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The Great Awakening of 1740 (written in 1903)**

PREACHING to a DYING NATION

**R. L. Hymers, Jr.
Christopher Cagan**

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by

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and

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– F. L. Chapell, Baptist pastor,

The Great Awakening of 1740 (written in 1903).

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This book is dedicated to the memory of

C. H. SPURGEON

(June 19, 1834 – January 31, 1892)

Though pastor of the largest Baptist church of his day,
he loved his people enough to listen to them and
evaluate each one's testimony.

and to

Dr. Hymers' mother

CECELIA

(May 20, 1913 – December 18, 1997)

She sat beside him and encouraged him as he worked on
this book. Her own remarkable conversion at
the age of eighty was instrumental in
motivating us to write it.

Quotations in this book, from sources other than the Bible, do not imply our full endorsement of everything the person we have quoted has written or said, even in the same book we have cited. We have quoted men favorably who hold various views. We ourselves are independent fundamental Baptists. We hold the historic Baptist position on all essential points. We strongly believe in baptizing the saved, and baptizing them only by immersion. We hold to the autonomy and absolute authority of the local church. We quote only from the KJV, though we reserve the right to refer to the Masoretic Text Hebrew and the Textus Receptus Greek, from which the King James Bible was translated, as did our Baptist forefathers.

This book gives names of those who are in error, as the Bible does. Matthew names Judas and names his sin (Matthew 26:14-16, 47-49); Genesis names Adam and names his sin (Genesis 3:6-19); the Bible gives David's name and his sins (II Samuel 11:1-12:18); the Bible names Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), Herod (Acts 12:1), Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:24-28), Alexander the coppersmith (II Timothy 4:10), Cain, Balaam, Korah (Jude 11) and many others, in nearly every book of both the Old and New Testaments. We follow the example of God's Word and give the names of those who are in error.

The people or sources mentioned in this book do not necessarily carry the endorsement of Dr. Hymers, Dr. Cagan, or the Fundamentalist Baptist Tabernacle of Los Angeles.

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FOREWORD

by

Pastor John S. Waldrip
Calvary Road Baptist Church
Monrovia, California

Our nation is dying. Our way of life has almost disappeared from the scene. Our culture has been wrenched from our grasp and replaced by a cruel and hateful paganism. This has happened because Christianity in America has become impotent. The problem began when pastors stopped preaching the gospel strongly and listening to the sinners who responded to their evangelistic sermons after they stepped down from their pulpits. As a result of not listening to sinners who responded to the call of the gospel, preachers gradually lost touch with those to whom they were preaching.

R. L. Hymers has a vigorous church in the civic center of Los Angeles because he has resorted to an old fashioned practice employed by nearly every gospel-preaching, Christ-exalting pastor in the English speaking world before Charles G. Finney changed evangelism in the last century. Instead of shaking everyone's hand after church, Hymers actually listens to sinners. He stays behind in his office for an hour or so after every service to do this. That's something every preacher used to do, but few do it today. Dr. Hymers listens to sinners.

The goal of this book is to get pastors to preach the gospel strongly and then listen carefully. Why? Dr. Hymers and Dr. Cagan show the horrible results of not doing so. Not preaching hard and then listening carefully has produced hundreds of thousands of lost church members, including lost preachers. It is not at all uncommon these days to hear of pastor after pastor falling into adultery, and then resuming his pastorate at another church, too often with another wife! And it's really no different with church members. How many medium to small sized churches have a group of qualified deacons anymore? Many of our churches are dying because pastors are not preaching hard enough and then taking time to listen and make sure the people are in Christ.

Read this book, brother preacher. Turn off the TV. Shut down the computer. Put the cat in the backyard, and read this book carefully. It could be the most important thing you read this year, because it will make you think about effective evangelism. It is also chock-full of sermon-starters, sermon illustrations and even sermon outlines. It will help your preaching. Read it.

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REVIEW

by D. A. Waite, Th.D., Ph.D.
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This is admittedly an iconoclastic and controversial book. The underlying passion of the authors is to see a revival of sound evangelistic preaching in America and Great Britain – evangelistic preaching that will end up in Holy Spirit regeneration rather than merely human “decisions.” The reason for this plea is twofold: first, the moral and spiritual decadence in the unchurched millions, and second, the deplorable moral and spiritual conditions in the churches themselves. Whether you agree with the percentages which are quoted or not, here are some of the estimates of the number of lost people in the membership of our churches: (1) Dr. B. R. Lakin – 75%; (2) Dr. W. A. Criswell – 75%; (3) Dr. Billy Graham – 85%; (4) Dr. A. W. Tozer – 90%; and (6) Jim Elliff, a Southern Baptist consultant – 90%.

Though a recent Gallup poll cited 74% in America as having made a commitment to Jesus Christ, it is the opinion of many cited in this book that only a fraction of that number has ever been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, justified by the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus soundly converted. The reason for this is given. After 150 years of Charles Finney’s “decisionism” and after 50 years of Billy Graham’s similar “decisionism,” and various gimmicks used in evangelism, this method has failed miserably to change the lives of people in our churches. The church in America is like the Titanic, according to pollster George Barna: “It is large, elegant, and sinking fast.”

Though at the beginning of his forty-one years in the ministry, Dr. Hymers practiced Finney’s “decisionism” and built (largely on sand) a church of over 1,000, he has turned from this defective methodology and has followed the Biblical plan of hard preaching against sin, a clear presentation of the gospel, and several sessions of personal pastoral follow-up with those who come forward.

As the Bible does, the authors name names, exposing the errors of Hyles on gimmicks, of Billy Graham on evangelism, and of John MacArthur on decisionist Lordship salvation, the incarnational Sonship of Christ, and the Blood of Christ. Those who “preach the Word” are to follow strictly II Timothy 4:2-3 and include reproving, rebuking and exhorting. Appendix 8 contains an excellent “Manual on Conversion” by Dr. Cagan.

BORN AGAIN CHRISTIANS IGNORANT OF FAITH

Baptist Bible Tribune

April 15, 1996

page 28

(Reprinted by permission from the *Tribune*)

Survey Also Finds Hell's Description Divides Americans

GLENDALE, CA – The majority of born again Christians (87%) indicate their religious beliefs are very important in their lives today. However, claiming that religion's influence is significant doesn't necessarily translate into a personal faith consistent with biblical teaching. A new national survey of American adults by the Barna Research Group found that eight in ten (84%) born again Christians hold the non-biblical view on at least one of eight statements of biblical teaching tested in the survey.

"Born again Christians" are defined as individuals who say they have "made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in (your) life today" and who chose one of seven alternatives posed regarding life after death. That alternative reads "when you die you will go to Heaven because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as (your) savior." Respondents were not asked to categorize themselves as "born again."

Survey results

Born again Christians exhibit surprisingly high levels of ignorance on the following core Christian tenets:

- Eight in ten (80%) born again Christians agree with the statement, "the Bible teaches that God helps those who help themselves."
- Half (49%) agree with the statement, "the devil, or Satan, is not a living being but is a symbol of evil."
- By definition all born again Christians believe they, personally, will go to heaven because they have "confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior." However, four in ten (39%) of the born again segment also maintain that "if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven."
- Three in ten (30%) claim that "Jesus Christ was a great teacher, but he did not come back to physical life after he was crucified."
- Twenty-nine percent contend that "when he lived on earth, Jesus Christ was human and committed sins, like other people."
- The same percentage (29%) assert that "there are some crimes, sins, or other things which people might do which cannot be forgiven by God."

- One-quarter (26%) disagree that “(they), personally, have a responsibility to tell other people (their) religious beliefs.”
- Fifteen percent disagree that “the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings.”

Bible reading in the survey

The survey findings also highlighted patterns in the Bible readership of Americans. One-third of all Americans (34%) have read from the Bible in the last seven days. That figure is essentially unchanged from the 1995 level, but reflects a sharp decline from 47% in 1992.

More than half of all born again Christians (57%) had read the Bible in the last week. Even among born again Christians, Bible readership is a shade lower than the percentage measured in 1993 (58%).

Americans’ views of hell

The survey also found much disparity among Americans’ views of hell. Three in ten adults (31%) see hell as an actual location: “a place of physical torment where people may be sent.” Slightly more adults, nearly four in ten (37%), say “hell is not a place, but it represents a state of permanent separation from the presence of God.” Describing hell as merely a symbolic term, not referring to a physical place was true for two in ten Americans (19%). Ten percent of adults were undecided on their views of hell.

PREFACE

I regard the subject of this book, Biblical conversion, to be the most important practical topic of our time. Many errors are embraced on this subject by evangelicals and fundamentalists today. I did not start the confusion regarding conversion and I wish it were not necessary to discuss it. The only way to avoid debate would be to remain silent, and silence would be a great sin.

This is a book that will upset some “big” preachers. It has to be so. We have quoted and named some of the leading figures who have promoted false ideas concerning conversion. We are all responsible for what we say and write. Anyone who doesn’t like being quoted should not blame us for printing his opinions. We didn’t say those things. The people we quote said them. And anything people write is subject to analysis, including what we write.

This book was written for a preacher who has courage, that increasingly rare quality of mind which enables one to meet difficulties with bold and brave resolution, mettle and tenacity. It was written for such a preacher, and for no one else. If you have a fearful, apprehensive, worrisome personality, this book is not for you. I suggest you pass it on to someone else. Why do I say that? Because this book contains iconoclastic ideas: it attacks the falseness of many cherished beliefs; it breaks the icons of evangelicalism; it shatters the idols and throws the shards out of the Temple. Don’t read it if the thought of breaking things and throwing out rubbish disturbs you.

President Theodore Roosevelt spoke of “those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.” This book was not written for such men. It will frighten them. If you are disturbed by the thought of radical change, if you are interested in a safe and relatively easy ministry, followed by an uneventful retirement, we advise you to leave this volume unread. Pass it on to someone else. It will only alarm and upset you.

If, on the other hand, you have become disgusted and dissatisfied with the various idiotisms of the ministry in our time, you may find it refreshing, in a dangerously thought provoking way.

“Little preachers” will be more apt to find this book helpful than those who are satisfied with their ministries. “Bigger” preachers, who want things to remain as they are, will probably dislike it, although I would rejoice if some preacher in a larger church hears our message. Probably those who are very dissatisfied will be helped most by reading it.

After many years in the ministry, I found that I myself was not satisfied. While reading the Bible one night, I came to this verse in Jeremiah, “And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh” (Jeremiah 45:5).

I decided then and there that I would no longer seek “great things” for

myself. Instead, I would turn back to the all but forgotten methods employed by our Baptist and Protestant forefathers.

I must admit that giving up decisionism and going back to the old-fashioned method of winning souls has been difficult. But even if I knew beforehand the trials that would come by returning to the old paths I would do it again, because it has produced a lively congregation made up of highly dedicated people who love their church, attend every meeting, work tirelessly to win the lost, and pray constantly for revival. My own mother faithfully attended four services each week, and enjoyed every minute of it.

Our critics may feel that this book is too negative. But I want you to know that we have really tried to give positive illustrations from past and present preachers, such as our description of emotion in the preaching of Dr. R. G. Lee, Dr. W. A. Criswell, and Dr. Jerry Thorpe, given on pages 125-128. We have mentioned 200 people by name in this book. We referred to 153 of them positively and named only 47 negatively. We hope you will notice our emphasis on the positive. Three-fourths of those we cited are referred to positively. We hope you will agree that we have made an attempt to be balanced.

Other critics may say that we believe people have “to get saved again.” But we do not believe this. We are convinced that the Bible teaches “once saved, always saved.” Others may say that we are attacking “easy believism,” but we never use that term in this book. We dislike that term because it confuses the issue. It *is* easy to believe in Jesus, if a person will actually do that. We prefer the British term “decisionism,” which better describes what we are against.

In recent times we have heard many answers to the problems facing our churches. Some advocate the principles of church growth; others are talking about lowering standards and making the churches “user friendly” and “up to date.” We are proposing a completely different approach, one which has not been tried by pastors for a very long time.

I wish I could make you understand how difficult it has been to write this book. I have quite literally burst into tears time after time, because I feel that God’s judgment may soon fall on our nation. If you have become as disenchanted as I am with the modern techniques of evangelism, and if you have decided to read this book, may God stir your heart to throw out fearfulness and go back with us to the ways of olden times. Then, even if we fail, we will at least have the satisfaction of knowing that we tried, an inner gratification never experienced by “those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

– R. L. Hymers, Jr.
The Pastor’s Study
February 20, 1999

“I am not a religious man, but America is now in moral anarchy. I do not believe it can even survive without a sweeping spiritual revival.”

– Judge Robert H. Bork,
nominee to the Supreme Court.

“Not until all is lost will many awake to the painful reality that America as we once knew it is gone.”

– Dr. Erwin Lutzer,
Pastor of Moody Memorial Church, Chicago

“A whole generation is growing up with no awareness of regeneration. Savages are stirring the dust of a decadent civilization and already slink in the shadows of a disabled church.”

– Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, evangelical theologian

“I believe that we probably have lost the culture war.”

– Broadcaster Paul Weyrich,
President of the Free Congress Foundation

“Criminologists are also warning that a new wave of ‘superpredators’ will soon hit the streets...no population poses a greater threat to public safety than juvenile criminals.”

– *Time* magazine

“There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.”

(Proverbs 30:11-14)

CHAPTER 1

THE BARBARIANS ARE COMING

by Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr.

“Mine eyes do fail with tears...because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.”

– Jeremiah, Lamentations 2:11.

It is 2:30 in the morning on the Fourth of July. I have just returned to my home from a prayer meeting, held at a friend’s church nearby. We were praying for revival. One theme ran through most of those prayers: our nation is in trouble, with problems far too deep to be solved by man.

On this Independence Day morning, as my wife and boys lie sleeping in the rooms above me, I can hear my mother, Cecelia, breathing in the bedroom next to my study. I am thinking of America, the good land she knew as a child over eighty years ago. I am brought to tears again and again as I sit here alone tonight thinking of our nation’s spiritual darkness.*

I am also thinking tonight of a dismal prediction given by Lord Macaulay, the great British historian, who died just prior to the Civil War:

Your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth; with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from *without* and your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered *within* your own country by your own institutions.¹

Macaulay’s words are coming true before our very eyes.

*Since writing this, my mother passed away, after a brief illness, in the eighty-fifth year of her life. She was born in Panama, Oklahoma and she loved America. So do I. I learned it from her.

There is a real parallel between our nation and the Roman Empire, with this exception: most of the barbarians in America do not practice pagan religion. According to a recent Gallup Poll, 74% of the American savages profess that they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ.^{2*}

When Los Angeles was burned in the riot, the Buddhists were hiding in their homes in the suburb of Monterey Park. The Jews and Moslems were trembling behind closed doors on the west side of town. Who burned Los Angeles? Not them! It was largely professing Christians who rioted, looted, burned and killed. Large numbers of these barbarians proclaimed themselves “born again.” Virtually all of them claimed some sort of “commitment to Jesus Christ.”

Next to Billy Graham, Luis Palau is probably the most well known evangelical leader of our time. He recently made this statement:

America, where 80 percent of the people claim to be Christians, but few live any differently from pagans or atheists, as though God has no claim on their lives. Their hearts have not been changed.³

That is a clear evaluation. This famed evangelist admits that very few are truly converted today. He goes on to quote the new-evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry, who said, “The barbarians are coming.”⁴ Neither of these men seem to see the irony of the fact that these “pagans” whose “hearts have not been changed” are mostly evangelical Christians already.

Earlier today one of these wild people slammed the phone down on my wife, when she telephoned, attempting to get a teenager to visit our church. “Don’t call here anymore,” the mother screamed at her, “We don’t need church. We’re already born again Christians.”

“We have forgotten the gracious hand that preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of

*Although polls like this are not picture-perfect indicators, they do appear to show that large numbers of Americans profess to be Christians. The numbers given in these polls approximate what we encounter in conversation with people in general. About three-fourths of the people we speak to think that they are Christians, and a large number of them think they have been born again. Our personal experience seems to validate the polls on this point.

our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. We have become too proud to pray to the God that made us.”
– Abraham Lincoln

Yes, Dr. Henry, the barbarians *are* coming – and most of them are “born again” evangelicals!

The “Born Again” Movement – a Social Failure

Europe has been called “post-Christian.” America is in an even worse situation. We are post-evangelical. This means we are moving into a time *after* the majority of our people claimed to be born again. With only a memory of decisionism, and very few who are truly Christians, American culture is now post-evangelical.

Billy Graham and a century of Finney-like preachers before him have gotten nearly all of these pagans to make “decisions.” Now these “Christian-barbarians” are coming to destroy our homes and our nation.

Here are several quotations gleaned from *Twilight of a Great Civilization* by Dr. Carl F. H. Henry:*

We live in the twilight of a great civilization, amid the deepening decline of modern culture. Our generation is lost to the truth of God, to the reality of divine revelation, to the content of God’s will, to the power of His redemption, and to the authority of His Word. For this loss it is paying dearly in a swift relapse to paganism. The barbarians are coming. A whole generation is growing up with no awareness of regeneration. Savages are stirring the dust of a decadent civilization and already slink in the shadows of a disabled Church.⁵

There is one weakness in these statements, however. Dr. Henry does not make the connection between his dark but true assessment and the fact that over 70% of these barbarians are *already* professing Christians.

*Dr. Carl F. H. Henry (1913 –) was the first editor of *Christianity Today*. He is the author of *God, Revelation, and Authority* (Word, 1981), six volumes on theology.

Billy Graham and over a century of decisionist preachers have produced a generation which Dr. Henry says has “no awareness of regeneration” who “slink in the shadows of a disabled Church.” Think of it: 74% of our people claim to be committed to Christ and yet have “no awareness of regeneration”! Think of it: 74% of our people claim they have made a commitment to Christ, and yet they “slink in the shadows of a disabled Church”! These “Christian-barbarians” are coming to destroy our homes and our nation. From Bill Clinton down, they have already invaded every area of American life.

Judge Robert H. Bork, a decade after his bitterly contested nomination to the Supreme Court, wrote that we are rapidly moving toward “a brutalized and chaotic culture...plunging to ever more sickening lows.”⁶ Later, in an interview with *Christianity Today*, Judge Bork said, “Our culture is in decline in almost every area, from popular music to religion.”⁷

Dr. Erwin Lutzer is the pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. He said:

Although our nation is rotting on the inside and hostile forces are determined to take away our freedom...there are too many people who neither know nor care. Not until all is lost will many awake to the painful reality that America as we once knew it is gone. Because the transition is happening over a number of years, millions don't realize it is happening at all.⁸

The situation is equally appalling in Great Britain, although it came about in a distinct way, and manifests itself somewhat differently. The results, however, are just as devastating and destructive as in America.

The Collapse of Our Culture

While looking through my boys' seventh-grade literature book the other day, I was surprised to find a poem I remembered from my own childhood:

Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself has said,
This is my own – my native land?
– Sir Walter Scott

My son drew a picture under the poem. It is a sketch of Los Angeles, smog hanging over it, police cars whistling past a sign with the words “Hope

Street” on it, the street where our church is located in the civic center of Los Angeles. Another sign he drew says, “You are now entering L.A., the city of taxes and crime.” A man with a knife in his hand is screaming, “Give, give,” as he demands money from a passerby.

I will try to help my boy feel what Sir Walter Scott said about patriotism. I will try to help him not to be a man “with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, This is my own, my native land.” But it is difficult in our day to instill in a child that kind of love for a barren, cruel, godless country whose leaders claim to be “born again” while committing nearly every imaginable evil.

Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget!
– Rudyard Kipling

Thirty-six million American children have been boiled alive in salt water, had their heads and arms torn off, or been savaged in some other way in the past twenty-five years. More Americans have died like this than were killed in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam and from the AIDS pestilence *all combined*. Tens of thousands of these unwanted children were in the ninth month.

Pulpit Helps magazine says this:

We look with horror at the pictures of the Jews who were sacrificed by Hitler to try to create a super race. We even have a museum in Washington, D.C. dedicated to those who died. The holocaust which has taken place in America since abortion was legalized in 1973 makes Hitler’s plan pale by comparison. Since 1973 there have been more than 36 million abortions.⁹

I once held the body of a beautiful eight-pound baby girl. A pro-life worker put her gently into my hands. She had been scalded to death in the womb of her mother. Tears come to my eyes even now, as I write this. The first allies entering Nazi death camps in 1945 must have known the horror I feel over this heart-breaking and ghastly memory. And what did the new-evangelical leaders do to stop the slaughter? Almost nothing.

A Sure Sign That Our Culture is Pagan

We ought to remember these clear words from Dr. Harold Lindsell,* “Abortion on demand is one of the sure signs that our culture is pagan.”¹⁰ Certainly Billy Graham and other leading evangelicals knew of Dr. Lindsell’s position, which was also put forth vigorously by the late Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer. If Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, D. James Kennedy, or some other leading evangelical had been willing to spend a few nights in jail, like the more liberal Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. William Sloane Coffin, and Rev. Ralph Abernathy did during the civil rights movement, surely abortion would be over or at least severely restricted by now. But the best of these evangelical leaders lacked the passion or conviction of a King or Coffin. They were simply too busy raising money and promoting their own ministries to actually *stop* the slaughter when it was possible. Now it is too late forever. As commentator George F. Will pointed out, “Most voters understand that abortion will not be banned.”¹¹

What do you think would have happened if Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, or D. James Kennedy had led a non-violent march on Washington, and then spent a few nights in jail for peacefully closing an abortion clinic during the Reagan years? What if Graham or Robertson had laid their lives on the line to stop the slaughter, instead of merely collecting offerings? What if they had done as much as King or Coffin? You *know* the outcome would have been different.

Now many of these same evangelical leaders are using the homosexual agenda to raise funds. This issue will also be lost. ***Battles like this are never won by men whose goal is raising money.***

“Send me money to save America,” but when do you do anything to save it? “Send me money to stop the homosexuals,” but what do you do to stop them? “Send me money to evangelize the world,” but what do you do to evangelize it? These are legitimate questions.

The best place to put your money is in your own local, New Testament Baptist church, because the local church is God-ordained. The money-raisers are not God-ordained. The money-raisers are parasites. They live off of us, but they don’t help us. Instead of being called *parachurch* organizations, many of them ought to be called *parasite* organizations.

*The late Dr. Harold Lindsell (1913-1998) was editor-emeritus of *Christianity Today*, and wrote the landmark book, *The Battle for the Bible* (Zondervan, 1976).

“The Second Coming,” a poem by Irish author William Butler Yeats,* describes many atrocities in our time, but none more than the failure of evangelicals to stop abortion:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.¹²

As in other areas of life, so in the abortion conflict: the best lacked all conviction, while the worst were full of passionate intensity. That is why the “born again” Christians have lost. The abortion battle is over. We have failed. Infanticide will have the protection of perverted law until the end of time.

We should never forget that the American Holocaust took place in a nation where uncounted multitudes proclaimed that they had made a commitment to Jesus Christ. Even though 74% of our people claim to be saved, they were not able to stop the slaughter because evangelicalism has become powerless.

Kids Without a Conscience

Television and newspaper commentator Patrick J. Buchanan is a Roman Catholic. Although he is wrong on religion, he is correct when he points out that our culture is collapsing:

America has ceased to be a moral community. We do not agree on whether God exists, whether there is a higher moral law, whether abortion is killing a child, whether gay is good, whether drugs should be a matter of choice. And a country that ceases to be a moral community will eventually cease to be a country.¹³

*William Butler Yeats, “The Second Coming.” Reprinted with the permission of Simon & Schuster from *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats, Volume 1: The Poems*. Revised and edited by Richard J. Finneran. Copyright (c) 1924 by Macmillan Publishing Company, renewed 1952 by Bertha Georgie Yeats.

Is Buchanan right? Has America “ceased to be a moral community”? I think so. Look, for example, at the growing number of newborn murders. Two teenaged college students beat their baby to death a few months ago. They were not poor. They were not from an inner city. They were upper middle class whites from a suburban New Jersey community. They were college preppies. Amy Grossberg and Brian Peterson, both 18, beat their newborn son to death, put his body in a dumpster, and walked away smiling. We read about this sort of thing with alarming frequency now:

Baby Born at Prom; Body Found in Trash

ABERDEEN TOWNSHIP, N.J.--A woman attending her high school prom gave birth in a restroom, left the baby in a trash can and returned to the dance floor with her boyfriend, authorities said.

Chaperones and medics tried to resuscitate the full-term baby but it was pronounced dead at a hospital.

The baby was found Friday night by a maintenance worker who had been told there was blood on the floor of one toilet stall, said Monmouth County prosecutor John Kaye.

The worker found blood splattered on the walls, toilet and floor, and the trash can containing the baby’s body was inside the stall.

Autopsy results were to be released today, Kaye told the Asbury Park Press. He said he was told the baby was a boy.

After giving birth, Kaye said, the 19-year-old woman returned to the ballroom at the Garden Manor catering hall, danced with her boyfriend and even requested a song from the band at the prom for Lacey Township High School.

– *Associated Press*¹⁴

She killed her baby, a six pound boy. Then she went back to dance with her boyfriend. “She was sitting near me and my friends, talking and laughing,” said student Janice Dries. “She looked like she was having fun.” She then went over to the deejay and requested the song, “Unforgiven,” by Metallica.¹⁵ It should be remembered that this girl is a

church member, one of the 74% who claims to have made a “commitment to Jesus Christ.”

People magazine recently gave the account of another girl who took a forty-two-year-old man into Central Park with her boyfriend. After they got the man drunk, the girl said to her sweetheart, “Gut him.” The boy did just that – he cut the man’s guts out. The girl is white, the daughter of a wealthy New Yorker. She is fifteen years old!

This child reflects the morals of a society gone wrong: “Kids Without a Conscience,” as *People* magazine called these children in their cover story.¹⁶ The article about the girl who killed her baby at the prom appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* directly beneath the account of a twelve-year-old child who doused his grandmother with gasoline and set her on fire because he was angry with her. The *People* article showed that teenage murders have increased fourfold in the last couple of years. Dr. David Hartman, director of neuropsychology at the Isaac Ray Center for Psychiatry and Law in Chicago said, “They need have no more reason for hurting another human being than they have for peeling an orange.”¹⁷

Speaking of two wealthy white teenagers who murdered their baby, attorney Jerry Capone said, “These kids from strong family backgrounds should have the proper moral background. That really frightens me. It means this lack of respect for human life cuts across all economic classes.”¹⁸ Referring to the girl who killed her baby in the toilet and went back to dance, *Time* magazine said, “There is almost no difference between the prom Mom and a woman having a third trimester abortion, except for location and a few days.”¹⁹ *The kids have not only noticed this, they have internalized it.* They are now at large in our culture, their view of human life shaped by a society which encourages third-trimester abortions, a society where most of the people claim that they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ.

Superpredators

Once Frankenstein turned his monster loose he could no longer control it. Like the monster, these kids without consciences now stalk our city streets. This morning a preacher told me about a conversation between a woman and her teenaged son. The boy had been home-schooled, but his mother sent him to public high school this semester. He came home and said, “Mom, there’s something wrong with the girls at school. I don’t know what it is, but something is awfully wrong. There’s just something wrong with them.” That is the candid evaluation of a modern American adolescent.

Time magazine said this about today’s teenagers:

From 1985 to 1995, juvenile crime rose 67%. Perhaps a fifth of all violent crime is the work of teens: In America today, no population poses a greater threat to public safety than juvenile criminals...Criminologists are also warning that a new wave of “superpredators” will soon hit the streets. In fatherless households and fractured neighborhoods, millions of four- to seven-year-olds are headed for their teens.²⁰

We are reaping a harvest of “superpredators” already according to *U. S. News and World Report*:

Violent crimes are being committed by younger and younger children: The number of 13- to 15-year-olds arrested for murder nearly doubled between 1982 and 1992.²¹

Dr. Wade F. Horn, Director of the National Fatherhood Initiative, points out that between 1982 and 1991 the rate at which children were arrested for aggravated assault rose 72 percent; for rape, 24 percent; for automobile theft, 97 percent; and for murder, 93 percent.²² He went on to say:

The teen population is expected to grow by 20 percent over the next decade, and this prospect has led many sociologists, criminologists, and law enforcement agencies to conclude that shortly after the turn of the century we will see an adolescent crime wave the likes of which has never been seen before in this country.²³

It should be remembered that this generation of superpredators was raised by a society in which three-fourths of the people claim they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ. Something is terribly wrong with the “born again” movement in America!

The wife of an honest evangelist said recently that there’s something wrong with many preachers as well. “They’re not clean. They’re just not clean,” she said. Her husband agreed with her. That is the evaluation of a man and wife who have been in countless conservative churches across America and have witnessed this in many of them. The uncleanness they have seen abounds in our churches.

How much farther can we go before our culture disintegrates completely? As Buchanan put it, “A country that ceases to be a moral community will eventually cease to be a country.”

Paul Weyrich is the broadcaster who suggested the name Moral Majority to Jerry Falwell. He is president of the Free Congress Foundation. Weyrich believes that conservatives have now lost the battle with liberal secular humanism. He said:

I believe that we probably have lost the culture war. I no longer believe there is a moral majority.²⁴

During the moral undertow that flowed from the failure of the Clinton impeachment, Weyrich said:

For conservatives, the meaning of this defeat is profound. It is clear that we now live in a hostile culture.²⁵

A Sea of Half Naked Men Dance at Wild Parties Across America and Europe

Here is a blood-chilling news story from the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*:

Gay Party Tour Where Sex and Drugs Flourish

A pulsating sea of mostly white, mostly buff, mostly shirtless men packs the dance floor, swaying to percussive music so loud it makes cars outside vibrate and conversation inside a challenge.

Navigating the crowd without brushing against bare flesh is close to impossible among partyers in black leather, skin-tight jeans and even a few in chaps that show their buttocks. A steady stream of couples heads hand in hand for the restrooms, where a sign obliquely reminds them to "Please Party Responsibly."

This is Magnitude, highlight of the latest stop on the Circuit, a series of weekend-long events built around all-night dance parties for gay men. Held year-round across North America and Europe, these are parties where virtually anything goes and freewheeling sex is *de rigueur*.

“A Circuit party gives us the chance to enter the altered world where man-to-man sex is not only accepted, but is celebrated,” says the World Wide Web site of *Circuit Noize*, a quarterly magazine that critiques and publicizes the parties.

“When the Circuit comes to town, that town becomes an instant gay ghetto full of hot men who are behaving as queer as they care to be,” says the magazine.

Los Angeles psychotherapist Betty Berzon, who sees only gay and lesbian patients and has written books on single-sex relationships, says more and more of her clients are pinpointing the Circuit as a source of trouble. “Men are coming to me because they want to get off the Circuit,” Berzon says.

Her clients tell stories of using Ecstasy or crystal methamphetamine to help them stay awake for days at a time, to get “up” for the parties, Berzon says. They come down with the help of a tranquilizer called K or Special K, or more recently, GHB, the so-called date-rape drug.

“The stories I hear horrify me,” Berzon says. “You go there Friday night. You don’t sleep Friday, Saturday, Sunday, maybe even Monday. You use drugs. You have sex and then you have a hard time getting home. You get to the airport and can’t remember what city you’re in. You don’t remember what you’ve done with your luggage, can’t remember flight numbers or where you are going.”²⁶

Please tell me how a culture can continue which not only allows, but actually encourages such behaviour. Explain, in the light of this news story, why Pat Buchanan was wrong when he said, “A country that ceases to be a moral community will eventually cease to be a country.”

Remember, a large percentage of the men at these homosexual orgies consider themselves evangelicals, and will tell you they are born again! We hear this time and again from people living in various forms of iniquity.

Pat Robertson has correctly said, “The acceptance of homosexuality is the last step in the decline of Gentile civilization.”²⁷ While I would not agree with him on a number of other issues, this statement has proved to be true throughout history (see Romans 1:21-32). What happened in past cultures is being repeated today in America and Great Britain.

**Thousands of the Elderly Dying From
Lack of Water and Food, Maggots Breeding in
Their Open, Untreated Wounds,
Abandoned by Their Children!**

Time magazine reports 26,097 nursing home sanctions recommended last year alone.²⁸ The article tells us at least 35,000 Americans “are dying prematurely, or in unnecessary pain, or both.”²⁹ Here are a few sample horror stories, taken from *Time* magazine, which illustrate what is happening to thousands of elderly Americans in nursing homes today:

“I couldn’t get anybody’s attention, starting on the fourth day,” recalls the bed-bound 84-year-old. “You’d have your call light on for hours, but nobody came.” What made her waiting more desolate was the near total deprivation of sunlight during her four months at Creekside. “It was a dungeon,” she says. “I really would have liked to see the sunshine, but they never put us outside.” Things only got worse when the sun set, and the staff ignored calls for help or painkillers. “The screaming is what got to me the worst, the screaming when the lights went out,” she says. “I couldn’t fall asleep until 1 or 2 in the morning with all that screaming going on.”

A bedsore on Bessie’s left hip turned into a gaping wound that would not heal, despite repeated whirlpool baths. Creekside nurse Patricia Lloyd knew why: the special washing machine for cleaning dirty bedpans had broken down. “So we washed bedpans in the whirlpool,” she says, “and then we’d put patients with big bedsores, like Bessie Seday, in there.” Fixing Bessie’s wound required repeated surgery, including the removal of her left buttock and part of her pelvis. “They were washing her,” says Lesley Clement, her attorney, “in a damn cesspool.”

Everybody was sick; everybody was having problems. Did such care lead to premature deaths among Creekside residents? “Absolutely,” Lloyd says firmly and quickly, “I’m 100% sure. People would come in, they’d get depressed, stop eating and start falling. Then they’d get tied down to a chair, and then they’d rapidly decline and die. That was something

that was pretty common at Creekside.”

And then there are the maggots. In 1994 a nurse at the Fairfield Health Care Center in Fairfield, Calif., found about 40 maggots in a bedsore on the left heel of an 87-year-old man. State inspectors recommended a \$24,000 fine, but the nursing home appealed, saying the wriggling larvae didn't constitute evidence of poor care. Besides, the nursing home argued, maggots are good for eating away dead tissue inside a wound. The state hearing officer agreed with the nursing home and threw out the fine.³⁰

This *Time* article says that similar conditions abound in nursing homes all across America. Please tell me how a nation that allows its older citizens to be treated like this can go on much longer.

Remember that a large percentage of these elderly people have been abandoned to a life of lonely filth and horror by their evangelical children and grandchildren, who brightly claim to be “born again.” How can a people that lets their parents rot and die in loneliness be considered “Christian” in any sense of the word? Please tell me why Pat Buchanan was wrong when he said, “A country that ceases to be a moral community will eventually cease to be a country.”

“Now That the Vulgarly Dike is Broken, Expect a Flood!”

In 1980, TV programs for children contained 18.6 violent acts per hour. Now they contain 26.4 violent acts every hour. The American Psychological Association says,

By the time the average child leaves elementary school, he or she will have witnessed at least 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other assorted acts of violence on TV.³¹

Dr. John P. Murray, director of the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University, says, “Kids grow up watching these shows and become desensitized to the violence. The longer society views this violence as an acceptable standard of programming, the more children are affected by it and carry the effects into adulthood.”³²

TV is rapidly adding scatology, pedophilia and other offences to its menu of garbage. Gutter-mouthed Howard Stern competes with Saturday Night Live. South Park features kiddie-style cartoon characters shouting

foul language, one of whom dies a horrible death each week. Recently a new character was introduced – a living, talking product of a bowel movement. *World* magazine says, “Now that the vulgarity dike is broken, expect a flood.”³³

A new situation comedy on TV features Abraham Lincoln in a bisexual relationship with a black male servant at the White House.³⁴ “Lincoln is portrayed as a sex-crazed bumbler, while his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, is mostly just sex-crazed.”³⁵ *Time* magazine reports that an off-Broadway play in New York called “Corpus Christi” portrays Jesus Christ as a homosexual who “has his first gay experience when Judas accosts him in the bathroom.”³⁶ It will probably be made into a movie and then shown on television. Nothing is honored; nothing is respected; nothing is sacred.

Even though 74% of Americans claim they are committed to Christ, these “Christians” are by far the largest consumers of trash TV – violence, sex and all that goes with it. If even a small percentage of the evangelical community turned off these programs the filth and violence would end. But they won’t do it.

Preachers often watch bloody videos filled with sex directly before going to bed on Saturday night. On Sunday morning they wonder why there is little blessing from God!

The Internet

Then take the Internet. There is a huge amount of pornography available to any child who can use an on-line computer. There are 155,369 Internet sites with names like “Sex Pics” and “Nude Teens.” And there are an additional 328,530 homosexual sites with names like “Breathless Boys” and “Big Stud Super Site.”³⁷

Millions of children are looking at this junk. Again, the largest consumer group is the evangelicals. Pornography has now become so easily accessible on the Internet that many preachers (and church members) have become addicted to it. They watch it by the hour. Throngs of these evangelicals have their hearts centered in garbage, trash and filth.

How much farther can we go before judgment falls? As Pat Buchanan said, “A country that ceases to be a moral community will eventually cease to be a country”...even if nearly three-fourths of its people say they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ.

NEW YORK

Teacher Attacked by Jerry Springer Fans

A New York City public school teacher was attacked by her sixth-grade students because she refused to allow them to watch “The Jerry Springer Show” on a classroom television set, police said. The teacher, Aishah Ahmad, 44, was slapped, kicked, punched and spat upon by four girls who became outraged when Ahmad wanted them to watch an educational show instead of Springer’s talk show. The topic of the show was “Bisexual Relationships Hurt Married Couples.” The incident occurred Wednesday at Public School 12 in Brooklyn. Ahmad was treated at an area hospital for bruises to her neck, face and leg. The students, ages 11 and 12, have been suspended, a Board of Education spokesman said.³⁸

But they’ll be back – with millions more like them. The barbarians are coming!

The Churches Will Do Almost Anything – Out of Desperation

And how are the churches responding? The July/August 1998 *Fundamentalist Digest* reported that teenagers are dancing to sensual rock music in many new-evangelical churches. The article indicated that this trend is now infiltrating fundamentalist churches as well.³⁹

I have in my hand a photograph from the *Dallas Morning News* which shows several teenagers dancing to rock music at the First Baptist Church of Dallas, where Dr. W. A. Criswell was the pastor for many years. Billed as a “Hard-Core-A-Thon,” this dance made the building at First Baptist shake according to the newspaper article.⁴⁰

A short time ago I was driving through Houston on a trip with my family. It was Sunday, so we dropped into the First Baptist Church, where John Bisagno is pastor, since we knew of no independent church in the downtown area. I can only describe this evening service as fully charismatic. The pulsating music went on at a deafening level for nearly an hour. The sermon, by a man named Louie Giglio, was replete with

charismatic ideas, punctuated by waves of people holding their arms in the air. The ushers were men dressed in shorts and caps with rings in their ears.* Yes, at the First Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, where J. Frank Norris once held mighty evangelistic meetings! This crowd wouldn't have put up with him for five minutes!

My boys and I were wearing dark suits. My wife was in a modest dress. All of us were carrying black Scofield Bibles. We felt as out of place as we would have if we had entered a night club, a rock concert, or an opium den! Everyone looked at us like we were from another culture, race or planet! I could hardly believe this was a Baptist church at all! But it was. It is considered one of the *conservative* churches in the Southern Baptist Convention. It is supposed to be one of the churches that saved the SBC from liberalism!

Campus Crusade for Christ points out that only 12 percent of today's teenagers attend church at all, and 88 percent of *them* will not continue to attend after they are out of high school.⁴¹ This trend has caused many churches to become desperate. They are willing to try almost anything, even dancing or charismatic music, to hold onto a few young people. They relax dress codes, throw out traditional music and preaching, take off their ties and put on collarless shirts, throw out the King James Bible – nearly anything – in a futile attempt to keep a few sullen, shaved-headed, grey-clothed, mumbling Neanderthals from leaving their churches.

But ask yourself this: can teenagers drawn to the church by these gimmicks save America from barbarianism – or will they remain pagans themselves?

Dr. Harold Lindsell gave this grim analysis:

Civilization based on Judeo-Christian foundations has collapsed. In its place the West without exception now lives and functions as a pagan world.⁴²

The barbarians are coming. They already slink in the shadows of a disabled church. And most of them will tell you they are Christians!

*We are *not* advocating the same position as Jack Hyles or his followers when we point out the neo-pagan dress code of this church. If you read another two or three chapters you will see the difference between our position and theirs.

Listening to the X-Generation

I believe there is a better way to reach the younger generation than by adopting their culture. By *listening* to them you earn their ear. Most X-Generation young people have never known an adult man who cared enough to listen to them, asking questions and then hearing their response, as Dr. Cagan advocates in Appendix 8 (pp. 215-227). It is particularly important to listen to them like this after we preach the gospel. I have found that they are often reduced to tears, their hearts melted, when a caring pastor listens. The fact that I am nearly sixty years old and wear a dark suit and tie actually *helps* me reach these X-Generation young people. Most have never known an older man who cared enough about them to listen intently before gently responding.

“Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled,
my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of
the daughter of my people; because the children and
the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.”
(Lamentations 2:11)

FOOTNOTES

¹Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, letter to Henry Stephens Randall, May 23, 1857, reprinted in *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, Thomas Pinney, editor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), volume VI (January 1856 – December 1859), p. 96.

²*National and International Religion Report*, October 8, 1990, p. 8.

³Luis Palau, *The Only Hope for America* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1996), p.10.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Carl F. H. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1988), pp. 15-17.

⁶Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Toward Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 140.

⁷*Christianity Today*, May 19, 1997, p. 30.

⁸Erwin W. Lutzer, *Exploding the Myths that Could Destroy America* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 11.

⁹Leland Crawford, “Abortion: America’s Holocaust,” *Pulpit Helps*, January 1999, p. 23.

¹⁰Harold Lindsell, *The New Paganism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 151.

¹¹George F. Will, syndicated column, *San Angelo Standard Times*, San Angelo, Texas, August 3, 1998, p. 6-A.

¹²William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming." Reprinted with the permission of Simon & Schuster from *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats, Volume 1: The Poems*. Revised and edited by Richard J. Finneran. Copyright (c) 1924 by Macmillan Publishing Company, renewed 1952 by Bertha Georgie Yeats.

¹³Patrick J. Buchanan, *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 1997, p. B-11.

¹⁴*Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1997, p. A-5.

¹⁵*Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 1997, p. A-16.

¹⁶*People* magazine, June 23, 1997, pp. 46-53.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁹*Time* magazine, June 23, 1997, p. 42.

²⁰*Time* magazine, July 21, 1997, pp. 26, 28.

²¹*U. S. News and World Report*, January 17, 1994, p. 26.

²²*Imprimis*, volume 26, number 6, June, 1997, p. 4.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Los Angeles Daily News*, February 23, 1999, p. 15.

²⁵*Los Angeles Daily News*, February 23, 1999, p. 15.

²⁶*Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1997, pp. A-1, A-23.

²⁷*Time* magazine, October 26, 1998, p. 35.

²⁸*Time* magazine, October 27, 1997, p. 34.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

³¹*National Enquirer*, October 21, 1997, p. 27.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*World* magazine, August 22, 1998, p. 4.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1998, p. F-16.

³⁶*Time* magazine, October 5, 1998, p. 86.

³⁷*World* magazine, August 22, 1998, p. 4.

³⁸*Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1998, p. A-13.

³⁹*Fundamentalist Digest*, reported in *Calvary Contender*, 9/1/98, p. 2.

⁴⁰*Dallas Morning News*, August 1, 1998, p. 2-G.

⁴¹Ron Luce, Teen Mania Ministries, August 1998, newsletter.

⁴²Harold Lindsell, *The New Paganism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 213.

“The evangelical accommodation to the world of our age represents the removal of the last barrier against the breakdown of our culture. And with the final removal of this barrier will come social chaos.”

– Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer,
evangelical theologian,
The Great Evangelical Disaster, 1984.

“It’s gone. Remember when Francis Schaeffer told us that some day we would wake up and find out that the America we once knew was gone? That day is here. We have crossed an invisible line and there are no signs that we are capable of turning back.”

– Dr. Erwin Lutzer,
Pastor of Moody Memorial Church,
Chicago, 1993.

“Pollster George Barna compares the church to the ‘Titanic.’ He said, ‘It is large, elegant, and sinking fast.’”

– Dr. James Dobson,
Focus on the Family.

“Anyone with any spiritual maturity and discernment, who knows the religious climate in America today, knows most church members today are not saved.”

– Dale Burden,
Editor, *The Gist*, 1997.

“If we could get half the church members saved, we would see a great revival. In fact, I think if we could get half of the preachers converted, we would see a mighty revival.”

– Dr. Monroe “Monk” Parker,
See Appendix 1, p. 195.

“We must have a new reformation. There must come a violent break with that irresponsible, amusement-mad, paganized pseudo-religion which passes today for the faith of Christ.”

– Dr. A. W. Tozer,
We Travel An Appointed Way.

CHAPTER 2

NEEDED – A VIOLENT BREAK WITH DECISIONISM

by Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr.

“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” (Jeremiah 9:1)

“Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord.”
(Jeremiah 9:6)

Western culture is rapidly declining into uncivilized savagery, our common speech becoming crude and coarse, our actions perilous, primitive, caustic, cruel and even subhuman.

Such barbarism did not appear suddenly. We slid into it gradually over about fourteen decades. Early in the twentieth century, Churchill was already haunted by the cultural erosion unveiled in the aftermath of World War I. Consumed with deep foreboding, he delivered this dark election speech in November, 1922:

What a disappointment the Twentieth Century has been.
How terrible and how melancholy
is the long series of disastrous events
which have darkened its first twenty years.
We have seen in every country a dissolution,
a weakening of those bonds,
a challenge to those principles
a decay of faith
an abridgement of hope
on which the structure and ultimate existence
of civilized society depends.
We have seen in every part of the globe
one great country after another
which had erected an orderly, a peaceful
a prosperous structure of civilized society,
relapsing in hideous succession
into bankruptcy, barbarism or anarchy.¹

He went on to say that millions of people desire to “shatter the structure by which they live and return blindly and heedlessly to primordial chaos.”

Churchill concluded the speech by saying that these “destructive tendencies have not yet run their course.”² He said this during the “roaring twenties,” and things have certainly not improved since then. Every sign indicates that his prediction still holds true. And the worst is yet to come.

Seventy-four years later, in May of 1996, Billy Graham received a Congressional Gold Medal from Bill Clinton and the Congress. According to a recent Gallup poll nearly three-fourths of Americans say they have “made a commitment to Jesus Christ.”³ Yet, when Dr. Graham received the Gold Medal, he told President Clinton and the U. S. Congress, “We are a society poised on the brink of self destruction.”⁴ He went on to say that our culture “is plagued with crime and violence, drug abuse, racial and ethnic tension, broken families and corruption.”⁵

How can this be true if most of our people have been converted by “making a commitment to Jesus Christ”? The only logical conclusion is that these “commitments” have not converted the vast majority of our people, and Churchill’s warning, that these destructive tendencies have not yet run their course, still holds true.

A Very Small Remnant

We live in Los Angeles, a morally vile and spiritually consumptive corner of the American Republic. It has often been noticed by social commentators that trends coming out of Los Angeles (which includes Hollywood in its city boundary) are often harbingers of the future, inclinations which will shortly thereafter be found throughout the English speaking world and beyond. If Christianity continues to follow the course it has taken here, we are in a fearful crisis indeed.

