LEAD US NOT INTO DECEPTION our salvation with His blood ... The sacrifice of C A Biblical Examination Make You Free The sacrifice of Christ is not the payment Moral Government Theology es not complete Alany W. Gomes, Th.M. e Pratney

LEAD US NOT INTO DECEPTION

A Biblical Examination of Moral Government Theology

by Alan W. Gomes, Th.M.

Fourth Edition

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FOREWORD

It is with pleasure that we introduce and recommend this expanded and updated edition of *Lead Us Not Into Deception* by Alan Gomes. This is a careful, biblical, and compassionate critique of doctrinal error which for many years has been and still continues to be promoted and practiced at Youth With a Mission (YWAM) (and elsewhere). Moral Government teaching is not an intriguing quasi-legitimate view of God and man: in its assumptions and implications it is thoroughly unbiblical. Whether a Christian knowingly or unknowingly promotes such doctrinal error, he still is responsible before God for distorting the truth. And when one claims to be a Christian teacher or leader, he is held even more closely accountable for his actions (James 3:1, 17).

In 1981 as directors of the California office of Christian Apologetics: Research and Information Service, we agreed to edit, publish, and distribute the first edition of Lead Us Not Into Deception. We had been aware of the problems with Moral Government teaching for some time, and several people who had been affected adversely by such teaching through YWAM had contacted us for apologetics help and information. After careful prayer and consideration of Alan's manuscript, we undertook its publication. This decision was made after hours of research, study, interviewing of former YWAMers, and careful perusal of the YWAM condoned materials which promoted Moral Government teaching. Staff member Cal Beisner was invaluable in checking out our research and conclusions. Bonafide attempts by Alan and Cal at talking with and reconciling the doctrinal problems with YWAM leadership and/or popular Moral Government teachers had been ignored or rebuffed each time. Because of the serious doctrinal implications and the real biblical and spiritual damage suffered by victims of Moral Government teaching, we were convinced that the only course of resolution was through publication and distribution.

However, after publication but before distribution, we were approached by two prominent Moral Government teachers who protested our evaluation and agreement with Alan. Always open to reconciliation with estranged brothers in the Lord, Alan, Cal, and we together agreed to meet with these teachers to discuss Moral Government teaching. The meeting lasted many hours and came to no satisfactory resolution. Various explanations were offered by these teachers for the clearly unbiblical quotes we noted. Some quotes were explained by these teachers as being out of context, others as being poorly "translated" from extemporaneous speaking to teaching manuals. Others were explained as being poorly worded, or stated naively by nonscholars and non-theologians who didn't realize their implications. The two teachers agreed to make specific changes and to provide us with specific evidence of their orthodox beliefs and teachings.

The two teachers did not make the agreed upon changes and did not provide us with the evidence we requested.

Rumors circulated that *CARIS* had disagreed with Alan, and that we had apologized to YWAM and Moral Government teachers. We did not apologize and we did not agree that they were right. We did not disagree with Alan.

The past 5 years have provided us with additional evidence and research. We are more than ever convinced that Alan's analysis is accurate, comprehensive, and necessary. The recent actions and teachings of YWAM and Moral Government teachers have affirmed to us that this new edition of *Lead Us Not Into Deception* is sorely needed. The former YWAMers we have had contact with over the intervening years have affirmed to us that the unbiblical teachings of Moral Government are damaging people biblically and spiritually.

It is our prayer that this booklet will be part of God's work with the leadership and teachers of Moral Government to show them the errors of their "gospel," the harmful implications of their teachings, and the path to doctrinal purity.

In Christian Service, Robert and Gretchen Passantino April 1986

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Thirdly, this book would never have been printed without the generous financial support of L.E.A.R.N. of Yorba Linda, California, and Fieldstead and Co. of Irvine, California.

Finally, I must thank my wife Diane for standing by me patiently during the many long hours of editing and re-editing which went into this book.

Alan Gomes October 1986

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CHAPTER ONE Introduction

Statement of the Problem

There is a form of teaching popular among certain Christian groups which goes by the name of "Moral Government." The Moral Government teaching is a distinct system of theology concerned with the nature and attributes of God, the nature of man, and the process of salvation.

The Moral Government teaching is a heretical form of doctrine. It is unbiblical in key areas of the faith, such as the atonement and the nature of God. Moral Government errs in more than peripheral areas of doctrine: the Moral Government teaching is basically flawed concerning the issues on which salvation hinges. Therefore, the purpose of this booklet is to understand this teaching and properly refute it from the Word of God.

Contemporary Manifestations of the Moral Government Teaching

The system known as "Moral Government" is not new. It goes back at least to Hugo Grotius, a 17th-century Dutch lawyer. However, the form of "Moral Government" currently taught in certain circles has gone well beyond the formulations of Grotius.²

Perhaps the best known organization where this form of teaching is found is Youth With a Mission (YWAM). YWAM is an "interdenominational, international sending agency engaged in recruiting, evangelism and

¹J. Oliver Buswell Jr, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, II (GrandRapids Zondervan, 1962), 95. For a short but interesting discussion on the Grotian theory of the atonement, see James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1952), pp. 300ff.

²Classic Moral Government theory, as developed by Grotius and later adopted by Charles G. Finney, was an attempt (albeit an erroneous one) to explain the work of Christ on Calvary. To the Grotian theory of the atonement these modern-day "Moral Government" proponents have added bizarre features not found in either Grotius or Finney, such as the notion that God lacks the foreknowledge of future moral events. Even though these additions are not part of Moral Government in the classical sense of the term, the modern-day proponents generally lump these accretions in with the Grotian view of the atonement and term the whole system "Moral Government." Therefore, references made to "Moral Government" in this work will refer to the contemporary, expanded manifestation of the theory.

training for evangelism with an emphasis on short-term service for youth. YWAM recruits during the summer at least 1,000 youths for short-term service overseas besides ongoing U.S. and international ministries." YWAM has branch offices throughout the United States as well as field offices in Switzerland, West Germany, England, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Scotland, South Africa, Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and Rhodesia. They have approximately 70 bases worldwide.

Need for the Study

A biblical evaluation of Moral Government is needed because of the seriousness of the errors involved, the pervasiveness of the teaching, the deceptiveness of the organizations propagating it, the negative practical effects of this teaching on one's Christian life, and the lack of other substantive works refuting it in its contemporary form.

The Seriousness of the Error

As previously mentioned, Moral Government errs in more than peripheral areas of doctrine. At issue here is whether or not Jesus literally paid for our sins on Calvary, if the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us when we believe, and if God possesses the attributes of immutability and omniscience. Clearly, these are not issues about which Christians can "agree to disagree." These are issues which strike at the heart of the Christian faith.

The Pervasiveness of the Teaching

A young person joining YWAM will often attend a Discipleship Training School (DTS) or a School of Evangelism (SOE). The teachings in these schools consist of practical and classroom training. Certain lecturers travel from school to school and lecture on a variety of topics, including the Moral Government system of theology.

Some report attending DTS without directly encountering Moral Government. This may perhaps be due to the short-term nature of the DTS. The longer-term SOE, on the other hand, tends to emphasize the teaching more.⁴

Some of the individuals who teach Moral Government through lecture,

³Edward Dayton, ed., *Missions Handbook* (Monrovia, Ca.: MARC, 1976, 11th ed.), pp. 370-371.

⁴For example, one lady in Ventura, California writes, "We have a daughter who had a very solid background of fundamental evangelical teaching. She has completed both DTS and SOE with YWAM. DTS training did not affect her, but during her SOE training she began to be led into this teaching with more intensity" (letter on file with the author). Others have indicated the presence of Moral Government at both DTS and SCE. See "Appendix B."

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cassette and video tape, and books are Winkie Pratney,⁵ Harry Conn, Gordon C. Olson, George Otis Jr., and H. Roy Elseth.

The Moral Government teaching is not an isolated phenomenon; it is found at YWAM bases throughout the world. While it is true that the degree to which this teaching is stressed varies somewhat from locale to locale, the teaching does appear to be wide-spread, evidenced by the independent testimonies of those who have attended YWAM schools in divergent parts of the globe.⁶

The Deceptiveness of the Organizations Propagating It

The deceptive nature of this teaching is clearly shown in the variety of ways Youth With a Mission's leaders have attempted to evade responsibility for it when confronted with the facts. During a meeting with YWAM's top leaders, ⁷ this author was told that Moral Government is no longer an issue at YWAM and that Moral Government books are not distributed through their bookstores. A telephone call to the main bookstore in Hawaii the evening before, however, revealed that Moral Government books by the previously mentioned authors were available for purchase and were avidly read. ⁸

When this author confronted these leaders with this fact [i.e., that their bookstore(s) do sell Moral Government books] they reluctantly admitted that the teaching still exists at YWAM. The author was then told that YWAM as an organization is not responsible for what their teachers teach. These leaders maintained that YWAM as such has no set theological position; various points of view are supposedly allowed among the students and leadership. Moral Government, they claimed, is but one view among many found at YWAM and is not especially prominent or pervasive.

In reply to the above, the following facts must be pointed out: (1) A large number of students who attend the Schools of Evangelism throughout the world are taught Moral Government concepts. (2) Some of the lecturers at the YWAM schools teach Moral Government. (3) YWAM

⁵Mr. Pratney met with this author in July of 1981 and vigorously denied that he had ever believed or taught the Moral Government doctrine treated in this booklet. This author finds Pratney's adamant denial difficult to reconcile with the independent testimonies of those who have sat under his teaching. Even more telling are statements in his writings which seem clearly to teach Moral Government concepts—at least in the crucial areas of anthropology (the doctrine of man) and hamartiology (the doctrine of sin), subjects which he treats at length.

⁶Documentation on file with the author.

⁷August 27, 1982 at Los Angeles Harbor aboard YWAM's ministry ship, the M/V Anastasis.

⁸In fact, this writer spoke with a salesperson at the Kailua Kona bookstore who told him *The God They Never Knew* [a book strongly propagating Moral Government concepts] by George Otis Jr. would have to be back-ordered because, in her words, "We sell these very fast; I have 25 more on order." Two full years after this meeting, the main books on Moral Government were readily purchased from the YWAM bookstore in Tyler, Texas.

bookstores sell books which teach Moral Government. (4) Many letters of testimonial from ex-YWAMers document the prevalence of this teaching, even in recent times. (5) A training manual entitled *Sharing Your Faith* by Gordon C. Olson propagates Moral Government teaching and is used at YWAM schools world-wide. (10)

The Moral Government system, as we will see, is heretical. Therefore, whether other forms of teaching are allowed at YWAM—or any other school mentioned—is beside the point. The point is that YWAM allows *this* form of teaching to exist within its ranks. This teaching is at its core unbiblical. Therefore, it is immaterial whether it is ten percent or ninety percent of any organization's teachers that endorse and teach Moral Government. That it is condoned at all is inexcusable.

The Negative Practical Effects of Moral Government Teaching

Numerous conversations, letters, and first-hand observations have convinced this author of the horrific fruit Moral Government teaching has borne in the lives of individual Christians who have sat under it.

One young lady, for instance, felt this teaching caused her to question the dependability of God, even to the point of abandoning her faith. She experienced such psychological trauma connected with the teachings that she required extensive counseling from leaders of a mission organization and later from an apologetics ministry specializing in refuting religious cults.

Another young man, who attended YWAM schools throughout Europe, stated that he sensed very strong pressure to conform to Moral Government's ideas about God which, after careful soul-searching, he could not accept in good conscience.

The Christian Research Institute of San Juan Capistrano, California—an organization specializing in cult apologetics and research—has issued a brief position statement which reads in part: "Agape Force and YWAM are closely linked in their theology and methodology. We have had numerous disturbing reports concerning the teachings and practices of both ministries....The flow of bad reports pertaining to YWAM, from all quarters, is increasing at CRI, and the nature of the testimonies are becoming more disturbing. Much prayer and searching of the word is in order with reference to participation in YWAM."

These examples could easily be multiplied well beyond the space

⁹ Excerpts from some of these letters will be given in an appendix at the end of the booklet.

¹⁰It is a matter of indisputable historical fact that at least one YWAM base in Europe produced copies of Sharing Your Faith on a YWAM-owned printing press. The title page of this version actually bears the YWAM logo and copyright. YWAM presses have also printed The Truth Shall Make You Free (a revised version of Sharing Your Faith) and Pratney's Youth Aflame manual.

¹¹Christian Research Institute statement entitled "Youth With a Mission and Agape Force;" dated 5/82.

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available in this booklet.¹² Suffice it to say: the Moral Government teaching has borne rotten fruit.

The Lack of Substantive Works Refuting This Heresy

Thus far, there have been no substantive works refuting the Moral Government error in detail. Judging by the many requests for information received by this author, there is considerable need for careful and thorough research in this area.

Sources for the Study

The sources used for this study were chosen because they were written by noted teachers of Moral Government theory and are widely read at various YWAM bases. Among these works are the writings of Gordon C. Olson, including his *Moral Government of God, Sharing Your Faith*, and *The Truth Shall Make You Free;* George Otis Jr.'s book, *The God They Never Knew* (a popular treatment of the themes raised in Olson's more technical writings); H. Roy Elseth's book, *Did God Know?*, dealing with the nature and attributes of God;¹³ and Winkie Pratney's *Youth Aflame* manual.

A complete list of all references cited will be found in the bibliography at the end of the booklet.

¹²At the end of this booklet is a brief testimony by Gregory L. Robertson. Mr. Robertson attended YWAM schools throughout the world. His account provides us with an eye-opening view of what goes on behind the scenes at YWAM. After 5½ years as a full-time staff member, Mr. Robertson is highly qualified to discuss what really goes on inside the organization.

While it is true that Elseth's book is currently out of print, it appears still to be avidly read by many in YWAM. In fact, the copy in possession of this author was secured from a YWAM member who obtained it during his YWAM training.

CHAPTER TWO The Nature and Attributes of God

Our understanding of God's nature and attributes will profoundly affect the way we relate to Him. As A. W. Tozer observes:

A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple.... Before the Christian church goes into eclipse anywhere there must first be a corrupting of her simple basic theology. She simply gets a wrong answer to the question, "What is God like" and goes on from there. ¹

The God of the Bible is not an abstract idea or a force. He is a being who invites us to a personal relationship with Him. Yet, such an interpersonal relationship cannot take place unless we know something of His character. As A. W. Pink states, "An unknown God can neither be trusted, served, nor worshipped." Fortunately, God has chosen to reveal who He is through the Bible which is His inspired Word.

Part I The Biblical View: The Unchanging God

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning (James 1:17).

The term "immutable" means "unchangeable." When God is spoken of as "immutable' it means that He is "subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations." God's immutability is portrayed in Scripture as one of the Divine perfections. We will examine the biblical evidence for God's immutability in the following three categories: His *character*, His *counsels*, and His *knowledge*.

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¹A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 9, 10, 12.

²Arthur W. Pink, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), preface.

³Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are taken from the New American Standard Version.

⁴Pink, p. 37.

God's Immutable Character

The Scriptures reveal much about God's moral character. The Bible says that "God is love" (I Jn. 4:16), "God is light" (I Jn. 1:5), "God's eyes...are too pure to approve evil, and [thou] cannot look on wickedness with favor" (Hab. 1:13), and that God "cannot lie" (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). We must realize that God's moral perfections flow from His nature and are as unchanging as His essential being. God is not love because He chooses to love, but His choice to love is based on the fact that He is love by nature.

First John 4:16, "God is love," is an *anarthrous* construction in the Greek which, simply stated, means that the definite article "the" [Greek: (ho)] does not appear in front of the word "love" [Greek: (agape)]. The significance of this type of construction in New Testament Greek cannot be overlooked. This construction stresses the quality, nature, or essence of the word in question. The idea in I John 4:16 is that God is of the essence, nature, or quality of love. God loves because to violate love would be to violate His very nature.

Someone might object that this takes away from God's freedom since we are saying there are certain things God cannot do. This really depends on how the term "freedom" is defined. God can do all things only in so far as they are consistent with His nature. The Scriptures do not simply state that God *does not* lie, but that God *cannot* lie (Greek: (*adunaton*)—to be unable). God could no more choose to lie than He could cease to be God.

When we consider the doctrine of the atonement in Chapter Three, the importance of these considerations will be evident. Because God is holy (Josh. 24:19-20), He *must* punish sin (Nah. 1:3; Ex. 34:6, 7). In Chapter Three it will be demonstrated that God provides forgiveness of sin in a manner consistent with His nature—a nature which compels Him to punish sin.

God's Immutable Counsels

The word "counsel" refers to one's intention, resolution, will, or purpose. God's counsels are not subject to change, fluctuation, or failure. The Scriptures expressly declare that God's purpose is "unchangeable" (Heb. 6:17). He is a God who "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11) and assures that His purpose will be established and that He will accomplish all His good pleasure (Isa. 46:10). Whatsoever He

⁵H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Mac Millan, 1957), p. 140 note vii; pp. 149-150.

⁶G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977), p. 123.

plans He surely does (Isa. 46:11). As A. W. Pink observes: "It is no more possible for the Divine counsels to fail in their execution than it would be for the thrice Holy God to lie."

Does God Change His Mind?

The following Scriptures clearly indicate that God does not change His mind or alter His plans:

And so the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind. [I Sam. 15:29].

God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent: Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? [Num. 23:19].

How Are Passages Which Show God "Repenting" to Be Explained?

There are certain passages which, at first glance, appear to show God changing His mind. While there are several of these, we will deal with two which are frequently alluded as representative samples. Explaining these should clear up difficulties with the others, since the same principles of interpretation are involved.

Jonah and the Ninevites. God sent Jonah to preach against the Ninevites because of their great wickedness. God had Jonah inform the Ninevites that in forty days they would be destroyed (Jonah 3:4). As a result of Jonah's preaching, the Ninevites repented in sackcloth and ashes. Because of their repentance, God spared the Ninevites and did not destroy them in forty days as originally threatened (Jonah 3:10).

How can we reconcile this apparent change of God's mind with the concept of a God who is unchanging in His counsels?

Stephen Charnock, a Puritan divine who lived in the middle of the 17th century, explains in his epochal work, *Discourses Upon the Existence and Attributes of God:*

But the answer to these cases is this, that where we find predictions in Scripture declared, and yet not executed, we must consider them, not as absolute, but conditional...with a clause of revocation annexed to them, provided that men repent; and this God lays down as the general case, always to be remembered as a rule for the interpreting of His threatenings against a nation, and the same reason will hold against a particular person. (Jer. 18:7-10) "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them;"... ⁸

Apparently the Ninevites knew and understood this principle, at least

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⁷Pink, p. 19

⁸Stephen Charnock, *Discourses Upon the Existence and Attributes of God*, I (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 343.

instinctively. In verse 9 of chapter 3 they state, "Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" Furthermore, the fact that God gave them forty days is certainly evidence that the purpose of His threat was to induce them to repent. Why would God give them forty days if they were to understand their destruction as inevitable, regardless of what they might do?

As Charnock states, "The will of God is unchangeably set to love righteousness" and to punish iniquity. Please notice that God did not "repent" of the evil He said He would do to the Ninevites until after they themselves had changed. "When the threatening was made, they were a fit object" for God's wrath. When they repented, they became "a fit object" for God's mercy. Again, we must stress that it was the Ninevites who first changed their relationship to God (i.e., from objects of wrath to objects of mercy). Then God, applying His unchanging principle of rewarding righteousness and punishing iniquity, dealt with them accordingly. When the Scriptures speak of God "repenting" of the evil He had threatened (3:10), we are to understand that this repentance in God "is only a change in His outward conduct, according to His infallible foresight and immutable will." It is not that God had changed His mind for it has been shown that He dealt with them according to His unchanging principle.

