Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

A Quick Look at Justification



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By Jim Hill

The subject of **justification** was one of the things that the former Catholic priest Martin Luther protested against the Roman Catholic Church when he nailed his thesis to the door of the Cathedral in Wittenberg, Germany. Link: http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html Hence the name for the church that was formed out of this movement, the Reformation, the Protestant church. The entire unity of believers I will call the Christian church, whether they are Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, or Anabaptist. There are both believers and unbelievers in all of the churches, and only God knows a person's heart. We cannot be their judge, God has this supreme role. Unfortunately, the official doctrine of many of these churches disagree with what is taught in the Bible.

First, realize that within the various churches there are a wide variety of personal viewpoints. For example, some Roman Catholics have chosen to use birth control, in violation of church teachings. Also, there is variation in beliefs in the Protestant church, and also the Christian church as a whole. The concept of the Rapture for example, and infant baptism for another. Also, we see the Orthodox Church appointing an openly gay bishop for example, and while many disagree with that, others among the majority of leaders agree. The bottom line is that as Christians, there needs to be agreement upon the fundamentals of the faith. Any difference upon these key points is a different Gospel, which as Christians we are called to condemn.

This brings us to the next point, authority. Who has final authority in leadership of the universe of Christian believers? Is it the church, the church fathers, the church teachings, or is it indeed the Lord God? If you agree that God is the authority, has He vested this authority in an elite group of church leaders? What does God's Word say about this, the Bible? The Bible says that the Christian Church, which is the unity of all of us that believe in Jesus for salvation, is a "priesthood of believers." These believers can come from within any Christian denomination, or possibly even none of them. In 1Peter 2:9 Peter says, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." In Revelation 1:6 John says, "and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Later in Revelation John said:

> And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth. (Revelation 5:9-10)

What sacrifices do these priests offer? Romans 12:1-2 says:

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

Also, 1 Peter 2:5 says, "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

So, all believers are Priests and offer spiritual sacrifices. What about the altar? What does the Bible say about offering physical sacrifices on a modern church altar? Hebrews 7:27 says, "who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."

Once for all, and Jesus said "It is finished" as he died on the cross. A warning is in order here, which is that **anyone forsaking Jesus as their Savior no longer has a sacrifice for sin** (Hebrews Chapter 10 v 26). This is what is taught in the Bible and the Christian Church as a whole. What about the office of High Priest, who fulfills that role now that there is no longer any sacrifice for sin, which was the main purpose of this role of the Jewish High Priest? Hebrews 4:14-15 says:

> Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

We can show other verses that will tell you that Jesus is our High Priest, and we as believers are

priests with our chief purpose to set about fulfilling the **Great Commission** explained in Matthew Chapter 28 v 16-20:

> ***All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.***

Now we can come back to the topic of **justification**. The word in the theological construct means in layman's terms, "how you are made right with God." In Romans 3:23 we know that it says "for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God." All, means everyone, except Jesus of course who is the God of the universe, the creator of it all, our Savior. Another way to look at **justification** is how we can be made right with God, "just as if I'd never sinned." Say that quickly, "just as if I'd never sinner." Justified.

How can we be justified with God? How can our sins be blotted out, forever, and we be made right with God? The Bible teaches, and the Christian church believes, that "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." John 3:16 Matthew 18:3 says, "unless you are converted, and become as a little child, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

John 3:3 says "you must be born again to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Romans 10:13 says that "anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

Now, briefly, let me move to Luther's primary protests. Over the years the Roman Catholic Church adopted a different theology of **justification,** one not taught in the Bible. The theology that developed through church tradition and councils is as follows: (1) Grace comes through receiving of the sacraments, and (2) the sacraments, along with good works are meritorious towards Salvation. The sacraments themselves, and good works, along with Jesus death and resurrection, and dying without any un-confessed mortal sins, results in justification. As Christians, we would call the process of purification occurring after trusting in Jesus, sanctification. The Bible is clear that justification does not come from the works of men. You may ask, what is grace? Grace is "unmerited favor from God." Unmerited means undeserved. The Christian church teaches, as is Biblical, that we are justified by grace, through faith, alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 says this clearly:

> For it is by grace that you are saved, through faith, and that not of works, it is the Gift of God, lest any many should boast.

This is what was taught by Jesus and the Apostles in the Bible. The Catholic Church now officially teaches that the sacraments (works of men) are meritorious towards salvation. But, like I said before, there are many different ***personal*** views within the Catholic Church. The view that a person holds will determine whether they enter Heaven Justified, or made right, before the Lord, or they hear the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew Chapter 7 "away from me, I never knew you." Strong words? Yes, but we have a very loving God who wishes that all come to faith in Him and none to

perish in the judgment of eternal Hell.

So, what were our marching orders when Jesus left? The Great Commission, which commands us to make disciples of the Christian Church, teaching, and baptizing. Those three things. Our goal is not to specifically make members of a particular denomination or church, but to the universal Christian church, priesthood of Jesus Christ our Lord. We are to make disciples of Jesus, teach others what He taught us to, and Baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This needs to be the goal of our lives. As Christians, every morning that we wake up we need top ask ourselveshow we are doing on the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Our answer will determine the extent of our eternal blessings in Heaven.

I hope that this clarifies some of the misunderstandings that you may have. For some reason many people are afraid to discuss these very important matters. I have that this is especially true among my Roman Catholic friends and family. The life we spend here on earth is miniscule compared to what we will spend in eternity. We must know the truth, and the truth will set us free.

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The following are links to ministries which we recommend:

Back to the Bible, Ministry of Woodrow Kroll

Through the Bible, Ministry of J. Vernon McGee

Compassion Radio, Ministry of Norm Nelson

Bob Dutko, Ministry of WMUZ Radio in Detroit. This show airs from noon – 4:00 pm weekdays

Words to Live By, Testimonies of God working in people's lives.

Statement of Beliefs

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Our Statement of Beliefs

(1) The Holy Scriptures

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

(2) The Godhead

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

(3) The Person and Work of Christ

a. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that he might reveal God and redeem sinful men (John 1:1-2,14; Luke 1:35).
b. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for all mankind as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice, and that the sufficiency of this atoning sacrifice to accomplish the redemption and justification of all who trust in him is assured by his literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Romans 3:24-25; Romans 4:25; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 Peter 2:24 and 2 Peter 2:1).
c. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand

of God, where, as our high priest, he fulfills the ministry of representative, intercessor, and advocate (Acts 1:9-10; Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2).

(4) The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

a. We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and, that he is the supernatural agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption (John 16:8-11; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13-14).
b. We believe that He is the divine teacher who guides believers into all truth; and, that it is the privilege and duty of all the saved to be filled with the Spirit (John 16:13; 1 John 2:20,27; Ephesians 5:18).

(5) The Total Depravity of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and, that man is totally depraved, and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:22-23; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3,12).

(6) Salvation

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins(Ephesians 2:8-10; John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

(7) The Eternal Security and Assurance of Believers

a. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37-40; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:1,38-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 1 Peter 1:5).
b. We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word; which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh (Romans 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-15).

(8) The Two Natures of the Believer

We believe that every saved person possesses two natures, with provision made for victory of the new nature over the old nature through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and, that all claims to the eradication of the old nature in this life are unscriptural (Romans 6:13; Romans 8:12-13; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

(9) Separation

We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord; and, that separation from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices and associations is commanded of God (2Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 12:1-2; Romans 14:13; John 2:15-17; 2 John 1:9-11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

(10) Missions

We believe that it is the obligation of the saved to witness by life and by word to the truths of Holy Scripture and to seek to proclaim the gospel to all mankind (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

(11) The Ministry and Spiritual Gifts

a. We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowment of all his gifts; and, that the gifts of evangelists, pastors, and teachers are sufficient for the perfecting of the saints today; and, that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles gradually ceased as the New Testament Scriptures were completed and their authority became established (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12).
b. We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accord with his own will, for the sick and afflicted (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14-15).

(12) The Church

a. We believe that the Church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born again persons of this present age (Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:2).
b. We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:27; Acts 20:17,28-32; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11).
c. We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control (Acts 13:1-4; Acts 15:19-31; Acts 20:28; Romans 16:1,4; 1 Corinthians 3:9,16; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7,13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
d. We believe in the ordinances of believer's water baptism and the Lord's supper as scriptural means of testimony for the church age (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

(13) Dispensationalism

We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations or rules of life which define man's responsibilities in successive ages. These dispensations are not ways of salvation, but rather divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to his purpose. Three of these – the age of law, the age of the Church, and the age of the millennial kingdom are the subjects of detailed revelation in Scripture (John 1:17; 1 Corinthians 9:17; 2 Corinthians 3:9-18; Galatians 3:13-25; Ephesians 1:10; Ephesians 3:2-10;

Colossians 1:24-25; Hebrews 7:19; Revelation 20:2-6).