A recent advertisement in *Sword of the Lord* indicates only two fundamental Baptist churches in the entire Los Angeles/Hollywood area, a metropolis of four million people.⁶ Even if this proves to be slightly exaggerated, there are certainly very few churches. Our own congregation is almost the only church in the civic center of Los Angeles, other than the Salvation Army hall and the Roman Catholic Cathedral.

Dr. W. A. Criswell once said to me, “Go to it, Hymers. You don’t have any competition.” Though I believe he was wrong not to leave the Southern Baptist Convention, he was right in pointing out to me how pitifully few Bible-believing Christians there are in this great and wicked city.

Is this a picture of the future, a foretoken of doom for other cities? Will Los Angeles once again prove to be a trend-setter for the Western world?

Every social sign points in that direction. The days ahead look bleak for our churches and our culture.

Remember that this growing darkness is descending on us at a time when the swarming masses of our people say they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ.

We believe there is a remnant of converted people in the churches (cf. Romans 11:5). We do not profess to know how large it is, but the various statistics quoted in this book seem to indicate that it is pitifully small.

“Except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” (Isaiah 1:9).

To be sure, there are a few bigger churches scattered here and there, mostly in more newly developed areas, parts of the country less affected by the growing encroachment of barbarism. But the savages are even now infiltrating these areas through the media, dumping their pagan message daily into these homes through television. One of those suburban pastors said, “We have more people in the men’s bathroom than you do in your church.” That will give little comfort to the preacher who tries to copy his methods and fails to add solid converts to his own congregation.

Many pastors have been seduced into believing that manipulative sociological and psychological gimmicks can add people to their churches. Rick Warren lists several such gimmicks in his book, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Zondervan, 1995). They are really not unlike the gimmicks of Jack Hyles. They are different, but they are gimmicks nonetheless.

Warren, Bill Hybels and Robert Schuller use one set of tricks. Jack Hyles and his supporters use another set of tricks.

Both sets of contrived claptrap are based on the same idea – the belief that you can build a church by adding people through sociological manipulation.

In a sense, they are right. I started two churches using these techniques. The first one went up to five hundred members in a few years and the second one peaked out at one thousand one hundred and fifty on our high Sunday.

That’s when I started going back to the old methods. I couldn’t stand the phoniness of the whole thing. The people who came in were causing a constant turmoil. I now know that it was because most of them were unconverted. I had failed to take time, listening to each one personally before baptizing them.

The contrived gimmicks and tricks of the decisionists can gather a group of people together, but they cannot build a real, New Testament church. *This is revealed by the fact that their techniques work only in*

certain, newly built, white suburbs, places like Anaheim (a white suburb in the 1960s), Mission Viejo, or Hammond, Indiana (again, in the 50s and 60s). But an alert preacher will notice that these techniques don't work in big cities like San Francisco, Miami, or Washington, D.C.. Why? Because "church growth" methods are geared to sociology rather than conversions. Thousands of unwitting preachers have thrown out hymns, brought in snare drums, and all the rest, *without adding a single person! Yet they stumble on, sadly pursuing a method that "works" only under certain sociological conditions.* Rick Warren mocks churches that think the 50s was the golden age.⁷ He may be right, if he's referring to the 1950s. He's dead wrong if he's talking about the 1750s! (Read about the 1750s in a church history book!). The manipulative techniques of decisionist "church growth" experts, from Billy Graham to Rick Warren, will be unmasked in the twenty-first century. You see, America will be like Miami (almost from coast to coast), *not* like Mission Viejo then. The white suburban retreats will fade, and the gimmicks of the church growth "experts" will be exposed for what they really are: mere fads of the late twentieth century, dying gasps of a failed decisionist movement.

We simply *must* go back to the old ways if we intend to reach the masses in the great cities of our nation. We must listen, and make certain that the people are truly in Christ. I do not believe anything else can help us in the coming millennium.

We are convinced that real church growth can only come by rejecting and replacing the "decisionist" methods employed by Billy Graham and his fellow evangelicals in the twentieth century.

When Graham received the Congressional Gold Medal, he told the Congress and President Clinton, "We are a society poised on the brink of self-destruction." Yet Dr. Graham and his fellow "decisionists" have been so successful in their form of "evangelism" that a full 74% of the American people now claim to have made a commitment to Jesus Christ. This can only mean that Billy Graham and his fellow "decisionists" have been greatly successful in getting most of our people to proclaim themselves "saved," while utterly failing to get the vast majority of them converted.

Many have noticed that the spiritual condition of our generation is comparable to the days of Noah (Matthew 24:37-39). But very few have understood how the apostasy came about. This book attempts to give the reason and suggest an answer.

It will undoubtedly be disliked by those who favor the decisionist methods employed by Billy Graham and most other new-evangelicals. This is unfortunate, but it is to be expected. We ourselves defended Billy Graham and his techniques in the past. We also defended Charles G. Finney* at one time. We built an evangelical church of over 1,000 people in a short period

of a few years, using various techniques learned from Finney's *Revival Lectures*. We sent the names of every person who made a "decision" to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association so they could receive follow-up material in the mail. My own wife graduated from Graham's correspondence course for new Christians. But that church was built largely on a foundation of sand. When we rejected new-evangelicalism and reorganized as a fundamental Baptist church, many of those people fell back into various spiritual and moral sins. This caused Dr. Cagan and me to re-examine our own decisionist views in the light of Scripture.

The Silent Generation

My age-group has been named "The Silent Generation" by social commentators. We were born between 1925 and 1942. Much less troublesome than the "baby boomers" who followed us, we retained some of the characteristics of the "G. I. Generation," which came before us. But there are some big differences between them and us. They were willing to take risks; we are far more fearful. They were willing to lead; we are conformists. They were bold; we are timid.

Just picture the strong faces of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan in your mind. They were from the GI Generation. Now picture the timid faces of David Souter and Anthony Kennedy, of the Supreme Court. They are from the Silent Generation. Or picture the hyper-cautious, emotionless faces of "Silents" like Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and House Speaker Dennis Hastert, and compare their expressions to those of Ford and Reagan. I think if you will simply compare those faces in your mind, you will quickly see that my generation, men between fifty-six and seventy-four, are timid men generationally. We are conformists above all else. There are some exceptions, but they are pitifully few. For instance, the Silent Generation has never produced a president. We went from George Bush (G. I.) directly to Bill Clinton (Baby Boomer) without any man in the Silent Generation capable of leading the nation.

*Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) was a New England "revivalist" who promoted the doctrines of decisionism and introduced many of the techniques used in modern evangelism to this day.

We have produced very few robust leaders. We are too deeply concerned over what others think about us. We are too cold and timid to lead. We can't do anything bold or decisive out of fear that we will look too extreme. We wait – silently – for the nation to crumble.*

I think you will agree that a generation like mine isn't going to lead anyone anywhere, and certainly can't help America. ***Somebody is going to have to break out of the mental straight-jacket into which we have locked ourselves if we intend to save our country.***

You have to admit that there's at least a grain of truth in what I'm saying. The Silent Generation is at the top today. We hold key pastorates across the country. Most of us will never go any higher than we are right now.

Here is my question: do you want to serve out your time as a timid, "Silent Generation" man who doesn't want to appear extreme or ruffle any feathers? Or will you break out of this generational mold and become a true man of God, a man who lives to please Christ alone, a man apart, a leader?

Our people are lost. They don't know the way home. They need men who can point them down the right path and lead them with fearless honesty. Will you be such a man?

Those preachers who are most satisfied with their ministries will be more likely to criticize this book. If they have large and successful churches or other ministries to protect, they may fear the possibility of disaster if they were to take what we write seriously. That is to be expected, especially from the hyper-cautious Silent Generation, men ages fifty-six to seventy-four. With their hands and hearts all aflutter, these frightened "Silents" will think you are mad if you step slightly out of line to try something new – or something old. Therefore we think that preachers who are unsatisfied with the status quo are most likely to benefit from what we have written. In general it will probably be the "little" preachers more than the "big" ones from the Silent Generation who will find this book helpful. I just don't think many "big" men from my generation are going to have the courage to try anything bold or valiant at this late stage in their lives. Men who are starting new churches may well be the ones helped most by this book. They have less to lose.

*For a description of the Silent Generation, see *Generations*, by William Strauss and Neil Howe (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), pp. 279-298. "Sixty-five years after your first birthyear, no member of your generation has been elected President. That bothers you – though you would be the first to admit that an instinct for leadership may not be your generation's strong suit," p. 10.

Our Theological Position on Salvation

Since Dr. Cagan and I were “decisionists” ourselves, we can understand how those who are confronted with the problem through this book, perhaps for the first time, may be somewhat upset. Please understand that the convictions we place before you were arrived at through the trials and hardships of forty-one years in the ministry.

Our position on salvation by grace is that of mainstream fundamental Baptists in the United States. Dr. H. C. Thiessen states our view:

The upshot of the matter is that God must take the initiative if man is to be saved...We believe that the common grace of God also restores to the sinner the ability to make a favorable response to God.⁸

Thus, we believe that man is totally depraved; what Dr. Thiessen calls “common grace” (i.e. prevenient grace) enables a sinner to be converted during a certain period of his life: and that, once converted, the saved will continue in that state. After a baby is born it cannot be unborn, and after a man is converted he cannot be unconverted (John 10:27-28; John 5:24).

We do not use the term “easy believism” even once in this book. We are not writing against easy believism as such, because it is easy to believe in Jesus, if a person will actually do that (Acts 16:31). We much prefer the term “decisionism,” which refers to a far broader and more diabolically insidious problem facing us today, including “Lordship salvation,” which we reject. Those who brush this book aside as a mere diatribe against “easy believism” will not have dealt intellectually with the rather complex problem we are addressing.

Seduced by the World Spirit

Some may think that our words are too sharp and plain, but they need to be. Our culture is dying. Francis Schaeffer dictated these words as he lay on his own deathbed:

A large segment of the evangelical world has become seduced by the world spirit of this present age. And more than this, we can expect the future to be a further disaster. For the evangelical accommodation to the world of our age represents the removal of the last barrier against the breakdown of our culture. And with

the final removal of this barrier will come social chaos.⁹

This is a dark picture indeed, but it is full of truth.

One of artist Norman Rockwell's most famous paintings was reproduced on the cover of the November 24, 1951 *Saturday Evening Post*. The picture is titled, "Saying Grace."* It made an indelible impression on me the first time I saw it, when my uncle, Porter Elliott, brought this copy of the *Post* in with the newspaper one evening when I was ten years old. It has been reprinted and commented on countless times. A copy of it hangs in the kitchen of our home today. It has always meant a great deal to me personally.



*Printed by permission of the Norman Rockwell Family Trust. Copyright (c) 1951 the Norman Rockwell Family Trust. Masthead logo printed by permission of *The Saturday Evening Post*, licensing division, The Curtis Publishing Company, (c) The Curtis Publishing Company.

Examine Rockwell's *Post* cover carefully and you will see many things. All five men in the picture are looking at the old woman and her grandson as they pray. The *Post* version crops the painting about a half inch more than Rockwell intended, leaving out the faces of the men at the left. But the original reveals a somewhat wistful look in the eyes of these two middle-aged men, suggesting that they are remembering the religion of their childhood. The two teenagers, across the table from the old woman and the boy, do not have the same thoughtful expressions. The youth with the cigarette in his mouth looks at the praying pair with great inquisitiveness. The boy next to him has a look of disdain, even dislike, mixed with his own curiosity. One thing above all is certain: praying in public is out of place on Thanksgiving in 1951.

The painting graphically illustrates the following three points:

- (1) Praying is for those from the country, not the big city. The old woman and boy have their bags. They have come in from the countryside.
- (2) Prayer is looked at with curiosity; it is not understood and is even disliked by modern people in an urban situation.
- (3) Prayer is a thing of the past, remembered only by an old woman who leads her little grandson in saying grace.

These themes were true in 1951. Serious religion was for people out in the country, not in the growing cities. It was looked upon as a thing of the past, with curiosity and growing disdain. If that were true in 1951, it is even more so today.

Historically, we should remember that Billy Graham held his first major crusade in September of 1949, here in downtown Los Angeles. By the time this picture appeared on the *Post* cover two years later, Graham had already become a world figure, drawing huge crowds in Boston, London, and elsewhere.

Half a century has passed since I first saw Norman Rockwell's painting. Graham has held countless crusades, and has preached on prime time television to more people than any man in history. New evangelicalism, which began as a movement at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1948 (three years before the *Post* cover), has been highly successful in getting immense numbers of Americans to at least perceive themselves as

“born again.” Evangelical radio and television stations now beam their message to most American cities twenty-four hours a day.

Now look at the painting again and ask yourself, has all the effort of Dr. Graham and his fellow evangelical decisionists reversed the situation in the last fifty years? Sadly, we must admit that the condition is even worse, in fact *far* worse, than it was on Thanksgiving weekend in 1951. Evangelical decisionism has failed to convert the American people.

The America We Once Knew is Gone

I received a prayer letter from Billy Graham a few days ago. He said:

When I read the papers or watch television news, it seems like the moral dam in the western world is breaking wide open. The things on television and in the movies, and the literature people read, would make Sodom and Gomorrah feel ashamed. How long can God tolerate our loose talk and behavior?¹⁰

Apparently Dr. Graham does not see the strange irony of this statement. He and his fellow decisionists have persuaded 74% of our people to proclaim themselves “saved” at the very time that *he himself* says, “the moral dam in the western world is breaking wide open.”

The sad conclusion must be this: Billy Graham’s decisionist methods, followed by thousands of preachers in most segments of evangelicalism, have been an utter failure. Our Sodom-like society is proof that the decisionist movement has failed. It has not stopped the decline of morality in our nation.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer, pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, said:

It’s gone.

Remember when Francis Schaeffer told us that some day we would wake up and find out that the America we once knew was gone? *That day is here.**

We have crossed an invisible line and there are no signs that we are capable of turning back.¹¹

If he is right, then all of us should cast aside the petty fears and insignificant

*Emphasis by Dr. Lutzer.

goals which have held us back. Western culture is collapsing about us. We should be concerned only with eternity, not with what mere mortals think about us or our message.

We have written this book out of the white-hot conviction that we have nothing to attain by trying to look good, by playing politics, or by attempting to climb any denominational ladder. Since our nation is gone, we have nothing to gain or lose of any enduring value. This frees us to write what is absolutely necessary for any major revival to take place.

The Devil's Greatest Trick is to Imitate Salvation

The condition of America is tragic. Decisionism, rooted in the ideas of Charles G. Finney,* has produced a situation where over seventy percent of the people claim to be saved. Very often evangelical testimonies lack the basic elements of the gospel, however.

Here is the "testimony" of Steven Hill, leader of the "Brownsville revival" in Pensacola, Florida. This "testimony of salvation" was given on a 20/20 television program on October 9, 1997:

STEVE HILL: "I was arrested for – for drug sales, car theft about 13 times. And breaking and entering and – and you know, I had to have money to get drugs."

LYNN SHERR (20/20 reporter): "The change came at 21, he says, when his mother invited a Lutheran minister home to pray for him."

STEVE HILL: "I didn't believe in God, but he said, 'Say the name Jesus.' So out of desperation I looked up at the ceiling of the room, and I said, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.' I just began to say that name. And a power came through my body, and in a matter of seconds, it was like I was brand new."¹²

You will notice that Hill never mentioned the gospel in his "testimony"

*See pp. 165-167 in this book for our evaluation of Charles G. Finney. See also our book, *Decisionism and the Death of America*, which can be ordered by writing to P. O. Box 15308, Los Angeles, CA 90015. Enclose \$20.00 and ask for the book by name. This book shows how Finney's widely accepted theology and methods ruined evangelism and destroyed our churches.

(I Corinthians 15:1-4). We hear countless “testimonies” like this today, with no mention of Jesus’ death as payment for sin, or His Blood washing sin away. We are convinced that large numbers of Americans who claim to be born again have also been deceived.

This is true in Great Britain as well, though the decisionism there is mostly of the Reformed variety, rather than the “Finneyism” we have in America. There, the life-sucking elements of decisionism come mostly through mental belief, bypassing conversion and replacing it with mere acceptance of dogma. Instead of union with Christ, many have substituted belief in doctrines *about* Christ.

A Definition of Terms

What do we mean by decisionism? What do we mean by conversion? Here are working definitions of the two terms:

Decisionism is the belief that a person is saved by coming forward, raising the hand, saying a prayer, believing a doctrine, making a Lordship commitment, or some other external, human act, which is taken as the equivalent to, and proof of, the miracle of inward conversion; it is the belief that a person is saved through the agency of a merely external decision; the belief that performing one of these human actions shows that a person is saved.

Conversion is the result of that work of the Holy Spirit which draws a lost sinner to Jesus Christ for justification and regeneration, and changes the sinner’s standing before God from lost to saved, imparting divine life to the depraved soul, thus producing a new direction in the life of the convert. The objective side of salvation is justification. The subjective side of salvation is regeneration. The result is conversion.

Decisionism is on a human level. It counts something man does as the indication that conversion has occurred. Real conversion, on the other hand, is a saving experience with the resurrected Christ. True conversion is supernatural, while decisionism is purely human. Conversion is from God. Decisionism is from man. A decisionist does something which takes the place of saving trust in Christ Himself, but is, in fact, not that at all. It is only a human act. Decisionism does not convert the heart or the life. That is why so many people are spiritually and morally bankrupt today.

Churches Compared to the Titanic by Dr. Dobson

The churches in America were quite different before Finney's decisionism infiltrated them in the mid-19th century. Historian Timothy L. Smith points this out:

Certainly by modern standards church membership was a strenuous affair. *All evangelical sects required of communicants a personal experience of conversion and a consistent life.* Two worship services and Sunday school on the Sabbath were customary, along with a midweek gathering for prayer. The Methodists* invariably kept new converts on "probation" for many months...*All of these activities were pursued with a seriousness absent today.*¹³

After 150 years of Finney's decisionism, the "seriousness" of early nineteenth century Baptists and Protestants is "absent." In fact, a Gallup poll found "very little difference in the behavior of the church and unchurched on a wide range of items including lying, cheating and stealing."¹⁴ Gallup concluded that "most people's religion is secondary."¹⁵

"They profess that they know God: but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Timothy 3:5).

Dr. James Dobson, of Focus on the Family, says:

Many laymen may not know that the institution of the church is undergoing serious difficulty at this time. Many local churches are barely surviving with approximately 3,000-4,000 of them closing their doors every year. Pollster George Barna compares the church to the "Titanic." He said, "It is large, elegant, and sinking fast."

Attendance at weekly religious activities in the

*And most others, in varying degrees.

United States has continued to slip from 49 percent in 1991 to 37 percent today. Furthermore, **80 percent of church growth results from transfers of memberships. These statistics tell us that evangelism is largely stagnant.** Something is wrong with this picture. Obviously, the majority of Americans are dabbling in religious expression that has no substance.¹⁶

However, he does not point out the deep irony of this happening in a nation where 74% of the people claim to be saved! Why is evangelism “largely stagnant”? That is the most important single question of our time.

Over 3,500 U. S. Churches Close Each Year!

Woodrow Kroll is General Director of Back to the Bible. In his book, *The Vanishing Ministry*, Dr. Kroll gives these dismal statistics:

Many American churches are not healthy. It is estimated that 80 - 85 percent of American churches have plateaued or are declining.

The number of churches in America is not growing. ***In 1900 there were 27 churches for every 10,000 Americans. In 1985 this figure had declined so drastically that it is painful to report. There are now only 12 churches for every 10,000 Americans; less than half the former amount.*** Yes, this is the day of the super church, but even the phenomenon of the super church cannot account for this decline.

Add to this the number of churches that are now closing. There are over 66,000 closed churches in America. Another 62,000 are presently without pastors. ***Between 3,500 and 4,000 churches close their doors each year in the USA.***

In 1900, 66 percent of the American population belonged to Bible-believing soul-winning churches. They all professed faith in Christ as Saviour. ***Yet it is predicted that by the year 2000 there will be only 33 percent of the American population who belong to a church.***¹⁷

This has happened in a nation where the great majority of the people claim to

have made a commitment to Jesus Christ.

The churches are drying up. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit new members. Most pastors are frustrated, and many feel like giving up. A recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* said, "People are leaving the ministry in droves because it's so difficult. Pastors are what one study called the 'most occupationally frustrated people in America.'"¹⁸

The article failed to point out the *reason* pastors are "occupationally frustrated," however: they are dealing with mostly unconverted church members. No wonder they are so frustrated!

The Barna Research Group is an organization which studies statistical trends in American religion. Barna recently published a report that states:

80% of pastors surveyed said their ministries negatively affected their families; 70% said their self-esteem had dropped since they began their work; 70% had no close friends...despite eight years of higher education or more their salaries are "modest at best."¹⁹

Every one of these points can be answered by the fact that most churches have large numbers of unconverted people in their memberships.

1. Families of pastors are negatively affected because the pastor is dealing with many unconverted church members. This brings stress into the home.
2. Self-esteem drops among pastors because their churches contain many unconverted people, who do not appreciate them at best, and are often actively hostile toward them.
3. Few pastors have close friends because unconverted church members transfer to other churches and those pastors accept them with no questions asked. This destroys real fellowship and trust between neighboring pastors. Preachers often cannot be friends with other ministers near them for this reason. Also, many pastors find it impossible to maintain friendships within their congregations because so many of their members are unconverted.
4. Many pastors have low pay because unconverted church members don't give much money, and they don't want the pastor to make a decent salary.

Preachers are leaving the ministry “in droves” because “it’s so difficult.” But few see that the difficulties mostly lie in the fact that pastors are trying to “disciple” lost people in their congregations, and are trying to add more lost people through manipulative decisionist “evangelism.”

Leading Preachers Fear That Most of Their Members are Lost

According to a survey reported in the *Baptist Bible Tribune*, thirty percent of those who claim to be born again believe that “Jesus was a great teacher, but he did not come back to physical life after he was crucified.”²⁰ This means at least one third of those claiming to be born again are lost, since the Bible plainly says they are (I Corinthians 15:17; Romans 10:9). No one can be born again who does not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus (cf. Luke 24:37-39; John 20:27). The survey found that eighty-four percent of “born again” Christians “hold the non-biblical view on at least one of eight statements of biblical teaching.”²¹ This is the result of decades of “decisionism.”

It has been my impression, after hearing countless testimonies, that a large number of those who attend evangelical churches every Sunday are lost people, including Sunday School teachers, deacons, pastor’s wives, and even pastors themselves. Dr. B. R. Lakin used to say that seventy-five percent of those attending Bible-believing churches were lost.²² Dr. A. W. Tozer gave an even more dismal figure when he said, “Among evangelical churches probably no more than one out of ten know anything experientially about the new birth.”²³

Dale Burden is the editor of a Baptist publication called *The Gist*. Mr. Burden writes:

Anyone with any spiritual maturity and discernment, who knows the religious climate in America today, knows most church members today are not saved. Dr. W. A. Criswell, famous SBC pastor of the huge First Baptist Church in Dallas, said to a few pastors on the platform after he had preached (I was there) that he would be surprised to meet 25% of his members in heaven. Bob Gray, long-time pastor of the big Trinity Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, said several years ago that probably 75% of those he baptized were not saved.²⁴

Editor Burden went on to point out that Billy Graham, back in the 1940's, declared that 85% of our church members "had never been born again."²⁵ It must certainly be at least that bad today, though Graham doesn't make it that plain in his preaching now. These numbers given by Criswell, Gray, Lakin, Tozer, and a young Billy Graham are only estimates, of course. But they show that these leading figures believe something has gone terribly wrong in our churches.

Evangelical author Paris Reidhead wrote,

We've got to recognize that the message of salvation must not be addressed only to 'the world,' but to members of America's evangelical churches also. The greatest field for evangelism today, and in the days ahead, is among church members.²⁶

Dr. Monroe "Monk" Parker was often called "The Dean of American Evangelists." Dr. Parker said:

If we could get half the church members saved, we would see a great revival. In fact, I think if we could get half of the preachers in America converted, we would see a mighty revival.²⁷

Why No Revival?

That brings us to the subject of revival, which is the other point I wanted to bring out here. I have been studying this subject for over forty years and have had the privilege of personally witnessing two classic revivals in local Baptist churches. These were *not* just ordinary evangelistic meetings.

Duncan Campbell* preached during the last major regional revival in the English-speaking world. He said this about revival:

I would like first to state what I mean by revival. I do

*Duncan Campbell (1898-1972) came to the island of Lewis in December, 1949 from his home in Scotland. The island of Lewis is one of the Outer Hebrides Islands off the north-west coast of Scotland. The revival which came under Campbell's ministry began in 1949 and continued through 1953.

not mean a time of religious entertainment, with crowds gathering to enjoy an evening of bright gospel singing. I do not mean sensational or spectacular advertising. I do not mean high pressure methods to get men to an inquiry room. Revival is a going of God among His people, and an awareness of God...In revival the fear of God lays hold...moving men and women who until then had no concern for spiritual things, to seek after God.²⁸

Although there have been a few local church revivals, there has been no national revival since 1859, and no major one since we felt the effects of the 1905 Welsh revival in some parts of our nation. Why? Why has there been no nation-changing revival for over ninety years? Prior to that, nearly every American generation experienced revival. But something began to happen over a hundred years ago which has made it impossible for God to send real revivals to America and Great Britain any more.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee describes the results of this change, “Many folks have made salvation a simple mathematical equation: If you say yes to this, yes to that, and yes to a half dozen questions then you are a Christian...It just means a nodding assent, a passing acquaintance with Jesus. It does not mean that you are born again.”²⁹ This is a change from the old doctrines of regeneration and conversion.

I believe it was primarily this shift in the doctrine of conversion which stopped God from intervening, as He did so many times in the past, by sending revival. I first began to realize this when reading a book titled *Revival* by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) was a medical doctor before he went into the ministry. He was born in Wales and gave up medical practice to enter the ministry in 1927. In 1938 he came to Westminster Chapel, London, where he pastored until 1968. He was the author of many books and is considered to be an authority on revival. After a lifetime study of historical revivals he came to this conclusion:

The concealing, and the neglect of certain vital truths have always been the chief characteristic of the life of the Church in every period of deadness and declension...no revival has ever been known in the history of churches which deny or ignore certain essential truths. I regard this as an astoundingly important point.³⁰

He went on to prove from history that there has never been revival in churches which denied certain doctrines.* Then he gave the doctrines which he said *must* be held before revival is possible. After listing the correct doctrine of God, the authority of the Bible, the total depravity of man, the centrality of Christ, the Blood, and justification by faith in Jesus alone, he wrote,

Then, the other (doctrine) is, of course, the doctrine of regeneration...It reminds us that nothing will suffice except a man be born again, that he be given a new nature. That there is no value in any decision on the part of man...Regeneration. It stands out in the history of every revival that has ever taken place...³¹

When I read those two sections in Lloyd-Jones' book the whole problem and solution concerning revival flashed before my mind:

- (1) There is no revival because God has never sent revival where certain doctrines are denied.
- (2) One of these doctrines is regeneration (the corollary of conversion).

"There you have it," I thought. This insight burst upon my mind with a flood of light as I laid Dr. Lloyd-Jones' book down on my desk:

*British author Brian Edwards writes, "It has to be stated as a point of historical fact that revival never begins with the liberal wing of the church; that is, those who deny the full authority and accuracy of Scripture. I am not aware of any exception to this," Brian H. Edwards, *Revival! A People Saturated With God* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1990), p. 64. The greatly used evangelist Asahel Nettleton added these conditions, "Where the divinity of Christ, the total depravity of man, the necessity of a change of heart by the Holy Spirit, and justification by faith are denied and disbelieved – there the Holy Spirit seldom interposes to save the soul," Asahel Nettleton, *Sermons From the Second Great Awakening* (Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, P.O. Box 1286, Ames, Iowa 50014 USA, 1995), p. 95. Since decisionism denies three of these doctrines, for all practical purposes, those who cling strongly to its tenets have not seen many revivals. False doctrine on these points has quenched it, as Nettleton implied. We have not met God's conditions doctrinally.

We have had no major revival for over 90 years, and no national revival since 1859, because our churches have denied the doctrine of Biblical regeneration. We have come to believe in decisionism instead of conversion.

That is the reason why our prayers go unanswered, though many of us have literally prayed decades for revival. No matter how long we pray,

There will never be another major revival without a rejection of decisionism and a return to Biblical conversion.

Nettleton's Prediction

The absence of revival for many generations shows the validity of evangelist Asahel Nettleton's* prediction, given in 1827:

If the evil (of decisionism) be not soon prevented, a generation will arise, not knowing that a revival ever did or can exist without all these evils. And these evils are destined to be propagated from generation to generation, waxing (growing) worse and worse.³²

His prediction has come true before our eyes.

Dr. Kenneth Connolly says, "We are among several generations to be born, to live and to die without witnessing a national revival."³³ Leonard Ravenhill states, "We live in a generation which has never known revival."³⁴ Why? If our answer is wrong then there must be ***another*** reason. Surely God wants to send revival. What stops Him from doing so?

If you come to the conclusion that there is an element of truth in what we have written, then we pray that you will give serious consideration to the basic thesis of this book: ***We need sin-condemning gospel preaching followed by careful counselling from the pastor, with several counselling sessions in most cases.***

*Asahel Nettleton (1783-1844) was the most widely used evangelist during the height of the Second Great Awakening. Thousands were converted under his ministry. He strongly opposed Charles G. Finney's decisionist techniques and theology.

I have had the privilege of being an eye-witness to two classical local church revivals in Baptist churches. These two remarkable and unforgettable experiences set my heart on fire with the desire to see God move in this way again. I yearn for it and pray for it every day.

Tozer Called for a Violent Break With Evangelical Decisionism

Revival cannot come, however, without a revolution in our thinking regarding conversion. Here are excerpts from A. W. Tozer,* in which he called for “a violent break” with today’s decisionist evangelism:

Indeed, the whole evangelical world is to a large extent unfavorable to healthy Christianity. And I am not thinking of Modernism either. I mean rather the Bible-believing crowd... We are making converts to an effete type of Christianity that bears little resemblance to that of the New Testament. Yet we put millions of dollars behind movements to perpetuate this degenerate form of religion and attack the man who dares to challenge the wisdom of it.³⁵

That this disgraceful betrayal has taken place in broad daylight with full consent of our Bible teachers and evangelists is one of the most terrible affairs in the spiritual history of the world.

We desperately need seers who can see through the mist. Unless they come soon, it will be too late for this generation. And if they do come, we will no doubt crucify a few of them.

The tragedy is that present-day evangelism accepts the degenerate form of Christianity now current as the very religion of the Apostles and busies itself with making converts to it with no questions asked.

We must have a new reformation. There must come a violent break with that irresponsible, amusement-mad, paganized pseudo-religion which

*Dr. A. W. Tozer (1897-1963) was a pastor in Chicago for thirty-one years. He was the author of 32 books and was the editor of *Alliance Life*. He has been called “a 20th-century prophet” by many leading evangelicals.

*passes today for the faith of Christ and which is being spread all over the world.*³⁶

This book is just that: a call for a new reformation; a call for a violent break with the decisionism which has destroyed the moral and spiritual foundation of America and the English speaking world.

FOOTNOTES

¹When Churchill spoke, he did not use notes. Instead, he read the entire text of every speech. These speeches were typed out in broken lines to aid in delivery. Lord Halifax, followed by Churchill's staff, called this his "psalm form," because it looked like it was set down for singing. See William Manchester, *Visions of Glory 1874-1932* (Boston: Little Brown, 1983), p. 32; Manchester, *Alone 1932-1940* (Boston: Little Brown, 1988), pp. 33-34.

²WSC speech, recorded by Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume IV, World in Torment, 1917-1922* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1975), pp. 914-915.

³*National and International Religion Report*, October 8, 1990, p. 8.

⁴*Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1996, p. A-10.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Paul Chappell, survey reported in an advertisement given in *Sword of the Lord*, July 12, 1996, p. B-12.

⁷Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 55.

⁸H. C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 155.

⁹Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1984), p. 141.

¹⁰Billy Graham, prayer letter, January 1998, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, pp. 1-2.

¹¹Erwin W. Lutzer, *Where Do We Go From Here?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), p. 5.

¹²David W. Cloud, *O Timothy* magazine, vol. 14, issue 12, 1997, p. 26.

¹³Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (New York: Harper, 1965), page 18.

¹⁴Los Angeles *Herald Examiner*, July 14, 1984, p. 24.

- ¹⁵Ibid.
- ¹⁶James Dobson, Ph.D., Focus on the Family letter, Aug. 1998, p. 2.
- ¹⁷Woodrow Kroll, *The Vanishing Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1991), pp. 31-33.
- ¹⁸*Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1998, page B-8.
- ¹⁹Ibid.
- ²⁰“Born Again Christians Ignorant of Faith,” *Baptist Bible Tribune*, April 15, 1996, p. 28.
- ²¹Ibid.
- ²²B. R. Lakin, quoted by Roy L. Branson, Jr., *Dear Abner, I Love You. Joab* (Bristol, Tennessee: Landmark Publications, 1992), p. 298.
- ²³A. W. Tozer, quoted by Paris Reidhead, *Getting Evangelicals Saved* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), p. 46.
- ²⁴Editor Dale Burden, “Rick Warren, Rock Music, and the Fleshly Church Growth Movement,” *The Gist*, Spring Issue, 1997, p. 5.
- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶Paris Reidhead, *Getting Evangelicals Saved* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), p. 47.
- ²⁷Monroe “Monk” Parker, *Through Sunshine and Shadows: My First Seventy-Seven Years* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1987), pp. 61-62.
- ²⁸Duncan Campbell, *The Lewis Awakening 1949-1953* (Edinburgh: The Faith Mission, 1954), pp. 14-15.
- ²⁹J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), volume V, p. 608.
- ³⁰Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Revival* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1987), p. 35.
- ³¹Ibid., pp. 56-57.
- ³²Bennet Tyler and Andrew A. Bonar, *The Life and Labours of Asahel Nettleton* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975 reprint of the 1854 edition), p. 367.
- ³³Kenneth Connolly, *Frontline* magazine, Summer, 1994, page 17.
- ³⁴Leonard Ravenhill, *Revival, God’s Way* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1983), preface.
- ³⁵A.W. Tozer, *Of God and Men* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, 1960), pp. 12-13.
- ³⁶A.W. Tozer, “Could This Be Our Most Critical Need?” in *We Travel an Appointed Way* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1988), pp. 110-113.

“The pulpit has failed the churches, and the churches have failed America.”
– Dr. John R. Rice.

“Any man with fair pulpit gifts can get on with the average congregation if he leaves them alone. Never hint that they are wrong and they will be content. On the other hand, the man who preaches truth and applies it to his hearers will feel the nails and the thorns. May God raise up such prophets. The church needs them badly.”

– Dr. A. W. Tozer,
“Exposition Must Have Application.”

“Revival preaching has a power and authority that brings the Word of God like a hammer to the heart and conscience. This is exactly what is absent from most of our preaching today. The men who preach in revival are always unafraid and urgent.”

– Brian H. Edwards,
Revival! A People Saturated With God.

“We have been far too afraid of disturbing people, but the Holy Spirit will have nothing to do with a message or a minister who is afraid of disturbing.”

– Duncan Campbell,
preacher in the last great regional
revival of the English-speaking world.

“When was the last time you heard a good, old-fashioned, sin-condemning, Christ-exalting sermon? I’m talking about a real flaming, pulpit-pounding, Hell-raising, sin-naming, fire and Blood sermon. When was the last time you heard preaching like that?”

– Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr.

CHAPTER 3

LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY PREACHING COMPARED TO THAT DURING PAST REVIVALS

by Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr.

“Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow” (Jeremiah 14:17).

Sadly, it appears that Billy Graham was wrong when he said Richard M. Nixon was a born again Christian. As a college student, Nixon wrote that he did not believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ.¹ There is no proof that he ever changed that position. He never gave testimony to a Biblical conversion.² Knowing these facts, it should not surprise us that he used profane language in private and attempted to protect men who worked under him while he was president. However, after studying the facts carefully, I personally feel that President Nixon was driven from office unjustly by the liberally biased media and political establishment. I think he deserved no more than a censure from the Congress, certainly not the threat of impeachment, which forced him from office.

In spite of his resignation, Nixon was an important and even pivotal leader. That may be why Lyndon Johnson called him, “Probably the best president in history,”³ and *Time* magazine grudgingly said, “He was the most important figure of the postwar era,” thus putting him ahead of every modern president except Franklin D. Roosevelt.⁴

Jonathan Aitken is a member of British Parliament and an historical biographer. He called Nixon “America’s finest foreign policy president of the twentieth century.”⁵ Nixon opened China. He began detente with the Soviet Union. He backed the reorganized government of Russia, and persuaded Bush⁶ and Clinton⁷ to do so in the 1990’s. He changed the world as we know it.⁸

In 1994, President Nixon said:

What many commentators now join in calling a crisis of the spirit has affected all classes in American society...There is a growing sense that the social

contract essential to a free society has begun to unravel.⁹

Although Nixon does not appear to have been converted, he did have a profound understanding of history and culture. He read deeply on these and other subjects. That is why this comment, given in his final book,* is well worth our attention.

Nixon understood that we are in the midst of a great cultural war and that the very foundation of America, and the whole basis of Western society, is at stake. He believed that our culture was formerly based on a fundamentally Christian world-view, and that this is being eroded and replaced by a materialistic perspective.¹⁰ Nixon believed that this cultural war had been festering for decades, but that it exploded in the mid 1960's. He felt that the Viet Nam War ignited "the cultural revolution that eroded the traditional pillars of justice and decency in American life."¹¹

Nixon was somewhat fatalistic about the legacy of Viet Nam, and the cultural revolution it spawned, a moral revolution which made its way into the White House itself during Bill Clinton's presidency.

Today, there seems to be little hope for the future of our nation. Therefore, please do not think that any neat application of what we have written can solve the problems facing us. Only God can do that. Only He can send revival. Having said that, however, I believe there are certain conditions we can meet, and must meet, before God will send the awakening we so desperately need.

First, we can fast and pray. I believe that fasting is a key requirement for revival. There should be a word of caution here, however. Fasting without obedience will not bring revival. Read Isaiah 58:3-8 in this connection. Verse six says,

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

God wants us to fast for real conversions. That's what this verse is talking about.

Fasting has become quite popular among new-evangelicals. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, has promoted several fasting conferences. At one of these conferences in St. Louis, Missouri, Bright said

***Beyond Peace**, by Richard Nixon (New York: Random House, 1994).

that those present should repent of “racism, denominationalism, and the country’s moral decline.”¹² Fasts which include repentance in these areas will do little good, however. In all likelihood, not a person present was a racist or a denominationalist, and how could those present repent of “the country’s moral decline”? They could only repent of their *own* sins, but these were not mentioned by Dr. Bright.

True fasting must include repentance for failing to preach against the sins so rampant among professing Christians today. We cannot expect revival to come from fasting which doesn’t focus on the conversion of lost evangelicals (Isaiah 58:6). We cannot expect revival to accompany fasting when the preachers fail to obey God and

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1).

Not long ago, a certain preacher read to a congregation parts of a sin-exposing sermon by W. P. Nicholson, an evangelist who saw revival attend his ministry back in the 1920’s. The mere reading of this old sermon produced great anger among some people in the congregation. Another person who was present said to the preacher, “People don’t like that kind of preaching any more.” *That is precisely why they need it – now more than ever!*

“The Churches Have Failed America”

Dr. John R. Rice* said:

And whence comes this horrible breakdown in moral standards in America? Why is sex everywhere pressed

*We agree with Dr. Rice on the subject of preaching against sin. We disagree with him on the subject of Charles G. Finney’s decisionist techniques and on some related issues. But many of Dr. Rice’s sermons are evangelistic classics, such as “Crossing the Deadline – The Unpardonable Sin,” “All Satan’s Apples Have Worms,” “Neglect, the Shortest Way to Hell,” “Missing God’s Last Train for Heaven,” “God’s Slaughter Crew,” “The Scarlet Sin,” “Religious But Lost,” and many others. Preachers should obtain and read these powerful, conscience-probing sermons. It would do many churches good if pastors preached these sermons by Dr. Rice to their people. I myself have done just that on several occasions, always giving full credit to Dr. Rice before preaching.

on people, and movies and magazines are more lewd, and women less virtuous, and men more profane than before? Because America, with its millions of church members, has relatively few strong Bible preachers. There are not many preachers who preach on sin, on the coming judgment, on the awful Hell for Christ-rejecting sinners. There is not much preaching on “The way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15) and “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23) and “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). ***The pulpit has failed the churches, and the churches have failed America!***¹³

The Bible thunders forth on subjects like divorce, dancing, conversion, reprobation, total depravity, the unpardonable sin, the eternal fire of Hell, the need to examine one’s testimony, and more. But walk into most of the bigger churches today and what do you hear? Spiritual censorship has removed these Biblical subjects from most pulpits.

Many Silent Generation pastors, afraid of being considered too extreme, have stopped preaching the Bible’s full message. These timid pastors have bowed before the lost in their congregations. They have let unconverted people set the agenda for our preaching. They have allowed our churches to crumble and our nation to disintegrate, while they give soothing Bible studies designed to comfort the lost and keep them coming, without disturbing them. Many times, when members of our church go on vacation and attend other conservative churches, they are disappointed by the preaching. They often come back wondering what happened to the earnest preaching style of J. Frank Norris and Bob Jones Sr., which was quite similar in many respects to the type of preaching I heard as a young person in Southern Baptist churches. ***Most people don’t realize that this kind of preaching has already vanished from the pulpits in America and England.***

When was the last time you heard a good, old-fashioned, sin-condemning, Christ-exalting gospel sermon? I’m talking about a real flaming, pulpit-pounding, Hell-raising, sin-naming, fire and Blood sermon. When was the last time you heard preaching like that? I maintain that it is now quite rare to hear the gospel preached that way, even in fundamental churches. Gospel preaching is about gone – replaced by “expositions” and motivational talks aimed at Christians.

It is popular to say that the Methodists and Presbyterians don’t preach the gospel any more, and most of them don’t. But do you realize that hardly

anyone is preaching whole gospel sermons in *our own* churches on any regular basis? God help America! God help England!

The Attraction of Fiery Preaching

We've tried just about everything else: bus ministries, church-growth techniques, Sunday School programs, "user-friendly" promotions, charismatic music – you name it. But these techniques aren't working well anymore in most churches.

One preacher who has been through countless "How-to-do-it" seminars wrote this on the Internet:

I've been to Hyles' pastor's school, where I learned to preach against long hair; MacArthur's Shepherd's Conference, where I learned about Elder Rule. (I tried it, hated it, and even have a T-shirt to show for it – and all the bruises); John Maxwell's Leadership Seminar, where I learned to exalt me. Bill Gothard's Pastor's Seminar, where I learned just how unimportant the local church is; Narramore's conference, where I learned to pull myself up by my own boot straps. Financial seminars, where I learned how to fleece the flock ("you'll never get all their money"); Bus seminars, soul-winning seminars, church growth seminars, ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

I have read *Power-Korda*, *The True Believer*, *The Lonely Crowd*, all of Vance Packard's books on motivation, *Think and Grow Rich*, *How to Dress for Success*, *The Power Look*, *Transformed Personalities*, *The Measure of a Man*, *The Measure of a Church*, and hundreds of others.

I have found most were a waste of time and money!

There you have his answer: Modern "gimmicks" for Sunday School and church growth *just aren't working any more* for most preachers! "I have found most were a waste of time and money!"

Here's a new suggestion: how about going back to the oldest attraction of all – the one used in the Book of Acts to draw a crowd – the attraction of fiery preaching? Since all other methods are failing, why not make the pulpit the main attraction again?

Dr. John R. Rice once said:

The fervent denunciation of sin, showing by the Bible its wickedness...helps to get crowds to hear the Gospel. I have proved in major campaigns all over America that preaching on the scarlet sin (adultery), preaching on the death penalty for murder, preaching on the double curse of booze, and on other specific sins, has brought great crowds of lost people and has been used to win many to Christ. Some may come to scoff and remain to pray; some may be angry, but some will be blessed. *A crowd will gather for a fight. And the preacher who makes an open, sharp, logical and scriptural attack on sin, specific sins of people who are involved, will find that many such people can be gotten to hear such preaching.*¹⁴

This is a description of real, old-time evangelistic preaching. Dr. Rice said that such preaching will draw crowds. Why not make your pulpit the main attraction by returning to this tried-but-true method?

Our own church is located in a downtown area where there are hardly any churches. It has been built there by fiery preaching. It still works!

Someone may say, "Why, I could *never* do that!" Well, to put it as kindly as possible, if you *really* couldn't do that, even after praying and fasting, then perhaps you were never called to preach, since *preaching* is the thing we were supposed to be called by God to do. In his book, *Dear Preacher, Please Quit*,* Dr. Roy Branson writes:

"God marks his men by qualifying them. He enables them to do what he calls them to do" (p. 22).¹⁵

"One is not a preacher and ought not to preach unless Divinely called of God. He must be sent" (p. 7).¹⁶

*Preachers ought to read this book. It can be ordered from Dr. Roy Branson, Jr. by writing to Landmark Publications, P. O. Box 757, Bristol, Tennessee 37621. Although we do not agree with Dr. Branson on some things, this book is well worth reading.

Though I would not agree with everything in this book, he is Biblically correct in those statements. ***A man who can't preach should find another job.***

Secondly, along with fasting, praying and fiery preaching, I believe we can and must spend more time with the lost after each service. I believe we need to ***listen*** to them, not just preach at them some more. We must ***love*** them enough to spend time with them and ***listen*** to their thoughts, as Jesus did in John 3 and 4 and many other times.

I spent one hour asking questions and listening to sinners in an inquiry room at a friend's church this evening, before we had a Fourth of July prayer meeting. It was a joy to lead three men to Christ and then weep and rejoice with them. But it took time, over an hour after the sermon. It was done in the quietness of the pastor's office.

Every pastor should know what his people believe about the essential truths of salvation. There is no better way to find out what they believe than by ***asking*** them questions and ***listening*** to their answers. Dr. Cagan gives examples of the type of questions a pastor should ask on pages 225 and 226 of this book.

Listen to Leonard Ravenhill,* in an interview he gave to the ***Baptist Bible Tribune***:

One night on TV there was a National Geographic special about giraffes. They showed the birth of a giraffe and explained how the baby will be born from 14 feet above the ground and then must drop onto a small pad of straw. Sure enough the baby was born and dropped to the straw. Once it was on the ground it struggled to rise, and with the mother helping it, it was finally able to stand on wobbly legs. The announcer said this procedure took over four hours.

Well, I just burst into tears and ran into my bedroom and fell face down across the bed. My wife came in and I was weeping. She said, "What's wrong?" "Well, darling," I said, "it takes four hours for a baby giraffe to be born, but it only takes about four minutes at the altar in most churches for a sinner to be born again."

*Leonard Ravenhill was born in 1907 in England. He was an evangelist for many years. His most famous book is ***Why Revival Tarries***, which has been printed in thirty editions in over eleven languages. (Bethany, 1979).

This is a major problem in our churches. *Why don't we see more change in the lifestyles of our converts? It's because we don't take the time to really see that people are truly born spiritually. They make a mental assent and off they go, back to their sin and worldliness.*¹⁷

How could it have been said better? I do not agree with Ravenhill on everything, but he is absolutely right on this. We must spend more time questioning and listening to the lost after each service. A quiet place, like the pastor's office, is best.

Thirdly, we can preach the gospel. This may sound too simple to need saying. But it isn't. It does need *saying* – and *doing*. One of the main reasons we have so many lost people in our churches is because we are not preaching the gospel clearly (I Corinthians 15:1-4). We need to make sure the people *understand* the gospel by counselling them ourselves.