God would have changed His mind if 1) The Ninevites had not repented and God had spared them, or 2) The Ninevites had repented and God had not spared them. If one of these two sets of circumstances had taken place, then it could truly be said that God changed His mind and did not behave according to His principle of punishing those who sin and sparing those who repent. But it was the *Ninevites* who changed their minds, eliciting a change in God's outward behavior in accordance with His immutable will.

Genesis 6:5-6. This passage reads:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth...and the Lord repented that He had made men on the earth and it made Him sorrowful at heart.

Here is a verse which clearly shows God "repenting" over having made man. How can this be if God does not change His mind?

We must realize that a given word may have a variety of meanings depending on its usage in the context. Sometimes the Hebrew word for "repent" [Hebrew: (nacham)] found in this verse is used concerning a change of mind (see I Sam. 15:29), though it is often used in other senses. Nacham may also mean "to be sorry" or "to console oneself." That this is

⁹Charnock, p. 345.

¹⁰Charnock, p. 344.

¹¹Charnock, p. 341 (emphasis added).

¹²Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), pp. 636-637.

the meaning in this passage is clearly shown from the poetic parallelism of the verse. The sense of the phrase "it repented the Lord" is further explained by the statement "and it made Him sorrowful." ¹³

God "repented" in the sense that He was *grieved* over man's sin. This verse is *not* talking about God's knowledge or His will, as though He were having second thoughts about having created man. Rather, the verse is a reference to God's *emotions*, and simply describes how God *felt* about the sin of man.¹⁴

God's Immutable Knowledge

God is omniscient. This means that He knows all things, both actual and possible. ¹⁵ He knows all things past (Isa. 41:22), present (Heb. 4:13) and future (Isa. 46:10). He knows all things by one intuitive act and yet knows the past as past, the present as present, and the future as future.

Because God is all knowing, there can be no increase or diminution of His knowledge. Psalm 147:5 declares that "His understanding is infinite." From this it follows that He knows immutably. "There is a change in understanding, when we gain the knowledge of a thing, which was unknown to us before..." Charnock notes that such a change cannot be ascribed to God without destroying the infinity of His knowledge. If, for example, God is ignorant of the decisions I will make tomorrow, then God will know more tomorrow (after my decisions are made) than He does today. But an understanding which is infinite cannot by definition increase. How can absolute perfection become more perfect?

God's deity stands or falls on His perfect knowledge. It is this knowledge which separates Him from the gods of the heathen. Isaiah 41:21-22 reads:

Let them [i.e., the idols] bring forth and show us what shall happen, or declare us things to come: show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.

God's knowledge is not a conjectural knowledge (i.e., an educated guess), but an absolute and certain knowledge. Commenting on the above passage, Charnock observes:

Were it only a conjectural knowledge that is here meant, the devils might answer, they can conjecture, and so their deity was a good as God's; for though God might know more things, and conjecture

¹³Franz Delitzsch and C. F. Keil, *Commentary on Genesis*, I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1877), 140-141.

¹⁴Some commentators feel that Scriptures which speak of God as "grieved," "angry," "sad," etc., are to be taken in an *anthropropathic* sense, i.e., that such emotions do not properly belong to God, but are ascribed to Him to aid in understanding certain truths which could not be understood any other way. If and to what extent God's emotions correspond to man's is a question certainly worthy of study. But for the present purpose it is simply enough to note that Genesis 6 has nothing to do with God changing His mind or will.

¹⁵ Charnock, p. 417 ff.

¹⁶Charnock, p. 460.

nearer to what would be, yet still it would be but conjectural, and therefore not a higher kind of knowledge than what the devils might challenge. 17

Part II The Moral Government View: The Chameleon God

Having examined what the Scriptures say about the nature and attributes of God, we will now evaluate the Moral Government view. Again, we will consider the same three categories: God's character, God's counsels, and God's knowledge.

Is God Changeable In His Character?

Unlike the God of the Bible, the God of Moral Government is capable of choosing evil as well as good. It is denied that God's nature enables Him only to do good. God is good simply because (so far) He has chosen to be. H. Roy Elseth in his book Did God Know? asserts:

> God is good because He chooses to be good. If we say that God is simply a"blob" of good in the sky who can do nothing but good, because He is good, you then destroy the factor of choice....He only is able to do right who is able at the same time to do wrong. 18

The implications of this view are horrendous. According to Moral Government, all one can say about God's character with certainty is that, up until now, God has chosen to be good, truthful, loving, holy, etc. There is no guarantee about tomorrow.

It might be argued that, based on His track record, God is not likely to change into an ogre. Yet there is no assurance of this, for it is claimed that God is a "free moral agent" and the power to choose contrary is essential to free moral agency.²⁰

We previously noted that God, by His immutable nature, is holy and must punish sin. Gordon Olson, in his training manual entitled Sharing Your Faith, teaches:

In the governmental theory, the Atonement is not required by the

¹⁷Charnock, p. 432.

¹⁸Howard R. Elseth, *Did God Know?* (St. Paul: Calvary United Church, 1977), pp. 26-7. See also p. 30.

¹⁹Gordon C. Olson, *Sharing Your Faith* (Chicago: Bible Research Fellowship, 1976), p. I-2/1. [Note: the page numbering in Olson's manual is cumbersome and confusing, and there are some pages which have no number at all, such as that listed in the following footnote. It will sometimes be difficult, therefore, for the reader to locate the original quotation based on the numbers given here, not because of faults in the footnotes, but because of the awkward numbering system used by Olson.]

²⁰Olson, the page opposite that labelled IV-6.

subjective nature or vindictive justice of God before mercy is extended. $^{21}\,$

God does not require an exact payment for sin to satisfy retributive justice... "God is love" and has completely subdued all thought of retaliation toward rebellious sinners. 22

It is not that God the Father is personally unwilling to forgive sin without full vindictive satisfaction. [To forgive]...is to remit or pardon freely all guilt charged against one for his conduct out of pure love to the one being pardoned. It is to abandon all resentment in a spirit of cheerful leniency.... 23

The God of the Bible is not "vindictive" or "resentful" in the sense of being malicious or spiteful. But even so, God *must* punish sin, as we have already shown. It is not our place to let our feelings determine what the Bible teaches about the atonement. We might *like* to think that God requires no payment or punishment for sin, and *like* to think that God will let men off on the basis of a "spirit of cheerful leniency," but this is not what the Bible says. God *must* punish sin, for He is immutably holy. We will elaborate on this further when we discuss the atonement in Chapter Three.

Is God Changeable In His Counsels?

We have already shown from the Scriptures that God does not change His mind or alter His plans. The Moral Government God is a chameleon God who does both. Elseth states:

Prophecies do not occur out of necessity of God's foreknowledge, or even always because God said they would take place. In fact, God often changes His mind and does not do the things He says He will. 24

Such a view is patently unbiblical. Elseth attempts to support this position with arguments similar to the ones explained earlier (e.g., Jonah and the Ninevites).²⁵ These verses, when properly understood and considered in context, do not support the idea that God changes His mind or fails to carry out His plan.

God is not a man that He should repent or change His mind (I Sam.15:29; Num. 23:19). Furthermore, Deuteronomy 18:20-22 reads:

But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name...that prophet shall die... if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken.

²¹Olson, Historical Opinions, p. 3.

²²Olson, p. V-4.

²³Olson, p. V3.

²⁴Elseth, p. 109.

²⁵Elseth, pp. 85, 117, 123.

Now if it is true that "God often does not do the things He says He will," as Elseth asserts, then God is guilty of inspiring false prophecy and should be stoned to death.

Had the Moral Government God inspired Deuteronomy 18, we would have expected Him to say something like: "...if the thing does not come about or come true, this may or may not have been the thing which I told the prophet to say, since sometimes I say things will take place that never do." Fortunately, the chameleon god of Moral Government is not the God of the Bible, for:

...what comfort could it be to pray to a God, that like the chameleon changed colors every day, every moment? What encouragement could there be to lift up our eyes to one that were of one mind this day and of another tomorrow? ²⁶

Elseth concludes that it is "tragic" for Christians to exercise faith in God's sovereignty:

The ultimate end of this tragedy is that Christians begin to believe that God is satisfactorily working out His plan as He wants it in the world. 27

If the Moral Government view is true, then the Apostle Paul was the most "tragic" of all Christians, for it was he who stated that God "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). And it is Paul the Apostle who encourages the saints to believe God is "satisfactorily working out His plan as He wants it in the world" by saying:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Is God Changeable In His Knowledge?

The Moral Government God is not omniscient in the true sense of the term. While it is asserted that He knows "all that is knowable," it is denied that the free decisions of men fall into the category of the "knowable." Elseth maintains "God does not know ahead of time the free decisions of men...." Similarly, Gordon Olson states:

...future choices of moral beings, when acting freely in their moral agency, have not been brought into existence as yet and thus are not fixities or objects of possible knowledge. 30

²⁶Charnock, p. 348.

²⁷Elseth, p. 98.

²⁸Harry Conn, ed., *Finney's Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1976), abridged and glossary added by Harry Conn, p. 342.

²⁹ Elseth, p. 70.

³⁰Gordon C. Olson, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Franklin Park, III.: Bible Research Fellowship, 1980),

The Moral Government God is not ignorant of *all* future events; only events to be performed by people acting out of their free wills. It is asserted that sometimes God "freezes the will" and brings about desired responses by forcing an individual to make a certain choice. A choice of this sort can be foreknown by God since God causes it, although it is not choice in the proper sense of the word. Furthermore, it is maintained that a person constrained to perform an action because of a "will freeze" is not held morally responsible for that action.³¹

Apart from alleged "will freezes" the Moral Government God cannot know what men will do in the future with certainty. He can only venture an educated guess. As Elseth states:

Freedom can be predicted, but not with certainty. Thus God may have predictions and theories as to what man will do, but He cannot know with certainty what man will do in areas where God has given man absolute freedom of choice. 32

This heretical view of God's foreknowledge is not new. The 17th century Socinians likewise truncated God's foreknowledge in a manner almost identical to Olson et al. Mc Clintock and Strong's summary of the Socinian view is almost indistinguishable from the contemporary Moral Government position:

It [Socinianism] also denies that God foresees the actions of his creatures, or knows anything about them until they come to pass; except in some special cases in which he has foreordained the event, and foresees it *because* he foreordained it. That they may not seem to derogate from God's omniscience, they admit that God knows all things knowable; but they contend that contingent events are unknowable, even by an infinite being. ³³

Besides denying God's foreknowledge of contingent events, the Socinians also denied the substitutionary atonement and the deity of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the Socinian system has been consistently rejected by the orthodox of all communions.³⁴

When we treated the biblical view, we showed that God's knowledge is *infinite* (Ps. 147:5). If God is ignorant of the free decisions a person will make tomorrow, then when tomorrow arrives He will know more than he does today. Furthermore, considering the billions of people on the face of the earth, each making many moral decisions every day, the Moral

p. 111-13.

³¹Elseth, p. 107.

³²Elseth, p. 97.

³³John Mc Clintock and James Strong, "Socimanism." *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* IX (New York: Harper and Bros., 1880), 844.

³⁴For additional information on the Socinian system of theology, the reader is advised to consult the following sources: George Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1908), pp. 317-325; William Cunningham, *Historical Theology* II (London: Billingand Sons, Ltd., 1960), 168-188; and Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma* VII (New York: Russell and Russell, 1958), 137-167.

Government god's knowledge increases astronomically as each day passes. The Moral Government god is therefore not the God of the Bible, for the biblical God possesses infinite knowledge, not a finite knowledge which is daily approaching perfection.

There are numerous examples in the Scriptures which demonstrate that God foreknew the *free* decisions men would make. Jesus told Peter in John 13:38, "Truly, truly I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny me three times." God certainly did not "freeze Peter's will" or force him to deny Christ, did He? That Peter considered his betrayal of Christ a free moral act for which he was solely responsible was evidenced by his bitter weeping (Mk. 14:72). And yet Jesus predicted this free act of betrayal down to the minutest detail. Another example is the Lord Jesus—Himself God incarnate—foretelling that Judas would betray Him. Again, no competent Bible student would deny that Judas acted out of his free will and was morally responsible for what he did. Now, did Jesus simply make an educated guess that Judas would betray Him, or did He know it because He was God? Please note that Jesus *did not say*, "I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does you will be convinced that I can make highly accurate guesses," but instead He declares:

..."He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me." From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. 35

There are numerous other examples which we cannot investigate due to limitations of space. The interested reader is advised to read *Discourses Upon the Existence and Attributes of God*, vol. I, by Stephen Charnock, pp. 441-451 and 468-469 for a more detailed treatment of this subject.

At this juncture it must be pointed out that the 19th-century evangelist Charles G. Finney clearly taught God's foreknowledge of contingent moral events. This is highly significant because the modern-day Moral Government teachers claim Finney as their own and regard themselves as his true disciples. One frequently encounters passages in their writings lavish with praise for Finney and his wonderful theology which they claim to faithfully teach. For Finney to contradict them blatantly on such an important point is an unmitigated embarrassment.

Harry Conn's abridged edition of Finney's *Systematic Theology* contains some theologically significant omissions. Missing are passages where Finney explicitly taught God's foreknowledge of contingent moral events. For example, an earlier edition contains these statements by Finney,

³⁵John 13:18-19. Gordon Olson recognizes this as a free moral act, but attempts to deal with it by asserting that Jesus simply caught on that Judas was going to betray Him when "...He perceived its [i.e., the betrayal's] development in His mind" (Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. I-13/[e]). If Christ's statement was merely based on an educated guess, as Olson appears to be saying, then He would have had no right to claim deity based on this knowledge (Jn. 13:18-19).

statements removed from Conn's abridgement:

That he [God] has necessarily and eternally possessed this [infinite] knowledge, so that he never has, and never can have, any accession to his knowledge.

Every possible thing that ever was, or will be, or can be an object of knowledge, has been necessarily and eternally known to God. If this were not true, God would be neither infinite or omniscient. ³⁶

Foreknowledge and election are not inconsistent with free agency. The elect were chosen to eternal life, upon condition that God foresaw that in the perfect exercise of their freedom, they could be induced to repent and embrace the gospel.³⁷

The elect were chosen to salvation, upon condition that God foresaw that he could secure their repentance, faith, and final perseverance. 38

Also missing from Conn's abridgment are five entire chapters where Finney passionately vindicates the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints (pp. 544ff. in the Colporter Kemp edition). Interestingly, the modern-day Moral Government teachers thoroughly reject the concept of the security of the believer.

The Moral Government teachers reject God's foreknowledge of mans' choices because they—like the rationalistic Socinians before them—cannot reconcile this knowledge with the freedom of the will. But the ability to reconcile a difficult question must *never* become the basis on which doctrine is determined. We must take the scriptural statements as they are, believe them, and be humble enough to admit that our finite, sinful understanding will never plumb the depths of God's wisdom and being. Charnock's caution is particularly appropriate:

But what if the foreknowledge of God, and the liberty of the will cannot be fully reconciled by man? Shall we therefore deny a perfection in God to support a liberty in ourselves? Shall we rather fasten ignorance upon God and accuse Him of blindness, to maintain our liberty? That God does foreknow everything and yet that there is liberty in the rational creature, are both certain; but how to fully reconcile them, may surmount the understanding of man.³⁹

³⁶Charles G. Finney, Systematic Theology, Pres. J. H. Fairchild, ed. (South Gate, Calif.: Colporter Kemp, 1944), p. 481. What Finney is saying is that events that "will be" objects of knowledge from a temporal standpoint (including the choices of free moral agents not yet made) are necessarily and eternally known to God.

³⁷Finney, p. 496.

³⁸Finney, p. 483.

³⁹Charnock, p. 450.

CHAPTER THREE The Moral Government Teaching on Our Lord's Atonement

From our previous study of the nature and attributes of God (Chapter Two) we saw that the Moral Government tree is a rotten one. In this chapter we will examine one important fruit of that tree: the Moral Government doctrine of the atonement.

The doctrine of the atonement is a central doctrine of our faith because it concerns the very person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is central because man cannot save himself. Man is utterly dead in sin and alienated from God, totally unable to make himself acceptable to God. If man is to have any hope whatever of coming into a right relationship with God, it must be because God takes the initiative and provides the way. Such a way He has provided through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

The importance of this for practical Christian living cannot be overemphasized. For example, the message that we share with non-believers in an effort to win them to Christ will be profoundly affected by our view of the salvation process. It can have eternal consequences.

The Moral Government teaching distorts the fact that man cannot save himself.¹ It is therefore imperative that we investigate the Moral Government view of the atonement in the light of biblical truth.

Part I The Biblical View of the Atonement

In discussing the biblical view of the atonement, we will treat the scriptural data in the following manner. First, we will look at the "Godward" aspects of Christ's death. This refers to the effect the atonement has on God. Secondly, we will examine the "manward" aspects of the atonement. This refers to how the atonement affects man in bringing about reconciliation and the forgiveness of sin. Then, having established the biblical view, we will contrast it with "Godward" and "manward" aspects of the Moral Government teaching on the atonement.

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¹Howard R. Elseth, *Did God Know?* (St. Paul: Calvary United Church, 1977), pp. 108, 131.

The Godward Aspects

Propitiation

As we already mentioned, God by His very nature must punish sin. This is because God is holy and His wrath is towards sin. This leaves man in a terrible predicament, since all have sinned and are guilty before the tribunal of God (Romans 3:23; I John 1:8, 10). How is man to escape the wrath of God?

The Scriptures teach that Christ's death satisfies God's wrath against sin due to the demands of His holy character. This is precisely what is entailed in the term "propitiation."

The Greek word for "propitiation" used by the New Testament writers is *hilasmos*. The word *hilasmos* and its cognates include as an integral part of their meaning the turning away of wrath.² Smeaton states:

The uniform acceptation of the word in classical Greek, when applied to the Deity, is the means of appeasing God, or averting His anger; and not a single instance to the contrary occurs in the whole Greek literature. As interpreters, therefore, our business is to abide by language, and not pervert it from its proper meaning. As this is the received import of the term in the language of Greece, without a trace of any other, we are bound to hold that it here intimates the means of averting divine anger for the sins of mankind, when Christ Himself is called our propitiation.³

Consider for a moment I John 2:1-2 which declares: "...we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation [Greek: *hilasmos*] for our sins...." Leon Morris, commenting on this verse, notes:

The point is that Christ is said to be "an Advocate with the Father," and if we sinners need an advocate with God, then obviously...our misdeeds prevail against us, [and] we are about to feel the hostility of God to all that is sinful. Under these circumstances we may well speak of Christ turning away the wrath of God, and thus *hilasmos* is a natural word in the context.

Romans 5:9 states that we are saved from the wrath of God through the death of Christ. This fits well with the idea of Christ as a propitiation. A Greek living in the first or second century reading the writings of John or Paul would understand perfectly what was intended in speaking of Christ as *bilasmos*.

Romans 3:25 states that Christ was "...displayed publicly as a propitiation [Greek: *hilasterion*] in His blood through faith...." Charles Hodge, commenting on this verse, notes:

²Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1965), p. 178.

³George Smeaton, *The Apostle's Doctrine of the Atonement* (Grand Rapids Zondervan, 1957), p. 455.

⁴Morris, pp. 206-7.