(14) The Personality of Satan

We believe that Satan is a person, the author of sin and the cause of the fall; that he is the open and declared enemy of God and man; and, that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire (Job 1:6-7; Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 4:2-11; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

(15) The Second Advent of Christ

We believe in that "Blessed Hope," the personal, imminent, pre-tribulation and pre-millennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for his redeemed ones; and in his subsequent return to earth, with his saints, to establish his millennial kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 3:10).

(16) The Eternal State

a. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29; John 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5-6,12-13).
b. We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (Luke 23:43; Revelation+20:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
c. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment (Luke 16:19-26; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 1:6-7; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:11-15).

Note: Adapted From: www.ifca.org

Kathie's Testimony



Kathie's Testimony

By Kathie Smith

Hello. My name is Kathie and I would like to share with you a story of true friendship. Funny thing is that until I had this friendship, I never knew the magnitude of what I had been missing before. This friendship relationship is so significant that it will last forever, never to be parted by physical death but lasting forever into eternity.

I had passed by this new friend of mine when I was in church every Saturday night at mass. I would find out later on that he was always eager to meet me, but I just wasn't given the opportunity to meet him. We always seemed to simply pass by each other and never really truly had the chance to get to know each other personally.

I would pass by him when I would see a person helping another person in need. I would watch him work through the person assisting the other person but again, never was given the opportunity to meet him as I casually just observed from a distance.

I would pass by him when I would hear the kind words being said by a person trying to encourage and lift me up. Once again, I never recognized that it was his voice speaking but rather just heard the voice of the person speaking to me.

I would pass by him when I heard his words preached in the gospel readings during mass. His words were simply words on a page. I never heard His voice talking to me but rather I simply listened to the mere words being spoken.

How did I finally meet this friend of mine, Jesus Christ? Sit back, relax and I will tell you the story of how my relationship with Jesus Christ began.

I was raised by two loving parents who along with five other siblings were brought up in the Roman Catholic Church. We went to church every Sunday and Holy Day, received communion, confessed our sins in confession and were confirmed in the Church. I had an awesome childhood. Our family was very close. My parents were always the types of people who would do anything for us and for others. We all respected them as children and trusted in the belief system that they instilled in us.

After finishing college and working for a few years, I married a Catholic guy from a local town near our hometown. We were blessed with three wonderful children. We continued our Catholic faith by faithfully attending the Catholic Church and by enrolling our children in the local Catholic school. After living nine years at a thirty minute distance from my parents, we decided to buy property from my grandmother and build a home out in the country to be nearer my family. It was beautiful out in the country and meant a great deal to me to be close to my parents and to allow our kids to grow up with their grandparents living right down the road from them. Everything should have been perfect, right?

Well, the year was 1999. Y2K. People were running around telling others that

doom and gloom was lurking at the strike of midnight on December 31, 1999. Stories were circulating that electricity and phone service could cease and that food shortages could occur. I started to dwell on the what-ifs of the whole Y2K thing. I started to doubt our safety and became very scared for what the future would hold. Having just moved into our new house, I started to miss all of our old friends, our old neighbors, our old school and just all of the usual things that I had grown accustomed to at our old home. Deeply troubled over all of these things, I plunged into a state of depression. Any of you who have ever been through this will understand that it is a very difficult time. I was sad and simply could not tell anyone why it was that I was sad. What was I missing in my life? I had everything – a good job, a wonderful husband and family and a beautiful new home. Why should I be in such a state of sadness? I had never experienced anything like that before.

Remember that friend that I had mentioned? Well, you see the friend that I had been passing by my whole entire life, was calling me. He was calling so loudly this time that I finally heard him. My brother emailed me about this wonderful thing that had happened to him. He had found an Internet site addressing salvation through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. He sent me a simple prayer to pray asking Jesus to start a friendship with me. Being so desperate to dig myself out of the depression that I had been feeling, I humbled myself and cried out to God. I knew that there wasn't anything that I could do on my own to save myself and I asked God to do it for me.

The next day I woke up and I felt different than I did the day before. My depression was gone. I was happy again. It was simply incredible. To this day I can't even remember what it was like to be in that state of mind, but I am just thankful to the Lord for what he had done for me.

I met the Lord Jesus for the first time in my whole entire life. I could feel his warmth inside of me and the friend that I had been passing over all of these years was finally with me.

I had been taught to pray to God ever since I was a little girl. I prayed every day but never felt any response back when I prayed. Now, I finally understand the presence of the living God in my prayers. He had become my friend, my forever and eternal friend.

Are you missing that one true friendship that I had been missing? Maybe you are doing all of the right things as I had done, attending church every week, saying your prayers, trying to obey the ten commandments, and simply attempting to be a good person but you are missing something. Maybe you are attending church simply because it makes you feel good inside because you took the time to go to church. That's how I used to feel. My husband and I used to go to church on Saturday night so we could "get it out of the way" for the weekend. It was merely an obligation that we needed to fulfill every week like any other item on our "To Do" list.

Are you praying just because you were taught that that's what you are supposed to do? We always said the "Catholic Grace" before each and every meal. "Bless us O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive, from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen." I said that prayer so fast and without any meaning for so many years before meals. As I child, I never understood what "thy bounty" meant. It was just merely words spoken, done under obligation before we were to receive any food. Sadly enough, I continued this tradition into our own immediate family and was teaching them to pray out of obligation rather than giving honor to the Lord. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:7 "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words." Are you praying out of simply an obligation to pray or are you truly talking to the Lord in open communication?

We were taught that we were obligated to attend church, obligated to say our prayers and obligated to be the best person that we could be. What is an obligation? Webster defines an obligation as "something that binds one to a

course of action; a duty; an indebtedness". Isn't it true then that after the obligation is complete i.e. course of action completed or duty performed that you have satisfied the debt and do not need to do anything further? That's exactly how I felt. All I had to do was: attend church on Sundays and "Holy Days of Obligation", say my prayers and simply be the best person that I could be. By doing these things, I was satisfying the requirements and did need to do anything further.

I learned that if I performed the things that I had been told were religious obligations, that I would be secure in the eyes of the Lord and be in heaven forever. The problem was, how much was enough in the eyes of the Lord? Should I attend church more than I had been? Maybe I should have been attending daily mass. Maybe I needed to say more prayers. Maybe I needed to try and do more good things. Where would I draw the line? When would I do enough?

On that day in 1999, our Lord rescued me from the vicious cycle of "how much was enough?" My friend, our Lord Jesus Christ had already done everything that needed to be done for me already. 1 John 4:14 "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world." Jesus spoke his last words in John 19:30 "It is finished." The Father sent Jesus to save us from being eternally separated from Him. He endured the pain and bore our sins when he hung on the cross. He completed the obligation that the Father had sent him to do – to bear the sins of all mankind on the cross. When he completed that, his work was complete. All of the things that I had been doing in my "vicious cycle" did not lead me to my forever friend; but, rather lead me further away from him because I thought that I was eternally secure.

How can you be eternally secure? What does he ask of us to do? Jesus tells us in John 3:3, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." John 3:6, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." We are born from our parent's flesh into a body made of flesh. The Holy

Spirit comes into our lives as a living spirit inside of us when we ask the Lord to come into our lives." We are born once physically. We are born again when we are born spiritually, i.e. when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Was I born again by attending church every Sunday, praying prayers and attempting to do good things? All I had gained my whole entire life was a "good feeling" inside from all of the things that I had done. I was spiritually dead. I did not have the Holy Spirit inside of me. How can you become born again and receive God's gift of the Holy Spirit?