An Invitation Without the Gospel!

A preacher passed on to me a letter he received from a friend who attended a Christmas play at a large and well-known Baptist church recently.

When the Christmas play was over, the pastor of the church came out “and stood in front of the auditorium and said that if you weren't sure that Heaven was your home, you could be if you would just say this prayer. When he was finished leading the people in a prayer that involved ‘asking Jesus into your heart,’ the pastor declared to everyone who had prayed that ‘Heaven is now your home.’”

The man who attended the Christmas service told my preacher friend this:

There was no mention of sin, Blood, Hell, or the resurrected Christ! These four ideas were never mentioned!

In other words, people were called on to “ask Jesus into their hearts” without any mention of the Gospel whatever! (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

We are accepting many thousands of people as members of our churches without preaching the Gospel to them, as illustrated by this example, where methods were used to extract a “decision” without clearly presenting the Gospel of Christ. And I am saying that *we must preach the Gospel clearly* if we are to have true conversions in our churches.

One more thought: Where does the Bible itself plainly tell us to “ask Jesus into our hearts”? What preacher in the Bible asked lost people to do this? What convert in the Bible did this? It is common, but is it Biblical?

Confused by the Example and Preaching of Billy Graham

Belief in Billy Graham was like belief in Moses or Elijah when I was a small boy attending a Southern Baptist church. He was the greatest man in the world to us. The arguments Bob Jones, Sr. and John R. Rice were putting out against Graham’s cooperation with liberals and Catholics were never heard by us. We weren’t in the fundamentalist camp. That information never came to us in the isolation of our large, conservative, Graham-supporting church.

It is perhaps difficult for someone who has grown up in the fundamentalist camp to realize how strong Billy Graham’s influence was on a young man growing up in a Southern Baptist church in the 1950’s.

I believed in Billy Graham’s ministry. I prayed for him every day. I listened to him on radio every Sunday. I sat with my mother and watched him on television countless times. I read his books. I literally preached his sermons, even using his preaching style (some people tell me that even today they can hear an echo of Graham’s style in my preaching at times). I bought a coat like the one he wore. When he let his hair grow longer in the early seventies, I let mine grow.

I was a follower of Billy Graham. When he spoke at the dedication of Oral Roberts University, and joined with charismatics at Explo’ 72 in Dallas, I became more open to the charismatic movement than I had ever dreamed possible. I trusted Billy Graham. I was deceived.

When Dr. Graham praised the Pope as a great moral leader and evangelist, and said Mother Teresa and her nuns were high examples of Christianity, I looked at these Catholics and thought that they might be good Christians after all. Billy Graham said they were. We never questioned his judgment or leadership.

I went out of my way to meet Billy Graham and speak with him. I even had several professional photographs made with him. I was very definitely and very strongly under Dr. Graham’s influence before I began to see the errors of new-evangelical decisionism.

Even to this day there are those who pull out ecumenical quotations from tape recordings I made many years ago and try to use them to discredit my present ministry. That is to be expected. It is part of the price I’ve had to pay for being deceived by Billy Graham in the past.

I wish I had always seen the errors we expose in this book. I must admit that for many years I did not. Any insights we may have were only gained through long and very difficult years of transition, when Dr. Cagan and I struggled to leave new-evangelicalism and become true fundamentalists. I can only thank God for opening my own eyes, and pray that He will do this for others, perhaps through reading this book. Maybe my own path out of the darkness of decisionism and new-evangelicalism will help another struggling pastor somewhere. That would make the whole experience worth while.

Dr. Bart Brewer was a Roman Catholic priest. He left the priesthood and became a Seventh Day Adventist for a time. Finally, his pilgrimage complete, Brother Brewer became an independent Baptist. His book, *Pilgrimage From Rome*,* is published by Bob Jones University Press.

Some day I may write a similar book. It could be called, *Pilgrimage From New-Evangelicalism*. It would certainly have to contain a lot of material on how I was led astray by Billy Graham on many subjects. I came out of the Southern Baptist Convention, through new-evangelicalism, and into Fundamentalism, similar to the route Bart Brewer took from Catholicism, through Seventh Day Adventism, to Fundamentalism. Dr. Brewer and I have both been fundamental Baptists for many years.

I have loved Billy Graham. I prayed for him almost daily for nearly thirty-five years. But his messages became increasingly unclear as this poor, confused man pandered to the liberals and Catholics who peopled his meetings, and into whose churches he sent those who made decisions. His sermons were not as clear in the end as they were when I first heard him on the radio every Sunday as a small boy in the early 1950's.

I have loved Billy Graham. God knows that. So strong were my feelings toward him that I can recall vividly even now a dream I had twenty-five years ago, in which I rescued him from a crowd of ruffians. But I gradually saw that Billy Graham did not help America. He preached an increasingly confused message and sent many of those who made decisions into spiritual Hell-holes, posing as churches. I have come to believe that Billy Graham deceived us, that he didn't do his job right, and that millions will be in Hell through the confusion of his sermons.

**Pilgrimage From Rome*, by Bartholomew F. Brewer with Alfred W. Furrell (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1982).

Graham Gives Six Ways to be Saved

Not long ago I heard a sermon by Billy Graham in which he presented six (6) different ways to be converted. Then he glibly asked his listeners to pick whichever one of these suited them and come forward to make a “decision.” I have seen this confusing message presented by Dr. Graham time and time again in recent years.

The sermon was titled, “A New Beginning,” and was video-taped at a crusade in Cleveland, Ohio. It was broadcast on television in the Los Angeles area on the evening of June 1, 1996. In this sermon Dr. Graham gave six different, mutually exclusive, ways to be saved. Here they are, taken directly from the television program:

- (1) “Believe on Jesus as your Lord and as your Saviour.”
- (2) “Some of you might have been saved at confirmation.”
- (3) “I believe I know the day I was born again, but my wife doesn’t know the day. *She has always loved Christ.* She cannot remember the day when she didn’t love Him, and she cannot remember the day when she didn’t put Him first in her life.”
- (4) “The only way you can get to Heaven is to come to the Cross and confess that you’re a sinner.”
- (5) “You can be saved tonight by opening your heart to Christ.”
- (6) “Coming forward and making it public makes it genuine in your life. Jesus said, ‘Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.’”

These six ways to be saved contradict each other, and if one of them is true then the other five cannot be true. Here is how the first three ways contradict the last three:

- (1) “Believe on the Lord Jesus *as* your Lord and as your Saviour.” This contradicts number six, where he told the people that their salvation was not “genuine” (his word) unless they came forward. Which is it – believing on Jesus or coming forward? Or is it both? He doesn’t clarify this.
- (2) “Some of you might have been saved at confirmation.” Here he says that some Roman Catholics may have been saved during a ceremony

in which they promised to pray, “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners both now and in the hour of our death. Amen,” words from the rosary they promised to pray at their confirmation. They also acknowledged at their confirmation that salvation comes only through the “sacraments” of the Roman Catholic Church. Dr. Graham tells them some may have been saved that way, but this contradicts number five, “You can be saved tonight by opening your heart to Christ.” Which is it – salvation only through the sacraments (as affirmed in Confirmation) or salvation by opening your heart to Christ tonight? Both cannot be true. That is what the Reformation was all about – only the sacraments or only Christ – which is it? Dr. Graham says it can be *either* one! So much for the Reformation!

- (3) “I believe I know the day I was born again, but my wife doesn’t know the day. She has always loved Christ. She cannot remember the day when she didn’t love Him, and she cannot remember the day when she didn’t put Him first in her life.” This contradicts number four, “The *only* way you can get to Heaven is to come to the Cross and confess that you’re a sinner.” How can this be the “only” way if some people like his wife can be saved *another* way, by “always loving the Lord?” Why do the rest of us need to confess that we’re sinners and come to the Cross, which he says is “the only way” for us, *although some special people like his wife don’t need to do that?**

*For a printed reference to Ruth Bell Graham having no memory of a salvation experience, see *How To Be Born Again* by Billy Graham (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1977), p. 167. Mrs. Graham appears to be a moral person, and we hope she is indeed saved, despite the questions that are raised by her husband saying, publicly and in print, that she has no memory of a salvation experience.

A logical examination of Dr. Graham's six ways to be saved reveals that they contradict each other on many points. *Why then does he repeatedly mention these six different ways in his sermons?* The answer is simple: he lets you pick the one you like. That way no one, Catholic or Protestant, is offended. But does anyone get converted after being bombarded with six different ways to do so in one sermon?

I think we could be shocked in eternity to find that whole crusades by Billy Graham may have been conducted without a *single* conversion. That would not surprise me. After forty-one years in the ministry, talking to countless Christians individually, I have only met *two men* who claimed to be converted in Graham crusades. I greatly fear that Dr. Graham and his six ways to be saved have gotten only a tiny number of people converted, and have actually confused millions and helped send them to Hell.

Graham Failed To Add Church Members, But Helped to Change Our View of Salvation

Dr. William G. McLoughlin, Jr., late Professor of History at Brown University, has given a detailed analysis of the results of several Graham Crusades.¹⁸ He showed that Graham packed the stadiums by filling them with church members, through cleverly designed methods.¹⁹ Sixty to seventy-five percent of those who responded were active members of churches already.²⁰ Only a tiny number of previously unchurched people were still attending a few months later.²¹ McLoughlin reported one survey, done after a London Crusade, which showed only thirty-five people who were unchurched before the Crusade but still attending eight months later.²² *Think of it – only thirty-five people!* A Gallup poll conducted three years later revealed that the average Englishman felt “that religious influences were actually decreasing.”²³ William Martin points out that “Graham’s supporters typically defended the crusade with anecdotes rather than with statistics.”²⁴

In his 1988 book, *Billy Graham: Do the Conversions Last?*²⁵ Robert O. Ferm, a long-time member of the Graham organization, tried his best to show that Graham was adding people to the churches. But on pages 100 to 101 he gave a series of excuses for the extremely poor results. He blamed Southern Baptists for not conserving their evangelism. He blamed other churches for not preaching Biblically.

Dr. Christopher Cagan, the co-author of this book, is a professional statistician, with a Ph.D. in mathematics from UCLA. He says that Dr. Ferm’s use of statistics in this book is highly questionable. Dr. Cagan asks these questions: Were other polls taken that didn’t favor Graham? How

long after the crusades were they taken? What percentage didn't return the questionnaires at all? Where were the polls taken? When were they taken? How were the polls taken? Since these basic questions were never dealt with, Dr. Cagan feels that Ferm's book is of little value, except as a propaganda piece for the Graham organization.

Dr. Cagan then asked these questions:

“Where are the converts? Do *you* know many? Since there have been hundreds of thousands of ‘decisions’ in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, Atlanta, Dallas, London, and elsewhere, why hasn't there been more of a positive impact on society after fifty years? Why does Dr. Graham himself have to admit that our nation is crumbling after all of his efforts?”

These are good, hard questions. No one has answered them. *Statistics prove that very few people have joined the churches as a result of Dr. Graham's crusades. Numbers don't lie.*

Robert O. Ferm, the Graham organization man, goes on to admit this. He says:

In fact, the trends discovered in our research show that of those who make first-time commitments to Christ, only a few actually attend or become affiliated with a church in the first year after their conversion.²⁶

Thirteen People Added to the Churches

Few indeed! Dr. R. T. Ketcham was the main founder of the General Association of Regular Baptists. He gave these comments based on the statistics of Graham's San Francisco Crusade, which were published in the *Oakland Tribune*. R. T. Ketcham said:

Dr. Graham's San Francisco Crusade reported 26,698 decisions for Christ. One year after the Crusade, the *Oakland Tribune* reported that *first time* confessions of Christ were only 1,300, and that less than *one percent* of these 1,300 had become members of any church. *That would be 13 people.*²⁷

I researched this very carefully, and obtained a photo-copy of the actual *Tribune* article. Dr. Ketcham's comments on the statistics were exactly right. The *Tribune* article was titled, "Effectiveness of Graham Visit Studied." Here is the second paragraph of that newspaper article:

Approximately 1,300 people made decisions at the Cow Palace (auditorium) who had not frequented a church before. ***Less than one percent of this number have become church members.***²⁸

So, an entire Billy Graham crusade added only 13 new members to the churches of San Francisco, according to this study reported in the *Oakland Tribune*, and commented on by Dr. R. T. Ketcham. It should be remembered that ***this particular crusade was six weeks long and that 26,698 people came forward.*** Yet only one percent of the unchurched people who "made decisions" became new church members! Dr. Ketcham said, "***That would be 13 people.***"

The *Oakland Tribune* article ended with these words, "Very few churches were able to gain new adherents by contacting those whose decision cards were assigned to the church but who had no previous contact with the particular church." Very few indeed! Only 13!

Everyone thinks the great work of evangelism is going on somewhere else. But where? I personally have known only two men who claimed to be converted at Graham meetings, and I have known literally thousands of people who claimed to be Christians. Where are the rest?

We are not saying that Dr. Graham isn't successful. He is *very* successful at what he does. ***But he has not succeeded in getting unchurched people to join and support our local churches. He has largely failed to do that.***

What Graham has done successfully, through the use of prime-time television over the past forty-five years, is to get large numbers of people to think of themselves as saved; so that today 74% of Americans say they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ. More than anyone else, Graham is responsible for this mass religious deception.

Dr. Graham conducted three crusades in the San Francisco Bay Area in the fall of 1997, one in San Jose, one in San Francisco, and one in Oakland. I received several mailings asking me to financially support these crusades. On the cover of one envelope, in large bold type, were the words, "YOU CAN HELP CHANGE THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU!" Another letter, sent by the chairman of the Crusade Board, Rev. Karl L. Overbeek, said, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ can change the lives of your family, friends, and

neighbors and people throughout the Bay Area. This crusade is an opportunity to reach people around you.” It should be remembered that Graham held a lengthy crusade in San Francisco in 1958, and one in Oakland (a suburb of San Francisco) in 1972, as well as three crusades in 1997. But has he had *any* effect in “changing” the people there, or is the city still a secular Sodom? I think you know the answer to that one! I attended two seminaries near San Francisco over a four-year period. Never *once* did I meet a *single person* “changed” by Graham’s crusades and countless prime-time TV programs in that area. The major contribution Graham has made is the *confusion* of large numbers of people into thinking they are saved.

The Pope – a True Billy Graham Christian

Dr. Peter Masters, pastor of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle in London, writes:

In the past, Dr. Billy Graham has declared that HRH the Prince of Wales, former US President Richard Nixon, and former Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey were all true Christians [and] Pope John Paul II, yet another of Billy Graham’s true Christians.* None of these public figures ever expressed any form of evangelical profession, but that is not necessary to the new-evangelical, whose definition of “conversion” is broad enough to include the vaguest and most minimal assent to the fact that Jesus Christ is God.

New evangelicals now say repeatedly that Catholics may be converted without any evangelical grasp of the atonement or of repentance or faith, and without an evangelical experience of the new birth.²⁹

This is a result of decades of “decisionism.” The most “minimal assent” to a few facts about Christ is considered Christian conversion. The atonement and the new birth are not needed in the new-evangelical definition.

Now, I must make one thing crystal clear: If Billy Graham preached like John Knox, he would be as hated by the Catholics as John Knox was hated by them. If Billy Graham preached like Whitefield and the two Wesleys, he would be barred from the established Anglican Churches, which embraced Graham, but rejected Whitefield and the Wesleys. If Billy Graham preached the same way as Luther, he would not be photographed

*This sentence is inserted from another place in the same article.

with his arm draped around the Pope's shoulder. He would be blasted and banned by the Pope, as Luther was. If Billy Graham preached the same way as Jonathan Edwards, he would very likely be put out of his own church, as Edwards was.

Billy Graham does not preach like John Bunyan, who said, "When I went first to preach the word abroad, the doctors and priests of the country did open wide against me."³⁰ If Billy Graham preached the same way as Bunyan, the priests and doctors would open their mouths wide against him also.

Billy Graham is accepted by all, from the Roman Catholic Pope to the leaders of the Assemblies of God, simply because he does not preach the same way as Knox, Whitefield, Wesley, Luther, Edwards, or Bunyan. These men pounded (they say Knox broke the pulpit open on more than one occasion) and preached salvation by trusting Jesus only. They blasted away all worldly false hopes of lost church members. They insisted that only New Testament conversion by faith in the Blood of Jesus, without any other hope, could keep sinners out of Hell. They blasted sins by name and demanded full repentance, and real conversion.

Billy Graham does *not* preach like they did. Instead, he gives a potpourri of six or more different ideas concerning conversion which he lets the sinner choose from. In this way, no one is offended, and Dr. Graham becomes, in the words of his biographer William Martin, *A Prophet With Honor*.³¹ He lets sinners choose which way they want to be saved. Even the Pope admires him for this!

In choosing *A Prophet With Honor* as the title of his Billy Graham biography, William Martin seems to have overlooked these words of Christ:

“Jesus himself testified that a prophet hath no honour in his own country” (John 4:44).

“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!
for so did their fathers to the false prophets”
(Luke 6:26).

Some have said that Billy Graham preaches correctly, but just isn't separated. I strongly question that! If Graham really preached the way he ought to – as Luther, Knox, Whitefield and Bunyan did, he wouldn't have to separate – the lost Catholics and Protestants would separate from him – as they did from Luther, Knox, Bunyan and Whitefield! If he preached correctly, they would run from him and separation would not be an issue.

Thus, we conclude that Billy Graham does not give a clear enough invitation. He muddies the gospel by presenting six different ways for

people to be saved, and he confuses multitudes by extracting a psychological response during the invitation.

Dr. Peter Masters, pastor of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, writes, "Most new-evangelicals (believe) that people may be saved without understanding and responding to the central truths of the Gospel."³² That pretty well sums up the preaching of Billy Graham. I know he mentions the gospel, but he doesn't drive it home as the old preachers did. For instance, would Billy Graham preach as sharply as Spurgeon did in the sermon given on pages 100 and 101 of this book?

Don't you agree that Graham's preaching hasn't had much effect, especially in his later years? Don't you sometimes wonder why? I believe it is largely because Graham repeats the facts of the gospel without sufficiently reproving and rebuking sin (II Timothy 4:2). Sermons which do not adequately reprove and rebuke sin are not what is needed in this day of apostasy. See "Preaching to the Conscience" on pages 93-94 and "The 'You' Principle" on pages 131-133 of this book.

I watched Billy Graham tonight. His crusade was broadcast from Tampa, Florida on CBS Television, and was seen here in Los Angeles on January 30, 1999. He preached a sermon titled "Running From God," on the book of Jonah. How sorry I felt for Billy Graham. He is eighty years old now. He must be helped to the pulpit, for he cannot walk unaided any more. The camera cut away to avoid showing this, but it has been reported elsewhere. He looked down at his manuscript and read nearly every word slowly, haltingly. I have seen men older and more feeble than him preach with great anointing. It is not necessary to be young and vigorous to have God's power. It seems to me that Graham has none. "And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (Judges 16:20).

Billy Graham gave the invitation without adequately preaching the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4), and without adequately reproving and rebuking sin (II Timothy 4:2). He called on people to make a commitment without telling them what to be committed to! It was a shocking invitation. Both of my teenage boys noticed this. The next day, a preacher from Northern California who saw it told me, "It would take a very great miracle indeed for anyone to get saved by hearing that sermon." The Bible says, "Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment" (Job 32:9).

How sad I felt for our beloved Billy Graham! Tears run down my face as I write this. How I have loved him! "And they mourned, and wept...for Saul...and for the people of the Lord" (II Samuel 1:12).

Graham Embraces Roman Catholic Universalism

I first began to question Dr. Graham in the late 1970's. At that time he seemed to be shifting toward universalism. I remember reading an interview with Graham in *McCall's* magazine titled, "I Can't Play God Any More." Here is a quotation from Graham, given in that article:

I used to believe that pagans in far-off countries are lost – were going to hell – if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. ***I no longer believe that.*** I believe that there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God – through nature, for instance – and therefore plenty of other opportunities of saying "yes" to God.³³

This quote seemed to indicate that Graham had embraced a form of universalism rooted in "decisionism." Saying "yes" to God is all that is needed. Finney couldn't have said it better. Man is not totally depraved. Man is not totally helpless. Man is not, in any real sense, lost. All man has to do is say "yes" – to any god he imagines or believes in! Needless to say, this is not historic Protestant or Baptist teaching! It is not taught in the Bible itself.

Billy Graham was interviewed by Robert Schuller on the *Hour of Power* television program, broadcast in Los Angeles on May 31, 1997. Although I saw this program, I am relying on the transcript made by Robert A. Kofahl, Ph.D., and published in *Foundation* magazine. Here is Dr. Kofahl's transcription:

Schuller: What do you think is the future of Christianity?

Graham: Well, Christianity and being a true believer – you know, 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...***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 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 is that it's possible for 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 people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and have 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: [Schuller 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.³⁴

Dr. Graham said, concerning Buddhists and Muslims, "They may not even know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts they need something they don't have...I think that they are saved." That is not what the Bible teaches! If he is right, why do we need to send missionaries?

Foundation gave this analysis of Graham's statement:

The doctrine that Dr. Graham expressed to Dr. Schuller 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 not the 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) is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic church.³⁵

That is hardly Protestant or Baptist thought! It is quite clear that Dr. Graham has embraced Roman Catholic universalism. Whether he took it from them

directly or received it indirectly from someone else, the opinions he expressed on Robert Schuller's television program are identical with the false doctrines of the Roman Catholic church on this crucial subject.

Here is more of what Billy Graham said in the *McCall's* article:

I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics. We only differ on some matters of later church tradition.³⁶

So, Dr. Graham called the great truths of the Reformation, "some matters of later church tradition." The historic Protestant and Baptist view of conversion is just "later church tradition." He also openly admitted that his own beliefs are "essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics." I have noticed that most of Graham's sermons in recent years could have been given by the Pope. They contain basic, orthodox beliefs, which could be given by "orthodox Roman Catholics," but they do not have the application of a Bunyan or a Whitefield. Graham's sermons have led thousands into mere "decisions for Christ" without getting them converted.

Graham and the Pope Recite the Facts of the Gospel Without Rebuking Sin and Reproving Sinners

After my family and I got home from the service at our church last Christmas Eve, I turned on the television set. As I flipped through the channels, I found a choir singing a Christmas carol. I left the program on in the background while I helped my wife and boys bring in Christmas presents from the car and arrange them under the tree.

When I finished, the choir on TV had stopped singing, and I noticed that this was a service broadcast from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The Pope was preaching. I sat down and listened to him for a few minutes. I found it impossible to avoid comparing his homily with the sermons of Billy Graham. The Pope gave almost exactly the same message as Graham, with almost exactly the same emphasis. The Pope said that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh, God incarnate. He said that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins. He said repeatedly that Christ has risen from the dead. Furthermore, the Pope said that the problem of sin lies in the human heart, and that people must acknowledge this and have true repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. He said that Christ alone is the answer for man's sins. If you don't think the Pope says these things, why don't you listen to him yourself in his worldwide broadcast next Christmas Eve?

As I listened to the Pope, I began to realize why Billy Graham calls him "a great evangelist." They both have basically the same message. **But**

neither of them rebuke sin by name. They do not reprove and rebuke sin as the Bible tells us to do (II Timothy 4:2).

Think of the outcry that would come if Graham or the Pope ever said, "You will go to Hell if you go on living like you are." Imagine what would happen if either of them said, "Adultery is sin. You will be judged by Almighty God if you go on doing it. You will enter eternity lost if you refuse to acknowledge your sin and be cleansed in Jesus' Blood." Neither Graham nor the Pope ever preach like that. They don't preach like the Apostles or evangelists of olden times.

It is one thing to recite the facts of the gospel. It is another thing to preach the gospel Biblically. Billy Graham and the Pope neither one preach the gospel correctly, because they do not obey the commandment to reprove and rebuke sin, given in II Timothy 4:2-5. I have come to believe that Billy Graham is no more of an evangelist than the Pope!

When a man merely states the facts of the gospel he has not preached correctly. There must be a denunciation of sins and a reproof of sins or the gospel has not been preached Biblically, as the Apostles did throughout the Book of Acts, and the great preachers of the Reformation and the revival preachers did, recorded in Christian history.

Graham Says He Has 'Wonderful Fellowship' With Mormons and Catholics and 'Depended Constantly' on a Rabbi

Billy Graham was interviewed on television by Larry King on January 21, 1997. I saw the interview, but I am printing Dave Hunt's transcript directly from his newsletter, *The Berean Call*:

KING: What do you think of the other [churches], like Mormonism? Catholicism? Other faiths within the Christian concept?

GRAHAM: Oh, I think I have a wonderful fellowship with all of them. For example...

KING: You're comfortable with Salt Lake City. You're comfortable with the Vatican?

GRAHAM: I am very comfortable with the Vatican. I have been to see the Pope several times. In fact, the night – the day that he was inaugurated, made Pope, I was preaching in his cathedral in Krakow. I was his guest [and] when he was over here...in Columbia, South Carolina, he invited me on the platform to speak with him. I would give one talk, and he would give the other, but I was two-thirds of the way to China...

KING: You like this Pope?

GRAHAM: I like him very much. He and I agree on almost everything.

KING: Are you...are you comfortable with Judaism?

GRAHAM: Very comfortable. In New York, they have had me to the Rabbinical Council to talk with them and Rabbi Tannenbaum, who was a great friend, he gave me more advice and more counsel, and I depended on him constantly, theologically and spiritually and in every way...³⁷

Notice particularly that Dr. Graham said, "I have a wonderful fellowship with all of them" (including the Mormons). Would *you* have said that? If this doesn't illustrate Graham's move to a universalist position, nothing does. His statement on Larry King's program was extremely confusing.

Christianizing America

No one has been more successful in "Christianizing" America than Billy Graham. He has gotten thousands to think of themselves as saved without it having any effect of them morally or spiritually. He has "Christianized" the multitudes in our nation and has influenced many in Britain also.

When I was a boy fifty years ago a man knew he had to stop gambling, drinking, dancing and adultery if he wanted to trust Jesus and be converted. But Dr. Graham has spent several nights each year on prime-time television telling sinners,

"You may be watching in a hotel. You may be in a bar. Just bow your head and receive Christ. And if you will make that commitment, write to me, Billy Graham, Minneapolis, Minnesota, that's all the address you need, and I'll send you the same literature people are going to receive here tonight."

Sinners in hotels and bars from one end of America to the other bowed their heads and said some sort of prayer before they went on with their debauchery. Other tens of thousands received the impression that you could be a Christian in a bar, for Dr. Graham didn't tell them it was wrong. He did not reprove and rebuke sins by name, as the Bible tells us to do (II Timothy 4:2). So, now we have Christian drunkards, Christian gamblers, Christian marijuana smokers, Christian divorcees, and Christian adulterers...even in the White House. Someone showed me an advertisement in a newspaper, in which a homosexual was seeking a lover. This man advertised himself as "a

born again Christian.” Now we have “born again” practicing homosexuals!

A scandal broke out here in Los Angeles several months ago, when the police cracked open a prostitution and drug operation run by a woman named Heidi Fleiss. It was in the newspapers for weeks. After the trial was over this woman, who had sold drugs and prostitutes, was met on the street by one of our church members. The man gave her a tract and said, “You need to know Jesus Christ as your Saviour.” The prostitute Heidi Fleiss said to him, “Why, I’ve known Him since I was a child.”

This sort of thing can be traced to the success of Dr. Graham and his fellow decisionists in “Christianizing” America. Dr. Graham is not the only one to blame, but Who’s Who in Christian History is correct in saying that he “has become the symbolic leader of evangelicalism.”³⁸ The triumph of evangelical decisionism has resulted in 74% of our people claiming salvation. Yet Dr. Graham does not see the pitiful irony of his statement, “We are a society poised on the brink of self destruction.”

After fifty years of preaching, and getting most of our people to claim that they are saved, *he himself admits failure*, as America plunges ever more deeply into “crime and violence, drug abuse, racial and ethnic tension, broken families and corruption,” to quote the statement he made when receiving the Congressional gold medal from President Clinton and the Congress. The preaching of Dr. Graham and his fellow decisionists has failed by his own admission.

Even so, I have loved Billy Graham. He could have done so much. It is a great tragedy. How my heart breaks for him! “And they mourned, and wept...for Saul...and for the people of the Lord” (II Samuel 1:12).

Focus on Preaching

We can prepare for God to send revival by fasting and prayer, by fiery, sin-condemning preaching, by spending more time with the lost after each service, and we can preach the gospel – the true gospel of Jesus Christ. These are human activities. *Doing these human things will not produce revival, but they will present an atmosphere in which God can send revival. The great revivals of the past came in the midst of prayer and fasting, strong preaching of the gospel, and much personal counselling by godly pastors.*

Preaching the gospel is something we can do as we prepare for God to send revival. And to do this we should study some of the older sermons, given before Finney. We should learn how the old-time evangelicals preached. I especially recommend a three-volume set titled, *The Works of John Bunyan*, reprinted by Banner of Truth in 1991. These contain a type of sermon practically unheard of in our land at this hour. Bunyan follows

the old dictum – law before gospel. He probes the hearts and consciences of his hearers and calls for real conversions.

We will now focus more closely on preaching, the kind of preaching which is used in conversion and is characteristic of revival.

I have been an eye-witness to two major revivals in Baptist churches. By this, of course, I do not mean evangelistic meetings or any other sort of average meetings. I mean that I have seen two remarkable works of God, one in 1972 and one in 1992. Several thousand people were hopefully converted over a few months in the first of these two awakenings, in a church where I was a member for many years. Over five hundred people were hopefully saved in a three month period in the second one, which occurred in a Southern state. Both of these were local church awakenings, which are quite rare today.

Having observed two classical revivals first hand, and having spent over forty years studying the subject of revival, I have come to several conclusions on the subject. I believe that evangelistic sermons must be preached if we are to have revival. But these must be ***real***, old fashioned evangelistic sermons. These are my conclusions regarding the type of evangelistic preaching that accompanies revival:

- I. Negatively – what evangelistic preaching is not
 1. It is not “expository” preaching (as the term is used today).
 2. It is not preaching ***about*** various important doctrines.
 3. It is not merely intellectual preaching.
 4. It is not entertaining preaching.
- II. Positively – what evangelistic preaching is
 1. It is preaching of the law.
 2. It is clear and blunt preaching on sin.
 3. It is preaching of the gospel (i.e. Christ died for our sins and rose for our justification).
 4. It is textual preaching.
 5. It is emotional preaching.
 6. It is applied preaching.
 7. It is preaching which often produces anger and division as well as conversions.
 8. It is preaching which focuses on these great Baptist and Protestant themes – the self-examination of the heart, the depravity of man, the Last Judgment for sin, the unpardonable sin, the reprobation of sinners, the fire of Hell, the Ten Commandments, the atonement of Jesus, the Blood of Jesus, His resurrection from the dead, and the absolute necessity of conversion.

I will now go back and deal with each of these points at some length.

Today's Preaching

I have been on vacation in another state for the last few days. During this time I had the opportunity of hearing three of the most famous Bible-believing Baptist pastors of our day. All three men have tremendous preaching ability, but all three of their sermons were literally *ruined* by using the modern techniques of the "expository sermon." The first preacher got lost in a long exposition of I Corinthians 10:1-15. His delivery was great. His pulpit presence was excellent. But he "bit off more than he could chew." He also forced his outline "onto" the passage, so that he ended up preaching his own ideas rather than the words of Scripture. This is often the case when men follow the modern fad of the "expository sermon," so popular among today's preachers, but so deadly to real preaching, preaching which brings conversions and accompanies revival. This man's convoluted outline strangled his sermon instead of helping it. I see this again and again in the pulpits of our day.

The second famous preacher fell into the same trap. Again, "expository" techniques greatly harmed the sermon. He got all twisted up in the "expository outline" and never really got free to give his sermon the way it should have been delivered.

The third preacher turned to several different passages and gave "expositions" of them, but he committed the same errors as the first two men. Though his "exposition" covered passages in several parts of the Bible, the modern techniques of "expository preaching" made his sermon confusing and unclear in its main emphasis.

I cannot be more strong in stating this: *the "modern exposition" has done more to ruin today's preaching than any other single error, other than the false view of salvation presented by decisionism.*

The type of preaching which has accompanied revival in the past has *not* been what is popularly called "expository preaching" in our time. Today, when the term is used, it refers to a speaker taking a passage of Scripture of *several verses* and then going into those verses and explaining what they mean. *That was not the method of those who preached during revivals in the past. This can easily be checked by reading the sermons of Bunyan, Whitefield, Edwards, Wesley, the Tennents, Nettleton, Spurgeon, Duncan Campbell, and other great revival preachers.*

I believe that the wide acceptance of "Expository preaching" as we know it came largely from the influence of G. Campbell Morgan in England and Harry Ironside in America. Both of these men were very popular in the first half of the twentieth century, and many preachers copied their method of "expository preaching." But it should be remembered that Morgan and

Ironside, though they were good men in many ways, *never* experienced revival. Their method of preaching has been embraced by a whole generation of pastors in our day who have never experienced revival either.

Dr. John R. Rice said:

At the risk of being misunderstood, I must say that expository preaching, as it is done in most Bible-believing pulpits, does not grow soul-winning churches...no sermon that Jesus preached, neither the Sermon on the Mount, nor in His many parables, did He ever preach what is now called an expository sermon. And so with the sermons in the book of Acts by Peter, by Stephen and by Paul – none were expository sermons...I am familiar also with the volumes of addresses by the late Dr. H. A. Ironside...Although there were usually one or two or three and sometimes five public professions on Sunday (at Dr. Ironside's church), other men who have much less congregations than the 3,500 or 4,000 who often heard Dr. Ironside in that giant Moody Church in Chicago, have far more conversions.³⁹

Dr. Rice makes it quite clear that “expository preaching” as we know it does not add many people to our churches. We must return to the old way of preaching if we want better results from our sermons.

“Go Back to the Eighteenth Century” – or Farther

When twentieth century sermons are compared to the older ones, two things become clear at once:

1. The older preachers actually *did* do expositions. However, they usually expounded and explained one or two verses. Their expositions were, thus, confined to fewer words.
2. The newer preachers have gone astray by bringing *too many verses, too much material* and *too many ideas* into their sermons.

Take for instance Jonathan Edwards’* famed revival sermon from the first Great Awakening, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” It was a pure exposition of a few words in Deuteronomy 32:35, “their foot shall slide in due time.” Now, Edwards did not just read this verse and then speak on something else. He did not read the words as a mere motto. That came later, as decisionists took texts for mottos and preached “topical sermons.” But the old revival preachers like Edwards seldom if ever preached “topical sermons.” They preached expository sermons, but their expositions were confined to a few words of text, rather than a great, sprawling passage with many ideas to take the mind of the hearer away from the main point of the sermon, as so many sermons do in our day.

Edwards did not go to the other extreme either. He did not take the words, “their foot shall slide in due time” as a motto for a “topical sermon.” Instead, he used the old method. He dug deeply into these words bringing forth a rich panoply of exposition followed by a stinging application. That is the way of the old revival preachers: the first part of the sermon has exposition; the second part has law and application; the third part has gospel. However, in this greatly used sermon of Edwards, there is precious little gospel, only a sentence or two about flying to Christ at the end.

I consider “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” to be arguably the greatest revival sermon of all time, with the exception of the sermons recorded in the New Testament. You can obtain it in booklet form by writing to Sword of the Lord, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. I have personally preached this sermon, adapted to modern English, many times, often with surprising results. You should get it and study it as a classic example of the old style of exposition from a *few* words of Scripture, rather than the sprawling, sloppy, verse-by-verse commentaries that go under the title of “exposition” today, which have little effect on the hearers and have not been used in revival.

When one man saw the truth of all this, he said, “I don’t know how to prepare any other kind of sermon. What should I do?” He had been trained *only* in the method of Campbell Morgan and Ironside. I told him he needed to read Bunyan, Spurgeon, Edwards, and Nettleton, then pray and ask God how to help him construct and prepare sermons like theirs.

Here are two textual expositions from Asahel Nettleton, given to illustrate the type of sermons from the past that I am talking about. The wording is slightly altered from the original for modern hearers. These two sermons, adapted from Dr. Nettleton, were given in our church:

*Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) is considered to be America’s greatest theologian. During his 23-year pastorate at Northampton, Massachusetts, he saw revival twice, in 1735 and again in 1740, during the Great Awakening. He has often been called the “Theologian of Revival.”

SALVATION FOR THE LOST⁴⁰

“For the Son of Man is come to seek
and to save that which was lost”
(Luke 19:10)

- I. The doctrine – in what sense sinners are lost
 - 1. You are condemned by the law, Galatians 3:10.
 - 2. You are in need of pardon, John 3:18.
 - 3. You need life in Christ, John 10:10; 6:47; 5:24; 5:40;
Revelation 22:17.
 - 4. You need to be saved, Acts 16:30; Luke 15:24;
Luke 19:5-6; 19:9, 10; II Corinthians 4:3.
- II. The application
 - 1. Sinners say little about the Saviour because they
do not feel they are lost, Mark 2:17.
 - 2. Ministers preach the gospel to show sinners their
lost condition, I Corinthians 1:21.
 - 3. True preaching causes sinners to feel they are lost,
Acts 2:37.
 - 4. If sinners saw their condition they would ask how
to be saved, Ezekiel 33:11.

This strong sermon had a good effect on the people. Here is a second
sermon adapted from Nettleton:

GOD’S SPIRIT WILL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE⁴¹

“And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man”
(Genesis 6:3)

“deen = to judge; to minister judgment” – Strong
 (“deen” is the Hebrew word translated “strive”)

- I. The fact that the Spirit does strive with men, John 16:8, 9;
John 3:19-20; John 5:40; John 6:40; II Corinthians 10:4-5;
Psalm 139:7.
- II. The fact that God’s Spirit will not always strive with man,
Genesis 6:3; Hosea 4:17; 5:6; Luke 19:42;
II Thessalonians 2:11-12; Hosea 9:12; Proverbs 1:24;
Proverbs 1:28.
- III. The results of God’s Spirit ceasing to strive with you,
Genesis 6:5; Matthew 24:38; Genesis 6:7.

These outlines are slightly altered from the originals. To read a large

number of Nettleton's sermons, get a copy of *Sermons from the Second Great Awakening* by Asahel Nettleton (Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, 1995), International Outreach, Inc., P.O. Box 1286, Ames, Iowa 50014 USA. Phone (515) 233-2932 for the price and postal costs. We strongly urge preachers to obtain this book of evangelistic sermons and study it carefully. I have personally preached adaptations of more than thirty of the messages of Nettleton recorded on these pages, and with great blessing.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his book, *Preaching and Preachers*, said:

The sooner we forget the nineteenth century and go back to the eighteenth, and even further to the seventeenth and sixteenth, the better. The nineteenth century and its mentality and outlook is responsible for most of our troubles and problems today.⁴²

I agree with him completely. That is why I urge preachers to read the sermons of Bunyan, Edwards, the Tennents, and the others I have mentioned. For an excellent short account of the lives and preaching of eleven of the greatest 18th century preachers, given in one volume, see J. C. Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997). This book includes the lives of George Whitefield, John Wesley, William Grimshaw, William Romaine, Daniel Rowlands, John William Fletcher, and others of that century. In many ways Spurgeon, Duncan Campbell and even W. P. Nicholson were "throwbacks." Their preaching was more like that of the eighteenth century on many important points. Asahel Nettleton, though ministering in the early nineteenth century, was clearly an eighteenth century man in his thinking and preaching. My mother used to read the sermons of these old preachers, and so did I. Dr. Lloyd-Jones' quotation, given above, shows his contempt for the preaching and methodology of Finney and those who followed him in the nineteenth century.

Then, secondly, the type of evangelistic preaching which accompanies revival is not preaching *about* revival, or any other doctrinal or historical matter. What do I mean by that? Simply this: a sermon *about* revival, explaining what revival is and giving historical points on revival, may be well and good, but it is *not* revival preaching.

If you will go back and read the sermons given during great revivals, you will find that almost invariably those preachers did not speak on the subject of revival itself. They were too concerned with preaching on such subjects as sin, Hell, depravity, the Last Judgment, the Blood, intercessory prayer, seldom if ever on the history of revivals – or for that matter on any other doctrine, as such. For instance, when they spoke on Hell, they did not

speaking merely on the doctrine of Hell. They told the people seated the pews in front of them that *they* were going to Hell. When they spoke on the Blood of Jesus, they didn't merely speak on this great doctrine; they told the people sitting in front of them that they needed to be washed in the Blood *themselves!*

Which leads me to the next point: Evangelistic preaching is not merely intellectual preaching. That is to say, it appeals not only to the mind, but also to the heart and conscience. I think this is one of the reasons George Whitefield could speak to great crowds of thirty or forty thousand people without a microphone.⁴³ Although he surely had a magnificent and perhaps even supernatural quality to his voice, there was also far less intellectual reasoning than we find in the dry "expositions" of our day. Whitefield preached to the conscience. His fiery words went like daggers across acres of land to the sin-hardened hearts of men and women at the very edge of his enormous crowds. So, I am saying that revival preaching is heart preaching. It reaches the conscience. It produces fear, guilt, wonder, awe, pity and pathos. It wrings a man out emotionally.

Then, I must say fourthly, that evangelistic preaching is not merely entertaining preaching.

Jack Hyles Says "Better Churches" Have Turned Away From Evangelistic Preaching Today

Dr. Jack Hyles is a very entertaining preacher. He is the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana. His church has the largest attendance in America. I have heard him in person many times. I have often heard him say, "What we need today is old-fashioned, window-rattling, Hell-raising, sin-condemning preaching." He is correct, of course.

But, though he often says we need that kind of preaching (with hearty "amens" from his audience), *I have never heard him preach like that himself.* It is one thing to say *we need* that kind of preaching. It is another thing to actually *do it* yourself.

In fact, Dr. Hyles' sermons are very *rarely* evangelistic sermons. He may, on a few occasions, preach evangelistically, but I have never heard him do so. His sermons are nearly always motivational messages.

Though he uses a Texas pulpit-thumping style, the *purpose* of his sermons is little different from that of Robert Schuller, Bill Hybels, or Rick Warren. He is motivating "believers" to do something, not preaching to the lost.

Dr. Hyles has even written a book which has a section belittling evangelistic preaching. He says it's "wonderful" that many preachers have stopped giving evangelistic sermons today. Here is the exact quote from Dr. Hyles:

Something wonderful has happened in our generation. The New Testament church in the Book of Acts was a soul-winning church. Through the years we transferred the soul winning to evangelism, and for these many centuries, there has been an emphasis on the evangelistic church. In the evangelistic church the pastor stands behind the pulpit and preaches the Gospel to unsaved people whom the folks have brought to church. In our generation, we have seen the better churches turn from evangelistic churches. It enables the man of God to preach to the Christian people on the Lord's Day.⁴⁴

Let us now put Dr. Hyles' statement under the microscope and examine it line by line:

- (1) Dr. Hyles says, "Something wonderful has happened in our generation." I am always suspicious when I hear that from a preacher. It seems to me that only the Devil could say that with any sincerity, since the twentieth century has been characterized by so much apostasy.
- (2) Dr. Hyles tells us that the churches in the Book of Acts were soul-winning rather than evangelistic, but "through the centuries" preachers changed this by preaching the gospel to the lost who were brought to church to get saved. He says these preachers turned away from the method of Acts and began to preach evangelistically in church on Sunday. ***That is pure humbug! Fraud! Deception! Trickery! Read the Book of Acts!*** Every sermon but one recorded in the Book of Acts was an evangelistic sermon! That's right, sermon after sermon recorded in Acts was evangelistic, including Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40); Peter's sermon before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-12); Stephen's sermon (Acts 7:1-53); Philip's sermons in Samaria (Acts 8:5); Paul's sermons after his conversion (Acts 9:20-22);

Peter's sermon to Gentiles (Acts 10:34-43); Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:14-41); Paul's sermon at Athens (Acts 17:22-31); etc. We also read that Paul preached "repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ" publickly and from house to house (Acts 20:20-21). The Book of Acts says that the Apostles were in the Temple and in various houses preaching. We are told that "they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). *So, the plain words of the Book of Acts show that Dr. Hyles is wrong. Every recorded sermon but one was an evangelistic sermon (Acts 20:18-35 is the only exception). Evangelistic preaching built the churches and built up the Christians throughout the Book of Acts. When we stop preaching evangelistically in our churches today, we are turning away from the method of the preachers in the Book of Acts.*

- (3) Dr. Hyles tells us that the "better churches" have turned away from evangelistic preaching "to preach to the Christian people on the Lord's Day." This may sound wise to the ears of modern men, but it is a false and unscriptural position. If the "better" churches no longer preach evangelistically, this logically means that *worse* churches are evangelistic in their services. *Logically, then, it is worse to have evangelistic preaching and better not to have it, according to Dr. Hyles' reasoning.* That is the only logical conclusion which can be drawn from his statement. Now, I believe this is an unscriptural and even Satanic deception. How can anyone say that churches which no longer have evangelistic sermons are "better" than those in the Book of Acts, which had little else beside evangelistic preaching? How can anyone say that such churches are "better" than those which experienced the great revivals of the past, where evangelistic preaching rang out in every service? It is a foolish and unscriptural statement at best, and very likely a Satanic deception as well.
- (4) *If Dr. Hyles is right, and we don't need evangelistic sermons in churches anymore, why does the Bible say, "It pleased God by the foolishness of*

preaching to save them that believe”? (I Corinthians 1:21). Why did the great preacher Paul say, “We preach Christ crucified” (I Corinthians 1:23)? Dr. Hyles’ statement against evangelistic preaching is answered by this verse: “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God” (I Corinthians 1:18).

- (5) The finest Christians of all time lived under the evangelistic preaching of the Book of Acts, and the evangelistic preaching of the great revivals of the past. For the most part, today’s Christians can hardly be compared to them, as they come crawling in for yet another “devotional” message, “aimed at believers,” from Dr. Hyles, Bill Hybels, Robert Schuller, or John MacArthur. *Away with such sermons from the face of the earth!* They have not brought revival and have not helped our churches or our culture! *We need evangelistic preaching now! It is the crying need of this hour!*

Dr. Hyles Says His Father Died Without Hearing an Evangelistic Sermon

Let’s go over Dr. Hyles’ statement again and see how it contradicts his own criticism of the pastor he had as a child. Here is Dr. Hyles’ statement:

In the evangelistic church the pastor stands behind the pulpit and preaches the Gospel to unsaved people...In our generation we have seen the better churches turn from evangelistic churches. It enables the man of God to preach to the Christian people on the Lord’s Day.