The design of setting forth Christ as a hilasterion (i.e., a propitiation) was precisely that which an expiatory sacrifice was intended to accomplish, namely, to satisfy justice, that God might be just in the forgiveness of sin. ⁵

Payment of a Debt

Punishment, by its very nature, is the payment of a debt. As A. A. Hodge points out, punishment must not be confused with chastisement. In chastisement, the sufferer endures affliction with a view towards personal betterment. Punishment, on the other hand, is administered as the just deserts which sin incurs. If Christ's suffering was punishment, then by the necessity of the case it must be the payment of a debt. Isaiah 53:5 literally reads in the Hebrew "...the punishment [Hebrew: musar] of our peace was upon Him...." Keil and Delitzsch point out that musar in this passage carries the idea of a punishment or visitation of divine justice. This interpretation best fits the entire context of Isaiah 53 (see especially vv. 4-6 and 10-12).

The New Testament also bears witness that Christ paid the debt man owes. Colossians 2:14 states that Christ "...cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

The strongest argument for the idea of Christ's death being a payment for sin comes from the meaning of the word "ransom." The Greek word translated "ransom" is *lutron*. Its meaning is "a payment for loosing; "ransom price." Leon Morris points out that in ancient Greek writings (i.e., other than the New Testament) the basic idea in redemption is the paying of a price to secure a liberation:

Circumstances may vary, for the word applies to the freeing of a prisoner of war, or a man under sentence of death because his ox has gored a man, or of articles of pawn, or of a slave seeking manumission [i.e., being liberated from slavery]. But always there is the idea of a payment of a ransom to secure the desired effect.

Matthew 20:28 states: "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be

⁵Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 508-9.

⁶A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1866), pp. 422-423.

⁷Franz Delitzsch and C. F. Keil, *Commentary on Isaiah*, II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1877), 319. In other passages musar may carry the idea of chastisement ratherthan punishment. See R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* I (Chlcago: Moody, 1980), 386-387.

⁸Morris, p. 12; Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 481.

⁹Morris, p. 29. Smeaton similarly notes, "Thus, among classical writers the word always denotes the price paid for the liberation of a prisoner of war or the price paid for a slave, on condition that the holder shall forego his rightful authority or claim to the party in his power. Classical usage so indelibly stamped this meaning upon the word, that it became the paramount idea, and could not be separated from it, even when the word was used by Jewish writers." See George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Atonement as Taught by Christ Himself* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1868), p. 152.

served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom [Greek: *lutron*] for many." A first-century Greek reading this passage would almost certainly understand it to mean that Christ gave His life as a payment for liberating those held in bondage.

Even clearer is I Peter 1:18ff., where the price of mans' redemption is said to be "the precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ:" As Morris points out, "The contrast with such prices as 'gold or silver' means that there is no possibility of missing the references to a normal process of redemption." Morris concludes:

The New Testament consistently bases our redemption on the payment of the price in the death on Calvary. $^{\rm 11}$

 \dots both inside and outside the New Testament the payment of a price is a necessary component of the redemption idea. When the New Testament speaks of redemption...it means that Christ has paid the price of our redemption. 12

There are other passages in the New Testament, besides those which directly employ the word "ransom," that clearly teach that Jesus paid the price to set man free:

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

...For you have been bought with a price... (First Corinthians 6:20).

...Worthy art thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 5:9).

All the above passages bear the same consistent testimony: Jesus Christ literally purchased our salvation with His blood.

The Manward Aspects

We have shown that the death of Christ "propitiates" or satisfies God's wrath against sin. We also demonstrated that Jesus literally paid the debt that we owed because of our sin. Having therefore considered how the atonement relates to God (i.e., propitiation and payment), it is now appropriate to turn to the "manward" aspects of Christ's death.

Justification

Christ's sacrifice provides us with an absolutely virtuous standing before God. The Scriptures teach that when we accept Jesus Christ by faith, we

¹⁰Morris, p. 39.

¹¹Morris, p. 48.

¹²Morris, p. 61.

are "justified." The verb translated "to justify" in English is *dikaioo* in the Greek. Arndt and Gingrich state that in Paul's usage, the word *dikaioo* means "to be acquitted, pronounced and treated as righteous...." In addition, the Septuagint (LXX), which is the Greek version of the Old Testament, employs the word *dikaioo* some forty-five times; in every instance it is in the context of a judicial proclamation. ¹⁴

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul teaches that God will *justify*—declare to be righteous —the ungodly through faith in Jesus Christ:

...to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies [i.e., declares to be righteous] the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness (Romans 4:5).

Therefore having been justified [i.e., declared to be righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... (Romans 5:1).

Much more then, having now been justified [i.e., declared to be righteous] by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him (Romans 5:9).

Imputation of Righteousness

How is it that God can declare the believer righteous? It is because when God looks at a believer, He sees the righteousness of Christ. The Word of God teaches that Christ's righteousness is "imputed" to us when we exercise faith in Him. The word translated "impute" in English is *logizomai* in the Greek. This word means "to reckon, impute, credit to one's account." In ancient times, this word was used of commercial transactions. ¹⁶ It is an accounting term.

The Apostle Paul definitely understood *logizomai* as an accounting term when he states in Romans 4:4, "Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited to his account [Greek: *logizetai*] as a favor but as what is due." In the same context, Paul repeatedly asserts that the righteousness of Christ is credited to the account of the believer when received in faith:

But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who declares the ungodly to be righteous [Greek: *dikaiounta*] his faith is credited to his account [Greek: *logizetai*] as righteousness... (Romans 4:5).

¹³William F. Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon ofthe New Testament* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 196.

¹⁴James Rosscup, Syllabus on Romans (Unpublished classroom notes taken at Talbot Theological Seminary, La Mirada, Calif., 1979). See Deuteronomy 25:1 for a good example of this usage of dikaioo in the LXX.

¹⁵Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 476-477; George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), p. 377.

¹⁶Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 476-477; H. W Heidland, "logizomai, logismos," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), IV, 284.

... just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God credits righteousness to his account [Greek: *logizetai*] apart from works: Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not credit to his account [Greek: *logizetai*] (Romans 4:6-8).

... For we say that "Faith was credited to Abraham's account [Greek: *elogisthe*] as righteousness (Romans 4:9).

Now not only for his sake only was it written that "It will be credited to his account" [Greek: *elogisthe*] (Romans 4:23).

but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited [Greek: logizesthai], as to those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead...(Romans 4:24).

When the meaning of *logizomai* in these passages is understood, it becomes readily apparent how God can declare the believer righteous. The imputation of Christ's righteousness through faith becomes the basis on which God declares the Christian to be righteous. Paul sums up the matter well when he states:

... I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in orderthat I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from law, but that which is through faith, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Philippians 3:8-9).

The Application of the Atonement

How do the benefits of the atonement (i.e., justification, imputation of righteousness) become a reality for the individual? The benefits of the atonement are applied when they are received by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Acts 16:31-32 the Philippian jailor asked: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Man is saved by *faith alone*, apart from works (Rom. 3:28). It is important to realize that biblical faith is not to be confused with mere intellectual assent (James 2:19). Biblical, saving faith involves *trust*¹⁷ as a defining characteristic. Furthermore, good works *follow* and are the *fruit* of saving faith (Jas. 2:14-20), but are *not* the basis of salvation. Paul sums up the matter in Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that [i.e., "that salvation"] ¹⁸ not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

For further biblical evidence that man is saved by faith alone, see the following passages: John 3:16; Romans 1:16-17; 3:20-28; 4:1-8, 13-16, 23,

¹⁷Rudolph Bultmann, "pisteuo ktl.," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), VI, 203ff.

¹⁸A. T Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, IV (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 525.

25; 5:1; 6:23; 8:30; Galatians 2:16, 21; 3:2, 3, 10 ff., 24; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-7; and I Peter 1:2-9.

Part II The Moral Government View of the Atonement

Having examined what the Word of God has to say about the atonement, we will now turn our attention to the Moral Government view. Again, the "Godward" and "manward" aspects of the atonement corresponding to this view will be considered. But first it will be helpful to get a general, overall picture of what the Moral Government theory of the atonement is.

The Moral Government theory maintains that the work of Christ "so affects man by the spectacle of the suffering borne by Him as to deter men from sin." Deterring men from sin, God is able "to forgive sin with safety to His moral government of the world." Gordon Olson states: "God may be ever so ready to forgive freely man's sin out of His great bounty of love, but cannot do so simply because there are other conditions and problems involved." In other words, the God of Moral Government is in a predicament. He would just as soon forgive sinners outright on their sincere repentance, but cannot do so because this may lead others to lose respect for Him and His moral government. The spectacle of Christ's death demonstrates God's hatred of sin before all and thus impresses "the public mind of the moral universe with a sin-deterring motive," thereby enabling God to forgive sinners without weakening His moral government. ²³

Godward Aspects of the Governmental View

In considering the biblical view of the atonement we showed that the death of Christ has an effect on God. The death of Christ propitiates or satisfies God's wrath against sin. Christ's suffering pays a debt that we owe. A true atonement must accomplish these things, because sin *must* be punished and the debt *must* be paid. God's very nature demands that it be so; it could not be otherwise. Christ at Calvary took on Himself our

7. A. Houge, pp. 422-3

¹⁹P. Schaff and J. J. Herzog, *The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, I (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977 rpt. with supplemental volumes), 353.

²⁰Gordon C, Olson, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Franklin Park, III.: Bible Research Fellowship, 1980), p. VIII-6.

²¹Gordon C. Olson, *Sharing Your Faith* (Chicago: Bible Research Fellowship, 1976), p. V7/b.

²²A. A. Hodge, pp. 422-3

²³Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. VI-3 to VI-3/3(1).

punishment and paid our debt vicariously (i.e., in our place; as a substitute). It is on this basis, according to the biblical view, that God provides forgiveness of sins.

In the Moral Government theory of the atonement, there are no real "Godward" aspects in the sense mentioned earlier. There is no principle in the Moral Government God which must be satisfied before He can forgive sin. There is no need for payment to be made for sin. As mentioned in the brief overview, the Moral Government God would just as soon "forgive and forget" the sins of those who are sorry for them. The only reason He cannot do so is because of the bad side effects such an action would have on his moral government. The death of Christ is therefore simply a theatrical display in the Moral Government system, calculated to instill a fear of sinning by demonstrating its awfulness and to break up man's heart in sorrowful penitence.

The Moral Government God Requires No Propitiation

This is made clear by the following quote from Gordon Olson. He states that in God there is: "...a subduing of all personal righteous wrath rather than a full execution of it, a bypassing of personal justice rather than a demanding of punishment..." George Otis Jr. bluntly asserts: "Contrary to warped speculation, God was never worried about receiving some personal satisfaction for the hurt sin caused Him." ²⁵

These statements are not in harmony with the Word of God, for the death of Christ propitiates (i.e., satisfies) God's wrath against sin (I Jn. 2:2; Rom. 3:25).

The Moral Government God Requires No Payment for Sin

Since the Moral Government God requires no propitiation, it is easy to believe that he would not require a payment either. Gordon Olson states, "The sacrifice of Christ is not the payment of a debt, nor is it a complete satisfaction of justice for sin."²⁶

George Otis Jr. goes so far as to state that the teaching that Jesus paid for man's sin is a deception, and has caused immeasurable damage to the church:

One of the deceivers' most damaging deceptions centers around—of all events—the atonement....The idea perpetrated here probably is derived from the words "ransom" and "redeem" and it is that Jesus paid for our sins.²⁷

The assertion that Jesus paid for our sins has caused

²⁵George Otis Jr., *The God They Never Knew* (Van Nuys: Bible Voice, 1978), p. 97.

²⁴Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. VI-1.

²⁶Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, Historical Opinions, p. 2.

²⁷Otis; p. 26; emphasis his.

immeasurable damage to the Body of Christ. 28

If Otis is correct, then Jesus Christ Himself must be the biggest deceiver of all, for He stated that He came to give His life "...a ransom price in the place of many" (Matt. 20:18). Furthermore, the blame must fall squarely on His Apostles for causing "immeasurable damage to the Body of Christ;" for it was they that taught that Jesus *purchased salvation with His blood* (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 1:18; Rev. 5:9; I Cor. 6:20).

Manward Aspects of the Governmental View

Having considered the Godward aspects of the Moral Government teaching on the atonement (or lack thereof), it is now appropriate to investigate the "manward" aspects of the governmental view.

The Atonement Makes a Moral Impression

In the Moral Government system, the atonement is a theatrical display calculated to evoke a certain response from man. It is asserted that unrepentant sinners have a public testimony of the Moral Governor's hatred of sin. ²⁹ It also provides a force of humiliation to draw sinners to repentance as they consider the sufferings of Christ. ³⁰

In these assertions the governmental theory approaches some truth. The atonement does demonstrate God's hatred of sin. Men are (or ought to be) humbled as they view the spectacle of the death of Christ. The problem here concerns those elements of the atonement *denied* by adherents of the governmental view—elements clearly found in Scripture.

Justification and Imputation of Righteousness Denied

In the treatment of the biblical view, we showed that God justifies—declares to be righteous—those who trust Jesus Christ. This fact is denied by adherents of the governmental view.³¹ In the study of the biblical view we further demonstrated that the crediting of Christ's righteousness to our accounts forms the basis on which God declares us righteous; God sees us in Christ's righteousness. The Moral Government view of the atonement denies that Christ's righteousness can be credited to our accounts. Therefore, the Moral Government teaching undermines the very basis on which justification takes place. Gordon Olson writes, "The active obedience or holiness of Christ…is not legally imputed to the believer."³²

²⁹Olson, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. VIII-4.

³²Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, Historical Opinions, p. 2.

²⁸Otis, p. 93; emphasis his.

³⁰Olson, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. VIII-5.

³¹Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. V-4.

Speaking along the same lines, George Otis Jr. asserts:

The theological doctrine of "imputed righteousness" has been grossly distorted in our day. We are told that God looks at us through the blood of Christ—and sees us as righteous, regardless of our actual state.

Let's stop kidding ourselves. God sees us exactly the way we are 33

The notion that God enjoys fellowship with those who are sinners by glancing at Christ's righteousness beside Him is abstract, inconceivable, unrealistic and requires long writings to explain! 34

If this is the teaching of the true gospel, Paul ought to have said something like: "...and I want to be found in *myself*, *not having* a righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, but having *my own* righteousness...." Instead, Paul states precisely the opposite in Philippians 3:8-9.

If it is true that God "sees us exactly the way we are," in the sense that God does not look at believers through the blood of Christ, then even believers are in big trouble, for Romans 3:23 reads literally in the Greek:

For all sinned and are continually falling short [Greek: housterountai—present tense, "to be continually falling short"] of the glory of God.

Fortunately, Paul adds verse 24 which states that even as the believer is falling short he is: "...being declared righteous [Greek: dikaioumenoi] as a free gift by His grace..." 35

Moral Government Salvation Is by Works

Since the righteousness of Christ cannot be credited to another's account, according to Moral Government, then it necessarily follows that if a person is to obtain righteousness he must get it from somewhere else. In Moral Government, a person must earn his salvation through his own works-righteousness.

In the Moral Government system, *before* a person becomes a candidate for salvation he must *first* attain a degree of holiness, perhaps even sinless perfection. George Otis Jr. asserts that "repentance" is the "prerequisite" to salvation, ³⁶ (a point with which Scripture agrees), but then goes on to define "repentance" as a cessation of sinning ³⁷ (contrary to the meaning of the word and to its usage in Scripture). ³⁸ Likewise, Gordon Olson teaches

³⁴Otis, p. 142.

³³Otis, p. 43.

³⁵See Lenski's *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1936), pp. 249-250 for a detailed treatment of this verse.

³⁶Otis, p. 139.

³⁷Otis, p. 155.

 $^{^{38}}$ See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* III (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), p. 372 for a

that a prior condition to eternal life is the elimination of all sin in this life of "probation":

> Sin and happiness are totally incompatible. The eternal happiness of heaven can only become a reality, therefore, by the elimination of all sin. Where is sin eliminated? We have seen that all sin attaches to the heart, man's inner-most being, and thus will not be eliminated in the process of physical death. There must be repentance somewhere. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Ro. 21:27). Thus repentance must take place in this life of probation.³⁹

In other words, it is by works (erroneously termed "repentance") that a person first makes himself acceptable to God. 40

Unlike the biblical view, it is denied that all one need to do to be saved is accept Christ. Instead, the sinner must first clean up his life before God will have anything to do with him. As George Otis Jr. asserts:

> Our trite little formula of "just accept Jesus" has produced countless spiritual stillbirths and inoculated millions of others against the true gospel.... It is not the matter of whether or not we "accept" Christ but whether Christ accepts us-that is the crucial issue. Will, indeed, Christ accept us the way we are as so many today infer? Will the King of kings come in to rule over a garbage dump? The notion that the sinner's condition is irrelevant at salvation only reveals the extent of our ignorance of God and the nature of salvation. 41

If Otis' assertion is true, then Paul the Apostle was "ignorant of God and the nature of salvation," for it was Paul who stated:

> For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6, 8; emphasis mine).

Furthermore, the Bible indicates that the "trite little formula" of 'just accept Jesus" is actually the power of God unto salvation. The Apostle John states, "But to as many as accepted Him [Greek: elabon—to accept⁴²], to them He gave the right to become children of God...." (John 1:12).

It is a revolting insult to the work of Christ on Calvary to assert that a person must first "cease from sinning" to qualify for the Kingdom of Heaven. The good works of a Christian are the fruit of a salvation which has already taken place. God saves not because a person has done any good

good discussion of metanoia.

³⁹Olson, Sharing Your Faith, p. VIII-3; emphasis added.

 $^{^{}m 40}$ It is difficult to understand how the Moral Government teachers can consider repentance to be a work (i.e., a "cessation of sinning") when John the Baptist's words on this subject are so resoundingly clear: "Bring forth fruit [i.e., works] in keeping with repentance [i.e., the inward change of attitude]" (Matt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8). Repentance is a change of mind which results in changed behavior, but is not the change in behavior itself; it is an attitude and component part of faith. Were repenatnce a work, John would simply have declared, "Bring forth repentance." This same obvious distinction is also found in Acts 26:20.

⁴¹Otis, p. 141.

⁴²Gerhard Delling, "lambano," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1978), IV, 6.

works (i.e., "ceased from sinning"), but in order that one should perform good works:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Concluding Thoughts About the Governmental View of the Atonement

As this section has demonstrated, the governmental theory of the atonement cannot stand under the careful scrutiny of Scripture. This is certainly the decisive reason for rejecting it. But besides the overwhelming biblical evidence against the governmental theory there are serious philosophical flaws as well.

A major problem with the governmental view is that it destroys any ontological necessity for the atonement.⁴³ In other words, there is nothing in the nature of God that demands a true atonement for sin. Since the goals of the governmental atonement are to draw man to sorrowful repentance, prevent future sinning, and demonstrate God's displeasure at sin, God could theoretically have substituted any measure that would accomplish this. This seriously deprecates the person and work of Christ.

There is yet another serious flaw. If the atonement is to be a public demonstration of God's displeasure at sin, how does the crucifixion of an innocent man accomplish this end? Without a real judicial imputation the sufferings of Jesus demonstrate precisely the *opposite*, namely, that it is the *spotlessly innocent* who suffer. Unless Christ suffered the penalty of the law in man's stead, the "display" afforded by the atonement displays God's injustice if it displays anything. Indeed, had God merely wanted to provide an example of what sin deserves, He ought to have taken the worst sinner He could find and punish him in the presence of all. Buswell's recounts an insightful illustration that clearly shows how unjust the Moral Government theory of the atonement is:

In a certain community in England someone had been stealing sheep. The forces of the law were unable to apprehend the thief. A certain farmer was brought before the judge accused of being the thief, but he established his innocence of any connection with the offense, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Thereupon the judge said, "You are an innocent man, but someone has been stealing sheep. I must show to this community what the law would do to a sheep thief." Then the judge committed the innocent man to a period of incarceration, "to uphold public justice."