1. 1.Recognize that you are a sinner. Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
2. 2.Admit that no matter how many times you go to church, how many prayers you pray or how many good things you do that it will not be enough in the eyes of the Lord. Romans 3:10 "There is no one righteous, not even one."
3. 3.Believe that the Lord Jesus was sent down from heaven by the Father, lived a perfect life, bore all of your sins on the cross, died and rose again on the third day. 1 Corinthians 15:3 "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."
4. 4.Confess your belief in what Jesus did for you on the cross. Trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. Romans 10:9-10 "That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Are you being led astray into thinking that being a member of a church will guarantee your ticket into heaven? If you agree with the spiritual truths that I have presented, I now ask you to pray a very simple prayer. This is the prayer that my brother gave me, a very simple prayer that gave me my eternal and

forever friend, Jesus Christ. Here is the prayer:

> God, I am a sinner. There is nothing that I can do on my own to make it to heaven. God, I accept the free offer that you make to me: Jesus' death on the cross for my sins. You sent your only Son Jesus down to Earth and he died as a substitute for our sins on the cross and then he rose from the dead and I know that he is going to return in glory. I accept this free offer; I want to be with you forever. I ask you to send the Holy Spirit to me. I open up my heart now to the Holy Spirit and welcome Him into my being. As I breathe in I ask the Holy Spirit to come into me and I ask the Holy Spirit to graciously make His presence known to me. I know that there is no amount of good deeds or clean living that could ever make me suitable for entrance into heaven. It is only your sacrifice that makes it possible. I give my life over to you. I ask you to forgive my sins and to guide me so that I can do what you want me to do on Earth. I am here for you now and ready to do your will and accept help from you. I know that through you, anything is possible. You are the most holy, the living God, the one that was, the one that is, and the one that will be. Amen.

Kettle Point



Since I came to faith in Jesus Christ I have had several milestone events happen in my life. One of those was a trip that I took in the summer of 2000. It was just after church on a breezy Sunday afternoon when I decided to travel to a place in Canada to do some windsurfing. Kettle Point was a place on the southern end of Lake Huron that was rather famous to windsurfers for having very large waves on windy days. This day was no exception and the waves were forecasted to be ten feet tall! Even though it was not normal for him, my brother decided to ride along to watch. In fact, I can never remember another day that he had gone windsurfing with me.

After the hour and a half journey there, I had an excellent day riding the large, smooth waves in the bay. Just before I was going to stop for the day, I came in for a brief rest. Then I decided to go out for one just more run. My brother was sitting in my truck reading due to the high wind and blowing sand. I had a very uneasy feeling as I was carrying the windsurf board back to the water. I was compelled to pray very hard for God to keep me safe on this final run of the day.

As I proceeded out into the bay where the largest waves were crashing into a bowl-shaped area to the east of the beach, I made a turn on the face of a very large wave. This was like heaven! Suddenly, my sail separated from the mast base on the board that sent my board flying one direction while my sail remained in my hands. Meanwhile the large wave that I had just finishing turning on crashed overtop of me with my sail! I let loose of my sail and soon realized that I was drowning. For a brief instant I hated to let go of my equipment, but quickly decided that the equipment was replaceable. Even though I was wearing a short wet suit, I was unable to float in the bubbly water caused by the constant crashing of the waves. I got very tired in my attempts to grab small amounts of air in between the waves. I knew that I was going to die right there, with my precious brother only a half a mile away on the shore. Once again, I began to pray.

I began to visualize my dead body washing up on the beach. This was very real, and is difficult for me to put into words. I visualized my body from a viewpoint some distance away, above me.

As I was fighting for my life in Lake Huron that day, I made the vivid realization that God was in control. He was the Lord of the universe! Somehow during the events of the past several years I missed that point. While I was drowning I surrendered my will to God. I accepted that He was the Lord of my life. I had accepted Jesus as my Savior, but I had never really surrendered my will to God as my Lord. This was made clear to me while I was dying that day at Kettle Point.

Somehow I came to realize that if I pulled on my wet suit, I could create a small air bubble in my chest area that slightly increased my buoyancy. Also, I saw a white flag on a small floating buoy a few yards away. And there were some jet skiers in the area. So somehow I managed to swim over to the buoy and break the fiberglass rod attaching the flag. This left me with a two-foot long mast with a flag attached. Between the huge waves I was able to wave the flag. After about five minutes of waving, I had still not moved any distance towards the shore, although my board and sail had long ago washed away. I continued to pray, and as one of the jet skis approached I was spotted and rescued. I walked back up the beach praising God to tell my brother the amazing story. My equipment washed up on the beach a few minutes later in perfect condition except for the broken mast base.

Later that evening at a restaurant in Sarnia, Ontario I had my first meal as a truly "born again" man. And although I am much more careful while windsurfing, I recognize now that God is in control of my life.

Apes, Dates, and Escapes





Apes, Dates, and Escapes

A Poem By Jim Hill

One day my teacher told me that my daddy really just came from an ape.

"Mam, is that why ***your*** daddy bears an uncanny resemblance to one from *Planet of the Apes*?"

Hanging by the nape, I had little chance of escape.

Thinking, "Isn't this how mommy affected her brave cubs escape?"

"While daddy was out in the jungle, collecting savory dates?"

"Principal, why am I suddenly the subject of your extreme scorn, rage, and hate?"

"Scientific facts are the reason she went into such a state."

"Would have been worse, except her highly-evolved, motherly senses are innate."

"Not for that, she'd have had you on the rack, and been justified in her attack!"

Rubbing my neck, "Sir, could it be that your birth was the result of a rape?"

"While your daddy was hunting, out looking for a date?"

I have often said that evolution is a religion which requires more faith than Christianity. Christianity is historic and evidential, whereas evolution requires giant leaps of faith that would have to clear the largest mountain in a single stride. It seems that evolution is no longer taught as a theory, but pure fact. It is the foundation upon which much of modern biological theory rests. Evolution requires that literally quadrillions of simultaneous events happened at the very same time. Animals had to evolve from something and their food sources at the same time. The dirt on which they stand had to "evolve" from a great cosmic explosion. Yet all of it is based upon the idea that a genetic mutation prospered the evolutionary line. When is the last time we saw mutations improving things? Does a two headed frog hunt better than one with a single head? They should be able to catch twice as many bugs, but then why didn't this mutation become dominant? Breast cancer is a mutation, and does that improve the human race? The idea that genetic mutations improve anything is ridiculous, as is the idea that man evolved from an ape.

According to evolutionary teaching, humans are the most highly evolved creatures in the world. Okay, their instincts and intelligence shoud be written in their genes, and therefore their genetic makeup should be the most complex among any plant or animal. If you believe this you would be wrong. Wheat has one of the most complex genetic structures of any plant or animal. In fact some varieties has as many as six sets of chromosomes. So tell me Mr. Wheat, what should I wear to the prom this Saturday night? I'm thinking about renting a tux, but would I be overdressed in comparison to Sally my date whose mom made her dress out of an expensive table cloth? I could use some help in other areas too, perhaps I should ask Bran your sister for some help? Can you send her over tomorrow at 2?

Jim Hill

Apes-Dates-and-Escapes.pdfDownload

An Examination of the Escatolical View of Scripture Emerging from Hanegraaf and Brouwer's First Book in the Last Disciple Series



AN EXAMINATION OF THE ESCATOLOGICAL VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

EMERGING FROM HANEGRAAFF AND BROUWER'S FIRST BOOK

IN THE *LAST DISCIPLE* SERIES

BY JIM HILL

The Last Disciple (hereafter *LD*) is a fictional novel set in the Roman Empire during the reign of Nero. The main character is Vitas, a trusted advisor of Nero that attempts to curb this beast's maniacal excesses and save Christians from torture and execution. The plot is complex and follows Vitas as he journeys to Jerusalem to report on the governor Florus who has been persecuting Jews

and Christians alike. During the adventure, Vitas becomes engaged to a former slave girl named Sophia who is a Christian. Eventually they meet up with John the Revelator who is being held in prison. The book is exciting but requires attention to details since this first book in the series spends an extensive amount of time building the characters for future books.

The thesis of this paper is the degree to which we can affirm the partial preterist position that emerges from Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer's first book in their eschatologically themed series. Specifically, what are the main eschatological themes in the book? Second, did John mean for us to refer to the first-century Roman ruler Nero in the book of Revelation when he spoke of the beast? Finally, can we interpret many of the events in the Olivet Discourse as having already found their fulfillment during Nero's persecution of Christians during the middle part of the first century? Hanegraaff stated in the afterward of his book that the theology in the series was predicated by a term that he invented called "exegetical eschatology."[1] The thesis therefore is the extent to which this eschatological perspective is theologically palatable as it develops within the *Last Disciple* and from other statements made by Hanegraaff.

The word *preterism* came from the Latin words *praeter* meaning "beyond," and *ire* which means "go." This eschatological view has interpreted certain OT and NT biblical prophesies as having already been fulfilled. Toussaint quoted Ice as indicating three forms of this theology, including mild, moderate, and extreme. Followers of the extreme form teach have taught that all biblical prophesy has been fulfilled and the Lord Jesus has already returned. Teachers of the moderate form have held that most Bible prophesies have been fulfilled except for the second coming of Jesus. Adherents of the mild form of preterism have held that the Tribulation spoken of in the Olivet Discourse and Revelation was fulfilled through the judgment of the Jews in 70 C.E. or Rome in 313 C.E.[2] It was this mild form of what we call partial preterism that was the subject of this treatise.