It seems strangely hypocritical that Dr. Hyles bitterly rebuffs the pastor he had as a child for doing the *same thing* he does now! Hyles gives us this description of the event in his childhood:

It was Sunday afternoon. My father announced to me that he was going to church with Mother, my sister, Earlyne, and me that night. My little seven-year-old heart leaped with joy. I called my pastor and excitedly

told him that my daddy was coming to church that night, and I asked him please to do his best to get daddy saved. That night Daddy, Mother, Earlyne and I walked for the only time in our lives into a church building. We sat on the second row from the back on the left side facing the pulpit. I prayed that God would do something to my dad to transform his life and save his soul. Following the offering, the pastor stood and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, there will be no preaching tonight. This is the night of our annual cantata. The choir will present it to us at this time." My heart broke! I sat during the entire cantata and wept as my daddy slept. I could not believe that my daddy didn't mean more to my preacher than that! That was the only time he ever sat in church with me.⁴⁵

Dr. Hyles says that his father "died without Christ in 1950."⁴⁶ He tells us that shortly afterwards his sister had a dream about their father lying in a coffin with his hands extended in the air:

Jack, I could tell in my dream that those were Daddy's hands. I rushed to look into his face, and there was no look of peace. There was no smile, but a look of anguish and pain. His hands were raised toward me, and he was crying, "Sister, sister," and then he would make some kind of noises that I could not understand.⁴⁷

Dr. Hyles then says, "Earlyne told me then that she realized that Daddy was trying to tell her not to come where he was. My father died without Christ."⁴⁸

So, Dr. Hyles accuses the pastor of the church he attended as a boy of doing wrong by not preaching the gospel. Dr. Hyles tells us that his father is in Hell because the pastor failed to preach the gospel the Sunday he went to church.

Yet Dr. Hyles does the same thing that pastor did virtually every Sunday. According to his own words, he preaches "to the Christian people on the Lord's Day."

Dr. Hyles didn't accuse his childhood pastor of not giving an invitation. I am quite certain that a Southern Baptist church in Texas in 1933 would have an invitation after the cantata. Certainly, in a small town in Texas in

1933, *someone* gave his father a salvation tract. Undoubtedly his Christian mother witnessed to her husband. Dr. Hyles himself surely witnessed to the man. Dr. Hyles never says his father wasn't witnessed to by his mother, himself, the pastor and others in that small, depression-era Texas town.

But Dr. Hyles doesn't blame any of them. He doesn't blame those who witnessed to his father and passed a tract to him. ***He blames the pastor for not preaching the gospel.*** And rightly so, because the Bible says, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14)

I wonder if Dr. Hyles sees the inconsistency and deep irony of his own position that the "better churches" have stopped giving evangelistic sermons? I wonder if he has considered the tragic results that could follow from the practice of having his people witness to the lost and bring them to church to hear a mere motivational talk, aimed at his church members?

I wonder if there might be a little boy in his church today who will say something like this fifty years from now:

I brought my daddy to church to hear Dr. Hyles. Someone gave him a tract and witnessed to him, but he wasn't listening. He came to hear Dr. Hyles. After the song service, Dr. Hyles stood up to preach. He preached on the Christian home. But he did not preach an evangelistic sermon. My heart broke! I sat during the entire message on the Christian home while my daddy sat beside me. Dr. Hyles told some jokes. Everyone laughed. Daddy laughed too. But my heart was broken. Daddy didn't get to hear the gospel. I could not believe that my daddy didn't mean more to Dr. Hyles than that! That was the only time he ever sat in church with me.

The Bible says, "It pleased God by the foolishness of ***preaching*** to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21). Oh, how we need great evangelistic sermons ***in our churches*** at this hour! Spurgeon said, "I have been delighted as I have noticed the earnest efforts of many of my church-members in seeking to bring sinners to the Tabernacle (his church) to hear the gospel."⁴⁹

Dr. John R. Rice Disagreed With Hyles

The late Dr. John R. Rice correctly said:

The first aim of every preacher called of God should be to win souls. *A minister may say, as an alibi... "I am called to be a teaching pastor. My ministry is to the church. I must feed the flock of God." But that, I insist, is an alibi for outright disobedience to the plain command of God.* The Great Commission is still binding on preachers. The Gospel is to be preached to every creature...Charles Spurgeon was a pastor all his days and never called himself an evangelist. Yet multiplied thousands were saved under his ministry, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle (Spurgeon's church) was called a "soul trap." *The preaching in the church services ought to be strongly evangelistic, as well as in other places.*⁵⁰

This quotation from Dr. Rice shows that he disagreed with Jack Hyles' method of "preaching to the Christian people on the Lord's Day."

Two Main Preaching Errors

The two main preaching errors of our day are these:

- (1) *Rambling expositions.*
- (2) *Motivational talks.*

Both of them are aimed at "believers." Neither of them is evangelistic. Motivational messages, like those given by Robert Schuller, Bill Hybels, or Jack Hyles, will not bring revival or get many souls converted. Rambling expositions, like those delivered by Chuck Smith or John MacArthur, will not get many saved. We need old-fashioned, law and gospel, evangelistic preaching! We need a white-hot pulpit in these days of apostasy.

Much that we hear today is merely given to fill up an hour by men who know how to hold an audience's attention. We may say, to be as charitable as possible, that they entertain people for an hour or so with Bible stories. But this is not revival preaching. *It may even be loud preaching, though this is swiftly becoming a thing of the past. But even if it is loud, it is not the kind of evangelistic preaching which will accompany revival if its purpose is merely to give information or to hold an audience's attention.* No, it must have other elements in it to do that.

Listen to this description of the powerfully used Scottish preacher, Duncan Campbell:

Revival preaching has a power and authority that brings the Word of God like a hammer to the heart and conscience. *This is exactly what is absent from most of our preaching today. The men who preach in revival are always unafraid and urgent*, and the description of Duncan Campbell as a preacher shows how seriously they took their task: There was nothing complicated about Duncan's preaching. *It was fearless and uncompromising*. He exposed sin in its ugliness and dwelt at length on the consequences of living and dying without Christ. With a penetrating gaze on the congregation, and perspiration streaming down his face, he set before men and women the way of life and the way of death.⁵¹

Evangelistic Preaching

This description of Duncan Campbell's sermon delivery leads us into a discussion of evangelistic preaching in general. What is evangelistic preaching? *First and foremost, it is preaching which blames, which goads, which tells people they are wicked and lost, which tells them exactly why they are wicked and lost*. In a word, evangelistic preaching puts sinners "under the law," as the old pastors used to say. For the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Here is an account of the last great regional revival of the western world, with Duncan Campbell as the main preacher:

Whole communities were mightily moved as 'God came,' and the following instance is typical of the scenes witnessed in the churches throughout the island (of Lewis): A crowded church, the service is over, the congregation, reluctant to disperse, stands outside the church in a silence that is tense. Suddenly a cry is heard within; a young man, burdened for the souls of his fellow men, is pouring out his soul in intercession. The congregation, moved by the power of God, comes back into the church and a wave of conviction sweeps over the gathering, moving strong men to cry for mercy. This service continues until the small hours of the morning, but so great was the distress and so deep the hunger which gripped men and women that they refused to go home...Others were deeply convicted of

sin and crying out for mercy in their own homes before coming near the church...Within a matter of days the whole (area) was in the grip of spiritual awakening. Churches became crowded, with services continuing until three o'clock in the morning. Work was largely put aside as young and old were made to face eternal realities.⁵²

This happened again and again on the Island of Lewis, between 1949 and 1953. As I said, the main preacher during this time was Duncan Campbell.

Here is what Campbell said about the need for preaching which stirs the conscience:

*Then there are those who say, 'but we must not frighten people.' I would to God that a wave of real godly fear gripped our land. This is what our age needs, not an easy-moving message, the sort of thing that makes the hearer feel all nice inside, but a message profoundly disturbing. We have been far too afraid of disturbing people, but the Holy Spirit will have nothing to do with a message or with a minister who is afraid of disturbing.*⁵³

Preaching “a message profoundly disturbing” – that is *real* evangelistic preaching! Take a look at the sermons of Whitefield, Bunyan, the Tennents, Edwards, or Nettleton if you think Duncan Campbell was wrong. Many of Spurgeon’s sermons, such as the one outlined in Appendix Three of this book, were very disturbing to his staid Victorian audience.

Preaching the Law

Evangelistic preaching is preaching of the law. The old-time pastors understood this in a profoundly spiritual way, all but forgotten by today’s preachers. They said, “Law before Gospel.” By this they meant that evangelistic preaching holds up the law of God and shows the conscience of an unconverted man how he has come short of reaching God’s standard, given in His law (e.g. Romans 3:23). For this reason, true evangelistic preaching is “profoundly disturbing” preaching, because it is preaching to the conscience.

One of the greatest “law” passages in the Bible is Romans 3:9-20. The main point of this passage is to prove that “all are under sin” (v. 9), and that “There is none righteous, no not one” (v. 10). When I brought out

this truth rather strongly in a sermon given in Canada a few years ago, a woman stood up and screamed out one word – “NO!” Then she rushed from the church. I continued preaching and several people were hopefully converted. This is the kind of response often experienced during classical revivals in the Book of Acts and in Christian history. Don’t expect a mild reaction if you preach God’s law from this passage, applying it to those seated in front of you.

A series of sermons could be given on the Ten Commandments, showing the lost that they are guilty before God because they have violated His law (Exodus 20:1-17). A good example of a “law” sermon from this passage is Dr. John R. Rice’s great evangelistic message, “The Scarlet Sin, and Roads that Lead to It” (available from Sword of the Lord in booklet form). It is an exposition of Exodus 20:14, the seventh Commandment. I have preached this sermon many times in evangelistic meetings with a more modern title, “Sex Sin, and Roads that Lead to It.” The sermon is so sharp to the ears of modern people, that I have to tell them it is Dr. Rice’s message before I preach. I don’t think I could preach it in most churches without “hiding behind” Dr. Rice. Yet it is this type of sermon that was so common in the past, and which God blessed with great revivals before decisionism ruined evangelicalism. And I am saying that we can never expect more revivals and more real conversions without a return to this sort of preaching of the law.

Dr. Paris Reidhead said,

If I had my way, I would call a moratorium on public preaching of “the plan of salvation” in America for two years. Then I would call on everyone who has use of the airwaves and the pulpits to preach the *holiness* of God, the *righteousness* of God and the *law* of God, until sinners would cry out, “What must we do to be saved?” Then I would take them off in a corner and whisper the gospel to them. Such drastic action is needed because we have gospel-hardened a generation of sinners by telling them *how* to be saved before they have any understanding why they *need* to be saved.⁵⁴

Though I would not completely agree with this statement, it certainly reveals what some evangelicals are thinking regarding the need for preaching the law of God in our day, and there’s a lot of truth to it.

I Wonder Why There's So Little Conviction?

A friend said to me not long ago, "I wonder why people have so little conviction of sin today? I wonder why people are so unconcerned about sin now?" These are questions he thinks about and muses over often. I just listen to him, because I can tell from the way he is talking that he doesn't want an answer from me. But the Bible gives an answer:

"By the law is the knowledge
of sin" (Romans 3:20).

The reason people don't think much about sin is because preachers don't hold up God's holy law and show wicked men that they have broken it! "By the law is the knowledge of sin." There is no "knowledge" of sin where the law of God is not held up, and where sinners are not condemned through sermons for breaking that law.

The world famous psychiatrist Karl Menninger wrote a very interesting book titled, *Whatever Became of Sin?* In it he said:

We know that the principal leadership in the morality realm should be the clergy's, but they seem to minimize their great tradition and opportunity to preach, to prophesy, to speak out.⁵⁵

Then Dr. Menninger exhorts pastors to "Preach! Tell it like it is. Say it from the pulpit. Cry it from the housetops."⁵⁶ This is a Jewish psychiatrist telling Christian pastors to return to old-time preaching! He said that our nation needs it! *Even an intelligent psychiatrist senses that there is something wrong with preaching today, that there needs to be a condemnation and naming of sin from our pulpits.*

If pastors don't name sins and preach against them, we cannot expect people to have a sense of sin. We cannot expect many conversions. We cannot expect revival.

When I was a young boy there were a number of old preachers who still gave what are now referred to as "Hell fire and brimstone" sermons. But that is now a thing of the past.

After I was called to preach at the age of 17, I told my old Southern Baptist pastor that I was going out to speak in a certain church while their pastor was away. He looked at me with a stern expression and said, "Hold 'em low over the coals, boy." He didn't smile when he said it either. I will never forget that conversation as long as I live. He was telling me to preach judgment and law like he did. That is mostly a lost art today. Preachers now

give “nice” little verse-by-verse “expositions” that never upset anyone and never bring sinners under the law so that they will see that they are lost.

It is no coincidence that our nation is falling apart morally at the same time our pastors “quit preachin’ and went to teachin’.” The first is a direct result of the second. We have become a morally degenerate society exactly because our pastors have become timid. These preachers are afraid to hold up the law of God and tell sinners, “You have broken this law. You deserve Hell.” And I am saying that we must return to such preaching if we expect to see revival.

What is sin, anyway? The Bible says that “sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). People will have little sense of sin unless the pastor stops giving verse-by-verse studies, and takes up the laws of God, and proclaims, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” Only with this type of preaching can people experience a real awareness of their sin, through a direct appeal to their consciences, “for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

Then, too, it is only by preaching strongly on the sin of breaking the law that very many will see their need for Jesus. The Bible says, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). Preaching that does not expose sin by the law will not produce many real conversions.

As Dr. J. Gresham Machen put it, “Without the consciousness of sin, the whole of the gospel will seem to be an idle tale.”⁵⁷ I think this helps to explain why the Holy Spirit often takes the place of Jesus in so much of today’s preaching. One famous TV ministry even has a logo with a dove in the center of a cross. Thus, the Holy Spirit replaces Jesus in much of today’s thinking. I think the reason is precisely because a strong consciousness of sin has largely vanished. As a result, people ask, “Why do we need to hear the gospel of the Blood Atonement?” They think that all they need is a “touch” of power from the Holy Spirit to make them feel better. And this has come about because preachers do not emphasize the law, “for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). The gospel seems unnecessary because there is little rebuking and rebuking of sin.

Dr. Machen said:

Although Christianity does not end with the broken heart; it begins with the consciousness of sin. Without the consciousness of sin, the whole of the gospel will seem to be an idle tale. But how can the consciousness of sin be revived? Something no doubt can be accomplished by the proclamation of the law

of God, for the law reveals transgressions. The whole
of the law, moreover, should be proclaimed.⁵⁸

Preaching to the Conscience

Evangelistic preaching which accompanies revival, preaching which accompanies many conversions, is also clear and blunt *preaching against specific sins*. This is closely related to the preaching of law. It is an *application* of law-preaching, given to the consciences of wicked men. The Bible says,

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1).

“Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13).

“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (I Timothy 5:20).

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort” (II Timothy 4:2).

God has put a conscience in every human being (Romans 2:15). The preacher must appeal to the conscience of his hearers as Stephen did (Acts 7:51) and as Paul did (Acts 24:25). Preaching the law and preaching against specific sins is heart preaching. It is preaching directed to the conscience. *It is preaching that names sins like adultery, fornication, missing church, dancing, filthy movies, excessive TV watching, addiction to the computer, pornography, and others.*

If the main purpose of preaching is to teach the Bible or correct false doctrine, it will not be used in revival or in obtaining many conversions. True evangelistic preaching appeals to the conscience. It shows the sinner that he is wicked and calls for the sinner's own conscience to agree with God's Word that this is true. When such an agreement takes place, the sinner is awakened and may be converted before long.

But preaching to the conscience is largely a thing of the past now. The Bible tells us, “For 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” (II Timothy 4:3).

If we examine II Timothy 4:2-3 we learn several things:

- (1) Verse-by-verse Bible teaching is *not* “preaching the word” unless it has pointed reproving and rebuking in it. Unless sins are named and denounced, the word has not been “preached.”
- (2) A sermon which does not reprove and rebuke is *not* what is meant by “preaching the word” in these verses.
- (3) The “sound doctrine” referred to in verse three is sound doctrine concerning *sin*. The word “for” at the beginning of verse three shows that the unsound doctrine refers to teaching which does not have reproving and rebuking and exhorting in it. The word translated “doctrine” is διδασκαλιας (didaskalias) in Greek. It means “that which is taught” according to Zodhiates.⁵⁹ So, the passage tells us that *people will not want “that which is taught” to them to contain reproof and rebuke*. That is the *exact* situation today, since our churches are filled with unconverted people as a result of decades of decisionism.
- (4) Therefore, *preaching which does not contain reproving, rebuking, and exhorting is not Bible preaching*.
- (5) Preaching which does not contain reproving, rebuking, and exhorting is designed to please those who have “itching ears.” They want to have their ears tickled by some novel exposition or story. This describes most sermons today.

The above five points come out of an exegesis and application of this prophetic passage in II Timothy 4:2-4.

Note that verse four says, “And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” This shows that giving up preaching which reproves, rebukes and exhorts results in church members who embrace fables (Greek: muthos = fictions).

So today we have John MacArthur’s “fictions” on the Blood of Jesus, incarnational Sonship, and Lordship salvation.

We have Peter Ruckman's and Gail Riplinger's "fiction" of the KJV given by inspiration, and the "fiction" of the King James Bible being preserved, pickled, and mummified.

We have the Ruckmanite "fiction," put out by Heartland Baptist Bible College, that the KJV "is God's Word preserved for the English-speaking people."⁶⁰ This "fiction" is the *very essence* of Ruckmanism.

We have the Ruckmanite "fictions" put out recently on three videos by Pensacola Christian College, one of which is titled, "The Leaven of Fundamentalism," in which Theodore Letis attacks fundamentalists who refuse to embrace the doctrines of Ruckmanism.*

We have the various "fictions" of Oral Roberts, Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, and Benny Hinn.

We have Billy Graham's "fiction" that men like Prince Charles, Richard Nixon and the Pope are truly born again, even though these men have shown no understanding of the atonement or repentance and faith.

Bible teaching which does not reprove and rebuke results in men, like those above, who have "turned unto fables" (Greek: fictions). Furthermore, such teaching fills our churches with unconverted people who have an appetite for seriously false doctrine. As a result, many in our day have an aversion and dislike for plain old-fashioned preaching on sin and conversion. They would rather have their ears tickled with the latest fable.

Is It Right to Name Sins?

We often hear that it is not "spiritual" to give the actual names of those we are preaching against. But Matthew gave the name of Judas (Matthew 26:14-16, 47-49). Luke gave the name of Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9) and Bar-jesus (Acts 13:6). Paul named Alexander the coppersmith (II Timothy 4:14) and Demas (II Timothy 4:10). Furthermore, account after account in the Bible names sinners and plainly gives their sins and God's punishment of those sins.

*Ruckmanism is a serious doctrinal error which is causing division and confusion in many churches today. I have written a book which explains this error. It is titled, *Ruckmanism Exposed*. You can order it for \$5.00. Write to P. O. Box 15308, Los Angeles, California 90015, and request it by name.

So, the modern idea that it is not “spiritual” to give names is untrue to the Bible itself. Read Matthew, chapter 23, and see how Jesus named the Pharisees and named their sins. If we are true to Jesus and to God’s method in the Bible, we *must* sometimes give names, as we have done in this book. At times it is necessary to give the name of someone who is preaching false doctrine, or someone in a high place who is committing sin. It may also be necessary at times to describe, if not actually name, people in the congregation who are living in open sin (I Corinthians 5:1-13).

Yet there is very little naming of sin in most pulpits today. Dr. John R. Rice wrote:

Some pastors frankly admit that there needs to be preaching against sin – sharp, plain Bible preaching to bring conviction...yet they sometimes are unwilling to suffer the odium and criticism that comes on a preacher who rebukes sin.

Other preachers, who do not have the courage or the conviction or the devotion to preach hard against sin, rationalize and excuse their failure. Sometimes they pretend that love and kindness of heart prevent their preaching against sin. They do not want to “hurt their testimony” by offending anybody! How much nicer such preachers are than Jesus Christ Himself who preached so plainly against sin!⁶¹

Dr. Rice said that many preachers are not willing to suffer criticism, so they do not rebuke sin sharply. He said that others do not have the conviction or devotion to rebuke sin openly from their pulpits. He pointed out that such preachers do not follow the example of Jesus:

Preachers ought to preach against sin; first, because Christians are against sin, God is against sin, the Bible is against sin, the churches are against sin, and the moral consciences of even unsaved people are against sin. Second, preachers should preach against sin because to teach or preach all the Bible necessarily involves preaching and teaching that part which denounces sins, particular sins. Third, because the Bible plainly commands preachers to preach against sin. Fourth, because Bible

preachers, including the Lord Jesus Christ, preached against sin. Fifth, because preaching against sin brings revival of Christians and salvation of sinners.⁶²

But many preachers today seldom if ever denounce sins by name, *particularly* the sins of those seated in the pews in front of them.

In an essay titled, "Exposition Must Have Application," A. W. Tozer spoke of such a preacher's

...unwillingness to get himself into trouble. Any man with fair pulpit gifts can get on with the average congregation if he just "feeds" them and lets them alone. Never hint that they are wrong and should be set right, and they will be content.

On the other hand, the man who preaches truth and applies it to the lives of his hearers will feel the nails and the thorns. May God raise up such prophets. The church needs them badly.⁶³

Can a Christian Have Ten Concubines?

Several verse-by-verse teachers have a tendency to speak about King David, to tell people about David's sex sins, and then tell them that they, themselves, can be saved and commit such sins. They talk about David's sexual sins and say that he was a "Christian" who needed to rededicate himself. I heard a famous conservative SBC preacher talk like that on television this morning. These teachers do not refer to I Corinthians 6:9-10, which plainly says that adulterers and fornicators "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." In the light of I Corinthians 6:11, this passage refers to conversion. Revelation 21:8 plainly tells us that "whoremongers" will be in the lake of fire. But instead of preaching this, they stick with David, not telling people that he lived in the old dispensation, and that New Testament believers have a different standard.

Many will say that we are wrong to "dispensationalize" morality, but I do think this is clearly what the Bible teaches. For instance, II Samuel 16:22 tells us that "Absalom went in unto his father's concubines." II Samuel 20:3 tells us that David had ten of these concubines. *So, David had these concubines long after he repented of his sin with Bathsheba.* Now, who would dare to disagree with us when we say that *no* New Testament

Christian could have ten concubines? Would you want to have a pastor with ten concubines? How about a deacon with ten of them? How about a church member with ten such ladies at home?

Would you listen to Dr. Lee Roberson if he had ten concubines like David or seven hundred wives like Solomon? Would you follow Bob Jones III if he had ten concubines or seven hundred wives? Would you think Jerry Falwell was saved if he had as many women as David or Solomon? I think your conscience and common sense, as well as the Bible, show that we have a different standard in this dispensation.

Dr. Jack Hyles says that David had a conversion as we know it before murdering Uriah the Hittite and committing adultery with his wife.⁶⁴ While I would agree with Dr. Hyles that “salvation has always been and will always be by grace through faith in Christ,”⁶⁵ I do *not* agree with him that converted people in *this* dispensation can have ten concubines, as David did *after* he repented. Dr. Hyles’ teaching has harmed many (perhaps including his own son) who have thought that they could be born-again Christians while freely committing sexual sin outside of marriage. Acts 17:30 says, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”

So, there is a different standard today, and *it is wrong for preachers to go back to David’s sins, or Solomon’s sins, and imply that New Testament Christians can freely commit these sins in this present age. It is confusing and soul-damning preaching (Revelation 21:8).*

Here is an outline of a sermon I preached recently, titled, “Will a Real Christian Sin Like King David?” It shows that we are living in a different dispensation. In the exposition, before the sermon, I showed that God never meant for Israel to have a king in the first place (I Samuel 8:7-22). It was not God’s perfect will for David to be king at all. Then, after he became king, he murdered a man (II Samuel 12:1-9). During that dispensation, David should Scripturally have been executed for committing murder (Exodus 21:12). Since he was king, a position not favored by God, the people did not execute him as they should have done. Certainly no New Testament Christian can commit murder since “ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (I John 3:15). Thus, anyone today who commits murder as David did does not have eternal life, and is not a Christian.

Then, after that exposition, I preached the following sermon:

WILL A REAL CHRISTIAN SIN LIKE KING DAVID?

“Thou hast given great occasion to the enemies
of the Lord to blaspheme” (II Samuel 12:14)

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now
commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30)

I. The sins of David

1. Murder and adultery, II Samuel 12:9.
2. Continued adultery afterwards, II Samuel 15:16; 20:3.
3. David should Scripturally have been stoned to death, Exodus 21:12.

II. The sins of false Christians

1. Murderers are unsaved, I John 3:15.
2. Adulterers are unsaved, I Corinthians 6:9-10.

III. The dispensational differences

1. We have the whole Bible, II Timothy 3:16-17.
2. We have the local church, I Timothy 3:15.
3. We have pastors and teachers, Ephesians 4:11-12.
4. We have a superior priest, Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:11-12, 19-20.

I believe that this is the type of sermon we so desperately need in our time.

Unfortunately, *today there are few preachers proclaiming that those who practice sex sin are lost, though the Bible plainly says they are in Revelation 21:8 and elsewhere.* No wonder many so-called “born again” preachers themselves commit this sin! They are hiding behind David, but it will do them no good at the Last Judgment. They have *never* been Scripturally converted. It will do no good at all for such a person to “rededicate” himself. They must be born again (John 3:7) and converted (Acts 3:19; Matthew 18:3). *What we need today is New Testament Conversion! We need to stop preaching Old-Testament carnality and preach New Testament conversion!*

Spurgeon on Sexual Sin

Listen to Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, as he expounded on I Corinthians 6:9-11:

Now, beloved, first of all, here is A SOLEMN SENTENCE: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” Oh, while I speak of it, I pray God, in infinite mercy, to carry home the words I say to any who are guilty of either or all the sins in this black and shameful list!

“Be not deceived: neither fornicators...shall inherit the kingdom of God.” That is the first set of sinners mentioned in this terrible catalogue, “fornicators” – men and women who have been guilty of unchastity with those who are unmarried. Not necessarily in the bonds of wedlock should we all be, but always in the bonds of purity; and those who sin against that which is pure, in their intercourse with one another, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Nothing could be more explicit than this inspired declaration of the apostle. If any persons live in lust and uncleanness, God will not permit them to defile his true Church on earth, or to profane his temple above. *It is quite possible that I may be speaking to some people upon those ears this message grates very harshly – for all sorts of hearers come to this place,* – and they will be the first to say, “The preacher should not mention such a subject.” My answer to that remark is, – Then, you should not commit such iniquity, and give me cause to speak of it. As long as there are, in the world, sinners of this character, there must be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ faithful enough to pluck the velvet from their mouths, and to speak with the utmost plainness about them and to them. *Let there be no mistake concerning this matter, you cannot be Christians if you thus defile yourselves; you cannot be children of God and live in filthy sin; it must not – it cannot be, and God here, by the pen of the apostle Paul, excommunicates all who pretend to be members of his Church, and yet are guilty of the sin of fornication.*

As to adulterers, whom the apostle next mentions, I need not say much; but, alas! there are still many

such sinners, and they are found not only among the poor, but perhaps even more among those who can afford to pay for divorces, and dispensations, and indulgences to vice. Oh, horrible and terrible in this country, as well as in other lands, is the prevalence of this filthy sin! *If there be any persons here who have made a profession of religion, and yet who have fallen into this guilt and crime of adultery, let me read the solemn sentence of my text to you, without mincing matters in the least, or toning down the severity of the inspired language, you “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* Unless you hate and abhor this shameful sin, and flee from it, as from a poisonous serpent, you can never come into that kingdom where Christ is; neither in the kingdom of his grace, nor yet in the kingdom of his glory, can you have any inheritance.⁶⁶

How different is Spurgeon’s sermon on fornication and adultery from what is preached in many pulpits today. Spurgeon, and all the old preachers, knew that in a real conversion you have to hate and flee from these sex sins, or you are not a convert. *If you did not hate and flee from sex sins at the time of conversion, you are still a lost man. A man who practices sexual sin or pornography is unconverted. Rededication will not help you. “Restoration” will not help you. You must be born again.*

How About Jokes?

When modern preachers stand up, they often crack a few jokes to “loosen up” the congregation before the sermon. To me, this is a reprehensible way to begin an evangelistic sermon. Why? Because it is inappropriate and sets the wrong mood. The evangelistic sermon is a life or death matter. It is concerned with the most solemn subject on earth – how to keep sinners out of Hell. Jokes set the wrong mood, get people’s minds off of the subject, and quench the Holy Spirit.

None of the old revival preachers like Knox, Bunyan, Whitefield, Nettleton, Spurgeon, or Duncan Campbell used jokes to begin an evangelistic sermon. That is one of the main reasons today’s sermons are so much less effective than theirs.

There may be a place for a joke occasionally, but not to “loosen up” an audience. That is theatrics and psychological manipulation, not preaching.

We must return to the serious preaching style of the Puritans and early

Baptists. As Duncan Campbell put it, “Such a collapse of moral conscience in the land could never have happened if the Puritan element in our preaching had not, in a great measure, fallen out.”⁶⁷

FOOTNOTES

¹Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing Company, 1993), p. 57.

²Nixon went forward at a Paul Rader evangelistic meeting in 1926, when he was thirteen years old. But he did not refer to this as a life-changing conversion in later years. See *Nixon: A Life* by Jonathan Aitken (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing Company, 1993), p. 48. For Nixon’s own statement on Jesus’ resurrection as a “myth” see Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978). On page 16 of this book, Nixon said, “It may be true that the resurrection story is a myth, but symbolically it teaches the great lesson that men who achieve the highest values in their lives may gain immortality.” This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that the physical resurrection of Jesus is a fact. This is one of the fundamentals of Christianity.

³Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing Company, 1993), p. 495.

⁴*Time* magazine, May 2, 1994, p. 28.

⁵Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing Company, 1993), p. 577.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 441, 574-575.

⁷Monica Crowley, *Nixon in Winter* (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. 85-89.

⁸Monica Crowley, *Nixon off the Record* (New York: Random House, 1996), pp. 170-177.

⁹Richard Nixon, *Beyond Peace* (New York: Random House, 1994), pp. 177-178.

¹⁰Richard Nixon, *In the Arena* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p. 304.

¹¹Monica Crowley, *Nixon in Winter* (New York: Random House, 1998), p. 250.

¹²*Charisma* magazine, January 1997, p. 16.

¹³John R. Rice, *Bible Doctrines to Live By* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee:

Sword of the Lord, 1968), p. 311.

¹⁴John R. Rice, *Why Our Churches Do Not Win Souls* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord, 1966), p. 80.

¹⁵Roy L. Branson, Jr., *Dear Preacher: Please Quit* (Bristol, Tennessee: Landmark Publications, 1987), p. 22.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷*Baptist Bible Tribune*, August 14, 1995, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1959), pp. 514-522.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 515.

²⁰Ibid., p. 516.

²¹Ibid., pp. 516-517. These figures also reported by William Martin in *A Prophet With Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991), p. 184.

²²Ibid., p. 517.

²³Ibid., p. 518.

²⁴William Martin, *A Prophet With Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991), p. 184.

²⁵Robert O. Ferm, *Billy Graham: Do the Converts Last?* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1988).

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷R. T. Ketcham, "Facts Concerning Billy Graham," in "Graham's 23 Years of Change" by D. A. Waite (Collingswood, NJ: Bible For Today, 1971), appendix III, p. 3.

²⁸Bill Rose, *Oakland Tribune*, Wednesday, December 17, 1958, p. 6-S.

²⁹Peter Masters in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1995, no. 4, pp. 14-15.

³⁰John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 71.

³¹William Martin, *A Prophet With Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991).

³²Peter Masters in *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1995, No. 4, p. 14.

³³Billy Graham, "I Can't Play God Any More," *McCall's* magazine, January 1978, p. 158.

³⁴Robert E. Kofahl, Ph.D., *Foundation* magazine, May-June 1997, transcript of "The Hour of Power," program #1427, with Rev. Robert H. Schuller and Billy Graham, pp. 22-23.

- ³⁵Ibid., pp. 24-25.
- ³⁶Billy Graham, "I Can't Play God Any More," *McCall's* magazine, January 1978, p. 158.
- ³⁷Dave Hunt, *The Berean Call*, January 1998, p. 2.
- ³⁸J. D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort, *Who's Who in Christian History* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1992), p. 284.
- ³⁹John R. Rice, *Why Our Churches Do Not Win Souls* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord, 1966), pp. 74-75.
- ⁴⁰Asahel Nettleton, *Sermons From the Second Great Awakening* (Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, 1995 reprint), p. 445.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 439.
- ⁴²Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), pp. 265-266.
- ⁴³Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), pp. 295-296.
- ⁴⁴Jack Hyles, *Enemies of Soul Winning* (Hammond, Indiana: Hyles-Anderson Publishers), pp. 140-141.
- ⁴⁵Jack Hyles, *Teaching on Preaching* (Hammond, Indiana: Hyles-Anderson Publishers, 1986), p. 47.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., p. 46.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 50.
- ⁴⁸Ibid.
- ⁴⁹C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth reprint, 1976), p. 246.
- ⁵⁰John R. Rice, *Why Our Churches Do Not Win Souls* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord, 1966), pp. 67-69.
- ⁵¹Brian H. Edwards, *Revival! A People Saturated With God* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1991), p. 103.
- ⁵²Duncan Campbell, *The Price and Power of Revival* (Belfast: The Faith Mission, 1956), pp. 10-11.
- ⁵³Ibid., p. 42.
- ⁵⁴Paris Reidhead, *Getting Evangelicals Saved* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), p. 54.
- ⁵⁵Karl Menninger, M.D., *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 264.
- ⁵⁶Ibid.
- ⁵⁷J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 66.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D., *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: AMG Publishers, 1992), p. 1705.

⁶⁰Terry Randolph, "A Special Message From Heartland Baptist Bible College," letter to BBF pastors, December 15, 1998, p. 2.

⁶¹John R. Rice, *Why Preach Against Sin?* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord, 1946), p. 1.

⁶²Ibid., p. 5.

⁶³A. W. Tozer, *The Best of A. W. Tozer*, edited by Warren W. Wiersbe (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986), p. 142.

⁶⁴Jack Hyles, *Enemies of Soul Winning* (Hammond, Indiana: Hyles-Anderson Publishers, 1993), p. 3.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 9.

⁶⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "A Marvellous Change," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, preached September 7, 1882, vol. 46, pp. 62-63 (reprinted by Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena, Texas).

⁶⁷Duncan Campbell, *The Price and Power of Revival* (Belfast: The Faith Mission, 1956), p. 41.

“We have no great preachers anymore. There is a famine of great preaching, a famine of conscience-stirring preaching, a famine of heartbreaking preaching, a famine of soul-stirring preaching, a famine of that preaching like our fathers knew which kept men awake all night lest they fall into hell.”

– Leonard Ravenhill

“Present day preaching does not save men. Present day preaching does not even annoy men, but leaves them precisely where they were, without a ruffle and without the slightest disturbance...Anyone who happens to break these rules and who produces a disturbing effect upon members of his congregation is regarded as an objectionable person.”

– Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones,
Long-time pastor of Westminster Chapel, London.

“One reason many preachers do not preach as Paul did is that they are not willing to suffer as Paul suffered.”

– Dr. John R. Rice

“I know what’s wrong with this meeting tonight. There are too many hypocrites in the church. While we sing the first verse of the next hymn, will the hypocrites please leave the church.” During the singing thirty or forty left the church, many in evident annoyance.

– W. P. Nicholson,
Evangelist from Northern Ireland,

who was greatly used in revival in the 1920s.

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins”

(Isaiah 58:1)

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort”

(II Timothy 4:2)

CHAPTER 4

A FAMINE OF REAL GOSPEL PREACHING

by Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr.

“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.” (Jeremiah 23:21)

“I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.” (Jeremiah 23:32b)

Donald Wildmon is the president of the American Family Association. He is a well-known evangelical advocate of traditional values. Dr. Wildmon said this recently:

Who would have thought, 30 years ago, that our country would be in the moral mess it is now in? Not me. Not anyone I know.*

But the truth of the matter is that we are now in an extreme moral mess. We have abandoned our roots, told God He is irrelevant, and called good evil and evil good. In the past 30 years we have killed more than 30,000,000 innocent unborn children. We have allowed hardcore pornography into nearly every aspect

*I knew it...and preached it. So did many other Southern Baptist and Fundamentalist preachers. Thirty years ago we were in the time of anti-war demonstrations, race riots, and drugs. I don't know who Dr. Wildmon was listening to, but many conservative preachers were proclaiming a gloomy future for America in those days, thirty years ago. Nearly every sermon I preached during that period contained dark predictions, as my friends well know. Billy Graham wrote a book in 1967 titled *World Aflame*, in which he quoted this statement, “Unless the world has a spiritual rebirth within the next few years, civilization is doomed.”¹ Even Billy Graham was conservative enough to say that in the sixties. It seems that Wildmon did not read Billy Graham's book in 1967. Since Wildmon is a United Methodist, he probably did not hear much conservative preaching or read many conservative books during the turbulent sixties.

of our society. We have encouraged millions of individuals to beat the system and live off the state. We have accepted and even approved of the homosexual lifestyle with all the misery which goes with it. We have brought racial division to a deeper level than it was during the days of segregation. We have watched as divorce has become the norm. And on and on the problems go.²

This is a correct description of the terrible moral and spiritual condition of America. However, Dr. Wildmon does not give the *reason* we are experiencing today's "moral mess." He does not explain that American preachers followed Finney, in the last century, and turned conversion into a mere "decision." He does not tell us that these "new" preachers stopped counselling people after their sermons, and he does not tell us that the sermons themselves changed greatly during the past hundred years, so that today old-fashioned evangelistic preaching is a thing of the past. *That* is the reason for today's "moral mess."

He also doesn't tell us that many Protestant and Baptist ministers no longer believe in conversion. When you talk to these pastors, you get the distinct impression that they really don't believe in conversion at all.

A preacher like this sees so many (including other pastors) committing gross sins. He says to himself, "They have called on the Lord; they have said the sinner's prayer; they have made a Lordship commitment; they have rededicated their lives. They can't be *lost!*"

But they are indeed lost. The Bible is right in saying that they will never enter Christ's kingdom. Spurgeon, and all the old pre-decisionist preachers, were right in preaching Revelation 21:8 as a warning to whoremongers. A converted man will never practice adultery or fornication (I Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21).

Those who practice these sins are often "restored" through a process of counselling and "rededication." This is unscriptural. They need to be converted (Matthew 18:3; Mark 4:12; Acts 3:19). The only "restoration" that can save their souls from Hell is conversion (Mark 8:25; Jeremiah 30:17). It is sinful and wrong to restore an adulterous preacher without attempting to get him converted (I Corinthians 5:9-11).

New-evangelical preachers Tony Campolo and Gordon MacDonald counselled Bill Clinton every week after the Monica Lewinsky fiasco. They sought to help Clinton gain "spiritual recovery" by this process. But they did not tell the president that he was lost. They did not seek to get him converted. They foolishly tried to "restore" a lost man through psychology and

“rededication.” It is sinful and unscriptural to “restore” a lost president or preacher without insisting that he be converted (II Peter 2:1-3, 14-15).

I know many will say that King David was “restored,” but I believe this is a misinterpretation of Scripture, and not helpful to the people in our dispensation.

Some time ago a man who says that Christians can sin like King David spoke in our church. A few days later a woman came to my office in great confusion. She herself had broken off from an adulterous relationship when she was converted. Now this man’s sermon brought strong temptation and confusion to her. She thought that he was telling her she could go back to adultery and still be saved. Such sermons on David are often used by the Devil (Jude 4).

I asked Dr. Cagan why preachers would be inclined to teach so foolishly on sexual sin. He said that there are probably two reasons:

- (1) These preachers don’t do much “listening” to those who come forward in their churches. If they did more listening and less talking they would discover the horrible confusion that comes from their teachings.
- (2) These preachers have doubtlessly found that such teaching is very popular with the wicked. They *love* to be told how *much* they can sin and still be saved. This preaching appeals to the carnality of lost church members (II Peter 2:19-21).

I think there is a third reason in many cases.

- (3) Many preachers have no care for the souls of the people in their churches. They preach for a salary and treat the ministry as any other profession. They do not truly love the souls of the people, but work only for money. ***They fear they might lose their positions if they were to tell the lost in their congregations what they need to hear.*** Since the ministry is only a “job” to them, they have no real concern for the souls of their people (John 10:13; Jude 11).

Let a preacher go into a church pastored by a man like that and preach a strong sermon ***against*** sexual sin, and tell people they are going to Hell for sexual sin, and that they need to be converted, and there will be a great

outcry of rejection toward such real, old-fashioned evangelistic preaching (Acts 7:51-54, 57).

I clearly remember one preacher coming forward with tears streaming down his face after I preached in a certain church. This preacher told me he had led a secret life of sin and had never been converted. Even today he rejoices over the fact that he was finally saved that night. ***He was restored through Scriptural conversion. There is no other way to be restored from a life of pornography and other sex sins. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Ye must be born again" (John 3:3, 7).***

Fearful Preachers

A preacher has to decide not to be popular with the wicked people in his congregation before he can preach against sin as God wants him to do. Dr. John R. Rice wrote:

Some preachers do not preach against sin because they are afraid.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare" (Prov. 29:25). Preachers who are men-pleasers are not God-pleasers. It is sadly true that all over the country there are preachers who have convictions but dare not express them clearly. They are against sin, but they fear to say so. Some preachers preach strong and clear on God's mercy and love, but how timidly and hesitantly they mention the judgment of God on sin! Some preachers do not preach as John the Baptist did because they do not want to get into trouble. They, too, feel that Herod was wrong in living with his sister-in-law, Herodias, but they do not want their heads cut off as John the Baptist had his cut off. Jeremiah got put in a dungeon for plain preaching against sin. The Apostle Paul landed in jail many times. He got beaten up again and again for his plain preaching! He had to skip out of Damascus by night, let down through a window in the city wall in a basket! He was stoned and left for dead; he fought the wild beasts at Ephesus. And Paul's ankles and wrists bore callouses made by the year-long wearing of chains. His body had many scars. Primarily Paul suffered because he demanded repentance everywhere he went. He denounced sin. He preached unpleasant truth as well as pleasant truth. ***One reason many preachers do not preach as Paul***

did is that they are not willing to suffer as Paul suffered.

When Jesus denounced the Pharisees, they planned to kill Him! But is the disciple greater than his Lord? Jesus said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). If I were enough like Jesus, people would hate me as they hated Him. If preachers preached as Jesus preached, surely they would arouse the enmity of Satan and Satan’s men just as Jesus did. Oh, preacher,

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No, there’s a cross for everyone,
And there’s a cross for me.³

False Prophets

Jesus warned us that “many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:11). Who would question the fact that many of the “big” preachers of our day have become false prophets? We have seen several of these “big” men toppled from their positions by televangelism scandals. Other nationally-known pastors of bigger churches have gone into sin of one kind or another. Several preachers in smaller churches have told me that the fallout from these “superstars” has hurt their own congregations and confused their people. Men such as Donn Moomaw, Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and Dave Hyles come readily to mind. Many others, like John MacArthur, Oral Roberts, Peter Ruckman, Theodore P. Letis, Benny Hinn, and Billy Graham, have embraced serious theological errors.

“Big” preachers like this often become false prophets by entering the ministry without being called by God:

“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied” (Jeremiah 23:21).

“The Lord hath not sent them” (Ezekiel 13:6).

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”
(Romans 10:15).

Many “little” preachers have become confused, wondering why God seems to bless the ministry of these people. It should be remembered that the “big” preachers of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Jesus’ day were *false prophets*. Just because someone has a large ministry doesn’t mean he is right. No one ever had a more prestigious following than Rasputin, the demon-energized monk who led the family of Czar Nicholas II to destruction. The Pope often has millions in his audience when he speaks. On the other hand, Noah had a congregation of only seven. We need Biblical thinking in a day of apostasy.

False prophets often continue in the ministry out of greed. They treat preaching as though it were only a profession. They work for a mere salary. They become false prophets “for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread” (Ezekiel 13:19).

“An heart they have exercised with covetous practices”
(II Peter 2:14).

“Woe unto them! for they...ran greedily after the error
of Balaam for reward” (Jude 11).

If it is pointed out that they are false prophets, using the ministry to put food into their mouths, they often become furious:

“He that putteth not into their mouths, they even
prepare war against him” (Micah 3:5).

“Mine heart within me is broken because of the
prophets...For the land is full of adulterers: for
because of swearing the land mourneth...For both
prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I
found their wickedness, saith the Lord...I have seen
also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing:
they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they
strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth
return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto
me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as
Gomorrah. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts
concerning the prophets: Behold, I will feed them
with wormwood, and make them drink the water of
gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness
gone forth into all the land.”

(Jeremiah 23:9-15).

“I am against the prophets...I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.” (Jeremiah 23:31-32).

“Big” preachers who are false prophets will not preach against the sins committed by their congregations. Their purpose is to please wicked church members so they can keep their positions and their salaries. My mother once said to me, regarding a certain group of preachers, “You know what’s wrong with those preachers, Robert? They don’t *really* believe in God.” She may have been right. She often was.

Dr. James Montgomery Boice, a well-known evangelical author, made this statement about Chuck Colson recently:

I’ve always said that I think that if it weren’t that his income comes from Protestants, that he would convert to Catholicism. That’s my impression.⁴

There are many, like Colson, who preach for “the income” (i.e. money).

No Call to Preach

One of the main reasons for the decline of conscience-probing evangelistic preaching is that so many preachers today have never been called to preach in the first place. Pastors who are not called into the ministry cannot preach correctly. Here are portions of an article on “The Call to Preach,” from *Pulpit Helps*:

Some accept preaching as a mere profession. They have no call. The choice is made by the individual, not God. The true minister of God is called by God.

Though much human effort, study, and preparation goes into your training for the ministry, without God’s help you are nothing more than another professional man.

You should be sure you are called of God. If unsure, you should not enter the ministry. *If you enter the ministry but are not called, you will do a disservice to God’s work and God’s people.*⁵

A man who has never had a divine call will not be able to understand the need for preaching against sin. It will seem extreme, unnecessarily controversial, and foolish to such a man. He will not see the need for such

preaching because he has never been called to preach. He simply cannot understand these words of a God-called preacher:

“Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9).

The preacher who has no calling will never understand or agree with the man who has been called by God (compare Jeremiah 1:4-19 and 20:1-4). Can you give a testimony of God’s call similar to Jeremiah’s, in Jeremiah 1:4-19? If you can’t, you should quit the ministry.⁶

The weakness of today’s pulpit shows how many thousands of preachers have no divine calling. We need men called by God, who will stand up for the gospel, denounce sins by name, and preach like our forefathers (Acts 17:6).

“The Lord hath *not* sent thee: but thou makest this people to trust in a lie” (Jeremiah 28:15b).

“For I have not sent them, saith the Lord, yet they prophesy a lie in my name: that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you” (Jeremiah 27:15).

A Strong Word of Caution

In closing on this point, I must give a word of deep caution. A preacher who has allowed his church to fill up with those who made decisions but are not converted will have a great deal of trouble if he quits “ear tickling” teaching and begins to preach Biblically, with rebukes and reproofs. He will, in fact, probably have to go through an outright church split if he becomes obedient to the Bible on this point (I Corinthians 5:13). In any case, he should count the cost before he begins preaching like this. Perhaps it would be easier to start a new church than to go through the ordeals and trials that will be experienced by the preacher who roots out the sins of the unconverted people in his congregation.

I myself had to go through two major church splits to bring old-time preaching to the pulpit in our own church. I must admit that it nearly killed me. If my mother and my wife, Ileana, had not stood with me and encouraged me, I don’t think I would have made it through this ordeal. But Jesus said,

“Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” (Luke 9:24).

You may actually have to “lose your life” for His sake to save yourself and your congregation. Spurgeon’s wife said that he literally preached himself to death upholding the old gospel against the advance of liberalism, during the “Downgrade Controversy.”⁷ Who follows in his steps?