⁴³See Buswell, II, 96.

But what justice!⁴⁴

⁴⁴Buswell, II, 96. See also Emery H. Bancroft, *Elemental Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), p. 125 for a similar criticism.

CHAPTER FOUR The Moral Government Teaching on Man and Sin

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the Moral Government teaching of man and sin with the teaching of Scripture. This topic is intimately related to the discussion of salvation in the previous section because the extent to which man is affected by sin will determine the nature of the salvation God must provide. Indeed, if man is truly dead in sin (Eph. 2:1ff.), then he is totally unable to perform any action to commend himself to God (Rom. 8:7-8). This means that man is utterly dependent on the grace of God for the regeneration only He can effect. On the other hand, if man is capable of fulfilling God's requirements should he so choose, then God must merely persuade man to do what he was able to do all along: save himself.

We showed in the last chapter that the Moral Government "atonement" is a theatrical display which motivates man to save himself by exercising his free will in abandoning sin. Implicit in this is an optimistically mancentered doctrine of sin (hamartiology) and man (anthropology); the Moral Government teaching espouses an unrealistically high view of man's native ability to perform good. This view can have disastrous consequences in personal evangelism. If men are told to exercise a supposed "freedom" they do not possess in order to be saved, salvation may not take place at all.

Before examining the Moral Government teaching on man and sin, we will look at the biblical view of these two doctrines. Having established the biblical view as the standard, we will critically analyze the governmental position from this perspective in Part II.

Part I The Biblical View of Man and Sin

Definition of Terms

It is essential to define terminology at the outset of any theological or

philosophical discussion. A proper consideration of man as a sinner is no exception. It is paramount to define in at least a cursory fashion what is meant by "sin" in general and "original sin" in specific.

Sin

The Scriptures employ a variety of Greek and Hebrew terms which are rendered "sin" in the English. The most common and all-inclusive word for sin in the Greek New Testament is *hamartia*, which means "every departure from the way of righteousness, both human and divine."

With this understanding of *hamartia* in mind, Buswell's comprehensive definition of sin is apt: "Sin may then be defined ultimately as anything in the creature which does not express, or which is contrary to, the holy character of the Creator." ³

This "lack of conformity" might express itself in many ways. It may manifest itself in deliberate transgressions (I Jn. 3:4), sins of ignorance (Lev. 5:15), sins of omission (Jas. 4:17), and a sinful bias or tendency (I Jn. 1:8; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:18, 20; Eph. 2:1).

Original Sin

The term "original sin" as it is generally used includes "both the judicial guilt and the actual corruption of humanity which results from Adam's sin." We will consider both of these aspects of original sin in our discussion of the subject.

Results of the First Man's Sin

When Adam and Eve sinned against God in the garden, they fell from their original position of righteousness and communion with God. The Scriptures teach that because they were "the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed" to all their posterity. Furthermore, their death and corrupt natures were likewise conveyed to all their descendants. We will first consider the biblical teaching on the imputation of Adamic guilt to his posterity. Then, we will see what the Scriptures say about the sinful

¹For a detailed discussion of the various Greek words translated "sin," see Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), pp. 239-240. For an excellent discussion of the Hebrew words translated "sin," see Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 76-85. He also treats the New Testament words for sin on pp. 85-86.

²William F. Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon ofthe New Testament* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 42.

³J. Oliver Buswell, Jr, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, I (GrandRapids Zondervan, 1979), 264.

⁴See Buswell, I, 285.

⁵Westminster Confession, Chapter VI, 3.

nature of man.

The Imputation of Adamic Guilt to Posterity

What does it mean when we say that the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity? Is the teaching biblical?⁶

When it is stated that Adam's sin is "imputed" to his posterity, it is meant that the judicial guilt of Adam's sin is held against their accounts. This is analogous to Christ's righteousness being "imputed" to the believer. Hodge explains:

...in the imputation of Adam's sin to us, of our sins to Christ, and of Christ's righteousness to believers, the nature of imputation is the same, so that the one case illustrates the others. When it is said that our sins were imputed to Christ, or that He bore our sins,...All that is meant is that He assumed, in the language of the older theologians, "our law-place." He undertook to answer the demands of justice for the sins of men, or, as it is expressed by the Apostle, to be made a curse for them....When, therefore, God pronounces the unrighteous to be righteous, He does not declare them to be what they are not. He simply declares that their debt to justice has been paid by another. And when it is said that the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, [it means] simply that in virtue of the union between him and his descendants, his sin is the judicial ground of the condemnation of his race, precisely as the righteousness of Christ is the judicial ground of the justification of his people.

Proof of the doctrine. Romans 5:12-21 clearly teaches that mankind is judicially liable for Adam's sin. Paul explicitly states, "...through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men" (Rom. 5:18). It is impossible to do justice to these words unless we understand them as teaching that all men are condemned through the sin of Adam.

Death

Death is another result of Adam's sin: both for himself and his descendants. This is integrally related to the point above, viz. that mankind is under condemnation for Adam's sin. In the opening chapters of Genesis, God told Adam that disobedience would receive the penalty of death: "...but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). That all

⁶For an erudite and careful treatment of this subject, see John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1959). Especially germane to this discussion is his section on "The Pelagian View" (pp. 9-12).

^{&#}x27;Hodge, II, 195. Some (like Shedd) see the basis for this "realistically," i.e., that Adam's descendants were "seminally present" in Adam's loins and somehow participated in the act. See W. G. T Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 186 ff. Others (like Hodge) take the "federal" view, which states that Adam, as the federal head of the human race, acted in proxy for his descendants as their representative. Though the present writer favors the federal view, it lies outside the scope of this treatment to discuss the exact mechanics of how we become guilty for Adam's sin. For here it is sufficient to note that both the realistic and federal view agree that the guilt of Adam's sin is chargeable to his posterity. On *this* point sound, biblical theologians are in agreement.

men die is proof that they receive the same consequence as Adam. That all men receive this consequence (death) is indisputable proof that all men are constituted judicially guilty for Adam's transgression.

"Death" in the Scriptures refers primarily to *separation*. The Scriptures speak of death in three senses: physical death, spiritual death, and "the second death." Physical death refers to the separation of man's immaterial nature (i.e., soul or spirit) from his material body. In the second instance, spiritual death concerns the separation of man from fellowship with God and eternal spiritual life (cf. Eph. 2:1, 5). Finally, "the second death" spoken of in Revelation 20:6, 14 is permanent banishment in the lake of fire, characterized by eternal alienation from the presence of God. Though believers before conversion were in a state properly called "spiritual death" (Eph. 2:1) and still experience physical death, God's children through faith in Christ will never taste "the second death" (Rev. 2:11; cf. I Jn. 5:5).

Proof that all die in Adam. Again, the words of the Apostle in Romans 5 are exceedingly clear. Paul states that "...by the transgression of one the many died" (v. 15). It is impossible to escape the force of these words.

Sin Nature

Few contest that actions may be sinful. But it is important to realize that sin is more than sinful acts. Sin is also a disposition or abiding state of character. Buswell notes: "One of the most difficult lessons for us to learn is that sin is not only what we do, but also what we are. Sin, in the form of corruption, is in our very nature."

When it is asserted that man is sinful "by nature" it is meant that man has a propensity or radical bias toward sin. This means that apart from any external influence (i.e., grace) men inevitably gravitate toward sin:

The word nature in such forms of speech always stands opposed to what is acquired, or superinduced, or to what is due to *ab extra* influence or inward development. Paul says that he and Peter were by nature Jews, i.e., they were Jews by birth, not by proselytism. He says the Gentiles do by nature the things of the law; i.e., in virtue of their internal constitution, not by external instruction. The gods of the heathen, he says, are by nature no gods. They are such only in the opinions of men. In classic literature as in ordinary language, to say that men are by nature proud, or cruel, or just, always means that the predicate is due to them in virtue of their natural constitution or condition, and not simply on account of their conduct or acquired character....He [Paul] simply asserts that we are the children of wrath *by nature*; that is, as we were born. We are born in a state of sin and condemnation.

⁸Buswell, I, 281.

⁹Buswell, I, 286.

¹⁰ Hodge, II, 243.

The acts of sin a person performs flow from and are the fruit of his sinful nature. Man sins because he is a sinner, much as a dog barks because it is a dog. Or, to use the analogy of our Lord, the *fruit* of a tree (deeds) are a result of the *kind* of tree it is (nature). Thiessen elucidates this point cogently:

This universal sinfulness is not limited to acts of sin; it includes also the possession of a sinful nature. The Scriptures refer the sinful acts and inclinations to their source, the corrupt nature. "There is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit...the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil" (Luke 6:43-45); "how can ye, being evil, speak good things?" (Matt. 12:34). All men are declared to be by nature "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3);....

Proof that man has a sin nature. The Bible supplies abundant testimony to the corruption of man's heart. Jeremiah 17:9 declares that the "heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick:" John speaks of sin as an abiding state characteristic of all men (even himself—note the plural "we"!) (I Jn. 1:8). ¹² Paul describes unregenerate men as "dead in sin" and "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:1-3). He recognizes that even in himself "dwells no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). David likewise bewails his native depravity, tracing it back to the earliest motions of life: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). There is overwhelming biblical evidence that man since the fall is radically depraved. ¹³

Total Depravity and Total Inability

When Adam sinned he became "wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body." This is generally what is meant by the term "total depravity." When man's depravity is described as "total" it means that his depravity extends to every aspect of his humanity; no part of his being escaped the harmful effects of the fall. Because of his total depravity, unsaved man finds himself totally unable to perform any spiritual good. This concept finds expression in the biblical teaching of "total inability." This means that unsaved men are "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good." They are totally unable to

¹¹Henry Clarence Thiessen, Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), p. 260.

¹² Commenting on the nominal (i.e., noun) form of the word "sin" used in this verse, Westcott notes: "Thus "to have sin' is distinguished from "to sin' as the sinful principle is distinguished from the sinful act in itself." Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (London: Mac Millan, 1883), p. 22. Also note that *hamartia* ("sin") in this verse is anarthrous (i.e., without the word "the" in front of it), meaning that John is not talking about any particular sin but about a *quality* or *nature* of sin.

¹³Besides the verses treated above, see also Genesis 6:5, 6; 8:21; Job 14:4; 15:14; Prov. 22:15; Jeremiah 17:9; Ecclesiastes 8:11; 9:3; Matthew 7:16-19; 12:33; and Romans 5:12.

¹⁴Westminster Confession, Chapter VI, 2.

¹⁵Westminster Confession, Chapter VI, 4.

perform anything which would commend them to God and are in utter need of His saving grace.

Some mistakenly assume that "total depravity" means all men are as depraved as they can possibly be. But this is certainly an erroneous understanding of the term. Total depravity does *not* mean "that all men are equally wicked; nor that any man is as thoroughly corrupt as it is possible for a man to be; nor that men are destitute of all moral virtues. The Scriptures recognize the fact...that men, to a greater or lesser degree, are honest in their dealings," can behave uprightly in their conduct, etc. "All this is perfectly consistent with the Scriptural doctrine of total depravity," because even in such "upright" men there is "the entire absence of holiness" and no trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. "There is common to all men a total alienation of the soul from God so that no unrenewed man either understands or seeks after God; no such man ever makes God his portion, or God's glory the end of his being." None of their externally good deeds are ever done out of a desire to please God. "The apostasy from God is total or complete." ¹⁶

In other words, when we focus on "the things of the Spirit;' the unsaved are both unable and unwilling to please God. An unregenerate man can be externally kind and just, and meet his obligations so as to find favor with his fellow man. Furthermore, unsaved men can do deeds which are good as to the matter of the deed itself, such as saving a drowning child. But the unsaved cannot do these acts out of an attitude of faith and love for God, which is essential to true holiness (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6). The actions themselves may be good, but the motives by which they are determined render them incapable of meeting the approval of an infinitely holy God.

Proof of total depravity/inability. The Scriptures resoundingly affirm the total inability of sinful man. Paul states that "the natural man...cannot understand the things of God, because they are spiritually appraised" (I Cor. 2:14). He again states in Romans 8:7 that the mind set on the flesh is *not able* to be subject to the law of God. Notice that Paul does not merely state that the unsaved are *unwilling* to submit themselves to God (though they certainly are unwilling), but that they are *unable*. The Apostle bemoans his own inability when he states, "for the wishing in me is present, but the doing of the good is not" (Rom. 7:18). The Lord Jesus Himself clearly corroborated this teaching when He stated: "apart from Me you can do nothing." A brief portion of Augustine's eloquent sermon on this statement in John 15:5 bears repeating:

...when He [i.e., Jesus] was speaking about good works, i.e., about the fruits of the twigs and branches, He did not say, "Without me, indeed, you can do something, but you will do it more easily with me;" He did not say, "You can make your fruit without me, but more richly

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¹⁶See Hodge, II, 233-234.

with me." He did not say this! Read what He said: it is the holy gospel—bow the proud necks! Augustine does not say this: the Lord says it. What says the Lord? "Without me you can do *nothing*"! ¹⁷

As if this abundant biblical testimony is not enough, every man knows in his conscience that he is unable to meet perfectly God's righteous requirements:

The thing to be done is to turn from sin to holiness; to love God perfectly and our neighbour as ourselves; to perform every duty without defect or omission, and keep ourselves from all sin of thought, word, or deed, of heart or life. Can any man do this? Does any man need argument to convince him that he cannot do it? He knows two things as clearly and as surely as he knows his own existence: first, that he is bound to be morally perfect, to keep all God's commands, to have all right feelings in constant exercise as the occasion calls for them, and to avoid all sin in feeling as well as in act; and secondly, that he can no more do this than he can raise the dead. ¹⁸

The Provision for Original Sin

It is important for us to realize that God has made ample provision for extricating man from the terrible predicament of original sin. God has provided complete salvation in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Romans 5:12-21 Paul the Apostle discusses the parallel between the results of Adam's sin and the results of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Where the sin of Adam resulted in condemnation to all men, the act of Christ's atoning righteousness provides the remedy for all.

At this juncture it is significant to note an important difference between Adam's sin and the work of Christ. All men die in Adam; this is not a matter of choice (v. 12). In the case of Christ's work, it is necessary to *receive* the abundance of grace (v. 17). Christ's sacrifice paid for all the sins of men *provisionally*. In order for this sacrifice to be efficacious (i.e., actual or effective), it is necessary for the sinner to *appropriate* the payment through faith. ¹⁹

Objections to the Doctrine of Original Sin

Since the time of the heretic Pelagius, the doctrine of original sin has

¹⁷Warfield, "Studies in Tertullian and Augustine," p. 357; quoting Augustine, "Against the Manicheans Openly, but Tacitly Against the Pelagians" [Sermon 153].

¹⁸Hodge, II, 271.

¹⁹Note that even the ability to come to Christ as Savior (i.e., appropriate the gift) is in itself a work of grace and the gift of God (Jn. 6:37, 44, 65; Acts 13:48)!

been bitterly assailed.²⁰ Some have rejected the doctrine as "harsh," claiming it both unfair and contrary to the free moral agency of man.

The Doctrine of Original Sin Allegedly Unfair

Some say the doctrine of original sin makes God unfair because He condemns men wholesale for an act in which they had no say. How can God hold men accountable for a sin committed by another? Must not every man answer for his sins alone?

It is important to point out that it is not for us to determine what is "fair" or "unfair" for God to do. Whatever God does must be right. If He permits men to be born in sin—as the Scriptures decisively assert—then this fact must be consistent with His perfect justice and holiness.²¹

Furthermore, our own experience forces us to admit that we are born with a bias to sin or—at the very least—are born "in a state which inevitably leads to [our] becoming sinful and miserable." Every person knows this fact as certain as he knows he is a human being; no amount of "theologizing" or rationalizing will alter the fact.

At this juncture one might object, "But do not the Scriptures themselves contradict the teaching of original sin? After all: Ezekiel 18:20 states, 'The Son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity....' Is this not clear proof that God will not punish Adam's descendants for the sin of their forefather?"

The answer to this is that the sin of Adam was a *unique* case. Thiessen points out that the sin of Adam in taking the fruit was a *single* and *permanent* revolt against God. It is *this* sin that is imputed to posterity. ²³ Not only was Adam's sin unique, but Adam himself stood in a unique relation to all his descendants as the federal head of the race. Adam was in a position to determine the status of all who would descend from him. No other man since has been in such a position.

Though Adam undoubtedly committed many other sinful acts after he took the fruit, none of these are chargeable to his descendants. The Scriptures explicitly state that it is this *one* offence of Adam that is imputed to his descendants (Rom. 5:16, 18). Therefore, Ezekiel 18 has nothing whatever to do with this *sui generis* (i.e., "altogether unique") case.

If God is unfair for imputing the sin of Adam to all men, then is He not equally "unfair" in crediting the righteousness of Christ to the account of

²⁰Pelagius was a fifth century heretic who taught that man is not sinful by nature and that he can live without sin by virtue of his God-given "free will:" He was condemned by the church at the Synods of Mileve and Carthage (416 A.D.) and by the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.).

²¹See Hodge, II, 252.

²²Hodge, II, 252.

²³Thiessen, p. 260.

those who believe? Yet to protest against this arrangement as "unfair" is to subvert what the Bible says about our Lord's blessed atonement (see Chapter Three) and the scriptural teaching of justification by faith!

Buswell's insightful comment bears repeating:

Whereas the doctrine of original sin might seem hard and unreasonable, and the unconvicted heart of the natural man may reject it, yet the fact that I am offered the privilege of choosing another representative, and repudiating the former, makes it less difficult for me to accept the plain teaching of Romans 5:12-21.

The Doctrine of Original Sin Allegedly Destroys Free Will

It is further argued by some that the doctrine of original sin "destroys the free agency of man."²⁵ If men are born into the world with a corrupt nature which "inevitably" leads them to commit sinful acts, "men cease to be free in performing those acts." How can God hold men responsible for doing what they were compelled to do?

In answer to this it is sufficient to note, with Hodge, "that the doctrine of original sin supposes men to have the same kind and degree of liberty in sinning under the influence of a corrupt nature, that saints and angels have in acting rightly under the influence of a holy nature." Just as God is free to act according to His holy character and evil angels uniformly choose evil in harmony with their evil natures, men are free to act in a manner consonant with their corrupt natures. "To act according to its nature is the only liberty which belongs to any created being." ²⁶

Those who deny the doctrine of original sin generally commit the Pelagian error in assuming that the power to choose contrary (i.e., good as well as evil) is essential to free moral agency and that ability limits responsibility. These ideas were strongly espoused by the notorious heretic Pelagius in the fifth century. ²⁷ If this erroneous definition of "freedom" is true, then God is the least free of all! In Chapter 2 we already demonstrated that God not only *does not* sin but in fact *cannot* sin. God certainly has free choice, but He exercises His choice in choosing good in accordance with His immaculately holy nature.

Not only do the Scriptures decisively reject the mistaken notions of Pelagius but the common consciousness of every honest man does as well. It is certainly *not true* that our obligation is limited by our ability. "Every man knows that he is bound to be better than he is, and better than he can

²⁴Buswell, I, 296.

²⁵Hodge treats this objection in II, 254.

²⁶Hodae, II. 254.

