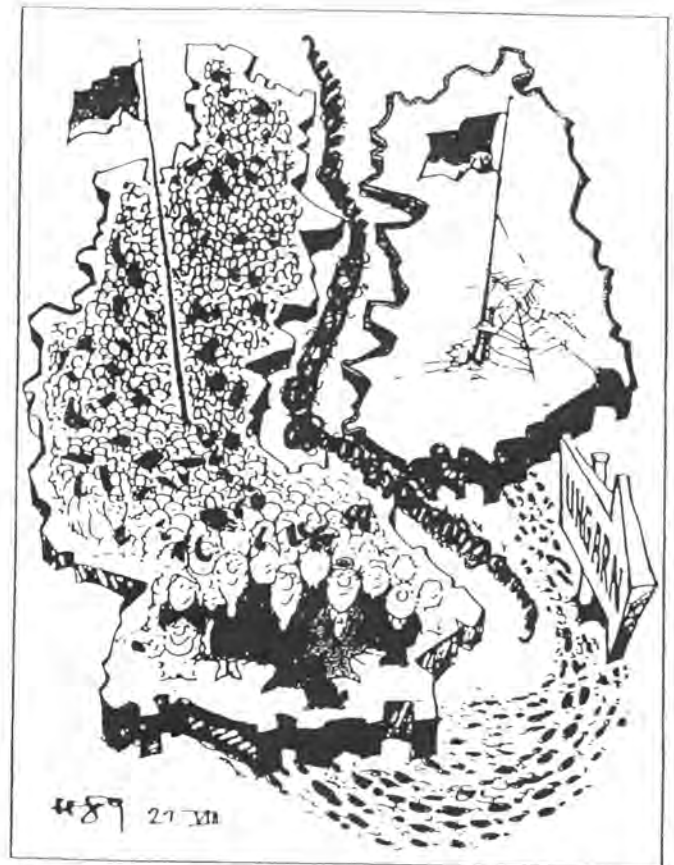


## Refugees stream into Austria

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.

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.

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.



**Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung**



**DR-Flüchtlinge in der Bonner Botschaft in Prag 1989: „Das Polifbaro hat gewußt, wie tief es in dem Sumpf sitzt“**

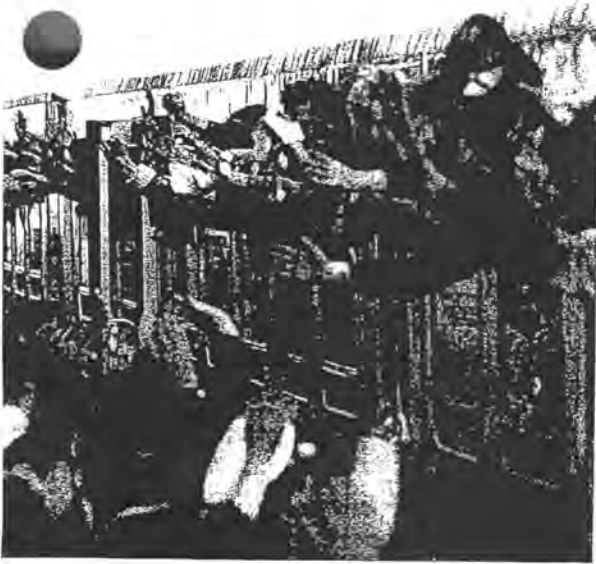
With world attention on the heart-wrenching scenes in Prague and East Germany desperately trying to save its face as its 40-year anniversary festivities were approaching, the East German government sent so-called “freedom trains” to Prague, which transported the refugees to West Germany.

**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



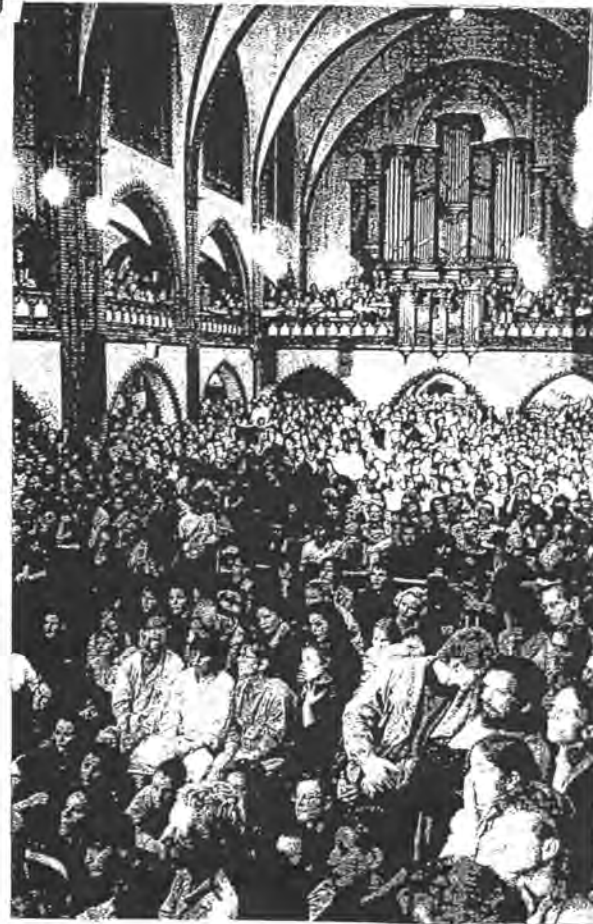
Wall would stand for another hundred years. Little did he know that God would soon intervene in a marvelous way and secure freedom for millions of oppressed people.

#### 4A. The Dedicated Evangelicals at Prayer

With the 40<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 in 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 listeners 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).

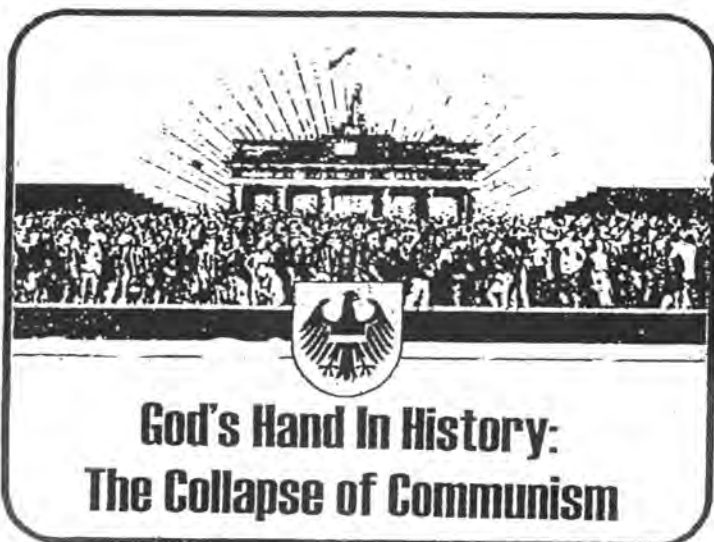
Schabowski had providentially misunderstood the Politburo decision which stipulated that the law would go into effect the following morning, but citizens still had to secure an exit permit at the local police station.

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](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.

RONALD REAGAN