Tyndale released *The Last Disciple* in late 2004 in response to Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins' highly successful *Left Behind* series. *Time* magazine interviewed Hank Hanegraaff when this first

book was being released who said, "There is a lot of hysteria because of the *Left Behind* books." He continued, "The *Left Behind* books are part of a trend toward sensationalism and 'script torture' of the Bible."[3] Several recent events ignited this battling of end-times authors. First was the 1996 release of the *Left Behind* book and subsequent series by LaHaye and Jenkins. Second was the callous acceptance by many evangelicals to Jenkins' series. Many of the callers to Hanegraaff's *Bible Answer Man* program did not seem to be willing to rethink any of their eschatological view. A third factor in the debate was pregnant pause that ensued as Christian radio listeners waited for the release of Hanegraaff's own position on eschatology. Hank made many critical comments about Jenkins' book on his radio program. Whenever callers would ask for Hank's position, his response was to tell them to wait for his book. His main complaint was that many callers blindly followed the futurist, pre-millennial view like a pied piper. Listeners to the program weren't surprised when Hank released his book series with a different theological bent coauthored with novelist Sigmund Brouwer. After Tyndale released this first book in the fictional series in 2004, the second one entitled *The Last Sacrifice* followed in 2005.

Primary Theological Issues in *The Last Disciple*

Eschatology is a vast and complex subject. If we were to examine all of the theological issues that emerged from the *LD* we would be doing so right up until "the Lord himself (comes) down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God" (1 Thess 4:16). [4] Because of this complexity, we have narrowed the scope of this paper to the events in the Olivet Discourse with a brief reference to events mentioned in Revelation. Yet the interrelatedness of the material requires that we examine at least some of the main theological themes in the book. These are seemingly without number, but the main ones are as follows.

First, the *LD* is an outright rejection of the futurist view of eschatology. It espouses a partial preterist view regardless of what Hanegraaff says otherwise. This doesn't mean that we accuse Hanegraaff of an unorthodox Christian view. Adams provided an excellent treatise on the different between what he called an "orthodox preterists" and an "unorthodox preterists." Although theology

is usually done in shades of gray, this debate on orthodoxy revolves around the heart of the Gospel, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The unorthodox preterist denies the second coming of Christ, saying that Jesus came spiritually in 70 C.E. They also deny the resurrection of the dead and relegate this to a spiritual sense.[5] Hanegraaff follows the orthodox view and doesn't in any way deny either the second coming of Christ or the resurrection of the dead. Even though Hank has rejected the prevailing eschatological view, his position isn't unorthodox in any fashion. We should discuss his beliefs with gentleness and respect as he likes to say on his program.

Second, the premise of *LD* almost entirely hinges upon an early dating of Revelation, before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. The thesis of the book is based upon this early dating of both Revelation and the entire NT. In his second book, Hank questions how John could have written Revelation and not mentioned that the temple had been destroyed. He said, "The point of all this is that if Revelation was written before AD 70, then it is reasonable to assume that the vision given to John was meant to reveal the apocalyptic events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem—events that were still in John's future but that are in our past." Hank went on to say, "First, it is instructive to note that the late dating for Revelation is largely dependent on a single—markedly ambiguous—sentence in the writings of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons." He gave one single reason for rejecting the late dating (95 C.E.) of Revelation. [6] Geisler stated regarding the eschatology in the *LD* book, "There is strong evidence that Revelation was written in the 90s well after Nero was dead during Domitian's reign. If so, this would make the LD false." Geisler gave no less than ten reasons for the late dating of Revelation.[7] It is evident from history that Nero was a monster. However, the text of Revelation seems to indicate that the beast mentioned there is connected to a later Roman figure or the nation as a whole. The first time that the beast appears is in Rev 11:7. The context of this passage is during the close of ministry of the two witnesses who are then overcome by the beast that came up from the abyss and killed them. Neither history or Scripture record the ministry of these two individuals during the timeframe of Nero. The beast could be prefigured by Nero, but certainly wasn't fulfilled by him.

Geisler continued to refocus the likely setting of Revelation in the future. He quoted Hanegraaff's

book as saying that since John uses words like "the time is near" and "soon" in Revelation, this reveals that John could not have been looking towards the modern era. Geisler said, "If so, then on this premise the whole book of Revelation (including the Second Coming and Resurrection – Chapters 19-20) must refer to the first century since the word "soon" applies to the whole book of Revelation (1:1; 22:10). In this case full preterism follows which is heretical." Geisler found that the word translated "quickly" in various places in Revelation is *tachu* (tacu) meaning "quick, swift, or speedy." He said, "Hence this term need not, as LD argues, refer to a first-century event but to the imminent coming of Christ whenever it occurs."[8]

Third, *LD* incorporates metaphorical language of scriptural in a very literal fashion from the Olivet Discourse and Revelation. This is something that Hank, while on his radio program, has accused LaHaye of doing. Hanegraaff said, "The pretribulational rapture model featured in the Left Behind series interprets Revelation 13 in a strictly literal fashion."[9] Yet Hank did the very same thing in his book with a variety of scriptural texts. On the very first page of the book, Hanegraaff introduced Nero as a man dressed in a costume consisting of leopard's skin, eagle's wings, a bear's legs, and the head of a lion alluding directly to Daniel 7 and Revelation 13.[10] Before the end of the first chapter, Hanegraaff had openly identified Nero as the "beast" spoken of by John in Revelation.[11] Additional examples abound. One of the characters said, "Earthquakes seem to occur daily across the world."[12] Hanegraaff didn't do anything different than LaHaye in literalizing the details of Scripture, but he shouldn't accuse LaHaye of violating hermeneutical principles since *LD* was filled with similar examples. On the positive side, Hanegraaff and Brouwer did a good job in painting this historical situation that existed in Jerusalem during the reign of Nero by including many true historical features.

Finally, *LD* inaccurately states the futurist position regarding the activities of antichrist in Rev. 13. Hanegraaff stated, "The pretribulational rapture model in the *Left Behind* series interprets Revelation 13 in a strictly literal fashion. Thus the antichrist dies and resurrects himself physically in order to vindicate his claim to be god."[13] Hank contrasted his approach with LaHaye's:

> In sharp contrast, The Last Disciple series exegetes Revelation 13 in light of the whole

> Scripture. Thus Satan can *parody* the work of Christ through 'all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders' (2 Thessalonians 2:9), but he cannot literally do what Christ did—namely, raise himself from the dead. . . .What is at stake here is nothing less than the deity and resurrection of Christ.[14]

The problem with Hank's thesis is that the biblical text does not plainly say that the antichrist does this. Revelation 13:3 states, "I saw one of his heads *as if* it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast" (emphasis added). The NIV reads, "seemed to have had a fatal wound."[15] The word rendered "seemed" in the NIV is the Greek word ώς (hoos) which means, "that is to say, so to speak," or as in 1Thess 5:2; "like," in the sense "like a thief in the night."[16] The text goes on, "And he (the false prophet) *deceives* those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the *wound* of the sword and has come to life" (Rev 13:14, emphasis added). These passages speak of how the false prophet *deceives* those on earth through the antichrist who was wounded *as if* dead. It is evident from these verses that the "death and resurrection" of the antichrist is a satanic deception. Scripture states, "And the whole earth was amazed" (13:3b). Therefore, LaHaye was justified in portraying an actual death and resurrection since the whole word was deceived by this satanic trick.

Norm Geisler reviewed the book and made the following statement regarding the preceding issues:

Many events in Matthew 24-25 and Revelation 6-18 were not fulfilled in A.D. 70 – at least not literally. For example, the stars did not fall from heaven (Mt. 24:29), nor were one-third of humans killed (Rev. 9:18), and neither did all the creatures in the sea die (Rev. 16:3) in A.D. 70. . . . Although *LD* disavows the label of "partial preterism" as well as "post-millennialism" this conclusion is in agreement with preterism. And if LD is right, then the rest of the Tribulation (Rev. 6-18) must be placed there too.[17]

Geisler hit on both the main eschatological theme and the problem with the partial preterist theology. The theme is that most of the events in Revelation were already fulfilled during the first-century except for the second coming of the Lord. The problem is that many of the events named by the partial preterists weren't completely fulfilled in that century. It's not so much that some of the

events that occurred during the first century couldn't have fulfilled Scripture, but that they weren't fulfilled in the thorough manner that the futurists require. In any case, Jesus' birth certainly surprised many Jews who later believed in him. It was only after the fact that anyone could look into OT prophesy and locate the details of Jesus' coming. These are the reasons that our correspondence with those holding a partial preterist position must be seasoned with love and humility that is to be forthcoming of fellow believers (John 13:35).