²⁷Warfield quotes Pelagius: "...Pelagius' definition in the 'Confession of Faith, that he sent to Innocent: 'We say that man is always able both to sin and not to sin, so as that we may confess that we have free will." See Benjamin B. Warfield, "Studies in Tertullian and Augustine," *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, IV (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 rpt.), 294.

make himself' through sheer will power.²⁸ We recognize the obligation to be free from all sin, and absolutely conformed to the perfect law of God. Yet who is so egotistical and blind that he dare say he is sinless? Did Paul ever make such a claim (see Phil. 3:12)? Did the Apostle James?²⁹ Or did John, the beloved disciple of our Lord?³⁰ Could a man's conscience be so seared that he dare claim a perfection these magnificent saints of God never dared ascribe to themselves?

Concluding Statement on the Doctrine of Original Sin

The solution to the problem of man's sinfulness and misery is not without difficulties. This problem has vexed the greatest theological minds throughout history; it is not disposed of lightly. Yet, this section has presented what Scripture represents as the answer to the dilemma. Scripture represents the truth an. 17:17), and as Hodge cogently declares, the scriptural solution "is far more satisfactory to the reason, the heart, and the conscience, than any other solution which the ingenuity of man has ever suggested."³¹

Part II The Moral Government View of Man and Sin

In this section we will compare the Moral Government teaching on man and sin with the doctrinal foundation laid in Part I of this chapter.

Moral Government Definition of Sin

When treating the biblical view, we noted that sin is any lack of conformity to the character of God. We further noted that this lack of conformity might take the form of sins of ignorance and a sinful nature as well as deliberate acts of transgression.

The Moral Government teaching denies that anything other than transgression of known law is properly sin. In the words of Gordon Olson, 'All sin consists in sinning—there can be no moral character but in

²⁹Jas. 3:2; note the "we."

²⁸Hodge, II, 155.

³⁰I Jn. 1:8; again note the "we."

³¹Hodge, II, 196.

moral acts."32 Likewise, George Otis Jr. states, "We search in vain for any evidence that would indicate that sin is a substance or anything other than a wrong moral choice."33 Not only is sin limited to acts, but deliberate and willful acts. As Pratney states, "IF it [i.e., the mind] should not know the choice made is bad, it is NOT SIN to the individual!"34 Pratney gives a more elaborate statement of the teaching:

> There is therefore no such thing as "unconscious" sin. God holds us responsible for all the light we have and are able to get-no more, no less. There is no sin that we know nothing at all about that God will judge us for....35

This Moral Government understanding of sin is unbiblical. The Moral Government doctrine cannot be reconciled with the biblical concept of sins of ignorance. Examples from the lives of Paul and Jesus are worthy of note. When Jesus interceded for those crucifying Him He prayed, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Were Jesus a Moral Government (or Pelagian) adherent, He would have said, "No need to forgive these men, Father. They know not what they do, and hence their action is not of the nature of sin and does not properly require forgiveness." Note also how Paul declares that he is to be reckoned "the chiefest of sinners" because he "persecuted the church of God in ignorance" (I Tim. 1:13-15). Even Paul at the height of his ministry had to say, "I am aware of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the One who examines me is the Lord" (I Cor. 4:4). Note that Paul did not say, "...because of this [ignorance] I am acquitted, for God only holds me responsible for the light that I have," but instead stated precisely the opposite.

In limiting sin only to overt acts, the Moral Government teaching rules out the possibility of sin being a principle or disposition of nature. The Moral Government teachers deny that man has a sinful nature from which the actual transgressions spring. This will be treated in more detail under the heading entitled "Moral Government Denies the Sin Nature." At this point it is sufficient to note that the Moral Government definition of sin offers little to distinguish it from rank Pelagianism.³⁶

³⁵Pratney, p. 84.

³²Gordon C. Olson, *Sharing Your Faith* (Franklin Park, III.: Bible Research Fellowship, 1976), page opposite that labelled IV-6.

³³George Otis, Jr., *The God They Never Knew* (Van Nuys: Bible Voice Publishers, 1978), p. 63.

³⁴Winkie Pratney, *Youth Aflame* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1983) p. 83.

³⁶Benjamin Warfield in *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*, p. 296, observes, "They [the Pelagians] appear not to have risen above the essentially heathen view which had no notion of holiness apart from a series of acts of holiness, or of sin apart from a like series of sinful acts....Dr. Matheson finely says (Expositor, i. ix. 21, 1879), 'There is the same difference between the Christian and the Pagan idea of Prayer as there is between the Christian and Pagan idea of sin. Paganism knows nothing of sin, it knows only of sins: it has no conception of the principle of evil; it comprehends only a collection of evil acts.' This is Pelagianism too." This statement similarly describes the Moral Government teaching.

A Brief Sketch of the Moral Government View of Original Sin

On the question of original sin, the Moral Government teaching significantly departs from even a radical Arminian position.³⁷ It is denied that men receive depraved moral natures from Adam. Olson states:

Moral depravity...is always a voluntary development....The universality of sin in the world is not to be accounted for, therefore, by some fixed causation in our personality inherited by birth.... 38

Holiness and sin are free voluntary acts of will or states of mind, and, although strongly influenced, are not caused by any internal force of nature, tendency, or instinct, nor by persuasion from external sources.³⁹

All that is allowed is a *physical* deterioration resulting from Adam's first transgression. This physical deterioration makes the demands of the flesh more demanding than they might otherwise be, and in that sense right action is rendered difficult. As Pratney states:

Physical depravity gives great power to temptation. We cannot help our physical nature, and God does not *condemn* us for being born in such a condition without choice. 40

We are all victims of physical depravity and death, circumstances and environments that provide powerful temptations to sin, and *all men* follow the wrong choice of our first parents. Our own family lines, and ultimately Adam himself, are responsible for our PHYSICAL depravity. But this is, in itself, *not* sin. It is not the direct CAUSE of sin, so that we sin from some sort of physical *necessity*, but simply the weakened constitution and strong desires that give sin power and make men open to the tug of temptation. ⁴¹

If men are not born with corrupt hearts, how is the universal depravity of the human race to be accounted for? Pratney gives this analysis:

In these circumstances, the natural, inherited appetites are *first* developed; and the child's natural love of conscious freedom begins to express itself. The feelings develop *long* before the *reason*, and both are deeply entrenched before the spirit begins to awaken to the claims of God....Since the feelings develop *before* the reason acconscience, the will begins to form the *habit* of *obeying desire*, which deepens every day. The obvious consequence is that self indulgence becomes the *master principle* in the soul of the child long before it can understand that this self indulgence will interfere with the right of

⁴¹Pratney, p. 76.

³⁷Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) lived after the time of Calvin and reacted against what he perceived to be the rigid Calvinism of his day. Arminius emphasized the free will of man and his ability to "cooperate" with the grace of God in salvation. The Moral Government teaching has gone far beyond what even the most radical Arminians taught about "free will."

³⁸Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. IV 4, 5.

³⁹Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. 11 1-1.

⁴⁰Pratney, p. 94.

happiness of others. This repeated bias grows *stronger* each day before a knowledge of right or duty could possibly have entered the mind. Finally, the moment of true *moral responsibility* arrives. The child is now old enough to understand wrong....Does the child approach this test in a perfectly *neutral* state? If Adam, in the maturity of his reason, with full consciousness of the morality of his actions could give in to such temptation, is there any doubt that a *child* will not?⁴²

In other words, an infant's disordered physiology "gets the jump" on his moral nature. The demands of his bodily appetites cry out louder than if Adam (and his parents) had not sinned; the gratification of these impulses becomes a firmly entrenched habit before the dawning of moral agency. Before the point at which the infant picks up a moral nature these gratifications are not sin. But—lo and behold!—once the infant develops into a responsible moral agent⁴³ the habits of gratification firmly entrenched before he knew any better—and hence before he was morally responsible—lead him inexorably into depravity.

At this juncture the thoughtful reader might be wondering why Pratney (and those who hold his view) goes through so much trouble to explain away the clear teaching of Scripture on original sin. The motivation seems simple enough: there is in all this an effort to vindicate the freedom of the will and to keep God from being charged with the sins of man. The Moral Government teachers reason that if man is under the necessity of sinning—which they say is the case under the Augustinian doctrine of total inability—and if he is under this necessity because of an inherited moral depravity given him by God (albeit through Adam), then God must be charged with man's sin. This system attempts to exonerate God while at the same time accounting for the universality of sin and admitting some damage from Adam's sin to his progeny as "physical depravity."

Unfortunately, this view condemns rather than vindicates God. As Warfield incisively observes, was it not God who constituted the child so that its selfish impulses should get the jump on its reason, thereby hopelessly committing it "to sin before it knew any better"? Was it not God who "established the physical laws that of necessity bring about" every child's depravity "at the first dawn of moral agency"? How does this vindicate God?⁴⁴ As Dr. Beecher notes, "it is by this theory as if God had placed a man in a boat with a crow-bar for an oar, and then sent a storm on him! Is the man to be blamed if in such a case he is drowned?"⁴⁵

What Pratney does is "merely to substitute...[a] rationalistic account" of universal sinfulness for the biblical one. And in so doing, Pratney jumps

⁴³And Pratney nowhere explains just how this amazing transformation takes place!

⁴²Pratney, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁴Warfield, pp. 183-4.

⁴⁵Warfield, quoting Dr. Beecher in *Perfectionism*, p. 184.

"from the frying pan into the fire." 46 God is no less "responsible" for human depravity in his system. In fact, Pratney denies God of any just basis for His action, since he denies that we are judicially constituted guilty for Adam's sin. 47 God creates man "physically depraved" (which ultimately leads to his moral depravity) wholly arbitrarily.

Of course, we must not forget that the issue is not what we perceive to be "fair" but what the Scriptures teach. If we cannot reconcile the biblical teaching on original sin with our concept of "fairness" then so much the worse for us.

Moral Government Denies Adamic Imputation

The Moral Government teachers deny that man is constituted guilty for Adam's first sin. We showed above that they do allow for a physically weakened constitution from Adam. But there is no judicial guilt entailed. This is unambiguously stated by Olson: "...a contradiction would exist in the Bible if any statement could be found declaring our guilt for Adam's sin.",48

Pratney attempts to explain Romans 5:12ff. with the following defective exegesis:49

> ...while Adam brought temporal death to his race, the Lord Jesus brought to man the gift of ETERNAL life. Nothing is said, as would be expected in verse 20, about Adam's fall extending to his race. Paul knew the word for "impute" (logizomai) meaning to count, reckon, and used it for righteousness (Romans 4:22); but a different word is used in Romans 5:13 (ellego [sic]—to bring into account). Verse 20 shows instead that the law came in as the occasion of universal sinfulness, implying that men sin now just as Adam did then; by intelligent transgression of the known law of God. 50

These arguments are singularly unconvincing. For one thing, the word used in Romans 5:13 is ellogeitai, a form of ellogeo and not "ellego" as Pratney erroneously states. Secondly, ellogeo is most definitely a commercial term meaning, "to charge to someone's account." Therefore, the meaning in 5:13, 14 is clear: sin was charged to the account of man even before the giving of the Mosaic Law, proven by the death of men from the time of Adam to Moses. About Pratney's assertion that the death spoken of in Romans 5 is physical only, there is no contextual evidence to support this.

⁴⁶Warfield, p. 185.

⁴⁷Warfield, p. 185.

⁴⁸Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. IV S. See also p. III-5.

 $^{^{49}\}mbox{{\sc He}}{\sc Exeqesis"}$ is the process of extracting the meaning from a biblical passage.

⁵¹Arndt and Gingrich, p. 251. See also Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New* Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 205.

Indeed, whatever death is spoken of here is tied in closely with *judgment* (v. 16) and *condemnation* (vv. 16, 18). And as far as the silence in verse 20 about Adam's fall extending to his race, Paul already clearly taught that Adam's fall extends to the entire race in the preceding verses (vv. 12-19).

The Moral Government teachers claim that the "Augustinian interpretation," if consistently applied, must lead to universalism. Pratney states, "Romans 5:19 is an exact parallelism. If the word 'were made' means 'constituted,' as some have said, then all men will be saved, BECAUSE of what Christ did, which is outright Universalism!" This argument is not new; it certainly goes back at least to the heretic Pelagius who said, "If Adam's sin injured even those who do not sin, Christ's righteousness ought likewise to profit even those who do not believe." 53

This objection is readily disposed of by even a cursory glance at verse 17, where the necessity of *receiving* the abundance of grace is clearly stated. No such reception is stipulated concerning Adam's sin; *all* men die in Adam. Therefore, Jesus is *provisionally* "the Savior of all men" but only in an efficacious sense for "those who believe" (cf. I Tim. 4:10).

Yet another objection against Adamic imputation is that it is manifestly unfair.⁵⁴ Pratney strongly argues this and cites Ezekiel 18 as proof that God would never impute one man's sin to another. But this objection has already been answered in the preceding section, where we showed that God is perfectly just in imputing Adam's sin to his posterity and that Ezekiel 18 has nothing whatever to do with this unique event.

Moral Government Denies the Sin Nature

As we noted previously, Moral Government denies that men come into the world with an inherited bias toward sin. Speaking of "moral depravity," Otis asserts: "This [moral depravity] is what we do with our situation, unintelligent responses to influences and suggestions. *This is sin,* but it is *not inherited*—it comes by *choice*, it is *created*."

But how can the Moral Government teachers evade the force of Psalm 51:5b, "in sin did my mother conceive me"? Does this not clearly teach a hereditary bias to sin? Some Moral Government teachers have actually said

⁵²Pratney, p. 92. This argument is also found in Gordon C. Olson's *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (Franklin Park, III.: Bible Research Fellowship, 1980), Historical Opinions p. 5 and Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. IV 6.

⁵³Aurelius Augustine, "On the Merits and Remission of Sins," iii. 5. *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* V, P. Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1956), 70.

^{54°}If the Bible affirmed that we are held accountable for other's sins, and particularly for Adam's sin, this would become such a gross injustice in the economy of God as to erect a barrier to intelligent thought and the meaning of guilt" (Olson, Sharing Your Faith, p. VII-3).

⁵⁵Otis, p. 59.

that the "sin" in view here is the sin of David's mother in conceiving him *out of wedlock!* This incredible view is put forth by Pratney as a serious alternative when he unblushingly states:

What then, does this passage teach? Three different interpretations have been given, none of which teach the dogma of transmitted sin: (a) That David was illegitimate, as the Jews have always believed (David's mother's name is not mentioned; David was not with the sons of Jesse when Samuel came to anoint them; David's brothers seemed embarrassed by his presence); (b) That David came from a lineage in which there had been immorality, and remembered his "lineage" mother in comparison to his own sexual sin; (c) That David was simply deeply cut to the heart by his sin, and broke out in the extravagant language of poetry (cf. v. 3, 3, 7 and 8); in thinking back along his life, he broke out affirming that from the earliest moments of light he had been a sinner, and had come from parents who were sinners, without in any way implying that this sin had been TRANSMITTED down to him by his mother. In no way does this passage teach "inherited" sin, no matter which way it is interpreted literally or figuratively. 56

All three explanations are patently absurd, particularly the first one. Deuteronomy 23:2 demolishes the contention that David was illegitimate: "No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation shall enter the assembly of the LORD." David's son Solomon not only entered the assembly of God's people, but was responsible for building the temple in which God's people met!⁵⁷ Also, Pratney's statement that "David was *illegitimate*, as the *Jews* have always believed" is ridiculously false. He conveniently fails to document where this perennial Jewish belief is to be found. Certainly the Talmud and Mishna know nothing of this alleged tradition.

The second interpretation Pratney mentions (i.e., that David refers to his "lineage" mother) is so egregiously absurd that it needs no refutation. David said "my mother," not some hypothetical "lineage" mother. Again, not the slightest shred of evidence is offered in support of this interpretation.

Pratney's final option (i.e., that David was merely making a poetic outburst, affirming that like him, his parents were sinners) makes absolutely no sense in the context of the passage. Throughout the whole context, David is bewailing *his own* sinfulness. In verse 5 he traces it back to the earliest motions of his life—even to conception. There is absolutely no reason for David to refer to the sinfulness of his parents in this passage unless he is somehow linking their sinfulness with his own.

Pratney gives many other "proofs" against the doctrine of an inherited moral depravity almost too painfully juvenile to discuss. He (like other Moral Government teachers) cannot seem to conceive of a "sin nature" in

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⁵⁶Pratney, p. 91.

⁵⁷Note Solomon's prayer of dedication in I Kings 8:22ff.

anything other than *physical* terms. For example: "If sin WAS physical, in what form would it exist? Would it be solid, liquid or gas? If sin is material, it can be isolated in a test-tube. May we then see the phenomenon of a vial of sin concentrate? This is, of course, absurd...." Pratney is correct in labeling the view "absurd," but what he fails to realize is that no competent theologian believes the sin nature physical. This was the error of the Manicheans and, later, the Flacians. This view was thoroughly repudiated by Augustine and the Reformers. The sin nature is a bias, propensity, or inborn tendency toward sin, not a physical something. Indeed, as Hodge observed, the "works of the flesh" and the sin nature are greatly evident in *fallen angels* who have *no* physical substance! 61

Moral Government Denies Total Depravity/Total Inability

Like Pelagianism, the Moral Government teaching is based on the plenary (i.e., full or complete) ability of the will. Gordon Olson states that *before salvation,* "We cannot say we were unable to fulfill God's reasonable and loving requirements." This is necessarily the case because, according to Moral Government, "the power to [choose] the contrary is essential to free moral agency."

Olson does admit that the action of past sins leaves a residue of habit that makes right action difficult, requiring "ever increasing energy of will to counteract." But even these sinful patterns may be repudiated through sheer will-power:

Every wrong action deepens the ruts of our depravity until we develop mighty monsters of bondage...that require ever-increasing energy of will to counteract. Evidently, man is able to rise up to do battle with himself in turning away from sin, for God commands "all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30) and nowhere implies that he is unable to do so. 65

⁶²Olson, Sharing Your Faith, p. VII-3.

⁵⁸Pratney, p. 85. George Otis Jr. likewise engages in such crudities (Otis, p. 60).

⁵⁹Though the Scriptures do seem to indicate that the sin nature is "passed down" (Job 14:4; 15:14), this does not make the sin nature "physical" any more than it would make the soul a physical substance in the traducian view. The exact relationship non-material entities like the sin nature sustain to the physical realm is intensely complex and falls under the more general consideration of the mind/body problem. This is discussed in J. Oliver Buswell, Jr, *A Christian View of Being and Knowing* (Grand Rapids Zondervan, 1960).

 $^{^{60}}$ Hodge, II, 158, 229; Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 188. In attributing this view to Augustine, Otis is thoroughly off the mark. See Otis, p. 58.

⁶¹ Hodge, II, 142.

⁶³Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, the page opposite the one labelled IV-6.

⁶⁴Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. IV-4.

⁶⁵Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, p. IV 4.

It is important for us to note the context of the above quotes. Olson is not talking about the Christian's experience of victory over sin through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Olson here has the *unsaved* in view! According to Olson, *men as such* are free moral agents and have full ability to fulfill God's law perfectly. Now the idea of even a *Christian* turning from sin through sheer "will-power" is grossly repugnant to the pious mind. Paul, speaking as a mature believer, certainly entertained no such notions of his own "free will" (Rom. 7:18). But to teach that *unbelievers* are capable of this is a flagrant insult to God's enabling grace.