Wicked Advice From a Bible School Professor

One evangelist told me that he went to preach in a Skid-Row mission while he was a theological student. He went with a professor at the Bible school. He memorized and preached John R. Rice’s sermon, “Trailed by a Wild Beast,” an old-fashioned, sin-condemning sermon on Numbers 32:23, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” The points are these:

1. Sin will find you out in your face.
2. Sin will find you out in your body.
3. Sin will find you out in your character.
4. Sin will find you out in your children.
5. Sin will find you out in a remorse-stricken conscience.
6. Sins come out publicly, with open shame.
7. Sin will find you out in Hell.
8. An escape for ruined sinners.

After the young preacher gave Dr. Rice’s sermon, the Bible school professor told him, “It’s OK to preach that kind of sermon in a Skid-Row mission, but don’t ever preach like that in a church.”

So, a sermon Dr. Rice preached in many churches in 1944 (when the sermon was copyrighted by Sword of the Lord) could not be preached in those same churches a few decades later, because they had filled up with unconverted people. But such sermons are needed in our churches – now more than ever.

The kind of advice given by the Bible school teacher has produced a generation of chicken-hearted preachers. It is evil counsel. It will not be blessed with many conversions, and never with revival. *Away with such Satanic counsel from the face of the earth! It would be better to have every church closed to you, like great Wesley and Whitefield did, than to follow such wicked, craven, self-serving advice!*

Winston Churchill said, “People who are not prepared to do unpopular things and to defy clamor are not fit to be Ministers in times of stress.” He

was talking about ministers of the government, but his words apply equally to ministers of the gospel in times like these.

Every preacher needs to constantly remember two Bible verses:

“Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10b).

“Even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (I Thessalonians 2:4b).

The Gospel at the Alamo

Evangelistic preaching is not only sin-condemning, it is also gospel preaching. *Many so-called evangelistic sermons today do not contain the gospel.* One pastor recently told me that he went to evangelistic meetings for several nights without hearing the gospel *one* time! I have seen this same phenomenon countless times myself. An exposition or devotional message is given to the Christians, and then an invitation is “tacked on” at the end. But even this “patched on” invitation too often does not contain the gospel. The gospel has not been preached unless the death of Jesus for sins and His resurrection from the dead are preached (I Corinthians 15:1-4). *Notice that I said “preached” – not just mentioned in passing.*

I recently took my wife and boys on a tour of several southwestern states. We heard seven famous Baptist pastors while we were on this trip, but not one of them preached an evangelistic sermon. I am not saying their sermons weren’t interesting. They were. But they were not evangelistic sermons. A lost man who wandered in from the street would not be converted by hearing them. The content of them could be given in an Episcopalian cathedral without disturbing many.

It was not until we reached the Alamo, in San Antonio, Texas, that we finally heard a clear evangelistic sermon. It seemed strangely ironic to me that gospel preaching appeared to be taking a last stand on the street in front of this memorial.

The Alamo is known throughout the world as the shrine of Texas liberty. But it is larger than Texas. In the heritage of every American stands this scarred and weathered monument to courage, determination and freedom.

We heard only one plain evangelistic sermon on our trip, from an elderly man in a black suit, preaching in 105 degree heat on the street in front of the Alamo. I gave him a small offering after my family and I sat on a bench and heard him gladly for half an hour. As we listened to him preach, I thought of these words: “Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness” (II Peter 2:5). Noah, like this old man, didn’t have a very big

crowd, but he was the only preacher who was right in his arrogant and rebellious generation. Tears streamed down my cheeks as I realized that evangelistic preaching, pushed out of most of our churches, was making a last stand here at the Alamo. Only this old Baptist preacher seemed to understand. My mother would have loved to hear him.

Great evangelistic sermons have gradually faded away, and personal work with inquirers, done by the pastor, is almost unheard of in our time. A mere physical action, such as walking to the front of a church, or raising a hand, or mentally believing the plan of salvation, has largely taken the place of conversion.

MacArthur's Reaction – Lordship Salvation

Before I tell you why I think John MacArthur is wrong concerning Lordship salvation, I must first admit that Dr. MacArthur is a careful student of the Bible. At the risk of being misunderstood, I must honestly say that *The MacArthur Study Bible* is a good tool, which can be used to help a discerning pastor. I myself read the notes in this fine study Bible nearly every day. It is not perfect. No study Bible is, not even the esteemed *Scofield Reference Bible*. I disagree with the *Scofield* notes regarding some things, such as the references referring to the church. I also disagree with some of MacArthur's notes, particularly on the Blood of Christ and incarnational Sonship. But most of his notes are helpful, and I believe that discerning preachers should have *The MacArthur Study Bible* in their libraries. Having said this, however, I must state strongly that I disagree with his view of Lordship salvation, and tell you why I don't agree with him on this subject.

Dr. John MacArthur sees the error of decisionism, but he proposes an answer which is unscriptural: Lordship salvation. No lost person can possibly do what Dr. MacArthur says he must do to be saved:

The call to Christian discipleship explicitly demands just that kind of *total dedication*. It is *full commitment*...No one can come to Christ on any other terms.⁸

To which we reply: if you are coming to Jesus as a lost sinner, you don't have any life or power to commit anything to Him (Ephesians 2:1, 5, 8-9). You are "dead" in trespasses and sins. You cannot make what Dr. MacArthur calls "total dedication" and "full commitment." Dr. MacArthur's view is similar to that of Charles G. Finney, who told lost sinners to commit every area of their lives to Jesus. No, conversion does not come that way.

Both MacArthur and Finney are wrong on “Lordship Salvation.” A lost sinner must believe on Jesus. That is the only Bible requirement (Acts 16:31; Galatians 2:16).

Dr. MacArthur is trying to correct “Those who think they can simply affirm a list of gospel facts and continue to live any way they please.”⁹ But his answer, in “Lordship Salvation,” is wrong.

He writes that the Disciples were saved when they “turned from sin and self to follow Him.”¹⁰ So, he thinks they were saved by their own efforts and works. There is *no* gospel in this statement, nothing about Jesus, Himself doing anything. ***The emphasis is all on the works of man.***

Again, in this same book, Dr. MacArthur says, “Saving faith is a commitment to leave sin and follow Jesus Christ at all costs.”¹¹ The thief on the cross did not get saved that way. The Philippian jailor did not get saved that way. Luther, Wesley, Bunyan and Spurgeon did not get saved that way. I did not get saved that way. Dr. Cagan did not get saved that way.

Dr. James M. Gray was an early president of Moody Bible Institute. He wrote a hymn titled, “O Take the Gift of Mercy.” The words are well worth reading:

It is not what you're doing or what you've left undone;
Or giving up a habit, by which salvation's won:
Salvation is not winning, it's something you receive,
God's free and gracious off'ring to all who will believe.

You say, “I read the Bible, in prayer I daily bow”;
You say, “Why, I am doing the best that I know how!”
But even were you perfect, the old sin still remains;
It needs the blood of Jesus to wash away your stains.¹²

The false ideas of conversion by doctrinal belief, and conversion by coming forward, and conversion by saying a prayer ***cannot be corrected through MacArthur's wrong-headed notion of salvation by “commitment to leave sin and follow Jesus.”*** MacArthur's “Lordship Salvation” is simply a different trick, a different decision. But it is still a man-made decision all the same. As J. M. Gray put it,

But even were you perfect, the old sin still remains;
It needs the blood of Jesus to wash away your stains.

The ***only*** decision God accepts is the decision to rest on Jesus, Himself. The Pharisees asked Him, “What shall we do, that we might works the works of God?” (John 6:28). “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29).

The *only* “work” that God accepts is the “work” of believing “on” Jesus. No other decision will be accepted by God. *The Bible says, “We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified” (Galatians 2:16).* MacArthur’s idea of salvation by “commitment to leave sin and follow Jesus” is *exactly* what is taught by the Roman Catholic church. It is salvation by human works (cf. Ephesians 2:8, 9; e.g. Titus 3:5).

Decisionism – Without a Public Invitation

Salvation by the human work of making Him Lord, or the human work of believing a doctrine, or the human work of going forward, or the human work of saying a sinner’s prayer will not save. None of these human works will bring salvation, including Dr. MacArthur’s. He just offers a different human work; he offers a different decision, but it is *still* a decision nonetheless. *A preacher can stop giving a public invitation in his church, as Dr. MacArthur has done, and still be a decisionist. One can substitute “Lordship Salvation” for other human works and still be a decisionist.* Remember our definition of decisionism:

Decisionism is the belief that a person is saved by coming forward, raising the hand, saying a prayer, believing a doctrine, *making a Lordship commitment, or some other external human act*, which is taken as the equivalent to, and proof of, the miracle of inward conversion; it is the belief that a person is saved through the agency of a merely human decision; the belief that performing one of these human actions shows that a person is saved.

Dr. MacArthur merely exchanges the usual external human acts for a new external human act – namely, making Jesus Lord of your life.

Let’s make sure Dr. MacArthur is really saying that. Here are several more quotes from him:

He was unwilling to come the way Jesus specified, the way of confessing his sin and surrendering to Jesus’ Lordship.¹³

This is actually pure Roman Catholic soteriology. It is *not* Reformed Protestant or Baptist doctrine! *Rome teaches salvation by confessing sin and surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. The Reformation taught salvation by faith in Jesus!*

Again, Dr. MacArthur wrote:

Saving faith is a commitment to leave sin and follow Jesus at all costs.¹⁴

Could St. Thomas Aquinas have said it better? Could the Pope have expounded it more eloquently? And Charles Finney would have loved it! But this is *not* Reformed Protestant or Baptist teaching. It is pure **Romanism**.

Again, Dr. MacArthur wrote:

Salvation is for those who are willing to forsake everything.¹⁵

So, a person must “forsake everything” to be saved! Could St. Francis have said it better? Could the Pope have expounded it more clearly? And Charles Finney would have loved it! But this is *not* Reformed Protestant or Baptist teaching. It is **Romanism!**

*Again, Dr. MacArthur writes that no one can be saved “without ridding himself of self-righteousness, pride, material possessions, or even sin.”*¹⁶ This is an astonishingly Pelagian statement. The Pope and Finney would leap for joy in reading it. But the Reformers would have turned from it with an angry scowl and strong denunciation.

How can a lost man “rid himself of self-righteousness, pride, material possessions, or even sin”? *How? How? How? How* can a depraved sinner “rid himself of sin”? The answer is simple: HE CANNOT! *Dr. MacArthur’s advice concerning ridding oneself of sin is Finneyism, decisionism and Catholicism all rolled together into one demonic admixture of self-salvation.* “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain” (Jude 11).

No wonder Dr. MacArthur denies the present need for the Blood of Jesus. The Blood isn’t necessary. *He rids himself of sin!* “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain” (Jude 11). A Bloodless religion will be the ruin of anyone who embraces it.

A Famine of Gospel Preaching

Joseph Bellamy put it this way:

O sinner, if you have a heart to do all that in reason you ought to do, to recommend you to the divine favor, do it; and you shall live. But then remember, there is no occasion that Christ should do any thing for you; *you*

will have done enough for yourself; and so Christ is dead in vain, and Christianity is overthrown.^{17*}

Bellamy tells us “doing all that in reason you ought to do” to obtain God’s favor (i.e. Lordship Salvation), *if it really did save, would make Christ’s death worthless and would overthrow Christianity.*

Indeed, that is exactly what decisionism in its various forms has done. Much of today’s preaching does not emphasize the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4) simply because the gospel is *not needed* if man can save himself by making

a Lordship decision, as advocated by John MacArthur and his followers. If man can save himself by a Lordship decision, why does he need the gospel? Why does he need the Blood?

Decisionism, then, is the main reason for the decline of real gospel preaching. If people can easily be manipulated into raising their hands or saying that Jesus is their Lord, why do we need great gospel preaching anyway? Why not just give a verse-by-verse Bible teaching and then ask for a show of hands at the end? Preachers have found that just as many people will raise their hands after a verse-by-verse exposition directed to Christians as will raise them after a sweaty, sin-condemning gospel sermon directed to the consciences of the lost.

So, why do we need fiery evangelistic sermons? Just teach the Christians and then ask for a show of hands from the unsaved. *Because of decisionism, great gospel preaching has become a lost art.* Preachers from Chuck Smith and Chuck Swindoll to John MacArthur, Bill Hybels, John Maxwell, and Rick Warren have replaced the gospel sermon with little Bible studies, delivered in a relaxed, conversational style. That is why the evangelistic sermon has become a thing of the past, replaced with expositions and motivational talks.

When preaching becomes effortless and heartless exposition, it is no longer great gospel preaching. When preaching no longer goads the consciences of sinners, it is no longer great gospel preaching. When preaching does not threaten sinners with eternal damnation, it is no longer great gospel preaching. When preaching no longer points men to the Blood of Christ, it is no longer great gospel preaching.

*Joseph Bellamy was born in 1719 and died in 1790. He graduated from Yale in 1735 and studied for the ministry under Jonathan Edwards. During the Great Awakening he preached almost daily in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York, with many savingly converted. God sent revival many times under his ministry.

As Leonard Ravenhill put it:

Just a couple of days ago a fine preacher brother said to me, "We have no great preachers in the country anymore." I think I know what he meant: no outstanding man with a "thus saith the Lord," a man terrible in utterance...We have gifted preachers, talented preachers, orator preachers, famous preachers, organizing preachers, but where, oh where, are the preachers who startle the nation? There is a famine of great preaching, a famine of conscience-stirring preaching, a famine of heartbreaking preaching, a famine of soul-tearing preaching, a famine of that preaching like our fathers knew which kept men awake all night lest they fall into hell. I repeat, "There is a famine of the word of the Lord." There is a famine of sound gospel preaching.¹⁸

"I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but *of hearing* the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."
(Amos 8:11-12)

This passage in Amos doesn't say they had no Bible expositions. It says there was a famine "of hearing." It was a famine of hearing because the expositions of that day did not stir the conscience. We have such a famine "of hearing" today for precisely the same reason. Preachers are afraid to cut loose and blast the sins of those in front of them and then hold up Jesus as the sinner's only hope. The Bible says:

"Preach the word...reprove, rebuke, exhort"
(II Timothy 4:2).

One verse later, we are given this prophetic warning:

"For 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."
(II Timothy 4:3)

The Bible tells us to “preach” and warns us that the time will come when people will have a desire to hear ear tickling “teachers.”

The Greek word for “preaching” is κηρυξον (kérukson). It means “to herald (as a public crier), preach, proclaim.”¹⁹ The Greek word for “teachers” is διδασκαλους (didaskalous). It means “an instructor, a teacher.”²⁰ It doesn’t take much knowledge of Greek to see that these verses give a great deal of insight into today’s pulpit delivery. *We have much instruction but little proclamation “as a public crier.” The Bible gives this as a prophetic sign of the end-times.*

We must stand against the tide of this age and “proclaim as a public crier,” with reproving and rebuking in the sermons, as well as exhortation. *“Teaching” is what the false prophets of the last days do – to please their audiences, filled with people who have “itching ears.”*

Textual Preaching

Evangelistic preaching which produces conversions is also *textual preaching*. Virtually all of the great revival sermons of the past were sermons on a few words of Scripture. Few if any that I know of were what is commonly called “expository” preaching in our day.

In olden times men knew the difference between an exposition and a sermon. For an example of the old way of separating the exposition from the sermon, see Volumes 38 through 60 of the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena, Texas). Beginning three months after Spurgeon’s death, his publishers printed his expositions as well as his sermons. Prior to that there is simply a statement at the end of each sermon which says, “Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon – Hosea 11” (or whatever passage was read). But beginning on April 24, 1892, the publishers also included Spurgeon’s transcribed expositions, given earlier in each service, with the sermon for that Sunday. Passmore and Alabaster, Spurgeon’s publishers, gave this note,

The publishers will issue, with the sermon, the
Exposition that preceded it.²¹

These pre-sermon expositions had been taken down by dictation and preserved for future generations.

Usually Spurgeon chose his text from the passage he had given an exposition on earlier in the service, though he sometimes took his text from a related passage elsewhere in the Bible. This was not innovated by Spurgeon.

He was simply preaching in the old way, before Finney's ideas ruined evangelistic preaching.

I have adopted Spurgeon's old method in our church and have found it very helpful. I discovered that I could give an exposition to the Christians first, and then devote the sermon to the lost. It does not add more than fifteen minutes to the service to follow this procedure. If some of the "special music" (which is often far too long anyway) is removed, there is plenty of time to do this. Thus, the preacher can speak to both the saved and the lost in the same service. Why not *try* the old method?

Then, coming back to the point from which I have strayed, the preacher can bring an evangelistic sermon from a single verse or two, directed solely at the lost in the congregation.

There are lost people in every service at our church because our people work hard to get them there. There is no finer place in the world to hear the gospel than in a Bible-believing church. I have found that there are literally thousands of ways to present the gospel, all fresh and interesting, from all parts of the Bible. This keeps Jesus Christ central in the service, and makes it possible for the preacher to say with Paul, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2).

Remember, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21). Also remember that all but one of the great sermons in the Book of Acts were evangelistic sermons to the lost. Can we do better than the Apostles?

I am so pleased with the people in our church. They are so strong, committed and selfless. They love Jesus so very much. They got that way by hearing Christ-exalting evangelistic sermons every Sunday morning and evening. They love and serve Jesus because He is at the heart of every message. They are repeatedly reminded of the debt they owe to Jesus.

Now, as I said earlier, it is my conviction that textual preaching must *also* be expository, that the text must never be used as a mere motto. The richest and best evangelistic sermons usually "dig the meat" out of the text before applying it evangelistically. The preachers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries knew this. Many today have forgotten that it is necessary to do so.

Emotional Preaching

Next, true evangelistic preaching is *emotional preaching*. I am not saying it is always loud, though it should be at times. I *am* saying it is preaching which is set on fire by emotion. Yes, the mind should be fed with the exposition of the text, but unless the preaching is accompanied by emotion there will be no life in it, and the lost will not be moved toward

conversion. As John Wesley said,

Set yourself on fire
and the people will come
to see you burn.

He was referring to emotion in an evangelistic sermon. The preacher *himself* must be moved with the message he is preaching or he cannot expect anyone else to become emotionally involved enough to have the sermon affect his life. The gospel given out in a dry, intellectual way will produce few conversions in most cases. While it is true that Jonathan Edwards read his sermons from a manuscript, he is the rare exception. Yet it should be noted that even quieter revival preachers like Edwards were always very solemn. They did not crack any jokes. They let people know they were in dead earnest. Their emotions were expressed by the weight of their gravity.

Some pastors may ask, “What is the difference between preaching and teaching?” *I feel that a man who asks this question is not fit to be in the ministry. If he has been called to preach by God, he ought to know instinctively what God has called him to do!*

Preaching should move the emotions as well as give information to the mind. I heard Dr. R. G. Lee preach his famous sermon, “Payday Someday”^{*} at the Long Beach, California Auditorium many years ago. It was a sermon on God’s judgment of King Ahab. Though he had given this sermon hundreds of times, it literally crackled with electricity, emotion, and great seriousness.

The most important part of this sermon is often left out when the message is printed today. It has been edited out of the tape-recorded version I heard as well.

Foolishly, those who edited it left the heart of the sermon out by removing the two great illustrations Dr. Lee gave toward the end of the message. The first illustration was about a young man who called himself “The Chief of the Kangaroo Court.” He lived a terribly sinful life and he

^{*}The following illustrations are given from memory after hearing this sermon twice, at the Long Beach Auditorium and later at the Church of the Open Door when it was located in downtown Los Angeles. They are not based on printed versions of the sermon, although I have read two printed versions.

died a horrible death. Dr. Lee told of going to see him as he lay dying in the hospital, ruined by a life of sin. A black foam came out of his mouth. He coughed and flecks of this dark mucous sprayed out onto Dr. Lee's hand. He cursed God as he died. As Dr. Lee left the hospital, a nurse told him, "Wash your hands. Wash them carefully. It's *poison*." When the preacher hissed out the words, "It's *poison*," the hair on my body literally stood up. An electric current seemed to surge through the room. You could have heard a pin drop. No one moved, though he had already been preaching well over an hour.

Then Dr. Lee gave the second illustration, about a girl in his congregation who had gone astray. Though I only heard the sermon twice, I clearly remember her name, Toni Jo Henry. You see, she had been a Baptist girl, but she never got saved. She quit the church and went into a life of sin. One night, during a struggle, she took a knife and drove it into her lover's heart. They sent her to the electric chair. She asked for her pastor to be there. He described what he saw.

As Dr. R. G. Lee told about seeing the girl walk down the hall to the electric chair, he slowly patted his hands together, simulating the soft padding of her feet on the cement floor of the prison hallway.

As I said, this was at the Long Beach Auditorium. Far away, in another part of the huge building, a boxing match was going on. You could hear the crowd cheering as they watched the fight. The sound echoed dimly through the hall. But rather than detracting from the sermon, it had an eerie, electrifying effect. Again, I felt the hair on my flesh stand on end.

Now she is strapped into the electric chair. Now the switch is pulled. Now her body lurches, lurches, lurches against the constraints. Now she slumps limply in the chair. Now a curl of smoke rises from her shaved head. The wisp of smoke takes the shape of a smiling skull. "It seemed I could hear the devil laughing out of that skull, '*Got you now, Toni Jo! Got you now, Toni Jo!*'"

The evangelical editors removed these two illustrations, stories of young people that Dr. Lee had obviously loved and cared for, and literally *hated* to see go to Hell, stories filled with emotion, pain and retribution for sin. In removing them, the sermon fitted more closely to the sort of thing we hear in most pulpits today. But the "soul" of it was gone. For the heart of this sermon lay in *applying* God's judgment of Ahab to the present. And these real-life illustrations, which were at the core of the sermon, were so soaked with genuine emotion that the memory of them brings tears to my eyes even now, as I write this, though it has been thirty years since I heard Dr. Lee that night. *I am not ashamed to say that this was one of the greatest evangelistic sermons I have ever heard*, though I wish Dr. Lee had left the Southern Baptist Convention before he died. I also wish he had personally counselled everyone who came forward in his church, as Spurgeon did.

I am not saying that we should have “fake” or “worked up” false emotion in our preaching, but I *am* saying that the preacher must give vent to his own emotions. He must pour out his heart. He must sometimes laugh. He must sometimes cry. He must shout. He must whisper. This must be genuine. It must come from his own heart and emotions. Effective evangelistic preaching is emotional preaching. *You can't preach what you don't feel.*

David Garrick, the greatest actor England ever produced, said that he would give everything he owned to be able to say the word “Oh!” the way George Whitefield said it. At another time Mr. Garrick said this concerning Whitefield's pronunciation of the word “Mesopotamia!” Why couldn't this marvelous actor capture the tones of the great preacher? Because emotion in preaching cannot be manufactured, made up, or produced. It must flow from the preacher's own soul. *You can't preach what you don't feel.*

If you don't feel the awful truths you are preaching, then *fast and pray until you do feel them!* Turn off the T.V. and the computer. Pray and fast until the tears run down your face. Pray until you have something to say with fire and tears and blood and sweat in it.

Dr. David O. Beale, professor of history at Bob Jones University, was with my wife and me in Dallas, Texas in 1985, at the Southern Baptist Convention. My wife and I were there to pass out literature exposing liberalism at the SBC seminaries for Dr. Bill Powell, editor of *The Southern Baptist Journal*. Dr. Beale was reporting on the convention. We heard Dr. W. A. Criswell give a very powerful sermon against liberalism at the SBC Pastors' Conference, just prior to the Convention. His voice rising to a fever pitch, this great preacher called the liberals “yellow bellied skunks.” You could have heard a pin drop in the vast auditorium. It was an unforgettable sermon, though I deeply wish he had followed these convictions and separated from the Convention, as Spurgeon did. But Dr. Criswell certainly preached with energy and emotion. He was a truly great preacher in many ways.

I heard a wonderful sermon tonight on the Cross of Christ. The preacher graphically described the sacrifice God made by allowing His only Son to suffer for us. Many of the preachers who were present at this vast BBF meeting were moved to tears. The preacher, Dr. Jerry Thorpe, of Odessa, Texas, had tears in his own eyes when I greeted him after he spoke. It was really only a simple gospel message, yet a number of pastors told me afterwards that it was “a masterpiece.” I agreed with them. The reason that this sermon was so remarkably moving was that the preacher *himself* was moved as he preached. We need great gospel preaching like this today, preaching which touches the hearts of the people because the preacher's own heart and emotions have first been touched by the content of his message.

Over forty years ago, an old Southern Baptist preacher told me, “Boy, you ain’t preached ‘till you sweat.” I still agree with him.

J. Frank Norris

J. Frank Norris (1877-1952) was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas from 1909 to 1951. He was the “father” of the independent fundamental Baptist movement in America, since he was the first man to lead churches out of the Northern and Southern Baptist Conventions.

Eighty-five recorded sermons by Dr. Norris are available on cassette tapes, and 171 of his books and booklets are also available, plus eight of his commentaries on books of the Bible. For a catalogue of these tapes and books by Dr. Norris, write to J and R Distributors, 1909 Thomas Road, Fort Worth, Texas 76117. Telephone (817) 838-7184. For orders and questions, use this toll-free number (888) 401-6998.

J. Frank Norris was a hard man. About as hard as Elijah. He was a stubborn man. About as stubborn as Luther. But he was a *preacher*. He preached with emotion. He preached ‘till he sweat. He preached to the conscience. He moved people’s hearts. He may or may not have been wrong on some things. That is for you to decide. But he was a *preacher*. That is an unchallenged fact.

Dr. Beauchamp Vick was *not* the preacher Dr. Norris was. Dr. Vick may have been a better man than Norris. That is for you to decide. Dr. Vick was a man of character, but he was not the preacher Norris was. He was an organizer and Bible teacher. I formed this opinion after hearing him in person at the Church of the Open Door some years ago, when it was in downtown Los Angeles, and by comparing his sermons to recordings of those from Norris.

It is a shame that so many men have followed the pulpit methods of the *organizer*, and turned away from the pulpit methods of the *preacher*. This, in my opinion, has harmed the preaching of many. I am *not* suggesting that we follow Dr. Norris in some of his alleged extravagances or his decisionist tendencies. I *am* saying that we today could learn much from reading his books and hearing tape recordings of his sermons.

I. E. Gates, long-time pastor of the First Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas, said of his preaching:

Dr. Norris is the greatest Bible preacher that I ever heard. He is familiar with every book of the Bible and can quote more Scripture in every sermon than any man I ever heard. He preached one whole week on

Hell, until I could hear the wails of the damned, and smell the smoke of their torment.²²

It is a shame that so many have followed the pulpit ways of John MacArthur, Chuck Swindoll, Bill Hybels, John Maxwell, and Rick Warren, and have become mere Bible teachers. Where is the sweat? Where are the tears? Where is the cry of warning? Where are men like Dr. Norris when we need them so desperately?

The great Puritan preacher Richard Baxter said:

I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.²³

How can a preacher do this without emotion? The Swiss Reformer Oecolampadius said, "How much more would a few good and fervent men effect the ministry than a flood of lukewarm ones."²⁴ Samuel Chadwick said, "Truth without enthusiasm, morality without emotion, ritual without soul, are things Christ unsparingly condemned. Destitute of fire, they are nothing more than a godless philosophy."²⁵ Joseph Parker said, "True preaching is the sweating of blood."²⁶ *Fast and pray until you know what they meant.*

Dr. William Evans, long-time professor at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, wrote:

The experience of the truth must be in the preacher himself before he can proclaim it with convicting force in and through the sermon.²⁷

Again, he wrote,

This truth must not be mechanically expressed. It must not be merely truth through the mouth, over the lips, in the intellect, or by means of the pen, but truth through his character and personality. Every fiber of the man's moral and spiritual nature must be controlled by the truth.²⁸

Evangelistic preaching which accompanies revival and is used to convert the lost is emotional preaching. Spurgeon said,

We must be in earnest when actually engaged in preaching. Cecil has well said that the spirit and manner of a preacher often effect more than his

matter...To rise before the people to deal out commonplaces which have cost you nothing, as if anything would do as a sermon, is not merely derogatory to the dignity of our office, but is offensive in the sight of God...A dull minister creates a dull audience...Let the awful and important thought of souls being saved by my preaching, or left to perish and be condemned to hell by my negligence – I say, let this awful and tremendous thought dwell ever upon our spirits...Our hearts must be habitually fervid (hot, burning, fiery), and our whole nature fired with an all-consuming passion for the glory of God and the good of men.²⁹

We must deeply *care* for the lost and confused souls in front of us. We must deeply *care* for the honor of our God and our Saviour when we preach.

Applied Preaching

Real evangelistic preaching must also be *applied* preaching. What good is it to hear a sermon on “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7) if the preacher speaks only about Nicodemus and *his* need for the new birth? I have heard sermons whose main point was to tell us as much information about Nicodemus as possible. But who needs to know most of this information? How does it *help* anyone? I heard one man go on and on about the kind of dye they made in Laodicea, in a sermon on Revelation 3:14-15. The main point of his sermon was to tell people all about life in the ancient city of Laodicea. Who needs to know this? How does it help anyone? I once heard a Jewish man, who had become a well-known evangelical Bible teacher, speak for over an hour on Matthew 12:31-32. The whole point of his sermon was to tell us that this passage does not refer to the unpardonable sin, but was only something the Jews could do as a nation in the time of Jesus.

I knew this was false right away because

- (1) Verse 31 says “men” twice and verse 32 says “whosoever.” Nowhere do these verses say “Jews.” So, Jesus was speaking to “men” and telling them “whosoever” does this sin will not be forgiven.
- (2) The words “men” and “whosoever” prove that this was not a national sin of Israel at all, but is, rather,

an individual's sin.

- (3) Why would the Holy Spirit put this passage in the Bible after it was no longer true, since the Gospel of Matthew was given by God long after these events? No, the old preachers were right in saying it speaks of the unpardonable sin, which can be committed today by those who continue to reject Jesus.

But why take an hour to talk about this subject the way he did at all? Who needs to hear it? How does it help anyone?

At another time I heard a Bible teacher relate the history of past revivals. It was fascinating, but it was not *real* preaching. There was no application like that given by the old-time preachers he told about. The old-timers would have told the lost Baptists and Protestants seated there in the church that they needed to be converted. It is one thing to talk about the history of revivals. It is another thing to *apply* your preaching to those seated on the pews in front of you.

Dr. Cagan attended a church before he was saved where he heard a preacher go on week after week, teaching the meaning of circumcision in the Bible. Dr. Cagan learned all about circumcision, but he never learned how to be saved from this man. What is the point? Who needs to hear it? How does it help anyone?

I have given several extreme examples, but there is a good deal more of this sort of thing going on under the name of "preaching" than there should be. Evangelistic preaching must not be done like this.

The "You" Principle

I have invited men to preach in our pulpit on Hell, and have had several of them teach what the Bible says on the subject of Hell as an abstract doctrine. That is *not* evangelistic preaching! Evangelistic preaching tells the lost, "**You** are going to Hell." It is applied preaching. It is not preaching *about* what Jesus did on the cross. Evangelistic preaching says, "**You** are a lost sinner. This is what Jesus did for *you*. What are *you* going to do with Him?" This I call the "you principle." *The word "you" should appear again and again in evangelistic preaching.*

There are many examples of this in the Bible. Nathan said, "*Thou* art the man" (II Samuel 12:7). It took great courage to use the "you principle" when speaking to the monarch. King David could easily have had him killed for saying such a thing. Who has the courage of Nathan today? At Pentecost, Peter told the crowd, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom *ye* have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). It took great courage for

Peter to use the “you principle” in addressing those people. They could easily have killed him for telling them “**you** crucified Jesus.” Who has the courage of Peter today? In Peter’s second recorded sermon, he said, “**Ye** denied the Holy One and the Just” (Acts 3:14). Again, it took great courage to say, “ye,” to use the “you principle.” Stephen paid with his life for saying, “**Ye** stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **ye** do always resist the Holy Ghost: as **your** fathers did, so do **ye**” (Acts 7:51). But though he died for preaching this way, he gained one convert. The crowd rejected him, but one man heard his words. This was the only sermon Paul heard before getting saved (Acts 7:58). Would Paul have been converted through a Bible study? Would he have gotten saved without the “you principle,” applied three times in verse 51 and twice in verse 52? Stephen said “you” six times in these two verses alone. No wonder Paul got saved soon after hearing it. **Such a sermon makes an unforgettable impression.** Stephen’s preaching angered the crowd. They killed him for it. But his sermon converted Paul, who went on to become the greatest preacher of the apostolic age.

In his first recorded sermon, Paul also used the “you principle.” He said:

“Be it known unto **you** therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Jesus) is preached unto **you** the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 13:38).

Again and again, in virtually all the recorded sermons in the Book of Acts, the apostles said “you.” They made it plain that they were preaching to the people **in front of them** and telling them to turn from their sins to Jesus. This “you principle” is often lacking in today’s preaching. That is one reason we do not have converts like they did in the Book of Acts.

Billy Graham now often says, “**We** need to be saved.” In recent years, he has had George Beverly Shea alter the words of the hymn he often sings before the sermon to say, “In times like these **we** need a Saviour,” instead of the way it was written, “**you** need a Saviour.” One wonders why Dr. Graham seems to say that he himself needs salvation. I don’t think he intends that, however. He wants to soften the sound of the words. **Too bad Stephen didn’t learn from him. He wouldn’t have gotten killed. But then, on the other hand, he wouldn’t have gotten Paul either!** That is probably why Graham has never had a convert who approaches the greatness of Paul. **Stephen did more to change the world in his one dying sermon than Graham has done by preaching for fifty years to millions of people, while softening the message.** The preaching of Dr. Nettleton, the evangelist who opposed Finney, has been described as vigorous, bold, and awakening. He used the “you” principle:

His hearers tended to forget about the speaker and become engrossed in his message. The sermons made men feel that *they* were the men addressed, and not their neighbours.³⁰

Preaching Which At Times Produces Anger and Division

Preaching which gets people converted also *produces anger and division many times*, because lost people in the churches don't like it! They often become upset when the preaching is directed to their consciences. As William C. Nichols, modern publisher of Nettleton's sermons, said, "The man who is religious, but lost...is content to hear ministers preach on the love and mercy of God, but he does not like to hear about sin."³¹

That is why real evangelistic preaching often produces anger among church members who are religious but lost. A study of great evangelistic preaching reveals how often this has been the case throughout history. Notice how the preaching of the apostles "grieved" the people in Jerusalem (Acts 4:2). They laid hands on the apostles and threw them in prison (Acts 4:3). However, many people "believed" though these sermons (Acts 4:4). The sermons "grieved" many. But many others "believed." *They believed or were grieved.* That is the kind of division real evangelistic preaching produces; the kind that accompanies revival divides the people like the waters of the Red Sea!

In the Book of Acts, the preachers were stoned, thrown out of cities, put in prison, screamed at, and spat upon by those who heard them. But multitudes also got saved. Has it ever changed? Before you answer, think carefully about this list of great Christians who were rejected for sharp preaching:

- Chrysostom was exiled by the empress Eudoxia.
- Luther was expelled from the Catholic Church.
- Baxter was locked in the Tower of London.
- Bunyan was sent to prison for twelve years.
- The Wesleys were driven from the Anglican church.
- Whitefield was banished from every church in London.
- Edwards was forced out of his own pulpit.
- Spurgeon was censured by the Baptist Union.
- Machen was defrocked by the Presbyterian Church.

And what faithful preacher has *not* been shunned or had doors close because he preached the gospel too strongly to please the lost? *Real evangelistic*

preaching closes doors at times and at times causes people, especially church people, to be angry and reject the preacher and his sermon.

It takes little courage to preach against the Catholics in the comfort of a Protestant church, but let a man be brave enough to preach against the false hopes of the Protestants seated in front of him, and they will very likely blast and reject him as the Protestant preachers blasted and rejected George Whitefield for insisting on real conversions. Let him preach against the false hopes of the church members seated in front of him, and he may be censured by them, as great Spurgeon was censured for strong preaching against liberalism during the “Downgrade Controversy.”

In Tyerman’s *Life of the Reverend George Whitefield*, we come across these melancholy words:

Mr. Stonehouse was now the only clergyman in London willing to lend his pulpit to poor outcast Whitefield; and even he was not able to carry out his wishes.³²

A committee of ten wicked church members put Whitefield out of Rev. Stonehouse’s church. It was the last church in London willing to have him preach at all.³³ Here is Whitefield’s account of the incident:

In the midst of prayers, the Churchwarden came and forbade my preaching in that pulpit. Let not the adversaries say I have thrust myself out of their synagogues. No, they have thrust me out.³⁴

Whitefield was driven from the churches, but he continued to preach outdoors. Vast throngs of people came to hear him under the open sky. Thousands were saved in this revival. But it cost Whitefield months of rejection and the bitter loss of friends who barred him from their churches.

If great Whitefield was put out of all the churches in London for preaching the need of conversion to lost Protestants, we must expect no better treatment today. Martin Luther, the man who started the Reformation, said:

False teachers have success and people bear with them. But no patience is to be exercised toward true preachers. There is only judgment, condemnation and scorn. Hence the office of preaching is a grievous one. He who has not for his sole motive the benefit of his neighbor and the glory of God cannot continue therein. The true preacher must labor, and

*permit others to have the honor and profit of his efforts, while he receives injury and derision for his reward.*³⁵

“I Repudiate You!” He Shouted

So, a preacher must count the cost if he is to give real evangelistic sermons and see true revival. Often he will be despised and rejected, as Jesus was (Isaiah 53:1-3). The preacher must count the cost and be willing to pay the price. I myself have been torn to pieces inside when called on to preach in other pulpits. I have paced, and sweat, and feared, and fasted, and pleaded, and prayed in many such situations. It is no easy task for any true preacher of the gospel. As Joseph Parker said, “True preaching is the sweating of blood.” Sadly, most men today have no idea of what he meant.

Why bother to preach in a way that will produce such anger and division? Because our example, the Lord Jesus, preached that way (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). Read Jesus’ sermon on the Good Shepherd in John 10:1-18. Then read the response to it in verse nineteen: “There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.” Note especially the last three words, “for these sayings.” We could translate it from the Textus Receptus Greek: “because of these words” – *in the sermon* Jesus gave. So, a division occurred and anger arose over the Lord’s sermon. The people called Jesus insane and demon possessed in verse twenty:

“And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad (insane); why hear ye him?” (John 10:20).

So, like his Master Jesus, the faithful preacher will be thought odd or unstable by some. After Paul preached the gospel to him: “Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad” (Acts 26:24). Festus said Paul was insane after he preached. This was the same response Jesus received, recorded in John 10:20. Many people who heard D. L. Moody preach called him “Crazy Moody.” This will sometimes be the reaction to any preacher who speaks as forcefully as Jesus, Paul, Whitefield, or Moody on the need for Protestants and Baptists to be converted. Jesus said,

“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...” (John 15:20).

Those words of Jesus were of great comfort once when I picked up the telephone and a pastor screamed these words at me at the very top of his lungs:

“I repudiate you! I repudiate you! I repudiate you!”

He castigated me for preaching against sin and getting three teen-aged members of his church awakened by sound gospel preaching and counselling. The only way to come through an ordeal like that, and still preach the way God wants you to, is to remember Luke 6:22-23, where Jesus said:

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven.” (Luke 6:22-23).

Yes, I have experienced rejection for strong preaching, but I have also seen revival. I have been an eye-witness twice to classical revivals in Baptist churches. Several thousand people were added to the church in a short period of time in the first of these revivals, and more than five hundred in the second one.

It is my conviction that we cannot have the blessing of God in revival unless we return to old-fashioned preaching – the kind that produces anger and division – the kind of preaching you read about in the Book of Acts and in Christian history during times of revival. *This kind of preaching has been abandoned in our time. That is why our churches have filled up with lost people and God has not sent revival.*

Gresham Machen and Lloyd-Jones Believed Modern Preaching Had Gone Wrong

J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) was a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary before he left because of liberalism in 1929. Later that year he founded Westminster Theological Seminary. He was defrocked by the liberals in 1936, and died one year later.

Dr. Machen took a strong stand for the Bible in the Presbyterian church. He had his ordination certificate revoked by liberals in the denomination for his stand, but he has been a hero to Bible-believing Christians ever since. Dr. Machen believed that modern preaching had gone wrong. He wrote:

Modern preachers are trying to bring men into the Church without requiring them to relinquish their pride; they are trying to help men avoid the conviction of sin...Such is modern preaching. It is heard every Sunday in thousands of pulpits. But it is entirely futile.³⁶

Iain H. Murray said this about Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the great Welsh preacher, considered by many to be one of the foremost authorities in the twentieth century on revival:

Modern preaching, Dr. Lloyd-Jones believed, had gone fundamentally wrong. He saw the main proof of that fact in the failure of the pulpit to recognize that the first work of the Holy Spirit is to *convict* of sin and to humble men in the presence of God. He knew that any preaching which soothes, comforts and pleases those who have never been brought to fear God, nor seek His mercy, is not preaching which the Spirit of God will own. The truth is that *he was going back to a principle once regarded as imperative for powerful evangelistic preaching, namely, that before men can be converted they must be convinced of sin.*³⁷

Dr. Lloyd-Jones said, *“Present-day preaching does not save men. Present-day preaching does not even annoy men, but leaves them precisely where they were, without a ruffle and without the slightest disturbance. Anyone who happens to break these rules and who produces a disturbing effect upon members of his congregation is regarded as an objectionable person.”*³⁸

A Pervert Told Me Not To Preach Against Sin

When I surrendered to preach as a teenager, I was asked to speak to a large youth group at our church in Huntington Park, California. I prayed and then spoke plainly on James 2:20, “Faith without works is dead.” It was not a wild sermon at all, just a plain gospel sermon to lost young people. It was my first sermon, preached at the First Baptist Church of Huntington Park in the spring of 1958, when I was seventeen years old.

The Choir Director, who also led the youth group, took me aside after

the sermon and told me I was wrong, that I must not preach like that again. I was shattered. My heart was so sick that it brings tears to my eyes even now, over forty years later. But a few months afterwards the secret life of this man came out. He had been molesting little children. Several parents took him to court. I watched as the young people I had spoken to fell away from the church until only a handful were left. Then the Lord seemed to say to me, ***“Hymers, you go back in there and preach, whether people like it or not. Preach to please me, not to please wicked, lost church members.”***

I have tried to follow God on this matter for over forty years now. Yes, it has cost me some misunderstanding and the loss of some friends. And yes, plain preaching has gotten me put out of a couple of churches across those forty years, where lost church members and weak preachers agreed I should be stopped from doing the work of true evangelism. Yes, some of my fellow preachers have said, as they did of the Lord, “He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?” (John 10:20).

Doubtlessly there will be an outcry over this book also. Sadly, we expect it. But someone needs to say what I have said. It might as well be a fellow who started out preaching that way over forty-one years ago – and still does it!

When weak preachers have told me not to preach against sin, I have often been comforted by reading this passage:

“Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, ***I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit: And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel,*** Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land” (Amos 7:12-17).

I was not a preacher, neither was I a preacher’s son, but the Lord took me and said to me, “Hymers, you go and preach the way I want you to.”

To weak preachers like Amaziah, God says, “Thy land shall be divided by line” (Amos 7:17). This judgment is coming again. It will soon overtake the land. Oh for men with vision to see this and to preach without fear of unconverted, hard-hearted church members!

But *why* preach in a way that will produce such anger and division? Simply because this is the way of *real* evangelistic preaching; it is the way of revival preaching. It is the way of John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, Luther, Knox, Bunyan, Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Duncan Campbell, W. P. Nicholson, J. Frank Norris and all men who preach for conversions. It is preaching which probes the conscience. *Oh, that God would send us more old-time preachers who are not afraid to preach to the consciences of lost Protestants and Baptists!* The only kind of preaching that will get many of them converted will undoubtedly anger those who resist the Holy Spirit and go on in their religious but lost state (Acts 7:54, 57-60).

Oh, for God-anointed preachers to proclaim judgment and Hell, self examination and salvation to lost evangelicals! Oh, there is a great need for preaching on the wrath of God in our time! Duncan Campbell saw this in the 1940’s and 1950’s:

Duncan Campbell was often criticized for declaring the wrath of God night after night, but he saw this only as a backcloth to the gospel.³⁹ Campbell’s method was to preach on sin, condemnation and hell during the services.⁴⁰

It should be remembered that the last great regional revival in the Western world was sent by God under Campbell’s preaching.⁴¹ Oh, for God to send such preachers again, at this hour!

**W. P. Nicholson –
An Example For Today**

Here is an account of an evangelistic meeting conducted by W. P. Nicholson,* an old-time evangelist. It was written by Michael Ramsey, who went on to become the Archbishop of Canterbury, and quoted from a book by Stanley Barnes. Michael Ramsey thought he had better go and hear for himself this fiery preacher from Northern Ireland:

*See Appendix 6, p. 209.

As I went in he was getting very worked up. Very worked up indeed. And there were a couple of rather rough chaps from Magdalene (College), whom I knew, sitting in front of me, crying. This surprised me a great deal. After singing a hymn, this evangelical preacher said, “Now hypocrites, go back to your women and cigarettes.”⁴²

Ramsey said, “It was very alarming.” He felt that he might be “impelled” to be converted, so powerful was the preaching of the evangelist.

Stanley Barnes went on to describe the last meeting of this evangelistic series. He quoted Nicholson as saying:

“I know what is wrong with this meeting tonight. There are too many hypocrites in the church! Too many blue-eyed, hatchet-faced, lily-livered hypocrites! While we sing the first verse of the next hymn, will the hypocrites please leave the church.” During the singing thirty or forty left the church, many in evident annoyance. One of them was a college chaplain who wrote the next day...complaining that he had been called a hypocrite.⁴³

There are many small-minded men like that college chaplain who would be offended at someone preaching the way Nicholson did. Can't you just hear this little chaplain backbiting Nicholson? Can't you hear him clucking away? “It was so frightfully rude of him! My, oh my!” A fainthearted person like that could never understand a man with the strength and spirituality of a Nicholson.

We have had weak-hearted men, like that chaplain, attempting to lead us for decades. They are too cautious and careful to do us any good. No revival can ever come under their weak and timid ministries.

W. P. Nicholson, in his revival years, is the kind of preacher we need again in this desperate hour! Oh, God – send such preachers to us now!

The devil tells a pastor that he would be a fool to preach like Nicholson or Duncan Campbell in our day. “You will lose everything,” the Tempter whispers. ***Let someone dare to answer Satan like this:***

“I refuse to listen! I don't care if I do lose everything! I will preach like Whitefield, Nettleton, W. P. Nicholson, and Duncan Campbell no matter what it costs!”

Oh, God – send such preachers to us now!

Focus on These Great Baptist and Protestant Themes

To be effective, evangelistic preaching must focus *repeatedly* on these great Baptist and Protestant themes:

- The *self-examination of the heart*,
(Have you preached to the people in your church on their need to examine themselves to see whether they are saved lately? II Corinthians 13:5).
- The *depravity of man*,
(Have you preached to the people in your church on their total depravity lately? Ephesians 2:1, 2, 5).
- The *Last Judgment*,
(Have you preached to the people in your church on what will happen to them at the Last Judgment lately? Revelation 20:11-15).
- The *unpardonable sin*,
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the unpardonable sin lately? Matthew 12:31-32).
- The *reprobation of sinners*,
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the reprobation of sinners lately? Romans 1:24-28).
- The *fire of Hell*,
(Have you told the unconverted people in your church that they are going to burn forever in Hell lately? Matthew 5:46; Luke 16:19-31).
- The *Ten Commandments*,
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the fact that they have broken the Ten Commandments lately? Exodus 20:3-17; I John 3:4).
- The *atonement of Jesus*,
(Have you preached a whole sermon to the people in your church on the atonement of Jesus for their sins lately? Romans 5:6-9; I Corinthians 15:3).
- The *Blood of Jesus*,
(Have you preached a whole sermon to the people in your church on the Blood of Jesus lately?
Strangely, some Bible teachers are suddenly unsure of the Blood in our day. There will be no revival

without great Blood sermons. If there is no Blood in Heaven, then you will never get in there! (Hebrews 9:7; 10:19; 12:24). Many preachers do not understand the importance of this doctrine because they are unconverted themselves. No real Blood – no real salvation.