The Olivet Discourse in *LD*

A well developed theology regarding the Olivet Discourse doesn't completely emerge in the *LD* since it is the first in the series. However, several themes do emerge regarding Jesus' prophetic speech heralded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. *LD* holds that the first portion of the scriptural text of the Olivet Discourse relates to the first century during the reign of Nero. In Matthew's version of the Discourse, Jesus predicted that the temple would be destroyed, then after a lengthy discourse he said in 24:34 that, "Truly I say to you, *this* generation will not pass away until all these things take place." Truly, what is meant by "this generation" is where the discussion on the Discourse must begin. Hanegraaff quoted these verses in the afterward of his second book to tie the generation mentioned in verse 34 to the destruction of the temple in verse 2.[18] After Jesus' lengthy discourse, the Lord went on to say when all these things would happen. In verse 34 he said, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." Hank agrees that Jesus has not yet returned,[19] therefore he cannot say that "this generation" is being spoken of in the near sense since if this was the case the entirety of prophesy in the Olivet Discourse would have had to have been fulfilled when the temple was destroyed. Hank can't have it both ways as Geisler aptly noted. He can't say that Jesus was saying that *all* of the events would be fulfilled in the lifetime of the generation existing around 70 C.E., but on the other hand look forward to Jesus' return on the clouds (v. 30) in the future.

Hank tries to get around these apparent difficulties. He said, "This is not to say, however, that all of the prophecies in Revelation have already been fulfilled. . . . Revelation not only predicted fore-

future events, such as the coming apocalypse in John's lifetime, but also chronicles events that will take place in the far and final future."[20] According to Hank, "(He is) deeply committed to a proper *method* of biblical interpretation rather than any particular model of eschatology."[21] This is a reasonable hermeneutic in light of the vagaries of theological systems gone awry such as hyper-Calvinism or Wesley's Christian perfection. His method deserves serious attention even though at first glance from a futurist perspective it is logically inconsistent. Hanegraaff would have to draw a dividing line between which events were literally fulfilled during Nero's reign and destruction of the temple during the Jewish civil war and the ones that were not. Futurist often point to dual fulfillments of prophetic Scripture. This adds yet another layer of theology to that hermeneutic, making prophetic interpretation the vastly complicated science it is. Hanegraaff's partial preterist hermeneutic, even though he doesn't call it that, not only brings some simplicity but may also help to explain away some of the futurist's problematic verses such as Matthew 24:34 which according to Toussaint is a hard one for everyone.[22]

Perhaps what is needed in the eschatological debates on the Discourse is this entirely different perspective brought by the partial preterist scholars. Nixon began his book on the Olivet Discourse from this perspective with the following statement, "If anyone proposes a new interpretation of Scripture that contradicts the sober opinions of MOST known Bible scholars, he is probably wrong. However, this is one case, at least, where one must ignore all existing attempts to explain the Discourse." Next, he boldly stated that Matthew 24:3-22 was clearly fulfilled during the Jewish/Roman civil war of 66-70 C.E., and "the present writer knows of NO ONE who disagrees with this interpretation." [23] Nixon said, "The standards or pennants of the 10^{th} legion (the Roman army's gods) were regarded as the "abomination of desolation" by the Jews of the city."[24] This interpretation contradicts even the most fundamental understanding of the futurist interpretation of the Discourse. Most futurist commentators point to these verses as having at least a future fulfillment regardless of what happened in the first century. Many look to the typology of the second century B.C.E. events under Antiochus Epiphanes, with final fulfillment in the future.[25] The preterist authors do offer an entirely different perspective, but not one without serious reactionary

preconceptions against the futurists. Their reactions against the futurists seem to drive their theology as much as the futurists are driven by their own.

Hanegraaff's book wasn't without many redeeming theological expressions. He offered an excellent insight regarding the biblical author's use of visual imagery in the Discourse. In his story, Helius was second in command under Nero, and had one of his scribes read from the Gospel of Matthew 24:29-30:

> But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."

His scribe related the meaning of this Scripture to him:

> If you were a Jew, you would be familiar with the imagery. *Coming on the clouds* is a familiar Jewish expression used by our prophets to communicate the majesty and sovereign power of God. His coming on the clouds translates to judgment for those who resist Him and blessing for those who bow the knee. . . . Isaiah, for example, used this very expression to describe God's retribution on Egypt when he prophesied that God would come in wrath and fierce anger to make the land of Babylon desolate, he said that 'the rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.'"[26]

As futurists, we have quite likely missed the sense of the Scripture by over literalizing it. This is hypocritical since it is the same thing that we earlier accused the partial preterists of doing. In the NASB, the text regarding the darkening of the sky is in all capitals, indicating an OT quotation. In terms of Jesus' promise to come in the clouds, should we literalize this in keeping with the promise by the angels in Acts 1:11, or should we allow symbolism in keeping with first-century Jewish thought? This latter course appears more logical, especially in light of Revelation 1:7: "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him." How can every eye see his coming at the same time if this is taken literally? In this text, the first portion concerning the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds is a direct quote from Daniel 7:13. In Exodus, the pillar of cloud was literally representative of the glory of God. Certainly, we have to allow for Jewish symbolism and visual imagery given to us by the Jewish scholars who created the NT.

Conclusion – No Logical Middle Ground

The value of Hank Hanegraaff's book was not its theological brilliance but rather the challenge

that it offered his readers to develop their own eschatological position. The first book in the series didn't develop an extensive theology but rather laid the groundwork for subsequent books. Hank appears to have taken a partial preterist position not so much as a middle ground but as a reaction against the futurists. In doing so, he has attempted to force his own partial preterism system on them, rather than allowing for what he called an exegetical theology to interpret the text outside of existing theological systems. We cannot suggest a novel middle ground that would negate some of the difficulties with Hanegraaff's position while offsetting those of the futurist position. Instead, we must continue to wrestle with the whole of Scripture with special emphasis on proper contextualization of the eschatological events in the NT. We long for additional validation of the late dating of Revelation. This is not so much for the purposes of proving our futurist position, which we believe, is the correct one, but to glorify the Lord in more confidently proclaiming his coming judgment and glory. Govett said back in 1985, "In conclusion—fully I am convinced that no ingenuity can extricate the Praeterist interpreter from the endless difficulties, absurdities, historic contradictions which beset his scheme."[27]

END NOTES

[1] Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer, *The Last Disciple* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 2004), 393.

[1] Stanley D. Toussaint, "A Critique of the Preterist View of the Olivet Discourse." *BSac* 161 (2004): 469-70.

[1] Kathy Boot Thomas, "Is it the End of the World as This Author Knows It?," *Time Magazine* 164 no. 21 (November 24, 2004): No pages. Citied 24 March 2006. Online: http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,995693,00.html.

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[1] Jay E. Adams, *Preterism: Orthodox or Unorthodox?* (Stanley, N.C.: Timeless Texts, 2003), 2-3.

[1] Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer, *The Last Sacrifice* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 2005), 342-4.

[1] Norm Geisler, "A Friendly Response to Hank Hanegraaff's Book, *The Last Disciple*," n.p. [cited 23 March 2006]. Online: http://www.ses.edu/NormGeisler/lastdisciple.htm.

[1] Ibid.

[1] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *Last Disciple*, 393.

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[1] Toussaint, 483.

[1] Thomas C. Nixon, *The Olivet Discourse – Mystery Revealed* (Bloomington, Ind.: 1st Books: 2003), x.

[1] Ibid., 172.

[1] See for example, John MacArthur, *The Second Coming* (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway, 1999) 105-112.

[1] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *Last Disciple*, 101.

[1] Robert Govett, *The Locusts, The Euphratean Horseman and the Two Witnesses* (Miami Springs, Fla.: Conley and Schoettle, 1985), 145.

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[9] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *Last Disciple*, 393.

[10] Ibid., 3.

[11] Ibid., 5.

[12] Ibid., 93.

[13] Ibid., 393.

[14] Ibid., 394.

[15] Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of International Bible Society.

[16] Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1898), 33.139, 64.12.

[17] Geisler.

[18] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *Last Sacrifice*, 342.

[19] Ibid., 344.

[20] Ibid., 344.

[21] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *Last Disciple*, 393.

[22] Toussaint, 483.