Again, the denial of total inability is related to the Moral Government teachers' concept of "fairness." They do not believe God could be fair if He required men to do what they were not able to accomplish:

Many sincere men are saying, "God gave us *good* laws to keep," and in the next breath saying, "we are actually *unable* to keep them!" If this *is* true, then God's laws ARE NOT GOOD! *No* law is good that asks the *impossible* of its subjects. If God demands obedience to impossible laws then *God* is not just, for even *men* do not require obedience to impossible laws. IF God demands such obedience under penalty of DEATH, then God is not only *unfair*, but *monstrous!* What kind of Being would pass laws upon his subjects they are unable to keep, then condemn them to *death* for their failure to obey? This is a blasphemy on God's character. ⁶⁶

Though this simple-minded reasoning may be attractive to some, it is fatally flawed because it contradicts both Scripture and experience, as we already saw in Part I. The Scriptures teach that man ought to keep the law of God but he cannot: "...for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not" (Rom. 7:18; cf. 3:20).

The governmental theory's optimistic doctrine of man cannot adequately account for the biblical teaching of grace. It is not uncommon to read large sections about man exercising his free choice with nary a word about the grace of God. Indeed, if man has "full ability to meet all of God's requirements" as Olson states, man does not need grace but mere persuasion to do what he was able to do all along: save himself. G. C. Berkouwer's criticism of Catholicism's anthropology applies to the distinctly Romish tendencies of Moral Government as well:

...one is inclined (a *priori*) to assume that the doctrine of divine grace, mercy, and forgiveness is better suited to a radically pessimistic view than to an optimistic conception of human nature. 67

Nor can Moral Government's passionate vindication of plenary ability and the power of contrary choice account for the universality of sin. Gordon Olson's statement that "so-called inability is a question of 'will

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⁶⁶Pratney, p. 79.

⁶⁷G. C. Berkouwer, *The Conflict With Rome* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), p. 92.

not' rather than 'cannot' obey God's reasonable requirements''⁶⁸ is thoroughly unconvincing. Why is it that a will which is "inalienably able to turn at its option from its sins to God, in point of fact never does and never will so turn," apart from divine grace? As Warfield notes, "A universal will-not, like this, has a very strong appearance of a can-not."

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⁶⁸Olson, *Sharing Your Faith*, VIII-6. Also note Pratney's Pelagianizing sentiment, "Falling short of the mark doesn't prove it out of range; the aim may not have been high enough" (Pratney, p. 93).

⁶⁹Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 177.

⁷⁰Warfield, *Perfectionism*, p. 177. Warfield goes on to this incisive conclusion: "A condition in which a particular effect follows with absolute certainty, at least suggests the existence of a causal relation; and the assertion of the equal possibility of a contrary effect, unsupported by a single example, bears the appearance of lacking foundation." Similarly, note Hodge's whimsical comment: "An ability which has never in the thousands of millions of our race accomplished the desired end, even if it existed, would not be worth contending for" (Hodge, II, p. 274).

CHAPTER FIVE

A Parallel Comparison of the Moral Government Teaching with the Word of God

The Counsels of God

Moral Government

1) "A significant percentage of prophecy indicating what God said He would do never took place" (Elseth, p. 107).

The Word of God

- 1) "But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name...that prophet shall die...if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken" (Deut. 18:20, 21)
- 2) "In fact, God often changes His mind and does not do the things He says He will do" (Elseth, p. 109).
- 2) "And so the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for he is not a man that He should change His mind" (I Sam. 15:29).

"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19).

"Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it" (Isa. 46:11).

- 3) "The ultimate end of this tragedy is that Christians begin to
- 3) "I know that thou canst do all things and that no purpose of

believe that God is satisfactorily working out His plan as He wants it in the world" (Elseth, p. 98).

thine can be thwarted" (Job. 42:2).

"...who works all things after the counsel of His will...." (Eph. 1:11).

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Omniscience/Foreknowledge

Moral Government

- 1) "Many Bible passages, when taken in their natural meaning, appear to indicate that God does not have absolute foreknowledge over all His own future actions..." (Olson, *The Truth*..., T-III-18).
- 2) "God does not know ahead of time the free decisions of men..." (Elseth, p. 70).

The Word of God

- 1) "I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning...saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure...'" (Isa. 46:9, 10).
- 2) "... For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him" (In. 6:64).
- "... 'He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me.' From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He" (In. 13:18-19).
- ". . .Truly I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times" (Jn. 13:38).

"Then David said, 'Will the men of Keliah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?' And the LORD said, 'They will surrender you'" (I Sam. 23:12).

- 3) "Thus, God may have predictions and theories as to what man will do, but He cannot know with certainty what man will do in areas where God has given man absolute freedom of choice" (Elseth, p. 97).
- 3) "... His understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5).

- 4) "...in many cases, the events foretold by God never occurred" (Elseth, p. 85).
- 4) "...if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken..." (Deut. 18:22).

"Let them [i.e., the false gods] bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place. . . . Declare the things that are going to come afterward, that we may know that they are gods. . ." (Isa. 41:22ff.).

The Atonement

Moral Government

VI-1).

1) "There is a willingness to forgive rather than an insistence upon vindictive satisfaction... a bypassing of personal justice rather than a demanding of punishment..." (Olson, Sharing...,

- 2) "God is willing to forgive man's sin 'freely by His grace', without any need for personal vindictive satisfaction . . ." (Olson, Sharing . . . , VI-1).
- 3) "Contrary to warped speculation, God was never worried about receiving some personal satisfaction for the hurt sin has

The Word of God

- 1) "...the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished" (Nah. 1:3).
- "But He was pierced through for our iniquities; the punishment of our peace fell upon Him..." (Isa. 53:5).
- 2) "...and He Himself is the propitiation [Greek: hilasmos a satisfaction; that which turns away or satisfies wrath] for our sins..." (I Jun. 2:2).
- 3) "...whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation [Greek: hilasterion a propitiatory sacrifice which turns away or satisfies

caused Him" (Otis, p. 97).

wrath] in His blood through faith . . ." (Rom. 3:25).

- 4) "The sacrifice of Christ is not the payment of a debt, nor is it a complete satisfaction of justice for sin" (Olson, *Sharing*..., Historical Opinions, p. 2).
- 4) "...having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col. 2:14).
- "...and He Himself is the propitiation [Greek: *hilasmos* a satisfaction; that which turns away or satisfies wrath] for our sins..." (I Jn. 2:2).
- 5) "One of the deceiver's most damaging deceptions centers around of all events the atonement....The idea perpetrated here probably is derived from the words 'ransom' and 'redeem' and it is that Jesus *paid* for our sins" (Otis, p. 26).
- 5) "...knowing that you were not redeemed [Greek: elutrothete to secure release through payment] with perishable things like silver or gold...but with precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (I Pet. I:18-19).
- 6) "The assertion that Jesus paid for our sins has caused immeasurable damage to the body of Christ" (Otis, p. 93).
- 6) "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom [Greek: *lutron* a payment for loosing; ransom price] in place of many" (Matt. 20:28).
- 7) "If we accept the premise that Jesus literally purchased our salvation with His blood, it... portrays God as vindictive and bloodthirsty..." (Otis, p. 109).
- 7) "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock . . .which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

"Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

"...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22).

Justification

Moral Government

- 1) "Because of a free will I myself am ultimately responsible for my salvation . . ." (Elseth, p. 108).
- 2) "The theological doctrine of 'imputed righteousness' has been grossly distorted in our day. We are told that God looks at us through the blood of Christ and sees us as righteous, regardless of our actual state.

"Let's stop kidding ourselves. God sees us exactly the way we are" (Otis, p. 43).

"The active obedience or holiness of Christ...is not legally imputed to the believer" (Olson, *Sharing*..., Historical Opinions, p. 2).

"The notion that God enjoys fellowship with those who are sinners by glancing at Christ's righteousness beside Him is abstract, inconceivable, unrealistic and requires long writings to explain!" (Otis, p. 142).

3) "Repentance is the condition of, or the *prerequisite to*, salvation.... Repentance doesn't mean that we cease to be guilty, but that we cease to sin" (Otis, pp. 136, 155; emphasis his).

"The eternal happiness of heaven can only become a reality, therefore, by the elimination of all sin. Where is sin eliminated?

The Word of God

- 1) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that [i.e., that salvation] not of yourselves..." (Eph. 2:8).
- 2) "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who declares the ungodly to be righteous [Greek: dikaiounta one who declares another to be righteous], his faith is imputed [Greek: logizetai to credit to one's account] as righteousness" (Rom. 4:5).
- "...not having a righteousness [Greek: dikaiosunen] of my own derived from law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith..." (Phil. 3:9).
- ". . . For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).
- 3) "...it [i.e., salvation] is the gift of God; not as a result of works..." (Eph. 2:8-9).

"For all sinned and are continually falling short [Greek: husterountai – to be continually lacking; falling short] of the glory of God, while being justified as a gift by His grace..." (Rom. 3:23-24).

...in this life of probation" (Olson, *Sharing*..., VIII-3).

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy. . ." (Titus 3:5).

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I Jn. 1:8).

4) "Our trite little formula 'just accept lesus' has produced countless spiritual stillbirths and inoculated millions of others against the true gospel...It is not the matter of whether or not we 'accept Christ' but whether or not Christ accepts us – that is the crucial issue. Will, indeed, Christ accept us the way we are as so many today infer? Will the King of kings come in to rule over a garbage dump? The notion that the sinner's condition is irrelevant at salvation only reveals our ignorance of God and the nature of the salvation process" (Otis, p. 141).

4) "But as many accepted [Greek: *elabon* – to accept] Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God..." (Jn. 1:12).

"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly....But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6, 8).

"...even when we were dead in our transgressions, (He) made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)..." (Eph. 2:5; parentheses are in the text).

"And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciplies, 'How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?' When Jesus heard it, he said to them, 'They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mk. 2:16, 17).

- 5) "Antinomianism [is] the concept that faith alone, without obedience to moral law, is all that
- 5) "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28).

is necessary for salvation (Considered by sound theologians to be erroneous doctrine based on a misconception of what salvation really is)" (Conn, p. 427; parentheses his).*

do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved..." (Acts 16:30, 31).

*Contrary to Conn's erroneous definition, "antinomianism" is actually the teaching that saving faith need not ultimately produce good works, an idea repudiated by James 2:14. The doctrine Conn maligns as "antinomianism" is actually the biblical teaching of salvation on the basis of faith alone, apart from works.

The Holiness of God

Moral Government

1) "God is not holy because He is holy – He is holy because He chooses to use all His attributes in a loving (agape) way" (Otis, p. 38).

The Word of God

- 1) "God *is* love [Greek: *agape*, anarthrous construction of the essence, or nature of love] . . ." (I In. 4:16).
- "...God *is* light [Greek: *phos,* anarthrous constructions of the essence or nature of light]..." (I Jn. 1:5).
- 2) "If we say that God is simply a 'blob' of good in the sky who can do nothing but good, because He is good, you then destroy the factor of choice. . . . He only is able to do right who is able at the same time to do wrong" (Elseth, pp. 26-27).
- 2) "Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and Thou *cannot* look on wickedness with favor" (Hab. 1:13).
- "...God *is not able* [Greek: *adunaton* to be unable] to lie..." (Heb. 6:18).

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, . . ." (Jas. 1:13).

Sin

Moral Government

1) "All sin consists in sinning – there can be no moral character but in moral acts" (Olson, *Sharing*..., opposite p. IV-6).

"We search in vain for any evidence that would indicate that sin is a substance or anything other than a wrong moral choice" (Otis, p. 63).

The Word of God

1) "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. . . .

"But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

"I find then the principle that evil is present in me, . . ." (Rom. 7:17, 20, 21).

"If we say we have no sin, [Greek: hamartian – nominal form indicating a principle or disposition] we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I Jn. 1:8).

"Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.

"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matt. 12:33-34).

2) "IF it [i.e., the mind] should not know the choice made is bad, it is NOT SIN to the individual!" (Pratney, p. 83).

"There is therefore, no such thing as 'unconscious' sin. God holds us responsible for all the light we have and are able to get – no more, no less. There is no sin that we know nothing at all about that God will judge us for. . . " (Pratney, p. 93).

2) "I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord" (I Cor. 4:4).

"If a person acts unfaithfully and sins unintentionally against the Lord's holy things, then he shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord...." (Lev. 5:16).

"But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing' "(Lk. 23:34).

3) "...a contradiction would exist in the Bible if any statement could be found declaring our guilt for Adam's sin" (Olson, Sharing..., p. IV-5).

"If the Bible affirmed that we are held accountable for other's sins, and particularly for Adam's sin, this would become such a gross injustice in the economy of God as to erect a barrier to intelligent thought and the meaning of guilt" (Olson, *Sharing*..., p. VII-3).

3) "...on the one hand the judgment arose from one [i.e., Adam's] transgression to condemnation....

"So then as through one [Adam's] transgression there resulted condemnation to all men..." (Rom. 5:16, 18).

- 4) "Romans 5:19 is an exact parallelism. If the word 'were made' means 'constituted,' as some have said, then all men will be saved, BECAUSE of what Christ did, which is outright universalism!" (Pratney, p. 92).
- 4) "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive [emphasis mine] the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17).
- 5) "This [i.e., moral depravity] is what we *do* with our situation, unintelligent responses to influences and suggestions. *This is sin,* but it is *not inherited* it comes by *choice,* it is *created*" (Otis, p. 59).
- 5) "The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth" (Ps. 58:3).

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5).

"Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!" (lob 14:4).

"What is man, that he should be pure, or he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" (Job 15:14).

"How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?" (Job 25:4).

Moral Ability

Moral Government

1) "We cannot say we were unable to fulfill God's reasonable and loving requirements" (Olson, Sharing . . . , p. VII-3).

The Word of God

- 1) "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3).
- "... For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law..." (Gal. 3:21).
- "...by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 3:16).

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, . . ." (Eph. 2:1).

2) "Every wrong action deepens the ruts of our depravity until we develop mighty monsters of bondage...that require everincreasing energy of will to counteract. Evidently, man is able to rise up to do battle with himself in turning way from sin..." (Olson, Sharing..., p. IV-4).

"So-called inability is a question of 'will not' rather than 'cannot' obey God's reasonable requirements" (Olson, *Sharing*..., p. VIII-6).

- 2) "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin....
- "...for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not" (Rom. 7:14, 18).

"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Gal. 5:17).

- 3) "Falling short of the mark doesn't prove it out of range; the aim may not have been high enough" (Pratney, p. 93).
- 3) "...for all sinned and are continually falling short of the glory of God,..." (Rom. 3:23).

CHAPTER SIX Summary, a Call to Action, and Conclusions

Summary

This booklet has examined carefully the Moral Government teaching found at Youth With a Mission. We have demonstrated that the Moral Government teaching is unbiblical in the key areas of God, salvation, sin, and man.

Moral Government's understanding of God is unbiblical. The Moral Government god is changeable in His character, counsels, and knowledge. Their god is not truly holy by nature, only by choice. This doctrine portrays a god who frequently changes His mind in response to His creatures. And because the Moral Government god does not know the free moral decisions of men before they occur, His knowledge grows astronomically every day. This is a far different god from the God of the Bible, whose "understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5).

The Moral Government teaching on salvation likewise falls far short of the biblical position. The Moral Government "atonement" is really no atonement at all. It is merely a theatrical display which motivates man to abandon sin and save himself. Moral Government denies that Christ's vicarious death propitiates the wrath of God against sin. They also deny that the believer is judicially justified—declared righteous—by faith alone. The "save yourself" system of Moral Government bears no resemblance to the biblical teaching of salvation by faith alone.

The Moral Government teaching on sin and man is simply the false doctrine of the ancient heretic Pelagius dressed up in a space suit.² Moral Government teachers do not regard man as truly dead in sin (Eph. 2:1). In spite of clear biblical evidence to the contrary, they do not regard man as a sinner by nature (I Jn. 1:8; Jer. 17:9; Ps. 51:5b). They believe *all men* (saved or not) have full ability to do what is right. Therefore, all that is necessary for "salvation" is to motivate man to exercise his powers aright in

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¹Indeed, the Moral Government god requires no punishment for sin. He would be happy to dispense with even the theatrical governmental atonement were it not for the bad "side effects" that would supposedly follow such an action.

 $^{^2}$ I am indebted to Dr. Henry Holloman of Talbot School of Theology for this metaphor.

abandoning sin. This view makes a mockery of the need for God's grace.

A Call to Action

This writer takes no delight in criticizing any group or individual. We grieve that this booklet is necessary, and earnestly pray that Youth With a Mission will repent of the Moral Government heresy. The attitude and prayer of Augustine is appropriate here, who said of the Pelagian heretics:

...would that the error might some day end! Therefore we admonish so that they may take notice, we teach so that they may be instructed, we pray so that their way be changed.³

We sincerely desire to see Youth With a Mission rid herself of this destructive and insidious doctrine. This author has personally suggested some definite steps YWAM should take to repent of this sin and eradicate this horrible teaching from her midst. These suggestions, outlined below, were made during a discussion with some of YWAM's top leaders aboard the MV Anastasis (see Appendix B for an account of this meeting). At that time, these leaders were unwilling to implement any of these steps. We will continue to pray that God will convince them to reconsider.

Step #1: Admit Guilt

Youth With a Mission has taught Moral Government in the past and it is *still* taught at various bases throughout the world. YWAM's leaders consistently try to make light of this. They do this by either downplaying Moral Government's pervasiveness⁴ or by (erroneously) arguing that each individual teacher, and not YWAM, is responsible for what doctrine is taught.

The closest YWAM leadership has come to admitting guilt is an "apology" for having allowed the Moral Government teaching to generate "controversy:" Well, if YWAM really believes their Moral Government Gospel, then YWAM should not apologize if its proclamation generates controversy; they should stand up for what they believe is true without *any* apology. The apostles and even our Lord Himself never apologized for the "controversy" their teaching caused—and it caused plenty! On the other hand, if Moral Government is "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6), then they should apologize: *not* for having caused controversy, but for subverting the faith of young believers.

So the first step is for YWAM to admit that they have taught false doc-

³Sermon 131, preached at Carthage; quoted by Benjamin B. Warfield, "Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy," *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 rpt.) p. 348.

⁴See Chapter One on "The Pervasiveness of the Teaching."

⁵Letter on file with this author.

trine in the past, and that it continues to be taught in some of their schools.

Step #2: Stop Teaching Moral Government

The second step would be to eradicate all present-day Moral Government teaching from their schools. This includes the dismissal of all teachers who espouse Moral Government concepts, and the permanent removal of all Moral Government literature and tapes.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, YWAM leaders claim to have removed *some* Moral Government books from *some* of their bookstores. But this is not good enough. Many of the worst books are *still* readily obtainable through YWAM bookstores. They should remove *all* the offending materials.

Step #3: Attempt to Undo Some of the Past Damage

Youth With a Mission is responsible to those who have been damaged through their ministry. This author has talked with countless individuals who have had their faith severely damaged through Moral Government teaching. There are undoubtedly many, many more who may never receive needed counseling.

Much of the damage can never be undone. But perhaps *some* of it can, and Youth With a Mission is responsible to try. YWAM should give those indoctrinated in Moral Government correct teaching on the nature and attributes of God, the atonement, and salvation by faith alone. When a person's entire Christian walk is at stake, this is not too much to ask.

Step #4: Give a Definitive Doctrinal Statement

If Youth With a Mission has nothing to hide, we encourage her to distribute a doctrinal statement which leaves no room for doubt about her stand. This doctrinal statement will address the major areas of conflict.