- The ***Resurrection of Jesus***,
(Have you preached to the people in your church on the physical resurrection of Jesus lately, or do you reserve this subject for Easter only? Remember, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain (empty); ye are yet in your sins” (I Corinthians 15:17). Remember also that “we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10). Sermons on this subject are especially important in this day of charismatism and new-age mysticism.)
- The ***absolute necessity of conversion***
(Have you preached to the people in your church on their need of regeneration and conversion recently? John 3:3, 7; Titus 3:5; Acts 3:19.

These great themes should constantly appear as the subjects of evangelistic sermons, if we wish to see many converted, and if we truly desire revival.

Asahel Nettleton pointed out that these doctrines were preached by the Apostles, Reformers, and early evangelists:

With these, idol temples were demolished – sinners pricked in their hearts, and brought to bow submissively to the Saviour’s feet.

These are the doctrines which were preached in the time of the glorious reformation from the papacy, throughout the whole Protestant world. These were the weapons used by Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Cranmer, and Knox. They went forth with the sword of the Spirit pressing the consciences of men...

These too are the doctrines which have been preached in the late revivals, in New England. Doctrines which have awakened the enmity of thousands, and have shown sinners their opposition to God. Doctrines which many have opposed with all their hearts, in which contest thousands have been convicted and slain. These are the weapons which have been wielded by the hand of the divine Spirit and

have been mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. These are the doctrines which thousands have embraced, by their own confession, at the very time when they submitted to God...⁴⁴

Oh, for God to send Spirit-anointed preachers to take up these grand old themes of our Baptist and Protestant forebears, and proclaim them up and down the land without fear of the lost evangelicals in front of them – and then sit down personally with those who respond and make sure they understand the gospel and believe on Jesus.

“Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit: through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:6).

“Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 1:8).

“Arise and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces” (Jeremiah 1:17).

“As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house” (Ezekiel 3:9).

“Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me” (Ezekiel 3:17).

“They shall put you out of the synagogues” (John 16:2).

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets” (Luke 6:22-23).

FOOTNOTES

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²*AFA Journal*, “Who Would Have Thought?,” February 1998, p. 2.

³John R. Rice, *Why Preach Against Sin?* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord, 1946), pp. 29-30.

⁴James Montgomery Boice, interview in *Christian News*, quoted in *Calvary Contender*, January 1, 1999, p. 2.

⁵*Pulpit Helps*, “The Call to Preach,” June, 1998, pp. 1 and 8.

⁶See Roy L. Branson, Jr., *Dear Preacher, Please Quit* (Bristol, Tennessee: Landmark Publications, 1990).

⁷Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1934), p. 149.

⁸John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1988), p. 197.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹²James M. Gray, “O Take the Gift of Mercy,” music by Alfred B. Smith, published in *Living Hymns*, edited by Alfred B. Smith (Greenville, SC: Better Music Publications, 1988), p. 552.

¹³John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, x.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁷Joseph Bellamy, *Sin, the Law, and the Glory of the Gospel* (Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, 1998 reprint of the 1850 edition), p. 138.

¹⁸Leonard Ravenhill, *America is Too Young to Die* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, 1979), pp. 79-80.

¹⁹*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 42.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 23.

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²³Richard Baxter, quoted in *Sodom Had No Bible* by Leonard Ravenhill (Zachary, Louisiana: Ravenhill Books, 1971), p. 178.

- ²⁴Quoted in *Why Revival Tarries* by Leonard Ravenhill (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, 1979), p. 63.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 26.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 62.
- ²⁷William Evans, *How to Prepare Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), p. 13.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ²⁹C. H. Spurgeon in *The Sword and the Trowel*, (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1983), volume v, 1877, pp. 149-151.
- ³⁰Brian H. Edwards, *Revival! A People Saturated With God* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1991), p. 102.
- ³¹William C. Nichols, *The Narrow Way* (Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, Inc., 1993), p. 70.
- ³²Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield, Volume I* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), p. 205.
- ³³*Ibid.*
- ³⁴*Ibid.*
- ³⁵Martin Luther, quoted by Dave Hunt, *The Berean Call*, April, 1997, p. 3.
- ³⁶J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, reprinted 1983), p. 68.
- ³⁷Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years 1899-1939* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), p. 206.
- ³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 207.
- ³⁹Brian H. Edwards, *Revival! A People Saturated With God* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1991), p. 108.
- ⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 254.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 275.
- ⁴²Stanley Barnes, *All For Jesus: The Life of W. P. Nicholson* (Belfast: Ambassador Publications, Ltd., 1996), p. 116.
- ⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 117.
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“The city has never been more ‘Christian’ and yet never more wicked than it is today”

– Dr. Christopher Cagan

“God jus’ gonna have to unnerstan”

– Slim

“The issues Mr. Foreman raises cannot be dodged.”

– Ruth Bell Graham,
wife of evangelist Billy Graham.

“The antidote to poison is not more poison”

– Dr. Christopher Cagan

“Finney’s real legacy is the disastrous impact he had on American evangelical theology and evangelistic methodology. The church in our generation is still seething with the leaven Finney introduced...”

– Dr. John MacArthur,
Ashamed of the Gospel.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT IS KILLING AMERICA – THE HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DECISIONISM

by Dr. Christopher Cagan

“My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled”
(Jeremiah 4:19-20)

I live in a dying culture – the inner city of Los Angeles. Devastated by decisionism, L.A. has become a bottomless pit of savagery and destruction. Downtown Los Angeles is the place where Billy Graham held his first major Crusade (in 1949) and several subsequent ones. Downtown Los Angeles is the birthplace of Pentecostalism. The charismatic movement began in the San Fernando Valley, a suburb of Los Angeles. Fuller Theological seminary, the birthplace of new-evangelicalism, is located in Pasadena, another suburb of Los Angeles. Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) has its headquarters near Los Angeles and its programs are broadcast across this city twenty-four hours a day. So it is correct to say that I live in a dying culture, the inner city of Los Angeles, a metropolis ruined by decisionism of various types.

The Prisoners Were Already Evangelical Christians

The failure of decisionism is revealed in a book called *Shattering the Darkness* by Joseph Foreman. In her preface to this book, the wife of Billy Graham wrote, “I have known Joseph Foreman since he was a boy growing up in the congregation where I also am a member.”¹ Thus, Mrs. Graham says she has known Foreman for many years in church fellowship, and speaks with respect for him and for his book. Mrs. Graham considers the points he makes in the book highly important. She says, “The issues Joseph Foreman raises cannot be dodged.”²

Joseph Foreman is a pastor who has founded a pro-life organization which works to save preborn babies from abortion. For his work in saving the lives of babies, Foreman has been arrested several times, spending many months in jail, as John Bunyan, our Baptist forefather, did for preaching without state approval.

While in jail, Foreman began to minister to the prisoners there. He found that they had all prayed the sinner's prayer, they had all "accepted Christ," and they all went forward in chapel each Sunday to make sure they were saved. Yet they always returned to their cells with the same foul language and dreams of sex and drugs. Foreman wrote that "the grip of the world seemed unchallengeable in their lives."³

What was the matter with these prisoners? Foreman found that "they were *already* evangelical Christians."⁴ They believed everything that evangelical Christians believed doctrinally. They had all prayed to "accept" Christ. They made a "decision" for Christ every Sunday in chapel. "But the world still claimed them."⁵ Evangelical decisionism was an empty failure for these men.

One of these prisoners was a Black man named Slim. He had committed a great deal of sin and crime throughout his life, but said that he "had always loved the Lord." Foreman often prayed and read the Bible together with Slim. Here is what happened as they studied the Scriptures on one occasion:

One day, we were studying I Corinthians 6, "No whore-monger, adulterer, etc. shall inherit the kingdom of heaven." Slim looked at me and said, "Rev, I believe in God jus' the same as you. I know that sex and rocks (crack cocaine) is sin. But I know that God forgives sinners, otherwise I cain't be saved. I confessed my sin, and I prayed for God to give me a new heart. So I guess God is jus' gonna have to unnerstan' that I need that sh-- to get along, that's all. God jus' gonna have to unnerstan'."

Here was a man who had neatly combined salvation by grace with free sex and drugs...My eye wandered down that passage, "uncleanness, jealousy, wrath, factions" and I thought about other similar verses which "God jus' has to unnerstan'" in our lives.⁶

Just what *was* the matter with Slim? Didn't he "love the Lord"? Hadn't he confessed his sin and prayed for God to give him a new heart? Just what *did* this man need to do?

A decisionist visiting the jail might tell Slim that he had been saved all along. Or another decisionist might lead Slim in a sinner's prayer to "accept" Christ, and add one more to the count of souls he had "won." Slim would be glad to pray such a prayer, since he had already done so countless times before. Slim was already an evangelical Christian, and had been for years. He considered himself "born again."

Slim was no different from the other prisoners. "They were already evangelical Christians."⁷ These prisoners, like millions of other evangelicals, had made a decision for Christ, believed the doctrines of evangelical Christianity, and "loved the Lord." Yet they were still on the way to Hell.

Slim did not need to be "reached" with the message of decisionism – for *he already had been reached with the evangelical message*. That was how he was able to neatly combine salvation by grace with free sex and drugs. Slim had made a decision, and was already an evangelical, *but had never been converted*.

The other prisoners were "already evangelical Christians" as well. None of them had ever been converted either. Like Slim, their decisions had not caused their sins to be washed out of God's records in Heaven (Revelation 20:12) and had not given them a new direction on earth (II Corinthians 5:17). *The situation of Slim and the other prisoners was the same as that of the great majority of the American people*. Like Slim and the rest of the prisoners, most of the people in America are "already evangelical Christians." Like President Clinton, they know the form of the gospel in some sense. They have made a "decision for Christ," and they "love the Lord." And yet the people of America continue year after year in fornication, missing church, taking drugs, and aborting four thousand babies every day. The majority of evangelicals in America have made "decisions," but have never been converted. They are on the road to Hell.

Mrs. Graham Says – Don't Dodge the Issue

This startling truth must not be taken lightly. As Mrs. Graham wrote, *"The issues Joseph Foreman raises cannot be dodged."*⁸ *Don't dodge them!*

These issues (which Mrs. Graham says "cannot be dodged") are the very fruits of the decisionism brought in by Charles Finney and championed by her husband, Billy Graham. Over the last fifty years Dr. Graham and his fellow decisionists have influenced a large majority of Americans to view themselves as saved. Countless millions have prayed a prayer, gone forward, believed a doctrine, attempted to make Christ their Lord, or made

some other “decision,” while actually *dodging* Jesus Himself and Bible conversion. These people have become “evangelical Christians” without being converted, and are still lost. As a result, American society professes to be Christian while rushing toward destruction.

I address this plea to Dr. Graham, Mrs. Graham, and all readers of this book: *do not dodge the issue*. When death comes, as it comes to everyone, there will be no more dodging, but only the terrible and certain wrath of God upon sin. When the end comes for our society, there will be no more dodging, but only certain and fearful destruction. Oh, let there be an end to decisionist dodging! It is time to face the fact that most people who have made an evangelical decision have never been converted.

If you are a pastor, it is almost certain that the majority of the people who attend your church every Sunday are lost – including many of your Sunday School teachers, deacons, perhaps your own wife – and maybe even you.

Steel Doors on My House

It happened on an ordinary Sunday in the inner city of Los Angeles. I came home to find out that my house had been attacked for the tenth time. The invaders had, after great and prolonged efforts, forcibly broken one of the metal hinges of the back door of my house. Since they knew that we were due back from church soon, and since they were tired out from their hard work of trying to break into my house on the Lord’s Day, the attackers had withdrawn to come back on another Sunday.

Knowing that such attacks would frequently come, I had made sure that it would not be easy to break into my house. The front and back doors of my home are no longer ordinary doors made out of wood. Instead, they are specially made *steel* doors, too heavy and too unsightly to be normally used for residences. In addition, the back door, which is the one most frequently attacked, is further reinforced with steel plating and steel bars across its width. All the windows on the ground floor, the second floor, and the basement of the house are protected with steel bars.

If they had finally been able to break all the steel hinges and reinforcements on the back door, the intruders would have entered into the laundry room of my house. But even then they would have been sadly frustrated, for I knew that this back door was the most frequently attacked – and so have installed a *second* steel door eight feet inward from the first door. Within the interior of the house itself, each bedroom is further protected by its own individual steel door. These security measures are necessary to survive in a dying city and a dying culture. If my house had not been protected like this it would be looted every Sunday.

The most interesting point is that these attacks almost always come on Sunday! The reason for this is quite simple: everyone who lives in my house goes to church on Sunday, while almost all of the people in the neighborhood stay at home. *And yet almost everyone in the neighborhood claims to be a born-again Christian!* This sad state of affairs is the result of decades of decisionism. Almost everyone in Los Angeles has made a personal “decision,” some sort of “commitment” to Jesus Christ. Yet almost no one goes to church. The popular watchword is this:

“You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian. You can be a Christian and serve the Lord in your own way. And the Lord is always with you, even if you aren’t walking with Him.”

With this in mind, nearly all of the “Christians” of Los Angeles not only stay home from church on Sunday – they also take drugs, fornicate, and attack with impunity the houses of the few of us who attend church, knowing they will never be caught in the act, since we won’t be home for several hours.

We almost never meet a Black person, an Hispanic, or White person here in L.A. who doesn’t think he is saved already. About a third of the Asians we encounter think they are saved. According to a Gallup poll, seventy-four percent of the American people have “made a commitment to Christ.”

Decades of decisionism have also produced the other great cities of North America, which are nearly impossible to live in, cities full of people who have made “decisions for Christ” and yet are not converted. That’s why our cities are often “living Hells.” The people who live there are citizens of Hell. Yet nearly all of them will tell you they are saved.

It should be remembered how large Los Angeles is. A *Los Angeles Times* article commented on the city’s “immense size” by saying:

At 467 square miles, the combined size of several of the nation’s most populous cities could easily fit within the boundaries of Los Angeles.⁹

The *Times* then displayed a map which showed that St. Louis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Boston, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco could all be put geographically into Los Angeles, with room left for Dallas, Chattanooga, and Springfield, Missouri.

Yet there are only three or four independent Baptist churches actually located in Los Angeles. People from outside California have a tendency not to realize that Long Beach, Lancaster, San Dimas, Orange County, and many other places in Southern California are all *outside* of the city of Los Angeles. Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral, John MacArthur's and Rick Warren's churches are all *outside* of the city of Los Angeles. Four million people, from every nation under Heaven, live *in* this city, with only a tiny Baptist witness. Our own church is the only Baptist church in the civic center. It is almost the only church of any kind in the center of the city. This reveals that evangelicalism is a failure. The people claim to be Christians, but cannot support more than three or four fundamental churches in greater Los Angeles. Actually, they support very few churches of *any* kind. They are too lawless and selfish to create or maintain much more than a few store-front churches and missions. Decisionism has failed to make them into stable church members.

“Those Are Bad People,” I Said To My Boy

It was late at night. Outside my house a series of gunshots exploded into the night. A car suddenly drove away, its tires squealing. After some delay, a police helicopter arrived and hovered low over our home, its engine thundering. A police searchlight shined upon our windows. But the people who had fired the shots were gone. I never found out who they were, or if they had killed their victim.

My oldest son, John Samuel, was two years of age. My younger son, David, was only a few months old. Hearing the gunfire, the older boy asked me, “What is that, Papa?”

How could I explain to a two-year-old boy what had happened and what those people were doing? I simply told him, “Those are bad people, John Samuel.” I didn't know what else to say. The boy accepted my explanation. Later, when the police helicopter arrived, my son did not ask me the meaning of the sounds he heard. He had already learned to identify the sound of a police helicopter.

What I did not have the heart to tell him was that those who fired the shots almost certainly considered themselves saved, born-again, and trusting the Lord. This is the result of decades of decisionism, carried to fruition in the streets of the cities of America.

I love my country. I love Los Angeles. I pray daily for a revival that will turn this awful tide. “Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down” (Isaiah 64:1).

Gunfire near our house is a fairly routine event. My bedroom faces the street, and not wishing to be killed by a random shot, I have covered over the entire bedroom wall facing the street (including the windows) with bulletproof steel. This arrangement is not very attractive, but has made the bedroom a safe place in which to sleep.

When I installed this steel, I wondered if people would think that this measure was too extreme. However, *not one person* I know has expressed such an opinion! Everyone has told me that armoring the bedroom was an excellent idea.

When I was a child, no one thought of putting steel doors on his house, much less of turning his bedroom into an armored shelter. In fact, most people did not lock the doors of their houses, and often parked their cars without locking them. Yet today, after almost everyone has made a “decision for Christ,” our society stands “poised on the brink of self-destruction” (in the words of Billy Graham) and my security measures are complimented as wise preparation for the future.

One-and-a-half blocks from my house drugs are openly sold on a certain street corner. Prostitutes approach any man they see, asking him if he wants to have a “date.” On that very same corner stands an evangelical church. On Sunday mornings, the voice of the Black new-evangelical preacher can be heard through the open windows of the church, his voice rising and falling, as he preaches to a few old ladies. Outside the church drugs and sex are bought and sold on the street – within the sound of his voice.

The problem isn’t that the people haven’t been reached. It is, rather, that *they have been reached* – but reached with the message of *decisionism* instead of the message of *conversion*. Almost everyone in the neighborhood, including the drug dealers, has “accepted the Lord.” THE CITY HAS NEVER BEEN MORE “CHRISTIAN” AND YET NEVER MORE WICKED THAN IT IS TODAY. This is true of all the big cities in North America.

Liberalism was Caused by Decisionism

John Wesley was an ordained minister in the Anglican church for years before he was converted. He went to Georgia as a missionary to reach the American Indians. After he failed as a missionary, he said, “I went to America to convert the Indians, but who shall convert me?” Although he was a minister in the Church of England, Wesley himself was yet unconverted. His words apply only too well today. My question in the midst of the dying culture of America is this: “*Who will convert the evangelicals?*”

The horrible state of our culture and religion has come about through 150 years of an increasing emphasis on obtaining decisions instead of conversions. This is also true in England, though the decisionism there came mostly through the agency of mental belief in doctrine, rather than through Finney's methods.

The problem of decisionism has not been confined to our own country or our own time. Rather, this replacement of Bible conversion by a merely human "decision" has occurred throughout the centuries of Christian history. Decisionism has been the great "wide gate" and "broad way" (Matthew 7:13-14) that has led again and again to the destruction of churches, denominations, and entire nations. Decisionism is the "wide gate," the "broad way," that leads from revival to apostasy and sin. Decisionism has invaded and conquered the churches again and again because of its tantalizing attractiveness – because it is the way by which "many" (Matthew 7:13) can so easily and so reliably go "in."

Many good men think that liberalism destroyed the great denominations, but we believe this position is untrue. It was decisionism, rather than liberalism, which filled the churches with unconverted people. These lost church members and pastors *then* turned to liberalism. They became decisionists, and this led them later to embrace liberalism because they remained unconverted. **Thus, liberalism was caused by decisionism.** This happened to the Methodists, the Congregationalists, the main body of the Presbyterians, and later to the various Baptist groups. Decisionism poisoned the great denominations and led them into liberalism as a result. **Lost church members and ministers just do not have the spiritual understanding to remain fundamental and true to the old-time religion.**

The Pharisees Were Decisionists

In the days when Jesus walked on the earth, there was never more religion in Israel and never less genuine salvation. Personal conversion had been forgotten, replaced by one form or another of human decisionism. Jesus spoke a parable to the Pharisees "which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9). In this parable a Pharisee complimented himself on being right with God because he fasted twice a week and gave tithes, and was not an extortioner, unjust, or an adulterer (Luke 18:1-12). This Pharisee trusted in his "Lordship commitment" for salvation.

Jesus spoke one night with the leading religious teacher of Israel, a man named Nicodemus (John 3:1-2). Jesus told Nicodemus of the new birth, and said to him, "Art thou a master (literally in Greek, *the* teacher) of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10). Jesus pointed Nicodemus to

personal trust in Himself (John 3:14-15).

Jesus did *not* tell Nicodemus to raise his hand as a sign or evidence of personal conversion. He did not say, “Now, Nicodemus, if you want to get saved, shake my hand.” He did not say, “Now say this prayer with me and you will be saved.”

Nicodemus would have been glad to cooperate by raising his hand or saying a prayer with his mouth. After all, as an observant Jew, Nicodemus put Bible verses physically on his hand and his forehead every day, in the form of phylacteries, little boxes with Scripture verses inside, wrapped with leather straps around the wrist and forehead, because in this way the Pharisees tried to observe Deuteronomy 6:8. And Nicodemus, as an observant Jew, frequently confessed with his mouth his belief in the Lord by reciting, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4). At least once a year, at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, Nicodemus asked God for the forgiveness of his sins. He would have been more than willing to cooperate with Jesus by raising his hand or reciting a prayer, since he had done both of those things many times. Moreover, Nicodemus would have been willing to make what is commonly called a “Lordship commitment.” In fact, he had already made a Lordship commitment. He was a Pharisee (an observant Orthodox Jew) and the leading rabbi of Jerusalem. He lived a moral life, prayed and read the Bible every day, and was frequently in the synagogue.

It is foolish to say that Nicodemus did not “believe in” or was not “following” the Lord. Nicodemus had made more of a Lordship commitment than almost anyone in America, including John MacArthur. And yet Jesus did not guide him into another Lordship commitment, a sinner’s prayer, a raising of the hand, or any other such “decision,” but instead told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again. Jesus called this lost man to actual conversion, not to any mere sign or “decision” that would serve to *stand for* or *represent* that experience.

Over the next several years, uncounted thousands of people, both Jews and Gentiles, experienced conversion in revivals. The history of these revivals is recorded in the Book of Acts. Beginning at Jerusalem, within a few years the gospel had reached Rome itself.

The Church at Rome

In the lifetime of the apostle Paul the church at Rome was a beacon of gospel truth. Paul wrote of them, “Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8). Many Christians in Rome died as martyrs for their faith, including Paul himself. But persecutions by pagan Emperors from Nero to Diocletian failed to destroy this church.

Yet only a few centuries later the church at Rome changed into the very opposite of its earlier state. Throughout the thousand years known commonly as the Dark Ages or the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church persecuted true Christians, often with torture and death. For hundreds of years true believers were few and far between. From being the “light of the world,” the church at Rome instead became the very headquarters of spiritual darkness. *The church at Rome changed from a great friend of the gospel of Christ into its greatest enemy through decisionism.*

This tremendous spiritual reversal happened over just a few generations, particularly in the fourth and fifth centuries. The way it occurred was *exactly* parallel to the growth of decisionism in the evangelical churches of America: in order to include the “many,” the churches substituted a form of “decisionism” in place of true conversion, taking the outward *sign* of Christianity as equivalent to a living and saving faith in Jesus Christ Himself.

The Sign or the Reality?

What do I mean by the error of taking the *sign* or indicator of something in place of the reality itself? A simple illustration from everyday life should make the matter clear.

Some years ago I was driving through Los Angeles along a dark street at night. I halted at a stop light, which continued to shine red for quite some time. Wishing to drive onward, but not desiring to run through the stop light, I wondered what I should do.

Then the answer occurred to me. I remembered that a little before the stop light there was a wire buried just beneath the surface of the road, in order to count each car that drove over that part of the street.

There was no one else on this street at that time. I quickly drove my car backwards and forwards several times over the wire! My efforts were swiftly rewarded when I saw the red stop light change to green within a few seconds. I drove through the green light and proceeded on my journey.

What exactly had happened? By driving back and forth over the wire, I had fooled the counting mechanism into thinking that there were several cars waiting in line. The machinery then ordered the stop light to turn green to accommodate the long line of cars that it thought were there. In reality, there was only one car waiting at the stop light. But the mechanism had signaled the passage of many cars, and the stop light soon changed color.

As it was at the stop light, so it is in religion. Many people comfort themselves with the *sign*, which is supposed to represent salvation, without possessing the *reality* of Jesus Himself. As I tricked the traffic mechanism into thinking that there were many cars waiting, so many preachers “rack up” large numbers of “decisions” to produce a higher “count,” when in fact the number of true conversions is much smaller. Why? Because it is faster, quicker, and can easily be done on a grand scale.

This is the way it was in the time when the Roman Catholic church became dominant. It is the same today in many evangelical churches.

In the New Testament, the great outward *sign* that a person had trusted Christ and been saved was the ordinance of baptism (Romans 6:4). The person being baptized was placed under the water and then brought out of the water, expressing a visible identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Baptism was the visible *sign* that a person had identified, or at least professed to be identified, with salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The idea that baptism *itself* washed away a person’s sins soon sprang up, however. This false idea led to many other errors. Some people postponed baptism until shortly before death in order to first commit all their sins and then have these sins washed away by the baptismal waters. Many Catholics began to “baptize” babies in order to wash away Adam’s sin and have the child “saved in Christ” if he should die in infancy; that remains the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church to this day. For over fifteen hundred years, the official Roman Catholic doctrine has been that baptism always performs a “work” upon the person baptized and washes away his sins, even if that person is an infant who knows nothing of what is going on.

The Catholic church confused the *sign* of trust in Christ with the trust itself, taking the sign as equivalent to the salvation which it was supposed to represent. Making the sign equal to the reality was the “broad way” by which the “many” millions of pagan Romans were quickly and easily “made Christians.”

Beginning with the time of the Emperor Constantine in 313 AD, Christianity first became tolerated, and then officially required by the Roman Empire. Millions of people came into the Catholic church by making a decision without a personal conversion experience. This led to the superstition and sin of the medieval Roman Catholic church. The Catholic organization received these millions of new “Christians” through the sign of baptism rather than through the reality of personal conversion. Why did this happen? Because it was easier, and at least appeared to *work*.

Now, true conversions are not obtained casually on demand, and they certainly do not come in an automatic way. And conversions do not come quickly and in large numbers without the intervention of God through

revival. To convert the majority of the Roman Empire to Jesus would have required a mighty work of God indeed.

On the other hand, the *outward sign* of water baptism *could* be applied on demand, at any time to any person, even to an unconscious infant. Under the false doctrine of baptism washing away sins, it became possible to “save” anybody at any time, and in fact to “convert” thousands of Romans at once simply by marching them past a line of Catholic bishops who sprinkled them with water by waving wet palm branches over them as they passed by. It was so much easier than the old way, and it “worked” so well. To use modern language, it got results, quickly, dependably, and in large numbers. Uncounted millions of pagan Romans became “Christians,” and it was so simple and so sure – but in fact it was only a “wide gate” that led thousands to destruction.

There are still many people today who trust in baptism to wash away sins. People have come to me in the office asking for baptism with the intention of having their sins washed away. Others have told me they were saved because at one time they were immersed in water. But the confusion of sign and reality is not limited to the matter of water baptism.

One person said to me, “I’m not coming back to your church because you can’t guarantee that I’ll be converted in two or three services.” In a way he was right. Neither I nor any other human being could *guarantee* his conversion at all, much less within a definite span of time. On the other hand, this person *could* go to a new-evangelical church and pray a “sinner’s prayer” any time he wanted to do so. This prayer is an outward representation in human words of the act of trusting Jesus. Many people think that they are saved *because* they have prayed this prayer. *They think the human act of saying the prayer is the same as the spiritual act of trusting Jesus.* They confuse the sign with the reality. In this way a decisionist church *could* in fact “guarantee” that he would be “saved” after two or three services or sooner. This person would have rejected the idea of salvation through water baptism, but leaped at the chance to be “saved” through the *outward sign* of reciting a certain prayer which he believed would infallibly produce the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of his soul.

The Struggle of the Centuries: Decisionism vs. Revival

Very few people in ancient Rome stood up to oppose the wave of decisionism. The Roman Catholic church continued in spiritual darkness for over one thousand years until God shattered that darkness. Through the God-blessed work of revival, the Bible became available to the common people and the gospel truth of salvation by grace through faith in

Christ alone was preached to many nations and led to the saving of innumerable souls. This great move of God has been called the Protestant Reformation – and was simply an awakening that swept away many of the decisionist errors that had accumulated for centuries in Catholicism.

The Protestant Revival did not come about through any form of decisionism. Martin Luther made many “decisions” before he was saved solely by union with Jesus. Before Luther was saved, he said many prayers with great sincerity. He made a strong Lordship commitment – and even became a minister. No one in John MacArthur’s church, including Dr. MacArthur himself, has made as deep a Lordship commitment as Luther did – *before* he was converted! He would have been willing to walk forward at the invitation in any church to obtain salvation – and he actually “went forward” by walking all the way from Germany to Rome itself, the religious center of his time. But “going forward” to Rome as a decision did not save Luther. He did not find peace through Lordship commitments, prayers, by walking forward to Rome, or any other “decision.”

If a modern decisionist evangelist had attempted to lead Luther in a “sinner’s prayer” or had tried to get him to walk forward or raise his hand, the poor fellow would have been more than willing to do so, but would have been very surprised when the evangelist then pronounced him saved! He would undoubtedly have thought he was still lost – as indeed he was.

When Luther finally did find peace with God, it was not through any form of decisionism, but through a personal union with Jesus Christ – and the Protestant Revival had begun. Luther now preached the true gospel. He said:

(Men) are all sinners and without praise from God, but they must be justified, without merit, through faith in Christ, who has earned this for us by His blood.¹⁰

As the decades passed, the tides of decisionism rose up again, this time within the Protestant movement itself. Salvation was more and more considered a matter of *belief in correct doctrine* in the Lutheran and Reformed churches. “Doctrinal belief” rapidly began to replace true conversion and was taken as equivalent to it, as an indicator that conversion

had occurred*. The decision to believe correct doctrine replaced true union with Christ.

Yet God later raised up movements of revival based on true and genuine conversion. Revival broke out in Germany in the form of the Moravian movement, which sent out the first great wave of missionaries since ancient times. The Moravian Revival in turn led to the conversion of John Wesley and the beginning of the Wesleyan Revival in England. John Wesley, the leader of this revival, found salvation through personal union with Jesus, Himself after a long period of struggle. He was already a minister and had already traveled to America as a missionary. In anguish over his lack of salvation and knowing that he was not ready to die, Wesley would have been glad to pray a prayer or raise his hand in a church. He had already done similar things many times! And he had already made a "Lordship commitment" far stronger than anyone in John MacArthur's church, including Dr. MacArthur himself. But he would have been surprised if someone had told him that he was saved by saying another prayer or making yet another Lordship commitment. In fact, many modern evangelists would have told Wesley that he had already been saved long before. Fortunately for England and the rest of the world, however, Peter Bohler and the other Moravians who spoke to Wesley did not point this unconverted man to a "sinner's prayer" or any other "decision." Instead, they spoke to him of Christ Himself, and not long afterwards Wesley was saved by union with Him. Wesley tells us that he was listening to a man read Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans when: "I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation."¹¹ Through Wesley and his followers, the Methodist Revival turned uncounted thousands of people from the emptiness of mere religion and brought them into true conversion.

Decisionism has always been the natural man's substitute for true conversion. God's remedy for decisionism has always been true conversion and real, God-sent revival.

*Much of Reformed Christianity in our day has experienced an almost exact duplication of this form of decisionism. Belief in the doctrines of salvation has replaced actual union with Christ for many, including ministers themselves. But belief in dogma is not the same as true conversion. That is why there has been no classical revival in Reformed Churches for many decades. "Doctrinal belief" is the main form of decisionism in the Reformed branch of American evangelicalism today. It is also the main form of decisionism in the British Isles.

Puritanism

One of the branches of God's river of revival was called Puritanism. It was this movement of revival, beginning in England and carried to New England's shores, that became the Christian foundation of our nation. To a very great extent most of what is good in America had its origin with the Puritans who came to our country. As God protected Judah for many years for David's sake, so also has God blessed and protected our unrighteous and ungrateful land for the sake of its godly founders and for the sake of its great missionaries, like Adoniram Judson.

The early Puritan settlers insisted on conversion as a requirement for church membership. As the years went by, however, fewer people in the younger generation could testify of conversion, and yet almost everyone wanted to be a member of the church. No one wanted to be excluded as a non-Christian. People wanted their children to join the church even though they were not converted. Could there not be found a "broad way" or a "wide gate" that would generously let everyone into the churches as Christians?

The Half-Way Covenant

That "broad way" arose soon enough. This new way of doing things was called the "Half-Way Covenant." Here is historian Kenneth Scott Latourette's description of the Half-Way Covenant:

As time passed, those who could qualify for church membership by offering evidence of a spiritual rebirth were few. In consequence, the custom gradually spread of permitting those who as children of church members had been baptized and were regarded as sharing in the covenant to present their children for baptism. Usually only full church members could partake of the communion, but eventually in some churches all the baptized were allowed to do so. The Half-Way Covenant was the occasion for much controversy. Its opponents regarded it as an ungodly compromise, but in 1662 a synod sanctioned it and its use spread rapidly. Yet it tended to make baptism a mere form.¹²

The Half-Way Covenant made it possible for the newer generations born and raised in the church to quickly and easily become accepted – to come half of the way, which was good enough for most of them. The old Puritan revival way of seeking a personal conversion was too much for them.

Only a “few” entered in by the “narrow way” after the “half-way” covenant became popular.

This form of “decisionism” led to a swift decline in the spiritual life of the churches in New England. The blind sheep soon found blind shepherds, in the form of unconverted ministers who taught easy, inoffensive doctrines, such as Deism. This paved the way for many unconverted New England Protestants to go into Unitarianism later.

Had it not been for the grace of God, the American colonies would have continued from bad to worse. But God in His grace answered the prayers of a godly remnant. Through the ministry of Jonathan Edwards, God sent a revival that we call the First Great Awakening. Edwards preached sermons like “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” in which he warned church members of the awful nature of sin and the horror of Hell, and called them to salvation through a real and personal encounter with Christ. God used men like Edwards and the great preacher George Whitefield to bring a genuine revival that stopped the destructive course of the Half-Way Covenant and saved America from spiritual death at that time. Jonathan Edwards stood up against the decisionism of his day. He and George Whitefield called for people to be personally converted.

Why did the Half-Way Covenant make such deep inroads into the churches? Simply because no one wanted to be “turned down” for membership, nor did they want their children “turned down,” and so they looked for a quick and ready way to get everyone in. This greatly harmed the churches.

In our day, the human desire to see oneself and one’s children comfortably saved has led many evangelicals to run their children through a “decision” at a very early age, whether or not the child understands what salvation means. Many bus ministries and other methods are used to get the children “in” without actually being converted.

Processing the Children

I once saw a well-meaning mother take her five-year-old daughter by the hand and walk the girl “forward” with her “to be saved.” The daughter had no idea why she was “going forward,” and was turning around and looking this way and that with a childish smile on her face, even as her mother walked her down the aisle. I spoke with the daughter after the service and found that she did not know why she had come forward, and that she definitely had no idea of sin and salvation. Yet many preachers today would not speak privately with the girl after she had “come for salvation,” but would instead please both mother and daughter (thus keeping the mother’s title) by announcing that the girl had been saved that day. Many

preachers would quickly baptize her – in the same service! *Is this unquestioning and virtually automatic procedure really any different from infant baptism? Isn't this actually the Half-Way Covenant of our time?*

In order to include quickly and efficiently the “many” (i.e. almost everybody), children are quickly processed through a “decision,” such as going forward, raising the hand, or saying a sinner’s prayer, without checking afterwards to see whether the child is truly converted or even understands what salvation means at all.

I have spoken to children who wanted to be “saved” but who did not know *why* they needed to be saved (forgiveness of sin), *how* they were to be saved (the Blood Atonement of Jesus Christ, obtained through personal union with Him), or *what* being saved would do for them (the washing of their sins in the Blood of Jesus, making them righteous before God). These children simply had heard the word “saved” and wanted to be part of the “in group” rather than the “out group.” I had to explain carefully to them what being “saved” actually meant before seeking to lead them to Christ.

In order to place them quickly and comfortably into Heaven (or at least onto the church rolls) many preachers rapidly process children through a decision without making sure that they understand what salvation is all about. Many preachers and parents would have joyfully proclaimed as “saved” the five-year-old girl who was walked forward by her mother, and would have baptized the girl as quickly as possible. When the girl grew older and came to doubt her salvation, based on a decision that she did not understand and very likely could not remember, she could be given “assurance” by mother and preacher that she had in fact been saved. After all, the mother and the preacher remembered her “doing it” even if the girl did not!

Others would run the girl through a new decision and baptize her again and again whenever a doubt arose. *I know of one famous Baptist church in the Midwest where the average child in the Sunday School has been baptized five times. This produces an impressive “count” for the preacher to report, but does not raise the number of true converts.*

Later, as the girl grew to adulthood, if she stopped going to church, began a life of sin, and generally brought forth the bad fruit of a bad tree, the mother could comfort herself that her daughter had been saved at the age of five and was simply “not walking with the Lord” for the last twenty or thirty years. In such cases the “quick fix” of substituting the “sign” or “indicator” of a “decision” produces a temporary comfort, but not the eternal salvation of a soul.

Dr. Hymers' mother was baptized at the age of nine in a Baptist church, back in 1922. The pastor asked her, "Do you believe in God?" She said, "O, yes," and he baptized her in a river, dressed in a beautiful white robe made of gauze. But she was not converted until the age of eighty – seventy-one years later! Dr. Hymers himself went forward in a service at a Baptist church when he was thirteen. He was baptized on the spot, in a white robe, without any understanding of gospel salvation whatsoever. He was not converted until he was twenty years old, seven years later, on September 22, 1961. Many thousands of people have had an experience like Dr. Hymers and his mother in our churches as a result of decisionism. But large numbers of them have continued in this lost condition, rather than being converted later.

The Acid Test of Ministry

The very core of the distinction between conversion and decisionism can be summed up in what I will call the *acid test of ministry*:

After attempting to bring a person to Christ and then listening to his testimony, can you tell him that he did not get saved that day? Are you willing to tell him that he is not yet saved and send him home lost? Are you ready to run the risk that the person may not come back? Or must you find some way to "declare" or "proclaim" as saved every person who comes forward or prays a sinner's prayer in your church?

The legitimate desire to win souls can quickly degenerate into an urge to quickly "get everyone in" or at least proclaim them "in." This is the essence of decisionism. The fear that someone will not be "in," or at least not be "in" right away, quickly leads to decisionism, pronouncing a person saved on the grounds of a sign without insisting on a true conversion. *This has filled our churches with unconverted people and has led to the disastrous moral and spiritual state of our country today.*

Many who gladly accepted the Half-Way Covenant did not want to face the unpleasant fact that most of their children were lost. Instead, they found a way to get them all "in." The results were disastrous.

Revival in the Great Awakenings

Two generations after the Half-Way covenant was accepted, Jonathan

Edwards stood up against it. God used Edwards and Whitefield in a great revival that saved not only thousands of souls but the very country where Edwards lived.* Yet it should be remembered that Edwards was fired from the very church where the revival started over his insistence that children of the members be converted before taking the Lord's Supper. His stand against the Half-Way Covenant cost him his pulpit.

Today, the churches of America are in need of preachers like Edwards once again, men who will not accept mere "decisions" but will stand up and insist on a converted church membership.

The revival associated with Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield is called the First Great Awakening. From the time of Edwards until the nineteenth century, God blessed the churches of America with many revivals, including the Second Great Awakening, which began about 1800 and the Third Great Awakening of 1858-1861. Sinners found salvation through Christ Himself, not through a mere "decision." Millions of people were converted. Conversion and revival have always been God's remedy for religious decisionism.

Charles Finney Replaces Conversion

Beginning in 1821, however, Charles Finney started the process of replacing true conversion with a human act, a "decision" of the human will. He told people to stand up, come forward, or pray, to indicate that they had committed themselves to God. Finney took these "decisions" as the equivalent of conversions. He taught that a person who made a decision was automatically converted. *He was the first to do this, the first major evangelist to say that an outward decision was the equivalent of conversion.*

*Leaders of the "laughing revival" have appealed to Jonathan Edwards. But they are wrong to do so, because Edwards' preaching and ministry was as different from theirs as night is from day. During the Great Awakening people came under deep conviction of sin and were in terror of damnation in Hell. Physical manifestations came as a result of conviction and fear of Hell-fire, a thing unheard of in our day. Fear like this is *not* present in "Laughing Revival" meetings. "Edwards made it crystal clear that a true valuation of the judgment of God and the terror of hell produces such powerful inner emotions that corresponding effects on the body were only natural," *Counterfeit Revival* by Hank Hanegraaff (Dallas: Word, 1997), p. 88. A comparison between the genuine revival in Edwards' day and the counterfeit revival of our day is given in his book, pp. 83-101.

Finney and many evangelists who followed him got tremendous “results” from a human point of view. Millions of people were quickly led into such decisions. Decisionism became the prevailing religious view of American evangelicalism and continues to be so to this very day.

No one was able to stop Finney and his false teachings. Asahel Nettleton tried to oppose Finney’s techniques, but he was too weak and sick by the time Finney rose up to stop the overwhelming tide, to block the “broad way,” the “wide road” of decisionism. The victory of decisionism became so complete that many people today think that there is no other way to bring about the salvation of souls. Many people think that Finney actually *began* or *introduced* revival, when in fact America had enjoyed many revivals before Finney and experienced no major one after his methods became the common standard, by the end of the nineteenth century. It should be remembered that Finney’s methods, outlined in his book, *Revival Lectures*, were not used in the 1859 revival. This revival occurred through prayer, *without* the use of Finney’s methods. This was also true of the 1905 revival in Wales, and the revival on the island of Lewis.

Men Forgot that Regeneration is God’s Work

In his book *Revival and Revivalism: the Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858*, Iain H. Murray points out that evangelicalism turned away from the old idea of conversion in the nineteenth century to the decisionism taught by Charles G. Finney (1792-1875). Murray declares that this transition was nearly complete in popular evangelical thinking by the beginning of the twentieth century:

The idea that conversion is man’s work became endemic to evangelicalism and, just as men forgot that regeneration is God’s work, so belief in revival as the work of the Spirit of God disappeared. (This) was a direct product of Finney’s theology.¹³

Murray’s book gives deep insight into this pivotal period. Chapter 14 should be read first. It outlines the slide of evangelical religion away from the old idea of conversion into Finney’s new doctrine of “decisionism.” Conversion as taught by the earlier Protestants and Baptists was forgotten, replaced by a mere decision for Christ, whatever that meant to the individual. “Going forward,” “raising the hand,” “saying the sinner’s prayer,” “making Christ Lord,” or believing some doctrine replaced the Biblical idea of conversion as a work of God within the heart of man.

The change from conversion to decisionism, which was spearheaded by Finney, has been noticed by a number of others. David F. Wells, Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has said that “The shift in understanding about conversion had several stages.” He gave them and then pointed out that these changes are associated with Charles Finney’s ministry.¹⁴ The late historian William G. McLoughlin, Jr. spoke of “Charles Grandison Finney, who, in the years 1825-1835, created modern revivalism.”¹⁵ Evangelical theologian J. I. Packer agreed, saying that “evangelism of the modern type was invented by Charles G. Finney in the 1820s.”¹⁶ Richard Rabinowitz has written about the shift from conversion to decisionism during the time of Finney from a secular historian’s viewpoint.¹⁷ Other preachers had a part in this transition, but it was Finney who clearly led the way.

Thus, conversion was changed into decisionism largely through the ministry and writings of Charles G. Finney, as these men have pointed out. Finney’s views engulfed the evangelical churches of America and later, in the twentieth century, other forms of decisionism infiltrated many churches in the British Isles. Today, Iain Murray’s statement is very nearly universal in the English-speaking world: “Men forgot that regeneration is God’s work, so belief in revival as the work of the Spirit of God disappeared. (This) was a direct product of Finney’s theology.”¹⁸ As William G. McLoughlin, Jr. put it, “He inaugurated a new era in American revivalism. He transformed the whole philosophy and process of evangelism.”¹⁹

Some great preachers, like C. H. Spurgeon in London, continued to proclaim the old way of conversion, but their voices did not stop the various forms of decisionism that spread across the Western world.

We are still dealing with the effects of that transformation today. The apostasy around us reveals that Finney’s decisionism has led to the death of American culture, and in various ways, to the death of Western society in general.

End-Time Deception: The Poison is the Medicine

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, when religion declined into the externality of decisionism, empty religiosity could be swept away by moves of revival. Beginning with Charles Finney, however, and continuing to this day through generations of preachers following in Finney’s train, the situation has become much more subtle and deceptive. “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made” (Genesis 3:1).

The subtlety of the decisionist error of Finney and other such preachers is that it *looks so very, very much like conversion and revival*. Coming forward, raising the hand, or saying a sinner's prayer are more subtle "imitative signs" of conversion than infant baptism. They appear or "look" more like conversion than the water baptism of an infant. Because they "look like" conversion, these signs are often labeled *as* conversion, and so are very dangerous to the person who possesses them but is not in fact converted. Because great masses of people can be easily processed through these signs (coming forward, saying a prayer, etc.), these "signs" applied to large numbers of people "look like" revival and thus are often labeled *as* revival, and so are very dangerous to the church or nation which embraces them.

This is the cause of the situation in our present day: almost everyone has made a "decision" and is supposedly "saved," and great masses of people have been "processed" – yet very few people are truly converted, and our society stands on the brink of self-destruction.

Dear reader, do you see the subtlety and danger of this error? The error itself looks so much like the remedy! One unconverted person said to me, "What do you want me to do? All right, I'll say the prayer again if you want." But *saying* "the prayer" a second time will not convert a person any more than "saying" it the first time.

Dr. Hymers *said* the sinner's prayer and *came forward* many times before he was converted, and the day he was converted, he said no sinner's prayer at all, and did not come forward, but simply united with Jesus. And yet so deep is the confusion and so subtle is the deception of our time that a lost sinner unsure of his salvation only wishes to repeat the same prayer he had said years ago. "Saying" the prayer again would in the long run only leave this poor sinner as unconverted and frustrated as he had been before, although it might provide some temporary comfort until it again failed to "work." But where is an inquirer to turn, and what is he to do? So dark is the confusion of our day that the sinner knows only to raise his hand yet again, come forward yet again, or say a prayer yet again – and most pastors will only direct him to yet another such "decision." For this reason children in Sunday School are often baptized four or five times in a search for assurance. *Thousands of adults come forward and "rededicate" their lives again and again, seeking the assurance that can never come without genuine conversion.*

What is true on an individual level also applies at the level of an entire church. Many pastors recognize that religion is in a sorry condition today. But what is the remedy? Why, organize a decisionist meeting of some sort! No one knows of anything else to do! Some pastors have brought in evangelists and have motivated hundreds of people to make decisions and go forward, or "rededicate" their lives, or say a prayer, all without actually

adding A *SINGLE PERSON* who continues to attend their church a month later.

One pastor I know had a leading evangelist come in for a special meeting at Easter time. Sixty-two people came forward, but not *one* of them was converted. *Not a single person among these sixty-two people was even awakened enough to come back to church one time, and certainly not awakened enough to even approach the possibility of conversion.*

Other pastors have organized a “deeper life” or “rededication” meeting of some sort, where everyone “rededicates” or makes some other “decision,” only to have it all wear out in the end because the people were not converted.