[23] Thomas C. Nixon, *The Olivet Discourse – Mystery Revealed* (Bloomington, Ind.: 1st Books: 2003), x.

[24] Ibid., 172.

[25] See for example, John MacArthur, *The Second Coming* (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway, 1999) 105-112.

[26] Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *Last Disciple*, 101.

[27] Robert Govett, *The Locusts, The Euphratean Horseman and the Two Witnesses* (Miami Springs, Fla.: Conley and Schoettle, 1985), 145.

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John Smyth: Root of the Baptists



John Smyth: Root of the Baptists

by James M. Hill

John Smyth was one of the founders of the Baptist church movement as a whole and was the impetus for the later founding of the General Baptists under his protégé Thomas Helwys. Smyth also made major contributions to later Baptist denominations and influenced the founding of America through colonies fleeing religious oppression in Europe. Tull put John Smyth's name foremost in his book on the major influencers of Baptist thought. He said, "John Smyth's life was profoundly influenced by the tortuous course of the English Reformation. Smyth, in turn, was a leader in one stream of that Reformation which flowed through Puritanism and Separatism to the beginnings of

Baptist life."[1]

Many events occurred in England leading up to John Smyth's birth sometime around 1570.[2] Henry VIII reigned from 1509-1547 and had separated with the Roman Catholic Church but wanted "popery but not a pope." Henry's oppressive laws such as the *Act of Six Articles* of 1539 forced many English Christians into exile. In Switzerland during 1525, the Swiss Anabaptists broke with Zwingli, and Menno Simmons became the leader of the Dutch enclave in 1537. In 1538 Henry VIII made efforts to expel all of the Anabaptists from England.[3] Many English refugees were able to return when Edward VI came into power in 1547, and they returned with a wide variety of ecclesiastical influences from the Reformers. Many reforms were made in the Church of England during this era likely as a result of these reformational ideas of the returnees. These included the destruction of shrines and idols, allowance of priests to marry, and important revisions to the *Book of Common Prayer*. Another exodus came about when "Bloody Mary" came to the throne in 1553, with many exiles going to the very same areas to which they had fled to under Henry VIII. Once Elizabeth came to power in 1558, many exiles returned marking the beginning of the Puritan movement. Elizabeth made some much needed reforms but also instituted ecclesiastical strictures such as mandatory church attendance and the requirement that all clergy swear to a shortened version of the Articles of Religion.[4]

John Smyth received an MA from Cambridge in 1593 and was ordained by the Church of England in 1594.[5] He worked either as a lecturer or preacher for the city of Lincoln beginning in 1600 but was removed from this official positon in 1602. Torbet quoted John Shakespeare in stating the reason for Smyth's removal as having "approved himself a factious man in this city by personal preaching, and that untruly against divers men of good place."[6] He joined a Separatist church in Gainsborough beginning in 1606 until he moved to Holland in 1608.[7] At some point he became their pastor.[8] This was an interesting turn of events since during his time with the Church of England, Smyth defended the Church against the Separatists. Later he began to have doubts about the teachings of the Church and spent some nine months investigating before he joined the very people which he had formerly opposed.[9] This is a pattern that repeated in Smyth's life. At first he objected to the Separatist teachings, then embraced them. Later he did the same with the Puritans, and embraced these. Finally he synthesized all of his beliefs into yet a third category which could be

called Baptist while embracing Arminianism, a doctrine he formerly opposed.

Smyth moved his congregation to Amsterdam after incurring the wrath of the English government. At this point some historians say that Smyth baptized himself,[10] something that he indicated later that he regretted.[11] There is much question over whether or not this event actually happened, and the importance of the debacle. Christian said, "It is difficult to see what difference it makes whether Smyth baptized himself or was baptized by Helwys."[12] Benedict quoted Crosby and Ivimey and said that most likely the story was false. More likely what happened was that one of Smyth's companions baptized him.[13] Perhaps some of the confusion in the historical accounts is because there are at least three men with the same name during the era.[14] Regardless what happened, Smyth's legacy contained in the various historical accounts is tainted by the possibility of his self-baptism. If Smyth didn't do what was reported it's hard to understand why he would later indicate remorse for it.

Sometime around 1609 in Amsterdam Mr. Smyth was excluded from his own congregation and his protégé Thomas Helwys became their pastor. Near the same time Smyth had petitioned the Mennonite Church for membership but was rejected.[15] The split seems to have come about because about ten members of the church didn't agree, including Helwys, who in effect formed a new church.[16] Smyth never was accepted into the Mennonite fellowship since he died of consumption in August, 1612 and was buried in Amsterdam.[17] In that same year, Helwys returned to England and together with many of his small congregation from Amsterdam. Once there, Pastor Helwys formed the first Baptist church in England. [18] The remainder of Helwys' church in Amsterdam wasn't accepted into fellowship with the Waterlander Mennonites until some three years after Smyth's death in 1615.[19]

John Smyth's theological beliefs followed three distinct patterns that progressed chronologically from his birth in England to his death in Amsterdam. The first phase was a time when he followed Puritan teachings. This was followed by a period when he was most closely identified with the English Separatists.[20] The final chapter of his life could be called his Baptist phase during which

he embraced Arminianism towards the close of his life. In his early life it appears that Mr. Smyth's beliefs were similar to the other Separatists around him. When he left England for Amsterdam he did it under the fellowship of a church under the authority of a Mr. Ainsworth and consisting of the co-pastors of a neighboring church, Mr. Robinson and Mr. Clifton. After they arrived in Amsterdam, they were unified in doctrine. Then Mr. Smyth began a doctrinal study and came to the conclusion that neither infant baptism or sprinkling were confirmed by Scripture. This caused a conflict within his church and he was thrown out.[21] At this point Smyth formed a separate church in 1607 or 1608 almost wholly composed of English exiles. Smyth was evidently a strong believer in the Anabaptist doctrine of believers' baptism. In 1608 Smyth, following the Dutch Anabaptists, concluded that members should be added to church fellowship through a profession of faith and subsequent baptism and therefore rejected infant baptism.[22] Smyth continued his doctrinal studies and produced about a dozen works during his lifetime.[23]

The Puritans were the foundation stone for the development of John Smyth's theological beliefs. This group came onto the radar screen during the reign of Queen Elizabeth and brought with it several distinctives that later found their way into the Baptists. First was their conviction that the church consist only of born again believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, they believed that the entire realm of Christian practice should be conducted strictly according to the word of God in the Bible. Third, the Puritans were primarily Calvinistic in their reading of the Scripture and presbyterian in their ecclesiology as it related to the order of church versus state. They believed that the king had supreme power over civil matters but was also under obligation to enforce order and worship in the church and to the extent that everyone in the society be a member. [24]

Smyth wrote two volumes during his Puritan phase. They represented some remarkable beliefs for the age, things which are directly reflected in the modern Baptist church in America today. He believed that the Lord 's Prayer was given to us by our Lord as a "model prayer" rather than one to be recited by rote repetition.[25] He spoke against the Roman Church's use of the prayer and strived for what he called "true and holy use" of it.[26]

The second building block of Smyth's theology was English Separatism. This small movement also came about during the time of Queen Elizabeth in response to the general idea that reforms were impossible inside the Church of England. One of the rallying cries of the Separatists, who likely numbered less than 1,000 people, was the same as the Puritans who believed the church should not contain a mixed multitude of saints with the wicked. The Separatists believed that they should expel from membership anyone that it deemed to be unconverted. Separatists shared the Puritan belief that the true church should be enforced by the civil authorities, even though they called Jesus Christ their prophet and king.[27]

Smyth wrote three volumes during his Separatist period that began around the time he left England. In these, he indicated that the church was both visible and invisible with the latter consisting, in Calvinistic terms, of only the elect. Smyth defined the visible church in strict terms such that it consisted only of true saints, the Holy Spirit dwelling within believers uniting church members to their head Jesus Christ, and something that he called "true properties." Within his "true properties" was a threefold process for appointing church leaders. This consisted of a popular election of them within the church, an examination of the candidate to see that they met the proper qualifications, and finally an ordination or laying on of hands in appointing the person to service.[28] This very thorough method of examining candidates to determine if they were truly spiritual undoubtedly influenced the later Baptist movement that followed similar prescriptions.