When pressed for a doctrinal statement, YWAM leaders usually respond in one of two of ways. Sometimes they say they have no doctrinal statement because they want to appeal to a variety of denominations. Other times, they direct inquirers to a general statement like the Lausanne Statement on Evangelism and say this represents their view.⁶

We believe it is possible to construct a doctrinal statement that does not get into issues which separate denominations—such as baptism by immersion, tongues, etc.—but at the same time enunciates clearly the fundamentals of the faith. Given YWAM's past problems with Moral Government, the doctrinal statement should: (1) condemn Moral Government by name; (2) condemn by name the specific books which teach

⁶The Lausanne Statement is a cooperative statement drafted by a variety of denominations, expressing their concern with reaching the world for Christ. It is fine as far as it goes, but naturally does not address these points of contention.

Moral Government; (3) enumerate and condemn the specific heresies of Moral Government, especially those treated in this booklet; and (4) affirm biblical teaching in the areas of conflict, such as salvation through faith alone and the fact that Jesus Christ literally paid for our sins on Calvary.

Conclusion

This booklet has demonstrated the aberrant nature of the Moral Government teaching as found at Youth With a Mission. Moral Government controverts the clear teaching of Scripture on the attributes of God, the way of salvation, and the biblical teaching of man and sin. These are certainly fundamental issues which strike at the heart of the Christian faith. It is imperative that those who name the Bible as their sole rule of faith and practice resolutely reject this heretical teaching.

As those who incur a "stricter judgment" (James 3:1), the leadership of Youth With a Mission needs to wake up to the fact that they *are* liable for what is taught in their schools. Until they stop trying to evade responsibility for the content of their teaching there is little hope for significant change.

We mourn that a booklet like this is necessary. We are deeply troubled that YWAM's participation in such a serious heresy as Moral Government forces us to respond in what may seem to be a critical way. If Youth With a Mission's leaders will implement the steps mentioned above we will greatly rejoice and embrace them with open arms. But until Youth With a Mission takes definitive steps to eradicate Moral Government, the Christian Church must recognize this teaching for what it is and stand firm against it, "...contending earnestly for the faith, once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

APPENDIX A

MY YWAM DAZE A Testimony

by Gregory L. Robertson

It was an exciting day for me as I drove off into a new life, working "full-time for the Lord." I had prayed much about the decision, attended a crusade at Yosemite National Park, and received what I thought was confirmation from the Lord that this was His will. I was confident that Youth With a Mission was one of the most "in-touch-with-God" organizations in the whole world.

I was twenty-three years old and had been a Christian for about two years. I was leaving a job as a skilled metal-man in a camper factory. After four years of building mobile homes and campers I was ready for a change.

My November 1, 1973 arrival at the YWAM houses in Sunland, California was not met with any fanfare. I arrived, asked around until I found out who was in charge of hospitality, and was shown to my quarters: a bedroom which slept six people in three bunks.

My first position as a new YWAM staff member was as a maintenanceman around the houses. Everybody seemed friendly and it felt good to be part of a group where I felt like I really belonged. I wanted, more than anything in the world, to be used of God to bring people into His kingdom.

In less than two months as a full-time YWAMer I had the opportunity to learn printing and fill the position as printer at the international administrative office in Tujunga, a few miles from Sunland. At the office I had daily contact with members of the international council and other important leaders.

Early in my YWAM experience I became aware of Moral Government's presence. My job in the office included some shipping tasks. I sent packets which included Gordon Olson's Moral Government of

God booklet to School of Evangelism (SOE) applicants. Also, our tape department reproduced and distributed Gordon Olson's forty tape series on Moral Government, "The Messenger, Message and Method of Sharing Your Faith."

In January 1975 I attended a three-month SOE in Bozeman, Montana. My first systematic exposure to Moral Government was at this SOE. Looking back at my notes, I found that the only theological system we were taught was Moral Government. An influential YWAM leader named Leland Paris did the Moral Government teaching.

After I completed the SOE, I returned to my printing work at the international office in Sunland. John Dawson, a leader in Sunland, led a Discipleship Training School (DTS) which featured George Otis Jr. as a resident teacher. I attended the evening lectures. During the day I often printed papers and tests for the Moral Government teaching which was going on in the school. I printed a twenty-page paper entitled "Research Concerning Omniscience of God" by Howard Elseth which was the predecessor of his book, *Did God Know?* This paper – true to Moral Government teaching – argues that "God does not know our future choices."

The teachings at the DTS produced in me a revulsion toward Augustine, Calvin, and all who held similar views. These great historical figures were portrayed as mindless idiots who believed in a tyrant God whom the world was sure to reject. The Moral Government view was portrayed as the only correct view because it gave God the glory due His name. Other views allegedly made *God* responsible for sin, but the Moral Government view made *man* responsible.

After two years and seven months in YWAM I had met hundreds of YWAMers from all over the world, knew and had worked with international leaders, attended four crusades, had heard George Otis Jr. and other Moral Government teachers, and had been through an SOE and parts of a DTS. By now Moral Government was the only system I felt made any sense.

At leadership's suggestion, I prayed and felt led to work with the main printing ministry of YWAM in Hurlach, West Germany. I applied, was accepted, and arrived at the base on June 1, 1976. I was shown my room in the castle, purchased for the 1972 Olympic outreach in Munich. My first room was on the third floor with seven roommates.

Gordon Olson and Harry Conn were regular speakers at the Swiss and German bases. I purchased "The Moral Government of God" tape series by Harry Conn and attended Olson's lectures during one of his visits to the German base. When Olson taught, I used a YWAM-

copyrighted edition of his theology to follow the lectures. In the print shop we printed some of Olson's tracts in an Eastern European language so they could be smuggled behind the iron curtain. When Elseth came out with *Did God Know?*, we used several feet of bookstore shelf space to stock the copies ordered. Moral Government was as popular in Europe as it was in the states.

I eventually started to question some things that were happening at the Hurlach base. These questions had to do with the practice of shepherding, which made leaders into "spiritually advanced," infallible little popes. Several rank and file YWAMers had been ostracized. When someone was ostracized we were told that they were having some kind of "problem" and we should not try to counsel or help them because "if too many people got involved they would only become confused." The leaders said they were working with them and would take care of it. One girl – who had been with YWAM for years – was sent home to England. This greatly upset me because I strongly respected her as a spiritual, wise and godly woman. She had become friends with a guy and they were getting together and talking. They made the "mistake" of talking about problems they saw at the base. An elder of the castle family ordered them to quit seeing each other, and they refused because they did not feel they were doing anything wrong. She was forced to leave.

Another person, who had only been a Christian for a matter of months, was told to give up his smoking habit. After one week he was still smoking and was put out on the streets. Finding a place to stay was his problem.

There were other things that bothered me too, and I was starting to voice my disagreements to leadership. I did not think it was scriptural to make full-time workers pay for staying at the castle. I felt it was wrong to make an older girl working forty hours a week for YWAM – cleaning toilets, mopping floors, etc. – pay for staying at the facilities. Nor did I like the idea of a young ex-heroin addict who came to us from a rehabilitation center, being required to pay when he was working full-time with the maintenance crew. One time I looked up all the Scriptures about widows, orphans, and the poor and wrote a list of the ones I felt applied to the castle situation. I presented the list to the director of the castle and asked him to look it over and tell me what he thought. He said he would get back to me and never did.

I started believing that YWAM leaders were using principles of "discipleship," "submission," "loyalty," etc., to control the sheep. When I disagreed with my flock group leader I was labelled "rebellious." He

said if he was wrong, but I submitted anyway, he would be held responsible before God and I would not be. I could not agree with such unscriptural teaching.

I still agreed wholeheartedly with Moral Government teaching — although there sometimes seemed to be inconsistencies with it. But I could not agree with the treatment my fellow workers and I were receiving. I felt I needed a time outside YWAM to look at everything objectively. I gave notice on February 1, 1979 — after much prayer and fasting — that I was going to leave in one month. Leadership did not agree with my conclusion and applied psychological pressure to make me stay. The elders convened a meeting to "pray about" my situation. They said they had "one of the best prayer meetings ever" and that God had "spoken to them about me." Yet, God supposedly would not let them disclose what He had revealed about my situation just yet. I was supposed to deal with my "root of bitterness" first.

Charles Grandison Finney, the well-known 19th century revivalist, is highly praised in YWAM and I spent alot of time reading his material. Finney said that God would bring about revival if only we would use the "proper means at our disposal." I felt we were being hypocritical because we did not do all we could to bring about revival. My heart was set to see revival but revival did not come.

After speaking out an objection during a staff meeting, I was commanded by my flock group leader to remain silent in all meetings. It became extremely hard to cope with YWAM. I now wanted to get out at any cost.

On March 16, 1979 a respected leader was addressing the "castle family" - explaining what God said to him during the night (all about how God was going to bless us, a kind of "peace, peace" message). I could no longer endure and stood up in the meeting to contradict him. I spoke about God's demand for holiness and how revival would come if we met it. Two elders grabbed me by the arms and took me into an office away from the meeting. Another castle leader joined us and they decided that I must have a demon. When one leader asked me to say "Jesus is Lord" (presumably based on 1 John 4:3 or I Corinthians 12:3) I came out with a little sermon on the deity and lordship of Christ. When I was told that everything would be all right if I would just submit to the castle leaders and do what they said, I insisted that I would only submit to the Lord Jesus and do what He said. After some further interrogation they tried to cast a demon out of me, saying things like "You're not Greg! You are a lying spirit! Give us Greg back! Let him go!" When that availed nothing, they "turned me over

to Satan for the destruction of the flesh." I was given one week to get out of YWAM, was put on visitor status, and was not allowed to attend any meetings.

It was Saturday, March 24, 1979 when I left the castle with no one to see me off. A Christian family in a neighboring town offered me their living room couch for a few days, and then an Assembly of God pastor at a military base in Augsburg (about 30 kilometers away) invited me to stay in his apartment until I could get organized, go to Frankfurt, and fly home.

During my five and one-half years as a YWAMer I traveled to ten nations, went through the SOE and other schools, went to staff conferences and outreaches, and had many "spiritual" experiences. But when I returned to Corona, California, my home town, I was discouraged. Our evangelistic efforts were not very effective in YWAM, and the revival I so desperately wanted to see never happened. At home some of my old friends were now mature pastors and youth ministers, while I was a printer and bindery worker who believed things that were unacceptable outside YWAM. Except for a former YWAM leader from my home town who taught Moral Government in a home Bible study, none of those around me defended such views. And because this former YWAMer was extremely loyal to YWAM, I could not relate to him. I was in a real predicament! But even though "outnumbered," I did believe Moral Government theology and would "defend the character of God," arguing with others about Moral Government concepts.

One day I caused a great disturbance after a church meeting because the speaker had declared that "we couldn't keep the law." The people could not understand why I got so upset and angry over the issue. To them it was normal doctrine. But to me, after five and one half years exposure to Moral Government thinking, it was equivalent to blasphemy. I felt I was living a sinless life most of the time and to say that God had asked us to be perfect when it was impossible, made Him a horrible tyrant. Unfortunately, I could out-argue most Christians about the views I held because they took absolute foreknowledge, inability to live sinless lives, etc., for granted. I had all the Moral Government answers down pat. Their inability to refute me left me all the more confident of my position.

The Moral Government teaching did more harm to me than it did to some who did not try to live consistent with it, or who simply went along with it but did not really believe it. I harbored secret feelings of superiority over others because I was the one with the "right views." I found a job in a print shop in Anaheim, Ca., and preached repentance

to my fellow workers, condemning them for not obeying the Lord. It seemed impossible to truly love those who, with no sinful nature or depravity, chose out of simple selfishness not to obey God. Sometimes I made printing deliveries around Orange county and listened to radio evangelists and Bible teachers, such as Pastor Chuck Smith, Prof. Walter Martin, and J. Vernon McGee. I felt they were not really Christian because they often spoke of such concepts as depravity and inability to live sinless lives. I was beginning to believe that I was the only Christian outside YWAM that lived the sinless life God demanded of us. Of course, I felt that anybody who smoked cigarettes or manifested some other outward "sin" was not really walking with God. In effect, the Moral Government teaching had made me into a perfect Pharisee. I was proud, self-righteous, superior because of my uprightness and understanding of the truth — and it was all in the name of humility, truth, and spirituality!

Then one day I met Cal Beisner, a researcher at the Christian Apologetics: Research and Information Service (an organization in Orange County, California specializing in apologetics and cults). Cal was different from the others I argued with about Moral Government. Cal studied it and disagreed with it on a scriptural basis. Over a period of months, Cal and I met many times to discuss and argue these views. I had been taught that people who held views like Cal's were against evangelism and didn't use their minds. His views were supposed to be held by those who were only seeking excuses for their sin. Yet Cal was involved in evangelism, and he was successful. He lived conscientiously for the Lord, and he had authority with Scripture like I had never seen in YWAM. He also had intellectual capabilities I had never seen in YWAM. But he wasn't lifted up in pride about it. I could beat Cal in chess, but otherwise I was dwarfed in his presence. This was a real blow to my pride. I thought I really understood theology. I thought those who were influenced by "biblical scholarship" were taught many false views about man and God. I now began to wonder if it was Lwho had been deceived.

At this point I was really mixed-up about YWAM and Moral Government. Maybe I was to blame for the problems I experienced with YWAM. Perhaps I did have a "root of bitterness." Sometimes I would go through agonizing times of introspection, wondering if I should "repent" and ask their forgiveness.

But crushing blows kept coming and I was becoming convinced that the problem was not just with me but with YWAM and its teaching. I met a girl who tried to commit suicide after the SOE group she was a part of in Lausanne, Switzerland tried to cast a demon out of her when she became sick in 1981. She jumped out of a third story window. After months in the hospital, she was able to walk, but her body was permanently disfigured from the impact. It was heart-breaking to see her cry, saying she could never forgive them for what they had done to her.

When an acquaintance of mine questioned a prominent YWAM leader from Sunland, he was told that "the Moral Government problem was about eight years ago and the person (!) responsible was no longer in YWAM"! I was well acquainted with the leader from my Sunland days and knew he was aware of the extreme Moral Government presence in YWAM, himself (at least during my Sunland days) arguing for the view.¹

Taking a class in the History of Christianity and doing my term paper on YWAM theology opened my eyes to a lot more deception I had been under. I was greatly disillusioned when I discovered that more than 200 pages of Finney's *Systematic Theology* were "abridged" by Harry Conn, one of YWAM's Moral Government teachers. Conn edited out many of Finney's Arminian views which did not agree with the contemporary Moral Government teaching and I found that the theology would be considered heresy even by Arminians.

Through Cal Beisner I became acquainted with Alan Gomes and read his analysis of Moral Government. I believed Alan took the views to their logical conclusion and his representation of them was accurate. In time, rumors were started about Alan. It was said that he had misrepresented Moral Government views; that he was hopelessly "reformed" in his theology and consequently would not tolerate other views; and that he was excommunicated from his church for writing such an inaccurate representation of the parties involved (when in fact Alan teaches an adult Bible class at his church and an elder from his church helped finance this present edition). I had come to know Alan and the situation well and knew that these were slanderous accusations.

Alan has accurately represented these teachings. However, when taught in their "natural environment" (i.e., YWAM), they are put in such a light as to be irresistibly convincing to someone with little or no Bible training.

I became completely disillusioned with the view I had so zealously defended. The trauma was so great that for a time I wanted to forget God and Christianity altogether. But God is faithful! Actually, I am a more mature Christian today than I was under the "old covenant" (the Moral Government way of salvation):

Therefore the law has become our tutor to lead us

to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:24-26 [NASB]).

As a result we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is our Head, even Christ (Eph. 4:14-15 [NASB]).

My disillusionment led to a theological reformation. I now understand what the Bible means when it says that we are saved by grace through faith as a free gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9).

I recently finished my second year at Christ College Irvine, in California. I am in the pre-seminary pastoral program, lead the High School youth group at Church, and plan to do graduate work in apologetics (i.e., the defense of the Christian faith). With my experience in being deceived I have found that I now have a compassion and understanding for others who are deceived by false religion. Although YWAM is not considered a cult by most definitions, I can identify with those who have been deceived by the false teachings which cults propagate. I never wanted to be deceived by non-biblical Moral Government teaching, yet I was (contrary to the Moral Government saying, "you are only deceived if you want to be deceived"). Millions involved in cults today were not looking for deception, but for a worthy cause, fellowship and love, and a purpose in life.

This testimony is in no way comprehensive of my YWAM experience. The first draft was thirty pages and even it left out a lot. My experience was not all bad, and not every one that joins YWAM leaves with a testimony like mine. Some may have had a more positive experience than I – though I know individuals who had worse things happen to them. In writing this testimony, however, I have spent hours and hours reading over old diary entries, school notes, papers I printed as a YWAMer, and books we printed and distributed in YWAM. I also listened to many tapes by popular YWAM speakers. I actually found that Moral Government is more widespread and deeper than I formerly thought. In all this I have tried to be perfectly accurate in what I have said. Many things were deleted from the manuscript simply because my memory was a little unclear and I had nothing in my diary about it.

Contrary to what YWAM leaders will probably say, I am not writing these things because of "some hurt I received." I have watched and

waited, and have come to the conclusion that YWAM is making no serious attempt to remove the heretical teaching and unethical practice which has become common place in their midst. In my opinion, the removal of Moral Government from the organization is only on the surface — a YWAM tactic for good public relations.

I believe that people like Alan Gomes, who take aberrant theology and shine the light of Scripture on it, should be commended for their service to the Church: ". . . holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9).

July, 1985

Gregory L. Robertson P.O. Box 4733 Irvine, CA 92716-4733

Appendix A

1. The story has now changed. This same leader in August, 1984 told people that YWAM had a "house cleaning" two years ago, banishing Moral Government from her ranks. This cannot be true because I ordered and received three well-known books on Moral Government from the YWAM bookstore in Lindale, Texas, in July, 1984. I also recently received a letter stating that a Moral Government book was required reading at the YWAM base in Los Angeles. See the Appendix in this booklet for further details.

APPENDIX B DOCUMENTATION

This appendix substantiates what has been said in the book about the presence of Moral Government teaching in Youth With a Mission. This appendix consists of three kinds of information. First, there is documentation from YWAM publications, newspaper clippings, information fliers, etc. These show the presence of Moral Government teachers and teaching within YWAM. Secondly there are unsolicited letters of correspondence received by the author. These letters, many of them quite recent, provide irrefutable testimony to the pervasiveness of Moral Government teaching in YWAM. Some also show the devastating effect it can have on a believer's Christian walk. Finally, there are witnessed accounts of several meetings with YWAM leaders. At these meetings the YWAM leaders were confronted about the Moral Government heresy. One of the meetings was with Dr. Walter Martin, founder and director of the Christian Research Institute.

Please excuse the small type. The documents were reduced to fit the size of the book. Names and addresses of anonymous writers have been withheld for their protection. Important segments of the various documents have been underlined.

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- LANGUAGE STUDY The ability to communicate to more people can be further developed through the study of a foreign language. French and German are taught on the school premises in Lausanne and Hurlach. Advanced students may wish to attend one of the fall SOE's offered exclusively in the French or German language. Special arrangements may also be made for the study of other languages through enrollment in accredited language schools in Europe.
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- SUMMER OF SERVICE The Summer of Service (SOS) gives you the opportunity for six to eight weeks of outreach in one of the 40 countries where YWAM teams are currently working. Teams are involved in personal witnessing, literature distribution, open-air campaigns, street theater, music groups, child evangelism, discipleship training, and church, campus, coffee bar, and military base ministries.

HOW DO I APPLY AND REGISTER?