The failures of decisionism have in fact given evangelism and revival a bad name, to the extent that many pastors are reluctant to use evangelists or have evangelistic meetings at all. For this reason, the Finney-like evangelistic meeting is swiftly becoming a thing of the past. It has too often failed to add new converts to the local church, and so, many pastors are giving it up altogether in our time.

Modern decisionism looks so much like conversion and revival that poison is in fact substituted for medicine. Imagine a person taking a capsule of poison every day and slowly dying as a result – and then, to cure himself of this poisoning, taking *more* poison as though it were the medicine! But this is exactly parallel to the religious situation of today. Facing the results decisionism, people turn to *more decisionism*, which has been labeled as medicine but in fact is only the same poison. *The antidote to poison is not more poison.* And the remedy for the effects of decisionism is *not* more decisionism, but conversion through Jesus Christ, Himself.

MacArthur’s Experience

For example, many modern evangelists, like Billy Graham, are anxious to raise their “numbers,” and often lead people in a quick assent of *doctrinal belief*. “If you believe that Jesus died for you and want to be saved, raise your hand.” Salvation by “doctrinal belief” is the idea that if a person agrees with Bible doctrine on the matter of salvation, and manifests this agreement by saying so with his mouth, or raising his hand, or responding in some other form, that person is saved.

Millions of people have made such “decisions” based on doctrinal belief without being converted, and thus without any change in their standing before God or in their life on earth. Unhappy with the results of such “decisions,” some people have turned to Lordship salvation, a different form of decisionism, but still decisionism nonetheless.

One of these people was Dr. John MacArthur. He reacted to the powerlessness and fruitlessness of mere doctrinal belief by embracing Lordship salvation. MacArthur teaches that if a person wants to be saved, he must make a Lordship commitment, surrendering his entire life to Jesus and becoming a student of the Bible. However, this is only another subtle form of decisionism. I must say here that I myself attended Dr. MacArthur's church for nearly a year before I was converted. I learned a great deal of the Bible from him, much of which I can remember to this day. I am thankful for most of what I learned from him. He is a careful student of the Word of God, a man who has devoted thirty hours a week, for thirty years, to Bible study. His scholarship shows up in many of his fine books. But there are also errors on important subjects in some of them. Doctrinal deviations on the Blood of Christ, which are found in his writings, are especially troublesome, because we need to be crystal clear on this subject in a day of apostasy like ours. Please understand that my comments on his view of Christ's Blood in no way reflect a rejection of everything he teaches. But to be true to God's Word, and to present the gospel with clarity, we must strongly reject his comments on the Precious Blood of Jesus.

Turning to Various Forms of Decisionism

Dr. MacArthur's doctrinal deviation on this subject seems to be the result of his own "Lordship" experience.²⁰ This is possibly the reason he downgrades the Blood and rejects its translation into Heaven. He just doesn't seem to understand *how* the Blood of Christ washes away sin.²¹

Kyle Paisley, son of Dr. Ian R. K. Paisley, gives this statement on Dr. MacArthur's errors:

I had become acquainted with a number of Dr. MacArthur's heresies through reading literature of the British Council of Protestant Christian Churches and the Evangelical Times. Dr. MacArthur is on record as having said, "As precious as the blood of Christ was it could not save." He has also stated his belief that the Sonship of Christ is not eternal but simply a "role" that he assumed when he came into the world. He quotes one of the Greek Fathers Tertullian in a vain attempt to support his error, who stated, "There was a time when the Father had no son."* When the Person and work of Christ are attacked by those claiming to be evangelicals, it is vital that people are warned.

*Tertullian was a Montanist heretic, not a mainstream Christian.

In defence of Dr. MacArthur's position on the blood of Christ (one man) said, "He was emphasizing that our salvation is not simply in the physical blood of Christ but in His life and death..." This is a misrepresentation or misunderstanding of the case. Dr. MacArthur has actually said, "The blood of Jesus could not save." He has also made it clear that he believes that "the blood of Christ is a metonym for His death." Here the question must be asked, "Was the shedding of His blood a symbolic gesture or a saving act?"²²

The Blood Downgraded

MacArthur is wrong on the Blood of Christ. In his note on Hebrews 9:14 in *The MacArthur Study Bible*, he writes:

"Blood is used as a substitute for death"²³

He is here repeating the idea given earlier in his commentary on Hebrews:

It was not Jesus' physical blood that saves us, but His dying on our behalf, which is symbolized in the shedding of His physical blood.²⁴

And again, MacArthur said,

Christ's own physical blood, in itself, does not cleanse from sin.²⁵

Thus, he makes the Blood of Jesus merely a "symbol" (his term, see footnote 24) and a "substitute" (his term, see footnote 23) for His death. But the Blood of Jesus is *not* a symbol or substitute for His death. ***The Blood of Jesus is real Blood, and it really does wash sins away.***

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

We could not have been "washed" in His death. It takes His Blood to do that!

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

The death of Christ alone could not cleanse us. It takes His Blood to do that.
In Heaven we will sing these words:

“Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy
blood...” (Revelation 5:9).

The Lord’s Supper Proves that MacArthur is Wrong on the Blood

MacArthur has said that “Blood is used as a substitute for death.”²³ He says that the Blood is a “metonym”^{*} for Christ’s death,²² merely another word describing His death, not a separate thing in itself. “The Blood” just means “the death” to Dr. MacArthur. Every time he says “the Blood,” he actually *means* “the death.” That is his own, oft-stated position.^{**}

Why, then, are there two separate elements in the Lord’s Supper, if his position is true? Why not just take the bread, if the Blood is nothing more than a metonym for the death? Why do we need two separate elements?

“Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to
the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body”
(Matthew 26:26).

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to
them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood
of the new testament, which is shed for many for the
remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28).

Every time we partake of the Lord’s Supper it proves that John MacArthur is wrong on this point. The Blood is not just a metonym for the death. It is not just another word for the death of Jesus’ body. If it really were just a metonym, there would be no need for the bread and the cup at the Lord’s Supper. If the death of Christ’s body was just a metonym, a different word

^{*}Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary gives this definition of a metonym: “A word used as a substitute for another,” as “the **White House** has decided” for “the **president** has decided.” But *is* “the Blood” merely another word meaning “the death”?

^{**}See ***John MacArthur’s Heresy on the Blood of Christ***, by D. A. Waite, Th.D., Ph.D., The Bible For Today #2185. Write to Dr. Waite at The Bible For Today, 900 Park Avenue, Collingswood, NJ 08108 and request this well documented exposé, which gives Dr. MacArthur’s own words on the subject of Christ’s Blood. It is highly documented from MacArthur’s own statements.

for His Blood, we could simply take the bread. There would be no need for the cup.

“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said,
Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you”
(I Corinthians 11:24).

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he
had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in
my blood” (I Corinthians 11:25).

These passages of Scripture are read in our churches nearly every time we take the Lord’s Supper. They show that the bread symbolizes His death. They show that the cup symbolizes His Blood. They show that the bread and the cup are two separate elements. Yet Dr. MacArthur says:

I believe that to speak of Christ’s blood, as it was shed on the cross, is the same as referring to His death. *They aren’t two separate elements as some people are trying to teach. The Bible just does not teach that.*²⁶

Oh yes it *does*, Dr. MacArthur! In Matthew 26:26-28 and in I Corinthians 11:24-25, we are told that the bread reminds us of His body, and the cup reminds us of His Blood. *The bread and the cup are two separate elements* in these passages, showing that His death and His Blood *are* two separate elements.

What a spiritual blunder to say that the Blood and the death are the same thing, when the Bible plainly says they are two things each time we take the Lord’s Supper! The bread is not a “metonym” for the cup. The death of Jesus’ body is not a “metonym” for His Blood. They are two separate substances. The Lord’s Supper proves that John MacArthur is dead wrong.

Some people are so “smart” that they stumble over a very simple matter. The Lord’s Supper is so very simple in its meaning that a child can see that the bread is not the cup. *But MacArthur can’t seem to fathom what any child can see every time we take the Lord’s Supper: the bread and the cup are not the same! Things that are different are not the same! The Blood and the death of Jesus are two different things!*

Since a small child can see that the bread and the cup are two different elements, we ask Dr. MacArthur,

“Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3:10).

MacArthur Attacks the Biblical Doctrine of the Blood in Heaven

In *The MacArthur Study Bible*'s note on Hebrews 9:12, Dr. MacArthur writes:

“Nothing is said which would indicate that Christ carried his actual physical blood with him into the heavenly sanctuary.”

It makes you wonder what Bible Dr. MacArthur reads!

Hebrews, chapter nine, presents the High Priest going into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement “once every year, not without blood” (Hebrews 9:7). This, we are told, was a “shadow of good things to come” (Hebrews 10:1). It was a photographically clear illustration of Jesus going into the Heavenly sanctuary. Leviticus 16:1-34 is the type. Jesus' taking His Blood into Heaven is the antitype (Hebrews 9:12). ***It is the clearest type and antitype in the Bible. No other is clearer – anywhere in Scripture:***

“Before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood”
(Leviticus 16:14).

Again, we read that He will

“Bring his blood within the veil” (Leviticus 16:15).

Finally, the Bible says:

“Whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place” (Leviticus 16:27).

So, the Scriptures plainly reveal, through the clearest type and antitype given anywhere in the Bible, that Jesus sprinkled His Blood on the mercy seat in Heaven, and that Jesus brought His Blood within the veil in Heaven to make an atonement for our sins in the holy place, “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24; see also verse 23).

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19).

God's Word Names the Blood in Heaven

Then, the Bible goes beyond this clear type and specifically tells us that Christ's Blood is in Heaven. It is listed as one of the things in Mount Sion, another name for Heaven:

*“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God...And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling...”
(Hebrews 12:22-24).*

Now the argument should be over for all true Bible-believers. It is settled once and for all by this clear statement. There need be no further argument for a man who truly believes God's Word, unless he has been confused by men like MacArthur. The Bible plainly tells us in Hebrews 12:22-24 that the Blood of Jesus Christ is in Heaven. It was borne up (translated) into Heaven, just as the body and blood of Enoch and the body and blood of Elijah were translated (cf. Hebrews 11:5; II Kings 2:11).

Fifteen Witnesses Against MacArthur From Across the Ages

We will now give fifteen major witnesses from across the ages of Christian history. *All of them affirm the translation of Jesus' Blood into the Holy of Holies in Heaven (cf. Hebrews 11:5):*

1. THE SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE

The *Scofield Reference Bible* gives this note on Leviticus 16:5,

The high priest entering the holiest, *typifies Christ entering “heaven itself” with “His own blood” for us.* His blood makes that to be a “throne of grace,” and “mercy seat,” which else must have been a throne of judgment...we enter, in virtue of His blood, where He is, into the holiest.²⁷

2. CHRYSOSTOM

In the fifth century A.D., the famed preacher John Chrysostom said the same thing, showing that the ideas in the Scofield note were written down by a leading Christian more than 1,400 years before the Scofield Bible was produced! Chrysostom wrote:

He suffered without (the camp), but *His Blood was borne up into Heaven* (i.e. translated). Thou seest then that we partake of Blood which has been *carried into the Holy Place*, the True Holy Place.²⁸

3. JOHN CALVIN

The great reformer John Calvin, who died in 1564, made a similar statement:

*The blood of Christ, which is subject to no corruption, but flows ever as a pure stream, is sufficient for us even to the end of the world...Because the blood of Christ is always in a manner distilling before the presence of the Father, in order to irrigate heaven and earth.*²⁹

4. MATTHEW POOLE

The 17th century Bible commentator Matthew Poole has been a source of inspiration to preachers for three hundred years. Richard Cecil said of him, in the nineteenth century, "Poole is incomparable." C. H. Spurgeon advised his students that Poole's volumes "are necessities for your library." Commenting on Hebrews 9:12 in the year 1635, Poole said:

*He entered in once into the holy place; with this blood of the covenant he entered immediately upon the breathing out of his soul on the cross...into the holy of holies in heaven, where never angel came, nor any but himself...and came with it (the Blood) to God's throne of justice there, and made the everlasting atonement for sin, and so turned it into a throne of grace, fulfilling his type, and as the high priest did.*³⁰

5. MATTHEW HENRY

Matthew Henry lived from 1662 to 1714. His *Commentary on the Whole Bible* was considered the greatest of all commentaries by C. H. Spurgeon and by many others. Commenting on Leviticus 16:29-34, Henry said:

That Christ our high priest entered into heaven at his

ascension once for all...He entered by his own blood (Hebrews 9:12), taking with him into heaven the virtues of the sacrifice he offered on earth, and *so sprinkling his blood, as it were, before the mercy seat, where it speaks better things than the blood of bulls and goats could do.*³¹

6. ISAAC WATTS

Isaac Watts died in 1748. He wrote such hymns as “Joy to the World,” “We’re Marching to Zion,” “Jesus Shall Reign,” “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” and “Alas! and Did My Saviour Bleed?” Dr. Watts said the same thing:

Christ being entered into the Holy place, made without hand, and dwelling there forever, *with His own blood,* answers for the sins of those that believe on him.³²

7. PATRICK FAIRBAIRN

Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874) was the author of *The Typology of Scripture*, a landmark book which continues to be used by pastors to this day. In the second volume, Fairbairn writes:

Christ’s having, in like manner, suffered without the gate, though certainly designed by men to exhibit Him as an object of ignominy and shame, did not render Him the less the holy child of God, *whose blood could fitly be taken into the highest heavens.*³³

8. C. H. SPURGEON

Here we give portions of a paragraph from Charles H. Spurgeon’s “The Blood of Sprinkling” sermon, given in the morning service at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, on February 28, 1886. Spurgeon said the same thing about the Blood:

When we climb into heaven itself...we shall not have gone beyond the influence of the Blood of sprinkling; nay, *we shall see it there more truly present than any other place.* “What!” you say, “*the blood of Jesus in Heaven?*” *Yes!* Let those who talk lightly of the precious blood correct their view ere they be guilty of blasphemy...For me there is nothing worth thinking of

or preaching about but this grand theme. The Blood of Christ is the life of the gospel.³⁴

Now we give another Spurgeon quote. This one is number 2,075 in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, preached March 17, 1889, three years after the above statement was made:

If you or I had gone there without atonement of blood, heaven would have been defiled. But *the Lord has gone there, and has sprinkled His blood on the mercy seat.*

And here is a third quote from Spurgeon:

It (the Blood) is said to be sprinkled within the veil, so that where the high priest could go only once a year we may now go at all times, for *the blood is there, interceding for us perpetually.*³⁵

Thus, both the resurrection and preservation of Jesus' Blood were preached by Spurgeon, for he said, "We shall see it there more truly present than in any other place. 'What!' you say, 'the blood of Jesus in Heaven?' Yes!" That's what the most famous Baptist preacher who ever lived believed!

9. THE PULPIT COMMENTARY

The Pulpit Commentary was edited by H. D. M. Spence (1836-1917) and Joseph S. Exell (c.1849-1909). In the exposition of Hebrews 12:22-24, we find this comment:

The Blood shed by Christ on earth for atonement is conceived as carried by him with himself into the holy place on high (i.e. translated) to be for ever "the blood of sprinkling" for effectual cleansing.³⁶

10. JAMIESON, FAUSSET AND BROWN

Here is a widely used commentary, written by Robert Jamieson (who died in 1880), Andrew Fausset (who died in 1919), and David Brown (who died in 1897). Here is what these men said in the famous *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary on Hebrews 12:24:

His blood was entirely poured out in various ways...It was incorruptible (I Peter 1:18, 19). No Scripture says

that it was again put into the Lord's body. At His ascension, as our High Priest, He entered the heavenly holiest "by his own blood" (not *after* shedding His blood, nor *with* the blood in His body, but) carrying it separately: not merely by the efficacy of His blood, but "by His own proper blood" (ch. 11:12) ...*the blood itself continues still in heaven before God, the perpetual ransom-price of the "eternal covenant."* Once for all Christ sprinkled the blood peculiarly for us at His ascension (ch. 11:12). But *it is called "the blood of sprinkling" on account also of its continued use in heaven...His blood introduced into heaven took away the dragon's right to accuse... Counteracted by Christ's blood calmly speaking in heaven for us, and from heaven to us.*³⁷

11. THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE

The Expositor's Bible was edited by Sir William Robertson Nicoll (1851-1923). It was published in 1908. In the exposition of Hebrews 9:15-10:18, we find this comment:

*The blood of Christ made heaven a sanctuary, erected there a holiest place for the appearing of the great High-priest, constituted the throne of the most High a mercy seat for men... For the blood of Christ, when offered in heaven, so fully and perfectly ratified the new covenant that He remains for evermore in the holiest place and evermore offers Himself to God in one eternally unbroken act.*³⁸

In the Expositor's Bible comment on Hebrews 12:18-29, we find this passage:

*His blood is sprinkled on the mercy seat, and speaks to God.*³⁹

12. ANDREW MURRAY

In his book, *The Blood of the Cross*, Andrew Murray wrote this in 1935:

Reconciliation and deliverance from guilt will become the blessed entrance for us into a life in which the blood – *as it is translated into heaven and abides there* – will be truly the power of a divine abiding life in us (preface,

second edition).

Again, Murray wrote:

The Spirit lived and worked in that blood, so that when it was shed *it could not decay* as a dead thing, but as a living reality, it could be *taken up to heaven*, to exercise its divine power from thence (ibid., p. 10).

And again, he wrote:

By the eternal Spirit the blood has obtained an eternal, ever-availing, *ever-fresh*, independent, *imperishable* power of life...the unspeakable glory of the holy blood in heaven (ibid., pp. 12, 17).

13. M. R. DeHAAN

Dr. M. R. DeHaan wrote these words in 1943:

*Every drop of blood which flowed in Jesus' body is still in existence, and is just as fresh as when it flowed from His wounded brow and hands and feet and side...The blood shed on Calvary was imperishable blood. It is called "incorruptible."*⁴⁰

Dr. DeHaan's position is similar to that of Chrysostom, John Calvin, Matthew Poole, Matthew Henry, Isaac Watts, Patrick Fairbairn, C. H. Spurgeon, The Pulpit Commentary, Andrew Murray, The Expositor's Bible, The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary, and countless others. *The essence of Dr. DeHaan's statement on the Blood has been believed by Christians across the centuries of time.*

I think we have proved that Chrysostom's view of the Blood in Heaven has been held throughout Christian history. We could easily have given twenty or thirty more major commentators who agreed with Chrysostom, Calvin, and the Scofield Bible regarding the doctrine of Christ's Blood on the Mercy Seat in Heaven. *It has been taught by the vast majority of Christians in all ages.* Only a *tiny number* of liberals, heretics, and uninformed evangelicals have taken Dr. MacArthur's position. *He has placed himself with a rather small and unconventional group.*

14. J. VERNON McGEE

We close this section by giving two more witnesses from Christian

history. The fourteenth witness is Dr. J. Vernon McGee, who wrote:

I say to you very definitely and dogmatically that I believe *His Blood is even now in heaven, and throughout endless ages it will be there to remind us of the awful price Christ paid to redeem us.*⁴¹

15. THE HISTORICAL HYMNS

The fifteenth witness is given in the great historical hymns, which have always taught the translation and preservation of Jesus' Blood.

“His Blood atoned for all our race
And *sprinkles now the throne of grace*”
(Charles Wesley, “Arise! My Soul, Arise!”,
died 1788).

“Lord, I believe Thy Precious Blood
*Which at the mercy seat of God
Forever doth for sinners plead*”
(Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf, “Jesus, Thy Blood and
Righteousness,” translated by John Wesley.
Zinzendorf died in 1760).

“*There is a fountain filled with Blood*”
(William Cowper, “There Is a Fountain,”
died 1800).

“*There is power in the Blood*”
(Lewis Jones, “Power in the Blood,”
died 1936).

When I sing these great hymns the words of John MacArthur seem strangely wrong by comparison. MacArthur said:

There is no sense in getting teary eyed and mystical about blood! We sing hymns, “There’s Power in the Blood,” etc. We don’t want to be preoccupied with blood! *There is no saving in that blood itself! We cannot say that the very blood of Jesus is what atones for sin.* So, we do not want to become preoccupied about *fantasizing about some mystical blood that is floating around somewhere* (A tape recording of

MacArthur's own voice saying these words is available for \$4.00 from Dr. Hymers. Write P.O. Box 15308, Los Angeles, CA 90015 and request the tape, "John MacArthur – Condemned by His Own Voice").*

Dr. MacArthur's statement is much like this quotation from the liberal Harry Emerson Fosdick:

The blood of Christ (was) carried over from primitive concepts. Mental patterns are too stubbornly persistent to be so easily cast off, and even yet *semimagical ideas concerning the potency of blood are woven into some Christian hymns, sermons, prayers.*⁴²

Fosdick was a rank modernist, who denied and attacked the deity of Christ, the Blood Atonement, and the inspiration of the Bible. It is strange that a supposed conservative like MacArthur would say almost the same things about the Blood and the hymns that extol it that this wicked, Christ-rejecting liberal said. ***MacArthur attacks the great Blood hymns just as the modernist Harry Emerson Fosdick, now in Hell, did in the past!***

Why did Dr. MacArthur attack those hymns on the Blood of Jesus? Why did he tell us not to get "teary eyed" about them? Why did he declare that Jesus' Blood perished when he said, "The literal blood of Christ ran into the dirt," and "The blood was never redemptive blood"? (See above mentioned tape).

We have given fifteen witnesses, from across the pages of Christian history, against MacArthur's view that the Blood of Jesus was not translated into Heaven. They include The Scofield Reference Bible, Chrysostom, John Calvin, Matthew Poole, Matthew Henry, Isaac Watts, Patrick Fairbairn, C. H. Spurgeon, The Pulpit Commentary, The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary, The Expositor's Bible, Andrew Murray, M. R. DeHaan, J.Vernon McGee, and the historical hymns of Charles Wesley, Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf (translated by John Wesley), William Cowper, and Lewis Jones.

*This tape was produced by Dr. D. A. Waite at our church a few years ago. While we are not in full agreement with Dr. Waite on some other issues, we heartily endorse his recording, which presents Dr. MacArthur's own voice saying what he believes about the Blood of Christ. This tape can be ordered from us by writing to P. O. Box 15308, Los Angeles, CA 90015. Send \$4.00 and request the tape by name. Dr. Waite has many other books, pamphlets and cassettes, showing MacArthur's errors. You can phone him to request a catalogue at (609) 854-4452.

This cloud of witnesses stands against Dr. MacArthur's view that "The literal blood of Christ ran into the dirt and dust," and does not exist "in any tangible or visible form."⁴³

Why Doesn't MacArthur Correct This Error?

John MacArthur has had many years to clear up any misunderstanding that may have come through a misuse of words. Why hasn't he done so? Why does he, instead, *repeat* his formerly stated errors in the newly published *MacArthur Study Bible*?⁴⁴ Wouldn't it be rather simple to say, "I believe the Blood of Christ is now in Heaven and available to wash sins away"? What's so hard about that? Couldn't *you* say that? Yet Dr. MacArthur can't do what you or I could easily do: he just can't make that simple statement. Why? *Because he doesn't believe it!*

Remember that this is a *serious* doctrinal error.

"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible (perishable) things...but with the precious blood of Christ"
(I Peter 1:18-19).

Dr. MacArthur is a capable Bible teacher in most areas, and we hope he is a saved man, despite the questions that are raised by his insistence that Christ became the Son of God at His incarnation,⁴⁵ and his mistakes on the Blood of Christ and Lordship salvation. These extreme errors on the person and work of Christ make us wonder at times, however, if he may be unconverted.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."
(I Corinthians 2:14)

The Scofield Reference Bible says this regarding the verse:

"The natural man may be learned, gentle, eloquent, fascinating, but the spiritual content of Scripture is absolutely hidden from him."⁴⁶

Is MacArthur's Message the Valid Gospel?

As I said earlier in this chapter, I attended Dr. MacArthur's church regularly for nearly a year, and sat under his preaching before I was converted. He was my pastor. He taught me the Bible. I appreciate much of the Bible teaching he gave me in his sermons, and I can still remember a

great deal of it in detail to this day. However, *I was not converted under his preaching. His view of Lordship salvation only confused me. It was not until I heard sermons more in tune with Spurgeon's view of conversion that I was saved. Dr. MacArthur's Lordship form of decisionism came through to me as salvation by works rather than salvation by faith in Jesus.*

I believe that we must be clear on the Blood of Christ and on the subject of salvation in our evangelistic preaching. I do not reject all that MacArthur has written. Much of it is fine and true to the Scriptures. But we must be as careful with his comments as we are with the Scofield Bible, when we pay attention to its great teachings on dispensationalism, but reject its deemphasis on the local church. We just cannot accept MacArthur's views on the Blood and on Lordship salvation if we want to preach great gospel sermons that God can use to convert many souls.

In his sermon, *The Warrant of Faith*, C. H. Spurgeon said that the things which must be believed to be justified "all relate to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ." Spurgeon continued:

We must believe him to be God's Son – so the text puts it – "His Son"...We are also taught, that if we heartily trust our soul with Christ, our sins, through his blood, are forgiven, and his righteousness imputed to us. *The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us*, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands. Faith must act in this wise: "I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore, sinner though I be, I rest myself on him; I know that his righteousness justifies the ungodly; I, therefore, though ungodly, trust in him to be my righteousness; *I know that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God* on behalf of them that come unto him; and since I come unto him, I know by faith that I have an interest in his perpetual intercession."⁴⁷

Spurgeon said that it is necessary to believe in Jesus to be saved, and this belief in Jesus includes the fact "that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God on behalf of them that come to him."⁴⁸ He says that "mere knowledge" of the facts of the gospel will not save us. We must rest "on" Jesus, Himself.

Many people, unsatisfied with their lives after making one sort of "decision," turn to a different form of "decisionism." A person who has made a profession of doctrinal belief while continuing to practice gross sin

may in turn make a Lordship commitment and begin studying the Bible, not realizing that this is only another form of decisionism. The same person, some time later, may still find his religious life empty and dry and seek for “feeling” in his religion through a charismatic experience.

Other people may repeat the same form of decision they practiced earlier, coming forward or saying a prayer again and again while remaining unsatisfied. But whether a person continues with the same form of poison he took earlier, or moves to a different variety of it, he remains lost and in error all the same. The only true salvation is found by uniting with Jesus Himself.

Decisionism in its various forms has produced the religious confusion of today, in which almost everyone has made one sort of decision or another, and yet very few people are genuinely converted, and live proper Christian lives as a result.

Although decisionism does not add many people to the Kingdom of God and does not convert very many souls, it has the attraction of seeming to be a quick and easy way of getting people “in,” and especially of quickly and easily getting a large number of people “in” over a short period of time. Thus, on the individual level, decisionism mimics conversion in a quick, easy, and “instant satisfaction guaranteed” offer that can be extended to anyone at any time.

On the level of an entire church or community, decisionism mimics revival in exactly the same way. Thousands of people can “come forward” in an evangelistic meeting and declared to be “saved,” – *as long as their testimonies are not carefully examined afterwards and no one checks on how many of them are actually attending church and living Christian lives a few years later.*

The wave of decisionism that began with Finney made it possible to quickly and easily say that great multitudes of people were saved. In modern decisionism, since the time of Finney, children and adults by the millions have been quickly “run through” decisions of various types.

Like the plant life of a jungle, decisionism has taken on a tremendous variety of shapes and forms. Well-meaning preachers have given invitations such as, “Everyone who wants to go to Heaven, stand up.” (Who wouldn’t?) “Everyone who doesn’t want to go to Hell, raise your hand.” (Who would want to go there?) Like “baptismal water” sprinkled from the palm branch of a medieval Catholic bishop, the indicator or sign of standing up or raising the hand is then “sprinkled” over the mass of hearers to proclaim them saved and “make Christians” of them. In the urge to include vast numbers of people, the decisionist “broad way” has been opened wider and wider. Some have even given up asking the sinner to pray! I heard one well-known preacher say, “*I’m* going to pray. If you want to get *under* that prayer, raise your hand while I pray.” Somehow the raising of the hand will place a sinner “under” the prayer and *implant* the contents of the prayer into his

soul.

Almost Everyone Has Made a Decision

I met one teenage boy in Los Angeles who had been involved in a gang. He had taken drugs, committed sexual sin, and seen people murdered, all by the age of fourteen. He visited a charismatic church. The people there did not even ask him to pray to be saved. Rather, they formed a circle around him and *they* prayed for him to be saved. Then they told the young man that God had answered their prayers and that he was now saved. The fact that he returned to the gang and its sex, drugs, and murders didn't bother them a bit. After all, he was saved now!

As a result of generations of decisionism, what happened to the Roman Catholics centuries ago has now come to the Protestant and Baptist churches of our land. In the Dark Ages, *everyone* had been baptized, but almost no one was a true Christian. Everyone had confessed their sins and gone to church, but almost no one was really converted. Everyone had been run through the decisionist machinery of the Catholic Church, but almost no one actually went to Heaven. And so it is in our own time.

The great majority of Americans have made a "decision for Christ" or "commitment" of some sort, *including President Bill Clinton, a decisionist Southern Baptist*. Most Americans have gone forward, prayed a prayer, raised their hand, had some sort of feeling or experience, believed some doctrine, or have made some other sort of "decision," or Lordship commitment, which is taken as equivalent to genuine salvation. And yet, to use the words of Billy Graham, "Our society is on the brink of self-destruction"!

Almost everyone in America has been "Christianized," but very few are real Christians. There are streets in Los Angeles where everyone (almost down to the very last individual) claims to be a born again, saved Christian, "trusting in the Lord," and yet both I and the people who live there are afraid to walk alone on the street! The same is true in big cities all across our land.

The "Christians" Burned Los Angeles

Decade upon decade of decisionism brought forth its evil fruit, and the sour, corrupted juices of that fruit exploded upon the streets of Los Angeles in the riots of 1992.

We have a church in the inner city of Los Angeles. We have talked personally with thousands of people. Thus, we know by experience that most of the people involved in the L.A. riot consider themselves born again Christians because they have made some sort of decision.

I personally witnessed these riots without the need of a television set,

for I live with my family in the inner city. Looking out the window of my house during the riot, I saw buildings burning and people running in the street with things they had looted from nearby stores.

There was no need to “pray the sinner’s prayer” with these people: They had already done that. There was no need to “reach them” with the decisionist message. They had already been “reached” with it. Yet the decisionist message had made no change in their lives. This was graphically proved on the night the riots started in Los Angeles.

These riots happened in a country where the great majority of its people have made a “personal commitment to Jesus Christ.” If you had been able to interview the people who ran looting and burning through the city, at least eight out of ten of them, and probably a much larger number, would have told you that they had a personal trust in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, that they considered themselves saved, born again, and going to Heaven should they die. *They would have told you that they “believed in the Lord” and had “the Lord” in their hearts, carrying “the Lord” with them as they ran into buildings to steal, smash, and burn.*

Of course, such an interview would have been physically impossible that night. If I had gone out into the street to speak to these rioting “evangelicals,” or indeed if I had gone out into the street at all, I would have been instantly assaulted and probably killed on the spot by a mob of self-proclaimed “born again” Christians on their way to steal everything they could from another store before burning it to the ground. No, I dared conduct no such interview. I could only lock the doors and look out the window as the evangelical Christians of Los Angeles burned my neighborhood, and hope that these “brothers in the Lord” would not seek out my family huddled inside our house.

The night of the riots, Los Angeles literally became a society going through “self-destruction.” This event can only serve as an illustration of what awaits America as a whole. *Darkness and sin will more and more prevail, unless someone stands up against the tide of decisionism and pays attention to the words of F. L. Chapell, a Baptist of the early 20th century:*

*The dark days that preceded the Great Awakening will come again unless somebody stands firmly and clearly and decidedly by the doctrine of a converted church-membership.*⁴⁹

Though I have strongly disagreed with John MacArthur on several doctrines, I approve and endorse this statement of his, “*Finney’s real legacy is the disastrous impact he had on American evangelical theology and evangelistic methodology. The church in our generation is still seething with the leaven Finney introduced...*”⁵⁰

FOOTNOTES

¹Ruth Bell Graham, in *Shattering the Darkness: The Crisis of the Cross in the Church Today*, by Joseph Foreman (Montreat, North Carolina: The Cooling Spring Press, 1992), preface, ix.

²Ruth Bell Graham, in *Shattering the Darkness*, jacket.

³Joseph Foreman, *Shattering the Darkness*, p. 25.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., pp. 61-62.

⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁸Ruth Bell Graham, in *Shattering the Darkness*, jacket.

⁹*Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1997, page B-2.

¹⁰Martin Luther, "Preface to the Epistle to the Romans," in *The Works of Martin Luther, Volume VI* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 454.

¹¹John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Volume I* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 103.

¹²Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Volume II: A.D. 1500 - A.D. 1975*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975, p. 955.

¹³Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: the Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), pp. 412-13.

¹⁴David F. Wells, *Turning to God: Biblical Conversion in the Modern World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 93.

¹⁵William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959), p.11.

¹⁶J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 292.

¹⁷Richard Rabinowitz, *The Spiritual Self in Everyday Life: The Transformation of Personal Religious Experience in Nineteenth-Century New England* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989).

¹⁸Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, same as footnote 13.

¹⁹McLoughlin, p. 11.

²⁰John MacArthur, "Testimony Tape," (Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California, 1986).

²¹On page 237 of *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Hebrews* (Moody Press, 1983), MacArthur says, "It was not Jesus' physical

blood that saves us. Christ's own physical blood, in itself, does not cleanse from sin." This directly contradicts I John 1:7 and many other passages of Scripture. It puts Dr. MacArthur in the same category with Harry Emerson Fosdick and other liberals who rejected the Blood of Christ, such as Nels Ferre, who said, "The blood of Jesus has no more power than the blood of a chicken." The Devil has always hated and opposed salvation by the Blood of Jesus (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 10:29; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:3-8; Jude 11; Genesis 3:15).

²²*The Revivalist*, Editor: Ian R. K. Paisley, May-June 1997, pp. 30-31.

²³John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1997), note on Hebrews 9:14.

²⁴John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Hebrews*, p. 237.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶John MacArthur, "MacArthur's Closing Statement," June, 1988, in "John MacArthur on Christ's Blood," by D. A. Waite, Th.D., Ph.D., *The Bible For Today* #1710-P, p. 12.

²⁷C. I. Scofield, editor, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (old). New York: Oxford University Press, 1917 edition. Note on Leviticus 16:5, p. 147.

²⁸John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews*, Homily XXXIII, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Volume XIV, Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, edited by Philip Schaff, translated by Frederic Gardiner (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978 reprint), p. 517.

²⁹John Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews, Volume XXII in Calvin's Commentaries on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1981 reprint), p. 235.

³⁰Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990 reprint of the 1685 edition), vol. 3, p. 849.

³¹Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (no city given: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996 reprint), vol. 1, p. 400.

³²Isaac Watts, "The Atonement of Christ Manifested," *Discourses on Various Subjects*, vol. 2, Discourse VI, reprinted 1811, no publisher given, p. 74.

³³Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1975 reprint of the 1900 edition), vol. 2, p. 297.

³⁴C. H. Spurgeon, "The Blood of Sprinkling," February 28, 1886, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* #1,888, vol. 32, p. 121, reprinted by Pilgrim

Publications, Pasadena, Texas.

³⁵C. H. Spurgeon, "The Saviour's Precious Blood," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* #3,395.

³⁶*The Pulpit Commentary*, H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, editors (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.), vol. 21, p. 362.

³⁷Robert Jamieson, Andrew Fausset, and David Brown, *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary, reprinted by Eerdmans, vol. III, pp. 576-77.

³⁸*The Expositor's Bible*, edited by Sir William Robertson Nicoll (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), commentary on Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews, p. 165.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 302.

⁴⁰M. R. DeHaan, *The Chemistry of the Blood* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1943), pp. 27, 24.

⁴¹J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), vol. 5, p. 560.

⁴²Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Harper, 1938), p. 230.

⁴³Douglas McMasters, "John MacArthur's Response on the Blood of Christ," Computer net posting, Dougm@gty.org, August 4, 1997, p. 2.

⁴⁴John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Waco, Texas: Word, 1997), notes on Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:7; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 9:18; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 10:10; Revelation 5:9, etc. MacArthur's former errors on the Blood are repeated in this new study Bible in the notes on these passages.

⁴⁵See George W. Zeller and Renald E. Showers, *The Eternal Sonship of Christ – a Timely Defence of This Vital Biblical Doctrine* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Bros., 1993), pp. 33-35.

⁴⁶C. I. Scofield, editor, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (old). New York: Oxford University Press, 1917 edition. Note on I Corinthians 2:14, p. 1213.

⁴⁷C. H. Spurgeon, "The Warrant of Faith," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, volume 9 (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1979), p. 530.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹F. L. Chapell, *The Great Awakening of 1740* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1903), p. 133.

⁵⁰John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), p. 235.

EPILOGUE

by Dr. Christopher Cagan

“But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears” (Jeremiah 13:17).

Asahel Nettleton made this statement concerning Finney’s methods:

These evils are destined to be propagated from generation to generation, waxing worse and worse.

– Dr. Asahel Nettleton,
1854 edition of *The Life and Labours of Asahel Nettleton*

Every sign indicates that Nettleton was right. Finney’s methods of decisionism have grown from generation to generation. And the methods he originated have deteriorated increasingly over the years into the various decisionist systems of our time.

In the preceding chapters we have covered these facts:

1. Our culture is unravelling, with no end in sight.
2. Decisionism has failed to cure the problem.
3. Stronger preaching against sin and a clearer presentation of the gospel are needed.
4. Careful counselling by the pastor is also needed.

It should be done after the evangelistic sermon in a quiet place. There should usually be more than one such counselling session, perhaps many in certain cases, but at least a few in almost all cases.

Spiritual Malpractice

Imagine yourself going to a doctor’s office with a large, bleeding sore on your face. In the office are a number of people with crutches, some in wheelchairs, others wheezing, barely able to breathe. You are all waiting to see the doctor. After a few minutes, a nurse runs in and gives everyone in the room a red pill. Then she smiles brightly and says, “You’re all cured! Go home now!”

“But, but,” you protest, “we have different symptoms.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” the nurse answers, “One prescription fits everyone.”

“But I wanted to see the doctor,” you protest.

“Oh, he never sees anyone who is sick,” she answers. “He delegates that to me.”

As she turns to go, she says, “Come back when you’re well. The doctor will be glad to see you then.”

Sadly, many churches handle lost inquirers about that way. If medical doctors treated their patients like many pastors treat inquirers, they would be faced constantly with malpractice suits.

We do not advocate giving up the public invitation to come forward. It is not the invitation itself that needs to be corrected, in our opinion, but rather what is done after the invitation. Pastors themselves should deal with those who have come forward, as Asahel Nettleton, Richard Baxter and C. H. Spurgeon did. Several counselling sessions should be held in most cases, as these men did.

Rev. F. L. Chapell warned that our churches would fill up with lost people unless pastors made sure they were converted:

The dark days that preceded the Great Awakening will come again unless somebody stands firmly and clearly and decidedly by the doctrine of a converted church-membership.¹

The tragic situation in our churches today could be reversed by following Spurgeon’s advice to preachers:

*If you wish to see results from your sermons you must be accessible to inquirers...you should appoint frequent and regular seasons for seeing all who are seeking after Christ, and you should cordially invite such to come and speak with you.*²

FOOTNOTES

¹F. L. Chapell, *The Great Awakening of 1740* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1903), p. 133.

²C. H. Spurgeon, “Conversion As Our Aim,” from *Lectures To My Students* (New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1889), quoted in *Encounter With Spurgeon* by Helmut Thielicke (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), pp. 60-61.

APPENDICES

“The dark days that preceded the Great Awakening
will come again unless somebody stands firmly and clearly
and decidedly by the doctrine of a converted church-membership.”
– F. L. Chapell, Baptist pastor, in his
1903 edition of *The Great Awakening of 1740*.

“America cannot fall – because she is already fallen! This goes for Britain, too. She cannot go into slavery – because her people are fettered at the moment in the chains of self-forged, self-chosen moral anarchy.”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

“If there is one thing preachers are agreed upon, it is that this is the Laodicean age in the church...To take an over-all view of the Church today leaves one wondering how much longer a holy God can refrain from implementing His threat to spue this Laodicean thing out of His mouth...”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

“We have scorned the old-time method of proclaiming repentance and regeneration...”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

“Were we half as hot as we think we are, and a tenth as powerful as we say we are, our Christianity would be baptized in blood, as well as in water and fire.”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

APPENDIX 1

TESTIMONY OF DR. MONROE “MONK” PARKER

by Dr. Christopher Cagan

Dr. Monroe Parker was one of the foremost fundamentalist preachers in America. He was often called “The Dean of American Evangelists.” He served as president of Pillsbury College, and his sermons were often printed in the *Sword of the Lord*. Here is a portion of his testimony:

I joined the Baptist church in Edgewood, Texas, when I was eight years old, but I was not converted. I knew many of the truths of the Bible. I knew about Jesus, His wonderful life, teachings, and miracles, His crucifixion and His resurrection, and I gave intellectual assent to all of the Christian teachings. But I was a sinner and knew it. When my brother Lew joined the church, I also wanted to join; so I followed him down the aisle.

A well-meaning deacon sat down by my side and asked if I came by “profession of faith.” To me, an eight-year-old boy, that word “profession” had something to do with being a doctor or a dentist or a schoolteacher perhaps; so I asked him, “What, sir?”

He asked, “Do you want to be baptized?” But he failed to lead me to Jesus Christ. Since I knew that baptism was in the offing when I joined the church, I answered, “Yes, sir.”

The deacon said, “Pastor, Monroe Parker comes by profession of faith.” Another well-meaning deacon said, “I make a motion we receive him.” Another seconded the motion. The pastor said, “All in favor, let it be known by saying, ‘Aye.’ Any opposed, let it be known by saying, ‘Nay.’” There were no nays.

That afternoon I was baptized with several others in Edgewood Lake. For eleven years I was an unsaved church member.

I catalogued all my sins and resolved to quit

them, and I kept my resolutions very well, but I was not saved. I knew it.¹

In the years since that day, *I have concluded that if we could get half the church members saved, we would see a great revival. In fact, I think if we could get half the preachers in America converted, we would see a mighty revival.*²

FOOTNOTES

¹Monroe “Monk” Parker, *Through Sunshine and Shadows: My First Seventy-Seven Years* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord, 1987), pp. 59-60.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

“This generation of preachers is responsible for this generation of sinners.”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

APPENDIX 2

SOUTHERN BAPTIST SEMINARY CONSULTANT QUESTIONS NUMBER OF CONVERTS IN SBC¹

by Jim Elliff

Jim Elliff is a resident consultant for the Midwestern Center for Biblical Revival at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, one of the six Southern Baptist seminaries. The following paragraphs are excerpts from an article which appeared on the Founder's Journal Website on February 7, 1999.

Out of Southern Baptists' nearly 15.9 million members, only 5.2 million, or 32.8%, even bother to show up on a given Sunday morning, according to the Strategic Information and Planning department of the Sunday School Board (1997). If your church is anything like normal, and is not brand new, your statistics are probably similar. In the average church, one can cut that 32.8% by about two-thirds to find those interested in any additional aspect of church life, such as a Sunday evening service. In other words, only about a third of the 32.8% or slightly more than a tenth of the whole (12.3% in churches with evening services in 1996, the last year for which statistics are available) show more interest in the things of God than Sunday morning attenders in the liberal church down the street where the gospel is not even preached. These figures suggest that nearly 90% of Southern Baptist church members appear to be little different from the "cultural Christians" who populate mainline denominations.

Though these people have "prayed the prayer" and "walked the aisle," and been told they are Christians, old things have not really passed away, and new things have not come. They are not new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). In too many cases obvious signs of an unregenerate heart can be found, such as long-term adultery, fornication, greed, divisiveness. These are "professing believers" which the Bible says are deceived. (See 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:7-8; Eph. 5:5-6; Titus 1:16; I Jn. 3:4-10, etc.).

Jesus indicated that there is a good soil which is receptive to the gospel seed so as to produce a fruit-bearing plant, but that the rocky ground believer only appears to be saved. The latter shows immediate joy, but soon withers

away (Mt. 13:6, 21). This temporary kind of faith (which is not saving faith, see 1 Cor. 15:1-2) is rampant among Southern Baptists.

Is it possible that we have taken in millions of “unrepenting believers” whose hearts have not been changed? I say that we have. Our denomination, as much as we may love it, is on the main unregenerate. If you double, triple or quadruple my assessment of how many are true believers, we still have a gigantic problem. It is naive to believe otherwise.

A great mistake is made by blaming the problem on poor follow-up. In many churches there is every intention and effort given to follow-up and still the numbers persist. One church followed up “by the book” the people who had been told they were new converts from a crusade of an internationally-known evangelist. The report of the pastor in charge was that none of them wanted to talk about how to grow as a Christian. He said, “They ran from us!” Authentic new believers can be followed up because they have the Spirit by which they cry, “Abba Father” (Rom 8:15). But you cannot follow-up on a spiritually dead person.

FOOTNOTES

¹Jim Elliff, Southern Baptist Consultant for the Midwestern Center for Biblical Revival, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Founder’s Journal Website, February 7, 1999.

“Brethren, it is just so much humbug to be waiting for this (revival), night after night, month after month, if we ourselves are not right with God.”

– A man on the Isle of Lewis,
just before the great revival of 1949,
quoted in *Why Revival Tarries*.

APPENDIX 3

SHAM CONVERSION¹

(i.e. False Conversion)

by C. H. Spurgeon

“They feared not the Lord.”
“They feared the Lord, and served their own gods.”
“Unto this day...they fear not the Lord”
(II Kings 17:25, 33, 34).

It is as needful to warn you against the false as to urge you to the true. Conversion, which is a divine change, is imitated, and the spurious palmed off as genuine. This answers the devil's purpose in several ways: it eases the conscience of the double-minded, adulterates the church, injures its testimony, and dishonors true religion.

I. THEIR FIRST ESTATE. “They feared not the Lord” (II Kings 17:25).

1. They had little or no religion of any sort.
2. But they were near a God-fearing people, and near to king Hezekiah, under whom there had been a great revival. Such influence creates a great deal of religiousness.

II. THEIR SHAM (FALSE) CONVERSION. “They feared the Lord” (II Kings 17:33).

1. They were wrought upon by fear only; the “lions” were their evangelists, and their teeth were cutting arguments.
2. They were instructed by an unfaithful priest; one of those who had practised calf-worship, and now failed to rebuke their love of false gods. Such persons have much to answer for.
3. But their conversion was radically defective, for:
There was no repentance.

No expiatory sacrifice was offered on God's one altar.

The false gods were not put away (verse 29).

While sin reigns grace is absent.

They rendered no obedience to Him. Even their worship was will-worship. "They feared the Lord, and *served* their own gods;" a very significant distinction.

The religious drunkard. See him weep! Hear him talk! He has a dread of God, but he serves Bacchus.

The saintly skinflint. He has "a saving faith" in the worst sense.

III. THEIR REAL ESTATE, "Unto this day...they fear not the Lord" (II Kings 17:34).

1. They own Him not as God alone.
2. They act so as to prove that they are not His. See the future history of these Samaritans in the book of Nehemiah.

In real conversion there must be:

Idol-breaking. Sin and self must be abandoned.

Concentration. Our only God must be adored and served.