During this time, Smyth sought to keep purity in the church and did not allow donations by nonmembers. He spoke about the duty of the entire church to maintain its purity by excommunication "not (for) the destruction of the offender, but the mortification of his synne, and the salvation of his soule."[29] Smyth exalted Scripture and believed that the most important aspect of local church government was for it to be true to the constitution of the church as uncovered in the NT. In this view, he found no justification for multiplicity of church offices described by the terms bishop, elder, or presbyter, as these were all the same thing with different names. The only other office he found in the NT was that of a deacon who were charged with performing acts of service.[30] He believed that Scripture should be translated directly by the minister for the congregation

and that this should be done in such a way as not to interfere with the Holy Spirit.[31] Smyth believed that an apostate church was marked by what he called a "mixed membership" of believers and nonbelievers alongside each other. He said this in spite of the fact that he believed there were true believers in the various false churches, but that they should depart from them. His test for membership in the true church was obedience to Christ shown in obedience to his commands in what he called an "outward visible faith." Because of these things and for other reasons he called the Church of England an apostate church. Out of this belief sprung his statement that if the Church was false, then so was its baptism.[32] Worship during his Separatist phase was what we would call charismatic. Smyth spoke against putting bounds on the Holy Spirit, which he said must be "at liberty," and that rote forms of worship were "quenching the Spirit."[33] Some of these beliefs most certainly found their way into the modern Baptist church, especially the limited church government of elders with deacons as "doers." This structure in defiance of the Anglican and Roman Churches is taken for granted in the modern Baptist church.

The third and final period of Smyth's life could be called Baptist or Anabaptist and began around 1609. This was marked by his rejection of infant baptism and a belief that church members were to be initiated into the church by repentance and profession of faith followed by baptism.[34] During this period, Smyth wrote against the Separatists in similar way in which he spoke against the mainline church. In fact, he called them harlots in that they shared with Rome the "mark of the beast" of infant baptism. The Anglicans justified the practice by saying it was a confirmation of the New Covenant in the same way that circumcision was the sealing of the Abraham's. Smyth broke new ground here by finding two covenants with Abraham, that of his "carnal seed" and "spiritual seed." He said the spiritual seed must first believe and be sealed with the Holy Spirit, then be baptized under their own free will. His prescription was clear that baptism was not effectual in doing anything except in that it made a visible declaration the promises of the Holy Spirit. The person that came forward for baptism, "must bee one that confesseth his faith & his sinnes, one that is regenerate & borne again." [35] Smyth seems to have been influenced by the Waterlander Mennonites during this time with their Anabaptist beliefs at least in part because his congregation

worshiped in buildings owned by a merchant that was a Mennonite.[36] These revolutionary ideas, borrowed and modified from the Mennonites, found their way into the modern Baptist church with the exception of the idea of the dual seed. The seed concept passed into other modern churches.

When Smyth was accused of siding with the Anabaptists, he stated that the baptism he was teaching was the only true baptism, and implied that the Anabaptists did the ceremony for the purpose of being rebaptized rather than for the principles that he outlined in terms of believer's baptism.[37] At some point after this, he came to the belief that "private baptism was an error and that the Amsterdam Mennonites constituted the true church and had a true baptism." Then he confessed that he acted too quickly in baptizing himself.[38] In 1610 Smyth contacted the Dutch Mennonites by writing a letter in which he confessed his error in baptizing himself and requested membership in their church. After this a conflict arouse amongst Smyth's congregation and a group led by Thomas Helwys split from Smyth. Helwys went as far as to draw up a document outlining his group's beliefs and present it to the Mennonites such that they wouldn't confuse him with Smyth's sect. Eventually Helwys' group returned to England sometime around 1611 or 1612. The Mennonites were cautious about Smyth and requested a detailed doctrinal statement, so Smyth produced two documents. The first was a compilation of twenty articles of faith, and the second was a document of one hundred articles called *The Last Book of John Smyth Called the Retraction of His Errors*. Torbet says that these two documents were some of the earliest English Baptist Creeds, but none of them contained any mention of baptism by immersion.[39]

Smyth's final years were marked by more doctrinal changes. In his early writings he was a confirmed Calvinist, although later on he apparently adopted Arminianism.[40] Since Smyth came to embrace a general atonement of Christ's death for all men, in his later years his group came to be called "General Baptists," a name carried forward by Helwys.[41] The "Particular" Baptists didn't come into the picture in England until around 1638 under the influence of non-Separatists such as Henry Jacob, John Lathrop, and Praise-God Barebone.[42] Tull noted that earlier Smyth believed classical Calvinistic teaching, "It is not God's will that all men should be converted and saved. Yet, because we cannot know which man is reprobate, it is our duty to pray for any particular man."

Smyth's view on the separation of the church from the state was surprising for the time, and in light of his other beliefs. He believed that the civil king was the supreme ruler of both the state and the church, and that the magistrate should force people to worship the true God or be punished with death, imprisonment, or confiscation of their belongings. He said that believers can pray against wicked rulers but never approved the use of force against them.[43] Later on Smyth apparently changed his view on Christian government and adopted a doctrine of free will according to man's conscience.[44]

Some of John Smyth's main contributions to the free-church movement may have been in the area of worship practices. McKibbens studied Smyth's worship and uncovered a document from one of his church members detailing the set form of worship. Smyth said that the Spirit was quenched by set forms of worship. He wrote in 1608 in a book entitled *The Differences of the Churches of the Separation* that the Spirit could be quenched in two ways. First was through silence, if anyone had some insight to add during the service they were obligated to offer it to everyone. Second, Smyth said that the reading of any book during the service quenched the Spirit. McKibbens quoted Smyth from this book as saying that reading from a book during the service was, "the invention of the man of synne it beeing substituted for a part of the spirituall worship."[45]

McKibbens put together the program for the sense of a general worship meeting. This consisted of an opening prayer, preaching of one hour each of three expositors on the same scriptural text, and a series of closing exhortations and prayer. The Separatist worship was loosely based upon three principles. First, they had to be spontaneous and open to change as their understanding of the scriptural text flowed from the expositors. Smyth often apologized for the constant changes made to his worship practices. Second, the worship had to be open to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. Third, their worship was based upon the principle of the freedom of the conscience in religious matters. Thomas Helwys, the successor of Smyth stated that even though King James did have power over his subjects in civil affairs, his power did not extend to their conscience relating to religious concerns.[46] This thinking found its way into the modern Baptist Church.

One cannot state definitively that John Smyth founded the Baptist Church due to the various opinions on the origin of the movement itself.[47] There are at least three theories for their origin and only one of them would account for a partial Smythian genesis. This idea is called the "English Separatist descent theory.[48] The basis behind it is that the Baptist movement initiated with particular individual English Separatists. Torbet said that this is the most reasonable explanation for the origin of the Baptists, but cautioned that, "This theory must be seen in the large context of the continental Reformation and its effects upon English reformers." Some trace these roots back to the Particular Baptists who were Calvinists, and the General Baptists, like John Smyth, who were Arminian in belief. Torbet cited John Shakespeare of the Evangelical Free Church in England in 1905 as believing that the line of succession was directly from the line of Calvinistic Baptists because the General variety apostatized from theological orthodoxy. [49] Regardless, John Smyth was certainly one of the several main influencers of the movement.

John Smyth's contributions to the Christian faith were evident by the time the London Confession of English Baptist beliefs was published in 1644. Perhaps two principles of freedom of worship are the greatest legacy of Smyth and Helwys as shown in the Confession. Articles forty-nine and fifty-two contained specific reference to a doctrine developed by Smyth. This was a commitment to the principle of freedom of conscience in religious matters. This principle is something that American worshipers take for granted, but men like Smyth and Helwys suffered greatly for this radical doctrine of the age. A second point was added in an amendment in 1646. A portion of this amendment stated that during a worship service anyone that was impressed by the Holy Spirit with knowledge brought out in the preaching was obligated to share this knowledge with everyone in the assembly.[50] These two principles of freedom of worship were cornerstones in the early American Quaker movement and subsequent expansion into Baptist and other free-church denominations.

"From the extreme freedom of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, to the *Order and Prayers for Public Worship* published in 1960 by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, there has been a constant stress on the freedom of Baptists in the area of worship."[51] Smyth's was one of the founders of the Baptist Church as a whole. Christian, quoting Adam Taylor who wrote *The History of*

the English General Baptists said, "This (church of Smyth's) appears to have been the first Baptist church composed of Englishman, after the Reformation."[52] John Smyth's legacy lives on through the rich heritage of the Baptist distinctives he developed through the progression of his beliefs in the melting pot of reformational thinking in Europe.

John Smyth left a lasting legacy on the Baptist Church in America. He emphasized a church membership consisting only of regenerate believers. Smyth believed in a single level of church leader, that of the bishop/elder with the deacons acting as "doers." He believed that baptism was the "badge of faith and is the constituting principle of church membership". He rejected the practice and doctrine of infant baptism and said that infants are incapable of faith,[53] and in later years believed in the religious freedom of conscience typical of the Puritans.

Smyth impacted the Anabaptist movement by developing his form of Separatism into Anabaptism.[54] He left a lasting legacy through Thomas Helwys who concluded that he had acted cowardly and returned to England, therefore further spreading the movement.[55] History isn't clear on the type of baptism that his church practiced so we can't make any claims regarding immersion. Overall, John Smyth was a powerful shaper of Baptist theology and made excellent contributions to the modern Baptist Church.

End Notes

[1] James E. Tull, *Shapers of Baptist Thought*, (Valley Forge: Judson, 1972), 9.

[2] Ibid., 13. This date was determined by counting backwards from the dates given by Tull from when Smyth was attending Cambridge.

[3] Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, (Valley Forge: Judson, 1950), 536.

[4] Tull, 9-10.

[5] John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists* Vol. 1, (Texarkana, Tex.: Bogard, 1922), 222.

[6] Torbet, 33.

[7] Christian, 223.

[8] Tull, 14.

[9] David Benedict, *General History of the Baptist Denomination*, (New York: Lewis Colby, 1848), 327.

[10] Tull, 13-4.

[11] Whitley, 757.

[12] Christian, 225.

[13] Benedict, 329.

[14] Torbet, 33.

[15] Christian, 224.

[16] Tull, 14.

[17] Torbet, 37.

[18] Tull, 14.

[19] Christian, 228.

[20] Tull, 15-29, esp. 15, 18, 24.

[21] Benedict, 328.

[22] Tull, 13-4.

[23] Smyth, xii.

[24] Tull, 10.

[25] Ibid., 16.

[26] Ibid., 17.

[27] Ibid., 12-3.

[28] Ibid., 19-20.

[29] Whitley, 260-3.

[30] Tull, 21.

[31] Ibid., 24.

[32] Ibid., 22.

[33] Ibid., 23.

[34] Ibid., 24.

[35] Ibid., 25-6.

[36] Torbet, 35.

[37] Tull, 27.

[38] Torbet, 35.

[39] Ibid., 36.

[40] Tull, 18.

[41] Ibid., 27.

[42] Torbet, 38.

[43] Tull, 18.

[44] Ibid., 28.

[45] Thomas R. McKibbens, "Our Baptist Heritage in Worship," *Review and Expositor* 80 (1983): 54-5.

[46] Ibid., 56-7.

[47] The following was from Torbet, 18-21.

[48] The other two are the secessionist theory and the Anabaptist spiritual kingship theory. The former is a concept that the Baptists followed in a long line of succession from John the Baptist. This theory holds that the Baptists were always present behind the scenes of church history. The means of succession of this theory are either through apostolic succession, a chain of baptisms by the adherents, or a succession of local churches and/or groups of believers that passed on the doctrine. The latter theory holds that the movement arose through the Anabaptist movement among such earlier groups as the Dutch and Swiss Anabaptists, Waldensians, Novatians, and Donatists. Torbet, 18-21.

[49] Ibid., 20-1.

[50] McKibbens, 58.

[51] Ibid., 60.

[52] Christian, 226.

[53] Tull, 30. N.B.: Martin Luther taught that infants were capable of expressing saving faith through baptism.

[54] Christian, 234.

[55] Benedict, 330.

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The Sandwich



All he really wanted was a sandwich.

The newspaper story on the bottom of page E12 read "Man Found Dead Near City Mission."

The day before was a cold and blustery, winter day. A lonely old man found himself standing outside in the cold, dark, world. Wearing tattered clothes, he had nowhere to go. He was very sad, his fingers were aching from the cold, and his feet and back were racked with pain. "Nobody will help me" he thought in desperation as he wandered about the lonely streets. He was very hungry, very tired, and very sad. Somewhere in the distance he saw a sign. As he approached it, it read "Never hunger again." He recognized the building as a Christian mission by the prominent cross out front. He had seen such catchy phrases on signs before, but "missions like this are for poor, lost sinners on their way to Hell, not for a religious man like me," he thought. He had heard of the routine. Wait in line, listen to some "preacher type" person, then get some food. With no place better to go, he hung around

> outside of the mission, milling about, and then crossed the street. Almost all at once, people begin to appear and form a line out in front of the old mission. He thought "I have lived a good life, never hurt anyone, and up until this sudden turn of events I went to church every Sunday. I have raised a beautiful family. Certainly this mission is no place for me!"
>
> He was starving to death. "Oh, if I only had a sandwich" he mumbles. Then somehow I could turn things around, pull my life together. But nobody wants to help me." He sat down against an abandoned building across the street from the Mission, mindful of the crowd gathering out front. "Nobody cares about me" he said to himself. A steady rain began to fall. He began to cry. "Won't somebody help me?"

God sees all of us as sinners. That includes millionaires, homeless people, and religious folks. Why won't religious people like him listen to the Word of God? Why do they let pride carry them through their lives thinking that they are earning their way to heaven? The Bible is clear that this is simply not the case.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: (it is) the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9 KJV)

[21] "Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. [22]Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' [23]And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:21,23 NKJV)

We are born spiritually dead, and we remain that way unless we believe and accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord. In the Bible, God spoke "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3 KJV) This foundational belief is key in understanding what steps a person must take to accept the free gift of salvation offered by God through Christ Jesus atoning death on the cross and subsequent resurrection:

1. Recognize and accept that you are a sinner. (Romans 3:23)
2. Be willing to repent of your sins. (Acts 17:30)
3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you, was buried, and rose from the dead. (Romans 10:9,10)
4. Believe that Jesus can save you from an eternal life in Hell and accept His finished work on the cross by prayer. (John 14:6, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:13)

How to Pray to Trust Jesus as Savior and Lord:

Dear Lord, I confess that I am a sinner in need of forgiveness and I cannot earn my way to Heaven. I believe that Jesus Christ shed his precious blood on the cross for me and I am willing to repent of my sins. I invite Him into my heart and accept Him as Lord and Savior.

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For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." (Romans 10:13 NKJV)

Jim Hill

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The Hospital



I remember the night quite well that I first really felt a real love for my twin brother. The night in 1984 began like any other. We were attending college at Western Michigan University and together we had rented an apartment behind the K-Mart. I don't remember exactly what time he left, but at some point around dinner time he went over to the one of the stores on the main street to do some shopping. I was sitting in my bedroom doing homework when he burst in the door. He was bleeding, holding a cloth on his head and was very emotional, saying something like "I'm hurt, help me, I cut my head." A million thoughts ran through my head trying to determine who had hurt him. I ran over there to him and quickly decided that we needed to get to the emergency clinic immediately.

A sense of deep sadness and compassion came over me, a protectiveness that I have never

felt enveloped my body and I began to grieve deeply for my brother. After I gained a bit of composure I quickly called my parents and told them that we were heading to the emergency room in a city nearby to them. I distinctly remember picking up a sense that this was kind of a bother, an inconvenience for them. Maybe such things became trivial to parents, they had their own set of problems. This was shocking to me, since I was grieving over this incident and would do anything to help my brother. The thought of prayer never even entered my mind. During the drive to the hospital, I got the remaining details on what had happened. He had been walking out of the store through the automatic door when it paused suddenly, causing him to ram his head into it. During this time the sense of compassion that I had for him began to get even stronger.

Many times, I have heard of criminals that were shot while fleeing the scene of a robbery, and after escaping, apparently become so afraid of death that they sought a hospital quite quickly even though they were almost certain to be confiscated there. I have watched movies in which similar things happened, but these failed to produce any of the feelings of deep sadness that I experienced when my brother was hurt. Somehow I always felt that while I was watching these movie scenes that such feelings should occur, but either due to the way in which the event was portrayed or the lack of closeness to the character, I never experienced any of the feelings I felt during my drive to the hospital with my brother.

As a sat here this evening contemplating this event, I wondered why my soul had been dead for so many years. Reflecting upon events in my childhood produced the answer, but as an adult I knew better than to dwell upon the happenings of years gone by. I remember the vast changes that have occurred since my brother and I became Christians. I have a powerful sense of peace and hope that was absent during this event. Without Jesus, we were actually no better than the man that robbed the bank. We were hopeless to save ourselves. Years of faithful attendance of mass at our local Roman Catholic Church didn't do it. Calling an ambulance to take us to the hospital would not have solved our problem, like it did for the bank robber. No, this was a problem that only God could solve. Both of us were hopeless without the actions of God through his Holy Spirit to call us to repent of our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. For this, we will be eternally grateful.