FOOTNOTES

¹C. H. Spurgeon, "Sham Conversion," condensed by David Otis Fuller, in *Spurgeon's Sermon Notes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1941), pp. 51-52. This sermon is given in full in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Volume 51, pp. 145-156 (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications).

APPENDIX 4

HOW SPURGEON COUNSELLED INQUIRERS

by Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr.

The methods used by the prince of preachers, C. H. Spurgeon, are well worth reviewing in this day of apostasy. Here is the way he added members to his vast congregation:

Candidates for church membership have an interview with one of the Elders,* some of whom attend the Tabernacle for that purpose every Wednesday evening.** A record is made by the Elder of the result of that interview in what is called the Inquirer's Book. If satisfied with the candidate, he gives a card, which qualifies for direct intercourse with Mr. Spurgeon, who devotes a fixed portion of that time to his office. If Mr. Spurgeon thinks favorably of that individual, the name is announced at a church meeting, and visitors are appointed to make the most careful inquiries into the whole circumstances connected with the application (for membership). If this investigation is satisfactory, the candidate appears at a church meeting where he is examined by the Pastor, after which he retires, and the visitor gives his report upon the case. It is then proposed to the Church for his adoption, and if approved, the Pastor gives the right hand of fellowship. As soon after this as convenient, the candidate is baptized, and on the next first Sabbath in the month ensuing, unites in the Communion Service, having

*Spurgeon's Tabernacle was (and is) a Baptist Church. These "elders" did not govern the church. Their duties were confined to counselling and visitation work. They were elected annually to attend to these duties. Spurgeon's church did *not* have elder rule.

**The prayer meeting was held on Monday evenings at the Tabernacle. Wednesday night was largely devoted to dealing with anxious sinners.

first been recognized before the whole Church by again receiving from the Pastor the right hand of fellowship.¹

Without going into great detail in reviewing this description, I think you will see instantly that it stands in stark contrast to the decisionist way of receiving people for baptism today. I would recommend that you read the paragraph again – slowly. Think about the way people are received and baptized into your church. Then ask yourself if more effort in spending *time* with those seeking salvation might not produce more *real* converts in your church.

Spurgeon's procedure of counselling inquirers was typical of early nineteenth century Baptists, before Finney's false view of conversion came in. Eric W. Hayden gave the great preacher's system of interviewing inquirers in an article on Spurgeon's weekly schedule.

After the Sunday services he often remained at the Tabernacle for another hour while he interviewed enquirers...from seven until half-past eight at night (on Mondays) he would be interviewing enquirers* prior to the Monday evening prayer meeting at the Tabernacle. Talking with enquirers he called "glorious work."²

I have read elsewhere that he often spent time on other nights of the week "interviewing enquirers." Remember, Spurgeon baptized no one into his huge church without being certain that the man or woman was converted *himself*. I am convinced that there needs to be a return to this sort of personal work by pastors. This was done by Jesus Himself. In John 3:1-21 Jesus gave a personal interview to Nicodemus. In John 4:7-30 Jesus gave a personal interview to the woman at the well. These were exactly the kind of interviews our old Baptist and Protestant pastors gave to inquirers before the change under Finney's decisionism ruined evangelicalism.

There are many other instances of such personal interviews with Jesus and the Apostles recorded in the Bible. ***How can pastors today do the work of Jesus and the Apostles without following the example of Jesus and the Apostles on this matter? Pastors must spend much time individually with each lost person.***

*The word inquirers was spelled "enquirers" in 19th Century England.

The necessity of pastoral guidance for inquirers is given in these words of Spurgeon, taken from his autobiography:

When talking with anxious enquirers, I am often amazed at the ingenuity with which they resist the entrance of faith into their hearts...After I have proved to them the demonstration that it is the most reasonable and fitting thing in the world for them to trust themselves with Christ, they ask, "How is this to be done?" or "How is that to be accomplished?" and they argue, first one way, and then another, all against their own best interests. Often, I go patiently through the whole process again and again; and even when that has been done, there comes another objection. I have tracked these people to their holes as diligently as if I had been a fox-hunter, and have tried to unearth them from their hiding places...³

Close personal work by the pastor is very uncommon today, but it should not be. We should follow Spurgeon's example and give pastoral counselling after we preach. And it should *not* be delegated to many others. Only highly trained people should be allowed to do this work, and the pastor should at least double-check the testimonies of the people very carefully before baptizing them.

FOOTNOTES

¹"Metropolitan Tabernacle Statistics," in *The Sword and the Trowel, Volume One: Years 1865, 1866, 1867* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1975), year 1865, p. 19.

²Eric W. Hayden, "Spurgeon's Working Week," from the jacket of Volumes 62 and 63, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1916-1917 (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1980).

³C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 1976), pp. 243-244.

APPENDIX 5

NINETEEN BOOKS THAT WILL HELP A PREACHER

Here are nineteen books here which will greatly help a pastor or other counsellor.* Anyone who is interested in the subjects we have addressed in this book can procure them from a bookstore which deals with out of print titles.**

1. Joseph Alleine, *An Alarm to the Unconverted* (sometimes titled, *A Sure Guide to Heaven*). Published under the second title by Banner of Truth Trust, 1959. Here is the table of contents:
 - (1) Mistakes about conversion.
 - (2) The nature of conversion.
 - (3) The necessity of conversion.
 - (4) The marks of conversion.
 - (5) The miseries of the unconverted.
 - (6) Directions to the unconverted.
 - (7) The motives to conversion.

First published in 1671, *An Alarm to the Unconverted* was popular among evangelicals for a hundred and fifty years before Charles G. Finney changed conversion into decisionism. Spurgeon's mother often read this book to him when he was a child. Although it has many helpful "law" passages, particularly in chapters one through five, it is marred by its appeal to Lordship salvation; it requires the seeking sinner to do more than trust Jesus, which is the only Biblical requirement (Acts 16:31). However, the first five chapters can help a discerning pastor understand the pre-Finney definition of true conversion. If the first five chapters were immediately followed by Spurgeon's *All of Grace* or *Around the Wicket Gate*, they would be most helpful to a seeking sinner. We recommend the book only with these reservations in mind. The first five chapters are the best. They will help you the most.

*Although we do not endorse everything in these books, we believe that they will be very helpful in guiding one's thoughts out of the decisionism of our time.

**Dr. David O. Beale has a world-wide booksearching ministry. He will be able to obtain these books for you. Phone him at (864) 233-0501.

2. Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*. First published in 1656, and reprinted by Banner of Truth Trust in 1989. Philip Doddridge said that it “should be read by every young minister before he takes a people under his care; and, I think, the practical part of it reviewed every three or four years.” We would be in full agreement. This is arguably the most important book on pastoring that has ever been written.

3. Richard Baxter, *A Treatise on Conversion*. First published in 1657, and reprinted countless times. A person who sees the folly of decisionism in our day should study this book carefully. It will be a guide out of decisionist darkness. Here are the chapter titles:
 - (1) Nature of conversion – change of mind.
 - (2) Nature of conversion – change of heart.
 - (3) Nature of conversion – change of affections.
 - (4) Nature of conversion – change of life.
 - (5) Necessity of conversion.
 - (6) Self-application – “Am I converted?”
 - (7) Miseries of the unconverted.
 - (8) Benefits of conversion.
 - (9) Appeal to the unconverted.
 - (10) Hindrances, with corresponding directions.
 - (11) Hindrances and directions – continued.

4. Brian H. Edwards, *Revival! A People Saturated With God* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1991). It will set the heart longing for real revival. Multiple examples from history are given. It is a wonderful book, well worth reading – and re-reading.

5. John H. Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards, Evangelist* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1995 reprint). Dr. Gerstner presents Edwards’ teachings in a crisp, modern style. It also systematizes the thinking of this great preacher, and portrays him as an evangelist, concerned with revival and the salvation of souls. Well worth reading and re-reading.

6. Matthew Mead, *The Almost Christian* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1989). Though we would not recommend John MacArthur, who wrote the introduction, because of his past statements promoting the incarnational

Sonship of Christ and other matters, we strongly recommend the book itself. It contains a series of sermons given by Mead on self-examination (II Corinthians 13:5). These are the kind of sermons that need to be preached in our pulpits today.

7. Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994). Read chapter fourteen first, then the whole book. Our little book on decisionism, which you have just read, is an outgrowth of the historical insights given here by Murray. If you are interested in the history of decisionism, it is a must.
8. Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon vs. Hyper-Calvinism* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995). A good introduction to Spurgeon as an evangelist; corrects overemphasis on various doctrines.
9. Asahel Nettleton, *Sermons from the Second Great Awakening* (Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, 1995). The only book we know of that gives 53 of Nettleton's sermons, most of them complete, plus 17 remarks on Scriptural passages, and 12 miscellaneous remarks on important subjects by the great evangelist. Dr. Hymers has preached over thirty of these sermons from our own pulpit. Every preacher needs this book. You can order it from International Outreach, Inc., P.O. Box 1286, Ames, Iowa 50014, U.S.A. Phone (515) 233-2932.
10. C. H. Spurgeon, *All of Grace* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1978). An earnest word with those who are seeking salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the first book published by Moody Press and is their all-time best-selling book.
11. C. H. Spurgeon, *Around the Wicket Gate* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1992). A friendly talk with sinners concerning faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
12. C. H. Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit* and *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. Sixty-two volumes, published by Pilgrim Publications, P.O. Box 66, Pasadena, Texas 77501, U.S.A. No other sermon set is as valuable. All preachers should have it.

13. *Index* to the New Park Street Pulpit and Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit. This index is a must. It gives every Spurgeon sermon, both by title and by text. All who buy Spurgeon's sermon set should have it. Available from Pilgrim Publications.
14. Solomon Stoddard, *A Guide to Christ* (Ligonier, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993). Reprinted from the 1816 Northampton edition. Though we would disagree with Stoddard's "Half-Way Covenant," which admitted unconverted members to the Lord's Supper as a means of converting grace, we recommend this book, particularly the section titled, "Directions How to Guide Souls Through the Work of Conversion." It is well worth reading and meditating on.
15. Joseph Bellamy, *Sin, the Law, and the Glory of the Gospel*. Joseph Bellamy, one of the key figures in the Great Awakening, shows how conviction of sin by the law is critical in evangelistic preaching. Order it from International Outreach, P. O. Box 1286, Ames, Iowa 50014, phone: (515) 233-2932.
16. Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining – The Anatomy of True and False Conversion* (volumes 1 and 2). Two books on the use of self-examination. They show how true conversion can be distinguished from its counterfeit. (Order from International Outreach, P. O. Box 1286, Ames, Iowa 50014. Phone (515) 233-2932.)
17. *Village Hymns for Social Worship*, edited by Asahel Nettleton. 600 hymns, 180 of them set to music. Over 50 by John Newton, 48 by Isaac Watts, along with hymns by William Cowper, Phillip Doddridge, Timothy Dwight, and others. Most of these great hymns have been lost to this generation as a result of Finney's decisionism, the resulting change in evangelistic preaching, and the adoption of hymns that fit the decisionist message. These older hymns, which present true Biblical conversion, were discontinued. They were replaced by modern gospel songs and choruses in most hymnals. *This is a hymn book every pastor in America needs to have, with hymns that need to be reintroduced to our churches* (International Outreach, P. O. Box 1286, Ames, Iowa 50014. Phone (515) 233-2932).

18. George W. Zeller and Renald E. Showers, *The Eternal Sonship of Christ* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1993). This book contains an excellent rebuttal of John MacArthur's heretical teaching that Jesus Christ did not become the Son of God until His birth. MacArthur has said, "He was not a Son until He was born into this world through the virgin birth...He is no 'eternal Son'." In the foreword to this excellent book Dr. John C. Whitcomb says, "If the second person of the triune godhead was not the Son of God until His incarnation, as some are now teaching, then the first person was not the Father until two thousand years ago." This rebuttal of MacArthur's false teaching on the Eternal Sonship of Christ is needed by every pastor.
19. R. L. Hymers, Jr. and Christopher Cagan, *Decisionism and the Death of America*. This is a companion to the book you have just read. It contains much more material on how Charles G. Finney poisoned evangelicalism down to our own day. It also contains Dr. Cagan's complete "Manual on Conversion." This book can be ordered for \$20.00 from Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr., P. O. Box 15308, Los Angeles, CA 90015.

"Wesley saw the doors of the English churches closed against him...But Wesley feared neither men nor devils. If Whitefield was burlesqued on the English stage in the basest way, and if, in the New Testament, Christians were stoned and suffered every ignominy, how is it then, since sin and sinners have not changed, that we preachers no longer raise the wrath of Hell?...Where can we have revival without riots?"

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

APPENDIX 6

W. P. NICHOLSON

by Dr. Christopher Cagan

W. P. Nicholson was an evangelist from Northern Ireland. God sent revival many times during his campaigns in Scotland and Ulster in the 1920's. Just before revival broke out, Nicholson said this:

The revival which ought to come to our churches is a revival that will make preachers forget their manuscripts and burst out and weep in their pulpits; a cyclone of mysterious omnipotence that, when it strikes a church or community will make people awfully mad or gloriously happy.

Nothing is so alarming as the absence of alarm in the churches. Nothing is so dreadfully terrific, to my mind, as that sinners have no terror. Oh for a few men so dead to all things but God, and so filled with Him, as to make them more than a match for the rest of mankind!¹

Nicholson himself was "more than a match for the rest of mankind!" His preaching was converting preaching; it was revival preaching. Dr. Ian R. K. Paisley said of him:

The religious scene in Northern Ireland felt the fullest possible impact of his ministry. The place could never be the same again since this God-anointed preacher delivered to it his God-appointed message. *During the twenties, campaign after campaign witnessed thousands upon thousands genuinely converted to God.*²

Here is a sample of Nicholson's preaching, taken from a sermon titled, "Christless Christians," preached in Glasgow, Scotland in 1929:

Remember Lot's wife. She went out of a Christian home to a Christless hell; she went out of the arms of a righteous man into the embrace of the devil and the damned. You may come out of a Christian home and land in a Christless hell.

Friend, do you hear me? For every unconverted church member who became converted, I will show you 20 million drunkards and desperados of the devil. When you join the church without being converted you are twice over a child of hell. I'll bet you that those five girls down there (points at them) shuffled a bit, and opened their eyes when I said that! I'll bet you they are baptized members of a church, but you couldn't touch them with a 40-foot pole!

When you get into a church, and you lie to God in the very house of God, it is a very hard job to get you converted.

Again, Christless Christians are men and women who imagine that they are Christians because they made a profession of faith at one time or another. *A man said to me some time ago, "I decided for Christ when Dr. Torrey was here." "Man," said I, "that's fine. And were you converted?" He said: "Once converted, always converted."*

Man, if there is anybody going to hell it's a man like that, or a woman like that. He that is born of God can't live in sin, and if he is living in sin he is a child of the devil, even if he has made 75,000 professions. My, yes, you professed, didn't you? Didn't you go in and sign a card? Didn't you belong to the church, and join it? Didn't you put your hand up? Weren't you dealt with? Didn't you get on your knees and pray? Yes, and now you are...ugly, nasty, angry, bad tongued, bad tempered; and you say you are a Christian! If you were, I would rather go to hell and live with the devil than be with you. I can live with a bona fide sinner, but a hypocrite scunnens³ me. You are joyriding on Sunday, desecrating God's day; you are down on the beach on Sunday, you are picnicking, never lifting a finger to win a man to Christ, never putting a hand out to help anyone get to Christ. Oh, yes, you are saved! "Not everyone that

saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”

A Christless Christian is a man who imagines that he is all right because he made a profession, but who shows no evidence of it in his life. There is no middle road, it is heaven or hell.

Let me ask you, dear friend, as I ask my own heart: Are you a Christless Christian? Are you a nominal Christian? You have all the trappings of religion, but no experience. You know about Christ in your head, but you can't say: "Thank God I have been saved." *You must humble yourself, be honest with God, and forget about your stinking pride, and your past professions, and your churchianity. You must go like a poor, lost sinner to Christ.*⁴

A preacher friend of mine once read that part of Nicholson's sermon to a congregation during a series of evangelistic meetings. Although many good Christians heartily agreed with Nicholson's sermon, some people were so angered by the mere reading of his words that they became agitated and the meetings were closed abruptly.

My friend stood directly in front of a large photograph of Nicholson while a timid minister, who had been left in charge of the meeting, lectured him against reading Nicholson's sermon. The minister said to my friend, "We can't preach like that today. People don't like that kind of preaching any more."

My friend walked away from the church in deep sadness. He told me later that *you can preach against the Catholics, the charismatics, or the liberals, but if you don't preach against the sins and false professions of the people in your own congregation, there will never be another great revival. My friend said that God will not send revival unless preachers strip away the false hopes of the people in their own churches. God will not send revival unless preachers have the courage to preach to the consciences of their own church members, as Nicholson did.*

My friend said that we must have a return to preaching aimed at the *conscience*. People must be told *that* they are lost and *why* they are lost. Oh, for God to send us a new generation of conscience-probing preachers! As W. P. Nicholson put it:

Nothing is so alarming as the absence of alarm in the churches. Nothing is so dreadfully terrific, to my mind, as that sinners have no terror. Oh for a few

men so dead to all things but God, and so filled with Him, as to make them more than a match for the rest of mankind.⁵

FOOTNOTES

¹*Sermons by W. P. Nicholson: Tornado of the Pulpit*, biographical sketch by Ian R. K. Paisley (Belfast: Martyrs Memorial Productions, 1982), p. 41.

²*Ibid.*, v.

³“Scunners” (Scottish Dialect: sicken with disgust).

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 41-44.

⁵*Ibid.*, xi.

“This is the hour for revival. This is the hour of doom. Where are the men of God?”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

“For this day of doom our pale, pathetic, paralyzed Protestantism needs God-filled and God-guided men. Wanted – prophets of God!”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

APPENDIX 7

WE NEED MEN OF GOD AGAIN

by Dr. A. W. Tozer¹

The Church at this moment needs men, the right kind of men, bold men. The talk is that we need revival, that we need a new baptism of the Spirit – and God knows we must have both; but God will not revive mice. He will not fill rabbits with the Holy Ghost.

We languish for men who feel themselves expendable in the warfare of the soul, who cannot be frightened by threats of death because they have already died to the allurements of this world. Such men will be free from the compulsions that control weaker men. They will not be forced to do things by the squeeze of circumstances; their only compulsion will come from within – or from above.

This kind of freedom is necessary if we are to have prophets in our pulpits again instead of mascots. These free men will serve God and mankind from motives too high to be understood by the rank and file of religious retainers who today shuttle in and out of the sanctuary. They will make no decisions out of fear, take no course out of a desire to please, accept no service for financial considerations, perform no religious act out of mere custom; nor will they allow themselves to be influenced by the love of publicity or the desire for reputation.

Much that the church – even the evangelical church – is doing these days she is doing because she is afraid not to. Ministerial associations take up projects for no higher reason than that they are being scared into it. Whatever their ear-to-the-ground, fear-inspired reconnoitering leads them to believe the world expects them to do they will be doing come next Monday morning with all kinds of trumped-up zeal and show of godliness. The pressure of public opinion calls these prophets, not the voice of Jehovah.

The true church has never sounded out public expectations before launching her crusades. Her leaders heard from God and went ahead wholly independent of popular support or the lack of it. They knew their Lord's will and did it, and their people followed them – sometimes to triumph, oftener to insults and public persecution – and their sufficient reward was the satisfaction of being right in a wrong world.

Yes, if evangelical Christianity is to stay alive she must have men again, the right kind of men. She must repudiate the weaklings who dare not speak out, and she must seek in prayer and much humility the coming again of men of the stuff prophets and martyrs are made of. God will hear the

cries of His people as He heard the cries of Israel in Egypt. And He will send deliverance by sending deliverers. It is His way among men.

And when the deliverers come – reformers, revivalists, prophets – they will be men of God and men of courage. They will have God on their side because they will be careful to stay on God’s side. They will be co-workers with Christ and instruments in the hand of the Holy Ghost. Such men will be baptized with the Spirit indeed, and through their labors He will baptize others and send the long delayed revival.

FOOTNOTES

¹A. W. Tozer, excerpts from “We Need Men of God Again,” taken from *Of God and Men* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1960), pp. 14-16.

“God help the nations, ruined with man-made religion...and doomed with man-made doctrine! Was there ever such an evil hour?”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

“Oh! God, send us prophetic preaching that searches and scorches! Send us a race of martyr-preachers – men burdened, but, bowed and broken under the vision of impending judgment and the doom of the unending hell...”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Why Revival Tarries.

APPENDIX 8

A MANUAL ON CONVERSION

by Dr. Christopher Cagan

C. H. Spurgeon strongly urged every Baptist preacher to have a quiet place where he could talk at length with the lost. He told the students at his Pastor's College:

If you wish to see results from your sermons you must be accessible to inquirers. It is shocking to think that there are ministers who have no method whatever for meeting the anxious. From the very first you should appoint frequent and regular seasons for seeing all who are seeking after Christ, and you should cordially invite such to come and speak with you. *Seek out the wandering sheep one by one, do not grudge your labour, for your Lord in His parable represented the good shepherd as bringing home his sheep, not in a flock, but one at a time.*¹

Speaking on the same subject, the seventeenth-century preacher Richard Baxter said to pastors:

The work of conversion is the first and great thing we must drive at; after this we must labour with all our might...We must be ready to give advice to inquirers, who come to us. *A minister is not to be merely a public preacher, but to be known as a counsellor for their souls, as the physician is for their bodies...*To this end it is very necessary that you be well acquainted with practical cases, and especially that you be acquainted with the nature of saving grace, and be able to assist them in trying (testing) their state, and in resolving the main question that concerns their everlasting life or death. One word of seasonable, prudent advice, given by a minister to persons in necessity, may be of more use than many sermons.²

These two men from the past strongly urge pastors to love the lost enough to spend time with them and help them. This manual on conversion is given to help pastors in the counselling work which Spurgeon and Baxter described. We do not believe that people are saved through our methods alone. Anyone who comes to Jesus is saved (John 6:37). But we believe that the following manual can be helpful in making sure inquiring souls actually do come to Him. What we present here is quite close to the methods used by Baxter, Nettleton and Spurgeon. This can easily be proved by reading what these men wrote on the subject.

A copy of this manuscript was sent to a highly intelligent lady with a seminary degree from a famous school. We asked her to review and evaluate the book. She sent it back with favorable comments on the first part, but she felt that we “over-reacted” in this section on counselling.

We considered what she said for several days. Then it dawned on Dr. Hymers that this lady is the wife of a pastor. She would think we over-reacted because, *if we are right, then her own husband is wrong, because he doesn't use the methods we give here!* We politely suggest that people like her read Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor* (1989 Banner of Truth reprint of the 1656 edition). We are simply restating the old method of pastoral counselling.

Before you conclude that the following section is too detailed and lengthy, *please be open to the possibility that we might just possibly have rediscovered something important.* Please evaluate this section with great care, and try to see what we are aiming at with new eyes.

What is Conversion?

A. We must have in mind a definition of salvation through Christ.

Conversion gives a man a new nature and standing before God and, thus, produces a new direction in his life.

Conversion is the result of that work of the Holy Spirit which draws a lost sinner to Jesus Christ for justification and regeneration, and changes the sinner's standing before God from lost to saved, imparting divine life to the depraved soul, thus producing a new direction in the life of the convert. The objective side of salvation is justification. The subjective side of salvation is regeneration. The result is conversion.

We believe that this definition will help to clear up the confusion caused by decisionism.

1. Historically and objectively (what Christ did):

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

2. Personally and subjectively (what the convert does):

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

As Spurgeon said, “That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life.”³

3. The act of believing on Christ (also called trusting Christ) is the means by which the atonement historically given for all mankind is received by the individual sinner and applied to him. Christ died for all men and women, yet not all are saved, because most people do not trust Him.

4. This act of believing on Christ or trusting Him is not a mere agreement to the historical facts of the gospel. It is instead an act in which the sinner trusts in Christ the person, Christ Himself (John 1:12). A. T. Pierson was quoted by H. C. Thiessen in his *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Dr. Pierson wrote:

“Here, then, is the starting point for any who would exercise saving faith; he must *receive* Jesus as Savior, Christ, Son of God; not simply the witness God gave concerning His Son, but the Son of God *Himself*.”⁴

Or, as C. H. Spurgeon put it, “The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer’s hands.”⁵

5. This act is unique among all the things that a human being can do. *Although called a “work” in John 6:29, it is in a class of its own and is distinguished from all human works* such as going to church, giving up sins, witnessing, fasting, giving money, praying, and so on. Believing on Jesus is the *only* “work” or “decision” that will save a person (John 6:29).

The act of trusting Christ is actually supernatural:

- a. It reaches from earth to heaven, going outside of a person and even outside of this earthly universe.

While a sinner can by his own power give up sins, pray, come to church, read the Bible, and so on, he cannot perform either aspect of salvation: he cannot pay for his own sins (I Cor. 15:3-4) and he cannot by his own abilities, without the grace of God, come to Christ (John 6:44), who is in Heaven (Mark 16:19; Hebrews 10:12).

Thus, it would be impossible for a person to come to, trust, or otherwise contact Jesus, if it depended upon purely human faculties: but the grace of God actually makes saving trust possible (Ephesians 2:8-9). How wonderful is the love of God!

- b. Furthermore, the sinner in his depraved state cannot be saved, and does not even want to be saved. He is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1) with the “understanding darkened” (Eph. 4:18).

It is only God that awakens a sinner and places within him both a desire to come to Christ and the ability to do so, John 6:44.

Were it not for the grace of God, no lost sinner could or would trust in Christ, or even want to.

But God's love is so marvellous and so great that not only did Christ die for us (Rom.5:8) but that God draws a person (through prevenient grace) at least once in his life and makes it possible for him to trust Christ (Titus 2:11). "He first loved us" (I John 4:19).

"Herein is love, not that we loved God (we did not) but that he loved us (first), and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
(I John 4:10)

6. When a person trusts Christ, he receives (whether he feels it or even knows it) all the benefits associated with Christ: forgiveness of sins, the new birth, and so on. Christ Himself thus takes priority over all the results that go along with trusting Him: joy, peace, assurance, a new life, and even the new birth. If a person comes to Christ, he gets all the benefits of Christ thrown in, I Corinthians 1:30-31.
7. The act of trusting Christ or believing on Christ or coming to Christ is the goal to be sought. The lost sinner must seek to trust Christ, and the pastor or personal worker must speak to the lost sinner with the intention of persuading him to trust Christ, Acts 8:30-37; Romans 10:14.

B. There are many errors regarding salvation, making it come through something other than Christ, Himself.

1. Salvation not necessary at all, with a person's "life-interest" or "life-trust" somewhere else: money, friends, family, knowledge, sex, self, etc. Often combined with a denial of Christian doctrine openly or practically; the person may think the Bible isn't true, deny the existence of Hell, think there is no afterlife, and so on.

2. Salvation necessary, but obtained without Christ; by works, holiness, study, attendance at meetings, religiosity, abstaining from sins, prayer, confession, and so on. (Judaism, Islam, etc.)

3. Salvation allegedly by Christ, but in fact Christ is subjected to or “piped through” something else.
 - a. Catholic: Christ obtained/mediated through baptism, communion, confession, church attendance, etc. (Worse: salvation through saints or the Virgin; Christ distant.)

 - b. Evangelical and Baptist: Christ obtained/mediated through sinner’s prayer (without saving faith in Jesus), doctrinal belief, study, church attendance, a Lordship commitment, or something else; doing one of these things confers Christ or proves that a person has Him.

 - c. Pentecostal: Christ obtained/mediated through experiences, tongues, good feelings, life going well, etc.

These errors are *ontologically* wrong; that is, they put Christ under or “pipe Him through” something less than Himself, such as church attendance, the mass, the sinner’s prayer, or doctrine. In fact, we are saved by a “direct” trust in Christ, who is greater than these other things: “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17).

- C. All of these errors come short of actually trusting Christ, although His name may be used. Just as a Catholic who names Jesus but in fact trusts baptism is not saved, in the same way an evangelical who names the name of Jesus but in fact trusts the sinner’s prayer or doctrinal belief instead of directly trusting Christ is not saved. This explains why many professing “born again” believers have no real Christian life, live in habitual gross sin, and in general give no evidence of union with Christ –

simply because they have in fact not trusted Christ, not rested in Him, not entered into a saving union with Him, John 5:40; John 6:40.

Thus, the pastor is to guide the lost person towards a salvation experience through trusting Christ. This *may* happen while a person prays a sinner's prayer, but never happens *because* he prays the prayer. The key element is trusting Christ, not the prayer. John R. Rice wrote that a person can be saved without prayer in his tract, "What Must I Do to be Saved?" Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, and Dr. Hymers were all saved without saying a "sinner's prayer," by a simple act of faith in Jesus Himself, John 3:18. These men did not pray when they were saved, they simply put the trust of their hearts in Jesus. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10).

Two Sides of Salvation

- A. The subjective side of salvation – regeneration (John 3:3; I John 3:9). "Subjective" refers to what happens *within* the convert.

This is what is called the new birth itself; when the Holy Spirit imparts new life to the person who has trusted Christ. This gives him the power to live the Christian life and the new (divine) nature. This new life reflects itself in the convert, I Corinthians 6:11.

- B. The objective side of salvation – justification (Romans 5:1, 6-9, Romans 4:5; Isaiah 53). "Objective" refers to what happens *in Heaven*, before God.

This refers to the forgiveness of sins through the shed Blood of Christ who died on the Cross to pay for sins, Romans 5:8-9. The proper order – justification precedes regeneration. This order places Christ in the most important place, where He ought to be. (The order is logical rather than chronological, since both happen in an instant when a person trusts Christ.)

C. The result – conversion.

1. A person who turns to Christ and trusts Him (believes on Him, unites with Him, comes to Him) for forgiveness (justification) is objectively justified and subjectively receives the new birth, Romans 4:5. As a result, he is converted, Matthew 18:3.
2. A person who looks to Christ for a mere spiritual “experience,” for personal power (even to overcome sin), for feelings, for a change, and so on, will get neither justification nor regeneration, Acts 8:18-23. As a result, he will not be converted.
3. So, we want the inquirer to turn to Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, which are written in God’s books in Heaven (e.g. Revelation 20:12-15). These sins will accuse the lost sinner at the Judgment even if he no longer commits them, because they are recorded in Heaven (Revelation 20:12). They can only be “purged” by the Blood of Christ, Hebrews 9:14, 22.

Stages of Conversion

A. Introduction: Preliminary considerations

1. The only thing needed to be saved is to trust Christ. Thus, a person does not need to pass through a noticeable or discernable period of awakening or conviction of sin in order to be saved.
 - a. Some have been saved without being under conviction of sin at the moment of their conversion such as blind Bartimaeus, Mark 10:47-52, though he was undoubtedly aware of his sinful and miserable state and in that sense was prepared for conversion.
 - b. However, in most cases people *do* need to see

their sins at the moment of conversion, or they will not trust Christ. As Dr. J. Gresham Machen wrote:

“Without the consciousness of sin, the whole of the gospel will seem to be an idle tale.”⁶

c. Some wish to focus on the details of salvation and “how to” trust Christ, but have no sense of sin, so the entire process is an “idle tale” at best, John 5:39-40.

d. Some wish to analyze themselves and seek for a consciousness of sin as an end in itself rather than looking at Christ. This too is fruitless, Ephesians 4:18-19; II Timothy 3:7.

2. Trusting Christ is instantaneous.

a. The “stages” suggested here usually come to pass over time. As Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote, “There may be such a thing as faith at first sight; but usually we reach faith by stages: we become interested, we consider, we hear evidence, and so are led to believe”⁷ (cf. Mark 8:22-25). But the moment of belief *itself* is instantaneous (Mark 8:25).

b. However, these stages can happen quickly at times and be a logical order rather than an order in time, Acts 8:30-38. ***Dr. Hymers’ wife and my own wife were converted immediately after hearing only one evangelistic sermon.*** The important thing is to lead the person to Christ rather than to make an idol out of a process of awakening and conviction, and seek awakening or conviction as though they were the goal itself, instead of union with Christ.

B. The unawakened or careless sinner

Almost everyone who comes for counselling the first time or two is in this state. To be in this state does not mean that a person is not religious, does not have an outwardly clean life, or is not interested in the Bible, the church, or the external things of God. Nicodemus, the apostle Paul, and John the Baptist were unawakened yet religious and clean-living before their conversions, John 3:10; Acts 26:4-5; Acts 9:5; John 1:31, 33, 34.

“I knew him not” (John 1:31).

“I knew him not” (John 1:33).

“I saw” (John 1:34).

This is John the Baptist unconverted and then converted. John is a transitional figure between the Old and New Dispensations, so we cannot be too dogmatic here. However, it seems that the above verses have deep significance in John’s own conversion.

Richard Baxter pointed out that it is the pastor’s job, through the use of the Bible, to be instrumental in moving a sinner into an awakened and convicted state, and finally to conversion.⁸

Unawakened sinners, whether they are new to the church or whether they have been coming to church for a long time, tend to have these two characteristics:

1. They have preconceived religious opinions about God (the Father), Jesus Christ, salvation (how to get to heaven), Heaven and Hell, and so on. Unawakened sinners hold to these opinions even though they may have been sitting under gospel preaching for years. They may outwardly profess orthodox Christianity but in fact, upon examination, have an entirely different religion (true of lost but orthodox Christians before the Great Awakening, the 1859 revival, etc.).

These opinions can be acquired at any time in life, usually by attending a church or religious meeting and hearing the gospel preached.

It is not necessary to attend a church many times in order to form a religious opinion. Many people have formed their opinions by attending a single religious meeting, or even by watching Christian television or by reading a book, or by conversations with others, during which religious opinions are expressed.

- a. It is important for the pastor to ask the sinner what was his church or religion in the past. This will give you an idea of what the sinner thinks.
 - (i) People with a ***Catholic background*** will generally think in terms of salvation by works--stopping sins, which they call "repentance," going to church, following Jesus, loving Jesus, confession, and generally being good. They will also often think that Jesus and God the Father are one and the same in every respect, and thus do not really understand how Jesus acts as the mediator between God and men in the work of the Trinity (I Timothy 2:5).
 - (ii) People with a ***Baptist, evangelical, or Reformed background*** will often trust baptism, saying the sinner's prayer, or mentally believing Christian doctrine, such as being able to recite the plan of salvation. They often abuse the doctrine of the security of the believer to the point of thinking that if they have at any time said a prayer, been baptized, joined a church, or believed Christian doctrine, they have been saved ever since and are now merely "backslidden" even though they have never been converted. This is what many evangelicals thought was wrong with Bill Clinton: they felt he was merely backslidden!

- (iii) People with a *charismatic or Pentecostal background* usually think in terms of feelings and experiences. If a person has had an experience with what he thinks is the Holy Spirit, feels God's blessing in his life, or feels peace and joy in his heart, etc., he considers himself saved. Many times such people come for counselling seeking assurance or another feeling when in fact they have never been saved by trusting *Christ*.
- b. To explore further, the pastor should ask the sinner, "How do you hope to get to Heaven?" This will reveal what the sinner believes about salvation. It will reveal the sinner's false hope about salvation – what the sinner hopes to do, or thinks that he has already done, to get to Heaven.

If the sinner already thinks that he is going to Heaven (should he die then), the pastor should ask him what a person should do to get to Heaven. If the time is short, it is better to ask this rather than to have the sinner repeat what he considers to be his salvation testimony, which is often a long story of the experiences in the person's life, leading up to an abrupt ending, with little or no mention of Jesus forgiving sins by His Blood. Cut past this monologue, and simply ask, "***What should a person do to get to Heaven? Please tell me in one sentence.***" This question alone will usually reveal whether someone is saved or not, and what their false hope is. It is an eye-opener! It will show you how many lost people attend your church!

What we are looking for is this: ***has the person come to Jesus? Has he come to Jesus because he could not get rid of his sins in any other way? Is he justified through union with the Son of God?***

It should be understood that the counselling we advocate must be done with inquirers who have already heard an old-fashioned, sin-condemning, conscience-probing, Christ-exalting sermon *before* they are counselled. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (I Corinthians 1:18). Such preaching is necessary prior to counselling or little good will come of it.

Spurgeon said, “When talking to anxious inquirers, I am often amazed at the ingenuity with which they resist the entrance of the faith into their hearts...I have tracked these people to their holes as diligently as if I had been a fox hunter, and have tried to unearth them from their hiding places.”⁹

Authors’ note: This is an excerpt of Dr. Cagan’s “Manual on Conversion.” The complete manual is given in our book, *Decisionism and the Death of America*. It can be ordered from Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr., P.O. Box 15308, Los Angeles, CA 90015. This second book contains the complete manual along with much more material on decisionism and the influence of Charles G. Finney in evangelism. Please send \$20.00 to cover the cost of the book, handling and mailing. Please request the book by name.

FOOTNOTES

¹C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, pp. 60-61.

²Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989, reprinted from the 1656 edition), pp. 94-97.

³C. H. Spurgeon, “The Warrant of Faith,” *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, volume 9 (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1979), p. 530.

⁴A. T. Pierson, *The Bible and Spiritual Life* (New York: Gospel Publishing House, 1908), p. 238; quoted in Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 359.

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “The Warrant of Faith,” p. 530.

⁶J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923, reprinted 1983), p. 66.

⁷C. H. Spurgeon, *Around the Wicket Gate* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications), p. 57.

⁸Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989, reprinted from the 1656 edition), pp. 94-100.

⁹C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 1976), pp. 243-244.

APPENDIX 9

DECISIONAL REGENERATION

by James E. Adams

The following pages are excerpts from *Decisional Regeneration* by James E. Adams.¹

The history of the Christian Church has seen many errors concerning the new birth. These teachings depart from Scripture by attributing to man the ability to regenerate himself. When these false concepts of man and the new birth are adopted, churches soon become corrupted with false practices. The Roman Catholic church, the Anglican church, the Lutheran church and many other churches have all been corrupted at different times and to different degrees with the teaching of Baptismal Regeneration. Because of this erroneous teaching on regeneration, these churches have embraced false practices.

In the nineteenth century few controversies were so heated as the one over Baptismal Regeneration. It is interesting to note that C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), the most prolific preacher of that century, had printed in 1864 more copies of his sermon denouncing Baptismal Regeneration than of any other sermon. Baptismal Regeneration teaches that the new birth is conveyed by the waters of baptism. This sacrament is performed by man and is in his control.

But the twentieth century Church has, in "Decisional Regeneration," a more subtle falsehood to combat. *"Decisional Regeneration" differs from Baptismal Regeneration only in the fact that it attaches the certainty of the new birth to a different act. This doctrine, just as Baptismal Regeneration, sees the new birth as the result of a mechanical process that can be performed by man.* What is here called "Decisional Regeneration" has in its deceptive way permeated much of the Christian Church.

We have an illustration of "Decisional Regeneration" when a popular present-day preacher prescribes a counseling procedure. He directs "Mr. Soul Winner" to ask an unconverted "Mr. Blank" a series of questions. If "Mr. Blank" says "yes" to all the questions, he is asked to pray a prescribed prayer and is then pronounced saved. For the most part this counseling results in an individual being "regenerated" through a decision. This is essentially the same counseling method used in large evangelistic crusades across the world. These campaigns are like huge factories turning out as many as ten thousand "decisions" in a week.

Iain Murray, in his timely book *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, points out that this same type of counseling is used in youth work: “For example, a booklet, which is circulated in student evangelism at the present time, lays down ‘three simple steps’ to becoming a Christian...Once I have done this I may immediately regard myself as a Christian. The advice follows: ‘Tell somebody today what you have done.’” There are many variations of this type of counseling, but they all have in common a mechanical element such as the repeating of a prayer or signing of a card upon the performance of which the individual is assured of his salvation. Regeneration has thereby been reduced to a procedure which man performs.

The counseling of “Decisional Regeneration” produces statistics that would encourage any Christian – until he follows up the so-called converts. In one heartbreaking experience forty “converts” of such counseling were contacted and only one person of these forty was found who appeared to be a Christian. One lady may have been reached, but what were the effects of the encounter on the other thirty-nine? Some of them may believe their eternal destinies were determined by their decisions, which is a fatal confidence if no change was wrought in their hearts and lives. The others may have concluded that they had experienced all that Christianity has to offer. Failing to feel or see any promised change in themselves, they may have become convinced that Christianity is a fake and that those who hold it are either self-deluded fanatics or miserable hypocrites.

“Decisional Regeneration” does not bring men to Christ any more than Baptismal Regeneration. It is true that some are converted under such preaching, but this is in spite of the false methods used, not because of them.

FOOTNOTES

¹James E. Adams, *Decisional Regeneration* (Pensacola, Florida: Chapel Library, n.d.), 21 pages.

“There is no hope of immediate revival until the lostness of man grips us believers like a fever and moves us to personal and church housecleaning...If our natural birth rate were as low as our spiritual birth rate, the nation would be panicking.”

– Leonard Ravenhill,
Sodom Had No Bible.

APPENDIX 10

EDITOR OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST “FOUNDERS JOURNAL” GIVES ALARMING BAPTISM FIGURES

by Thomas K. Ascol, Ph.D.

Dr. Thomas K. Ascol is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist church located in Cape Coral, Florida. The following are excerpts from Dr. Ascol's article, "Troubling Waters of Baptism," and is taken from "The Founders Journal" website, The Founders Journal, Issue 22, 1995. Dr. Ascol is the editor of "The Founder's Journal."

Southern Baptists are wading through troubled waters according to a recent Home Mission Board study. Last year the research department and evangelism division surveyed 1350 adults (18 years and older) who had been baptized in Southern Baptist churches. What they discovered ought to make all who love the souls of men and women stop and reflect on our practice of baptism and evangelism.

If Baptists should be clear on anything it is on the ordinance from which we take our name. At the heart of our most visible distinctive is this understanding that a person should be baptized because he or she has been converted. Yet, according to the Home Mission Board study, that is not the reason which was given by half of all the adults who were plunged under baptismal waters in Southern Baptist churches during 1992-93.

According to an April 13, 1995 Baptist Press report, the 1350 newly baptized participants in the survey were asked to tell why they had been baptized. When given multiple choices with which to answer, only 40.5% of those surveyed said they had been baptized because they had been converted. "Rededication" was the answer selected by 40.4%. According to BP reporter Sarah Zimmerman, "If the survey represents the 150,000 adults baptized in 1993, then only 60,000 baptisms represented conversions of the lost to Christ." What a commentary!

The figures become even more alarming when two other facts are taken into consideration. First, the question was asked only of *adults* who had been baptized. It is safe to assume that they would be in a better position to understand the point and purpose of baptism than are the young people and children who were baptized that year (including more than 3000 who were 5 years old or younger).

Secondly, the 840 churches who participated in the survey admitted that they had lost complete contact with more than one-third of those whom they had baptized the previous year. These people were baptized into oblivion. They have been relegated to the denominational black hole known of inactive and non-resident church membership.

This is not quite as bad as the Colorado Springs (Independent) Baptist Church who “accidentally” baptized a Jewish boy last February. The mother, Audrey Ausgotharp, gave specific instructions to the bus ministry workers that her children were not to be baptized while visiting the church. Two women who accompanied the children home that Sunday told her that her seven year old son had been baptized “by mistake.”

This is the latest chapter in what appears to be a pattern. The church is being sued by three other families whose children were mistakenly baptized in 1993. If “serial dunking” were a crime, this church would have been closed down a long time ago.

These “drive-by-baptisms” not only cheapen the ordinance from which Baptists take their name, they also leave widespread spiritual carnage in their wake. Think how confused and disillusioned those must be who have been mistakenly baptized! At the very least their case reveals a frightening disjunction between faith and practice. It is much more likely that this simply illustrates a lack of biblical instruction in many areas.

Believer’s baptism dramatically portrays the gospel of Jesus Christ. Three ingredients are absolutely essential for this to be true: 1) Right mode – dipping beneath the water; 2) Right candidate – a previously unbaptized believer in Jesus Christ; 3) Right meaning – it is a testimony of faith, symbolizing the believer’s participation in Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.

Baptists throughout our history have been severely persecuted – even to the point of death – for their distinctive convictions on baptism. How ironic that modern Baptists seem to be giving up through shoddy theology that which our forefathers would not relinquish despite the threat of the sword!

The Home Mission Board survey highlights the greatest need in the Southern Baptist Convention today. Southern Baptists need a renewal in theology – including the theology of baptism and church membership. *In the 1830s Jacob Knapp (who modelled his ministry on Finney) introduced the practice of instant baptism and membership to Baptist churches in the northern United States. Prior to this it was common for professed converts to be examined by church officers or a church committee before they would be admitted to baptism and membership.*^{1*}

John Dagg, Southern Baptists’ first writing systematic theologian, warned his denomination of this unsound practice. In his *Treatise on Church Order* he wrote:

In order that the church may judge whether a candidate is duly qualified for membership, they should hear his profession of faith. He is duly bound to let his light shine before all men, to the glory of God; and it is specially needful that they should see it, with whom he is to be associated in fellowship as a child of light...

Churches are not infallible judges, being unable to search the heart; but they owe it to the cause of Christ, and to the candidate himself, to exercise the best judgment of which they are capable. To receive any one on a mere profession of words, without any effort to ascertain whether he understands and feels what he professes, is unfaithfulness to his interests, and the interests of religion.²

What would happen if Southern Baptist churches (and others) began to exercise such care in the practice of baptism and church membership? How much spiritual confusion would be avoided? How much disillusionment would be spared? How much stronger would the testimony of baptism become in our churches and in our world?

*Murray points out that Knapp, a New York pastor, left the pastorate and became an evangelist. He modelled “himself on Finney” and brought Finney’s decisionist methods into Baptist churches. Thus, Knapp is the father of “instant baptism” in the Baptist movement in America.

FOOTNOTES

¹See the *Autobiography of the Elder Jacob Knapp* (New York, 1868), pp. 100ff. For a brief discussion of Knapp’s practice see Iain Murray, *The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), pp. 312-15.

²*Treatise on Church Order* (The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1850; reprint edition, Gano Books, 1982), pp. 268-69.

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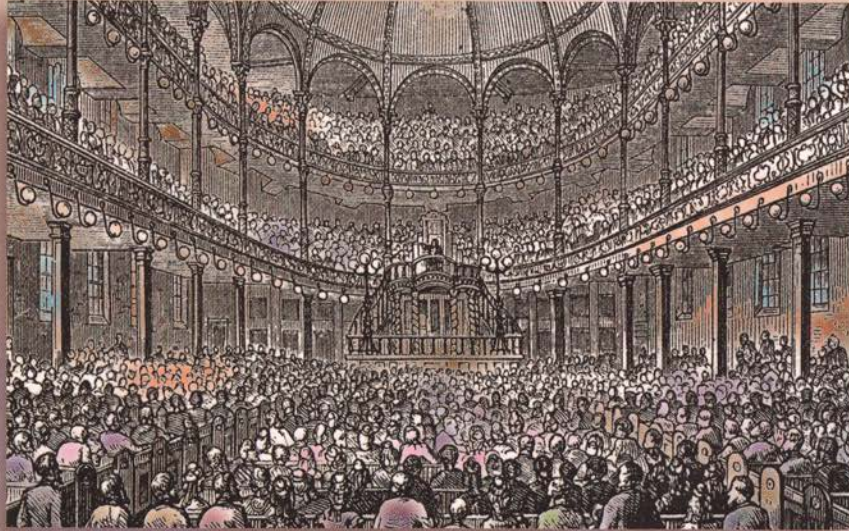
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