- Write to "School of Evangelism," Box 1099, Sunland, CA 91040 requesting an application.
- Plan to attend a one-week domestic crusade (if you are new to Youth With A Mission).
- Send in your registration fee (\$20 per individual or \$30 per married couple).

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California - John Dawson, P.O. Box 1099, Sunland, California 91040

Minnesota - Warren Keapproth, Faith Haven Youth Lodge, Battle Lake, Minnesota 56515

Olson, Conn and Pratney -- SOE speakers.



Harry Conn Author

Harry Conn, born in Lafayette. Indiana, studied mechanical engineering and related subjects at Lewis Institute of Technology. Armour Institute of Technology, Illinois Institute of Technology and Chicago University. He received an Sc.D. in Applied Science from Colorado Polytechnic. After working for John Deere Harvester Company, International Harvester, Buick and Studebaker, he was employed by La Salle Engineering of Chicago and New York. He then became Chief Engineer of Scully-Jones of Chicago from 1948 until 1961.

(Continued on back flap)

(Continued from front flap)

Mr. Conn was until he retired in December 1977 a Group Executive of the Esterline Corporation, with responsibility for four firms reporting to him. He was also Board Chairman of the W. A. Whitney Corporation, an Esterline firm, in Rockford, Illinois.

Mr. Conn has written hundreds of technical articles for over 75 engineering and science journals and he contributed to the textbook "Fundamentals of Design." In 1975 Mr. Conn received the Society of Manufacturing Engineers International Gold Medal. He has been a lecturer on engineering and theology in over 80 universities, colleges and seminaries in the United States, Canada, México, Europe and the Orient. Mr. Conn is also an active Christian layman having spoken for over 60 Protestant denominations in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Europe and the Orient. He teaches in the YWAM School of Evangelism in Lausanne, Switzerland, each winter and his subjects are Moral Government, The Atonement, Moral Law and Eschatology.

Mr. Conn has received the Freedom Foundation's George Washington Medal twice and is also listed in "Who's Who of Engineering." "Who's Who in Business and Finance." "International Businessman's Who's Who" and Marquis' new "Who's Who in the World."

In 1975 he also received THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHAN-ICAL ENGINEERS, Edwin F. Church gold medal which read, "Who contributed more than anyone else to extend mechanical engineering education in manufacturing, and who had for many years devoted his talents to serve and inspire his fellow men in enriching and furthering their careers and usefulness."

YWAM and Moral Government specifically mentioned in the book by Harry Conn, Four Trojan Horses.



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TO KNOW HIM

A YWAM bookstore happily offers fresh copies of Moral Government books in a recent letter.

Sharing Your Faith

The Messenger, Message and Method by Gordon C. Olson



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Tear gas, mace and pepper gas pierced through the pall of marijuana that hung over the camp. Riot-helmeted police came crashing through the crowds as hippies, yippies and radicals of every type scurried right and left. As they ran, some threw things, others just filled the air with their curses. In the midst of the confusion was a group standing calmly and singing choruses -- no stones, no curses, no hatred pouring from their hearts. As Abbie Hoffman passed, he said to one, "It looks like your group is the only one who has it together!"

He was right. Who were they? Young Christian revolutionaries working with East Coast YWAM to reach the varieties of people gathered in Miami's Flamingo Park for the Republican and Democratic conventions. About

4500 revolutionaries, including Gay Lib, Women's Lib, Vietnam War Veterans -- each campaigning their cause -- came from all corners of the U.S. and comprised the mission field. YWAM'mers came to campaign a different cause -- a revolution of the heart. They made a path off the camp's "Ho Chi Minh Trail,"
called it "Hallelujah Avenue" and pitched their tents. They began to have an effect. One SDS leader came under such conviction by their presence that he



yelled, "You Christians need to be killed! As soon as we get in power you'll all be dead!" Other effects were more positive, such as the story of Al. He got saved through the witness of the Christians, moved his tent to "Hallelujah Ave." and began to witness with the team. moved on with the group when the convention was over, later continuing on to an SOE and ministry in Europe. He then returned to the States, got married and is now the printer for YWAM in New Jersey. He is still a revolutionary, but for a whole different cause.

COOKIE FACTORY WORKERS AND NOVICE BUILDERS

Where did this determined band of disciples come from? They were an outreach ministry of Youth With A Mission on the East Coast of the United States. Seven years ago a vision was given for a YWAM base for ministry on the eastern seaboard. The first team, under the leadership of Jim and Carol Carmichael, was donated nine acres of heavily wooded land by a church in Hammonton, New Jersey. The Lord began to guide them concerning building a School of Evangelism on the property, so the team set out to build the

first building. The girls worked in a nearby cookie fac-The girls tory, giving their entire salaries to the project while the fellows, none of whom knew anything about building, began the construction. Though they were novice builders they did know how to obey God, and with His guidance and the counsel of experienced men, a beautiful Swiss style building began to take form.

In 1971 the first group of students met in the new building under the leadership of Leland Paris, now the U.S. YWAM Director of outreach and training, and Dave Snider. Since then the Lord has steadily added to the scope of the original vision with hundreds of young disciples trained, and outreach spreading along the eastern coast of the United States, one of the lesser-evangelized areas of America. Other major ministries have spun off from this core and now evangelistic bases located in Illinois. are Georgia, Pennsylvania and in the Caribbean.



YWAM boat in Caribbean

"EASY BELIEVISM" PLAGUES CARIBBEAN

The term of study at the East Coast SOE includes half a year of intensive classroom training under such men and women of God as Gorden Olson, Joy Dawson, Harry Conn, Loren Cunningham and John Poole. The remaining is spent putting the time teaching into practice on the field of active evangelism in the Caribbean and in the United

Olson and Conn -- "men of God leading intensive classroom training."

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Holiness and Sin, Gordon Olson, Men for Missions Ideas Have Consequences, Richard Weaver,

University of Chicago

It All Adds Up to Love, J. W. Jepson, Omega Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis, MacMillan Pro-Existence, Udo Middelmann, Inter-Varsity Scientific Creationism, Henry Morris, Christian

Systematic Theology, Charles Finney, Bethany The Atonement, Albert Barnes, Bethany

The Dust of Death, Os Guinness, Inter-Varsity

**The Entrance of Sin into the World, Gordon Olson, Men for Missions

The God They Never Knew, Goerge Otis, Jr., Mott Media_

**The Moral Government of God, Gordon Olson. Men for Missions

*The Truth Shall Set You Free, Gordon Olson, Bible Research Fellowship Whatever Happened to the Human Race?. Francis

Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop, Reveil

TAPES:*

Why Do the Innocent Suffer?, Loren Cunningham,

Why War?, Loren Cunningham, C-230

CUPISTIAN PUSTORY

BOOKS:

A Concise History of World Missions, J. Herbert Kane, Baker

A History of Christianity, Kenneth Scott Latourett, Harper and Row

America's Great Revivals, Bethany

Evangelical Awakenings, J. Edwin Orr, Bethany Foxe's Book of Martyrs, John Foxe, Spire How Should We Then Live?, Francis Schaeffer.

Men Who Shaped America, Robert Flood, Moody The Light and the Glory, Peter Marshall and David Manuel, Revell

**Order through: Honey & Spice Bookstore, Box 4600, Tyler TX 75712.

The "Theology and Apologetics" department of the 1983 YWAM Prayer Diary majors on Moral Government. P.O. Box 1099/Sunland, CA 91040/U.S.A./ Phone (213) 352-



April 23, 1976

Fred Vela D-8931 Hurlach 1 Schloss Hurlach, GERMANY

Dear Fred:

I have worked with Greg Robertson for the past two years and can give him my whole hearted support in working with you in Hurlach. He has my blessing in leaving Sunland.

Greg's work in the printing department has been excellent. He pays close attention to details which is very important in turning out a good job. He is a hard worker.

I have seen a good growth in Greg spiritually. His three months in the Bozeman S.O.E. was a great help to him.

Our loss is your gain.

Warmest Regards.

Wally Wenge

WW/jb

A character reference for Robertson as a YWAMer, written by a member of the International Council.

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Youth With A Mission--

They Come From Anywhere -- Go Anywhere

hippie trail that wanders youngsters come from through Afganistan-or as anywhere-and go close as Arleta, young anywhere." people are coming to Sunland-Tujunga to learn McGaughy a young what Youth With A married couple orginally Mission, or YWAM, is all from San Jose, for

Typical of the world's spending some time apart variation of youth studying in Sunland attracted to what YWAM recently and are now has to offer are Ronnie De working towards their goal Granf, from a solid, close of reaching young people in Dutch family; Ron and Jan the United States before McGaughy, who began they begin the journey to their search for some the hippie trail that lures meaning to life with drugs thousands of youngsters until Youth With A Mission each year. Beginning in diverted them; or Margie Amsterdam, it meanders Deal, of Arieta, who through Turkey. wonders if YWAM could be Afganistan, into North for her

In 1972 Tujunga became Nepai international headquarters aiong with Lausanne. Switzerland for the organization. Since then YWAM had expanded both distillusioned with the locally and internationally in numbers and impact.



RONNIE DE GRAAF. from The Netherlands. as secretary to Corrie Tem taken to prison. They Boom. (Record-Ledger learned that a prison in

From as far away as the the crop," he says. "Our

Take Ron and Jan Africa, India and finally

Growing up in San Jose. Jan and Ros knew each other casually. Both narrow, affluent life, the "depersonalization" they The headquarters felt trapped in, they began building remains along to travel separately. They met each other by chance on a Greek Island and began traveling together. Both interested in Eastern philosophy, they determined to go to India and seek out a guru or two.

DISILLUSIONED

Was disillusionment to them. They found it barbaric rather than enlightening and primitive, rather than fulfilling. On top of this. they both got sick. All of this time, they were on drugs, and at first found them gratulying.

Returning to the United States, they were married. and began looking around for something worth doing. They decided to purchase a large supply of drugs. smuggle them out of the wanted to come to the country and begin selling United States to better them along the hippie trail. understand American Whilesmuggling drugs into youth. She joined YWAM Afganistan, they were while in Egypt, and served arrested at the airport and



Long Journey

RON MCGAUGHY explains how after much sheuticism and questioning, he was convinced by YWAM that "Jesus was the only way." An ex-drug peddler in Afganistan, he and wife Jan, right, plan on trying to reach young Americans before they make the mistake of hitting the hippic trail.



Noon Interlude

JUST AFTER morning teaching session, some of YWAM students gather on porch of residence hall. Group includes, from left, Paul Eldsvoog, Goorge Otis, son of George Otis, noted evangelist who appeared recently at local prayer breakfast, Karen Forsvike, Dianne Cunningham, and Margie Deal (Record-Ledger photo)

"Towards me the residents of Dilaram were logical. I began to put what they said to the test and to see that it was highly

By LUCY COLVILLE

"People were not saying one thing and doing another." interrected Jan. The McGaughys stayed for nine months in Dilaram House and worked in the hospitals and through the embassies seeking what they chose to call the "sick. stranded, strung out and searching."

The McGaughys say there is no stereotype of young person, but they all need warmth and love and security.

Roo's approach to young people is, "first develop a relationship. Don't hit them over the head with the Bible. Give them time to reflect, and accept on their own terms."

DIFFERENT ROUTE

Ronnie De Graaf found her way to Suniand through quate a different route from the McGaughys. A Dutch student studying in England in 1970, she first beard about YWAM there. Next she went to Italy to work in a missionary orphanage; then she joined a YWAM team in Egypt. From there she attended a YWAM evangelism school in Switzerland. For two years she was secretary to Corrie Tem Boom, author of "The Hiding Place," and noted for saving many Jewish people during World War II. After that. she joined YWAM full time and worked in Amsterdam. "I worked in Eurone with

American voung people," she explained. I wanted to understand them and how they work and think. The way of living here in the United States is so rich--cars bigger, streets and houses bigger. I think it is very easy (or American couth to think life all over



Learning About YWAM

WINKIE PRATNEY conducts a marning session of Youth With a Mission in the Parkview Foursquare Church in Sunland, one of many churches interested in the work of YWAM. (Record-Ledger photo)



Destined For Everywhere

FROM TUJUNGA hendquarters, books, tapes, magazines, newsletters are mailed to all corners of the world. Responsible for much of the work is Danny Cortest, left, and Greg Robertson, Record-Ledger photo



"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." Prov. 3:5~6

MAY 3, 1984

Dear Greg,

Thank you very much for your recent letter and the additional information on "moral government" and shepherding. It is I who should apologize, and do, for not writing. The role of "worker-priest" that the Lord has blessed me with

is extremely rewarding, however very challenging and time consuming.

The day after the chapel presentation at CCI I penned a note to C.A.R.I.S., who appeared to be the distributor of Lead Us Not Invo Deception, requesting 40 copies of the booklet along with any "New Age Movement" information that they might have. My intention was to send a copy of the booklet along with a letter to Loren Cunningham with copies of each going to each of the leaders who participated in our DTS at Kona. Also copies of the booklet were to be sent with a cover letter to each of our DTS brothers and sisters explaining my inquiry. At this same time it was my intent to send you a copy of the letter to Loren to keep you updated on this quest for truth and reform.

To this date I have yet to receive any reply from C.A.RI.S.. This coupled with our research and preparation for teaching classes on Prayer and the "New Age Movement" have made it too easy to procrastinate in my letter writing.

Though this is no excuse I'm sure that you understand.

Since our conversation at CCI I have had the opportunity to speak with other YWAMers and former YWAMers regarding the "moral government" issue. They have confirmed that m.g. was taught at YWAM schools especially at (but not limited to) European bases. I also have been given copies of Winkey Pratney's Youth Aflame and Harry Conn's Four Trojan Horses which were required reading for one sister at her SOE in Ios Angeles. There is no doubt that material such as this could indeed cause a trusting, childlike, Christian to fall into condemnation.

My conditment to the Lord is, as every Christians conditment must be; a REPONSE TO HIS UNCONDITIONAL, NEVER FAILING LOVE. Sanctification is a process by which the Spirit of God makes us more like Jesus as we yield more and more of ourselves to Him daily. This does not make us any less sinners, nor does it change the nature or character of God or of man. It is by HIS GRACE ALONE that we can walk as new creations and experience the abundant life of fulfillment

and purpose as members of His Body and heirs with Christ.

If you are able to get copies of Alan Gomes booklets, please try to latch onto 40 for me and let me know the cost. Also, do you know anything about "The Natural Therapy Foundation" located at #5 Greenleaf, Irvine? It was advertized in the LCMS publication This Month, April 84 edition. Any information would be appreciated as it sounds at first look to be borderline "New Age"

within our own denomination.

Well, its quite late and I must close for now. Continue to pray for YWAM and we covet your prayers for our ministry here as God would lead. Our prayers are also with you. And I thank God that we have been able to share these things and that We uses members of the Body to strengthen each other. I can't say that I have any distillubinoment due to YWAM for our faith must always be in HIM, and according to His Word. (no additions, no deletions). He did use this organization to strengthen me and many others, and many have found new life in Jesus through their efforts to spread the Good News. It is also evident that His purpose for each of us being involved is to encourage them to continue to move with Him, without counterfeit means of comitment or distortion of the truth.

God's rithest blessings on you and your ministry.

-In Jesus,

A searching, questioning individual finds Moral Government is indeed taught in YWAM.

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October 31, 1982

Olan IV. Domes P.O. Box 1464 La Miroda, Colifornia 90637 Dear Sir:

Slease send me two (2) capies a your book regarding the teaching of Moral Hovernment, " lead us not into deception... The have a daughter who had a very solid background of fundamental evangelieal teaching. The has completed bath DTS and SOE with YNAM. DTS training did not affect her, but during her SOE training the began to be led into this teaching with more intensity. We spent a very tense Christmas bacation

Yet another concerned mother writes.

two years ago because of her trying to persuade us that this was right on".

Also I took some braining with a group of YWAM is in Lan Trancises. The training we received dealt in part with the Sovereinty of God and was the truth. But the YWAMero I was with rejuted the leacher in bery subtle and respectful ways. It lead to frustration in the sart of myself and the instructor.

Welky we book I have for the first

knew was there.

Thank you for revealing these tracking specifically and comparing them with service that saints but the errors. These send my two copies of your book to the following address:

09001 Santo André - SP Brazil July 9, 1986

Alan Gomes CARIS P.O. Box 2067 Costa Mesa, CA 92702

Dear Mr. Gomes,

I would like to request the material you have regarding the doctrine of Moral Government. A friend told me that you have done some research and have some published (or at least written) material.

I have also had contact with YWAM and some other organizations that teach Moral Government (there is a Bethany Bible Institute here in Brazil which teaches it, plus YWAM in Brazil is growing) and feel it is time someone brought things to the light. YWAM denies that they officially teach MG but they are everywhere still doing it. I even have a letter from Loren Cunningham to a friend of mine denying anything to do with MG. I feel that maybe the name of Finney connected with it sort of sanctifies it and so no one pays any attention.

If you would like what I have, you can write to

Thank you.

A letter from a concerned Christian reveals Moral Government teaching in South America.



our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ 1 john 1:3

August 26, 1982

Alan Gomes P.O. Box 1464 La Mirada, CA 90637-1464

Dear Alan:

Greetings in the name of Jesus: It was a delight to get your prompt response to my inquiry. Enclosed, you will find a check to cover the cost of the booklet and postage. Thank you very much. You asked for my honest response to the booklet. I found it very helpful. It is to date the only such treatment of the Moral Government teaching that I have seen. I had two impressions that you would be interested in: (1) It was alarming to see how blatant some of the teachings of Moral Government have become. It was more disillusioning than I thought it was going to be. (2) I did feel that, while the book does a good job of dealing with basic issues in the teaching, that it would have been nice to see that treatment extended on those basic issues and broadened to include others. I guess to say it in another way, it was good - I only wish there was more of it. I have only one caution and that is that the booklet seemed somewhat too pointed in bluntly stating certain things (e.g. "Moral Government teaching is a heresy;" that "the condoning of this teaching is inexcusable"). However, I understand your intention was to expose erroneous teaching and not to attack any group or individual personally nor to suggest that they are not sincere Christians.

You asked about other individuals who have been adversely affected by this teaching emphasis. It is doubtful that I would be able to encourage them to write you at this time, for I either have no contact with them at this time and/or they themselves are not convinced that there is any error in the teaching. That, to me, is the biggest tragedy of all. As for my experiences, I studied from the book by Gordon Olson, "The Moral Government of God" at the New Jersey school of Evangelism in 1972. Later, I was in the Munich Outreach, and in 1973 involved in outreach in Central Mexico. During that time, my exposure was to primarily "second line" teachers with some exposure to Loren Cunningham and Joy Dawson. As far as how the teaching affected my walk, I can only say that it encouraged greatly the notion that God was dealing severely with me on a continuous basis and the resulting bondage, legalism and low self-esteem took me years to fully shake.

The teaching causes serious problems in peoples' lives.

The way I heard about your booklet was through a man here in the Seattle area who was formerly on the Board of Y.W.A.M. in New Lealand and who, himself, has ministered to humerous individuals whose lives were adversely affected by this teaching. I will be giving him your name and possibly he will contact you.

You are no doubt aware of the work being done by the Christian Research Institute (CRI), P.O. Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA, 92693; and by CARIS, Box 2067, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, on this same subject. If not, I'd encourage you to contact them.

Thank you for your helpfulness.

Yours in Christ.

Enclosure

P.S. PLEASE COOKS WISE -P.S. MAIL (UTHER CORT!), SEAD THE (UTHER CORT!), ALEXING OF BY CORT!

KAILUA-KONA, HAWAI 96745

DEAR ALAN,

WE HAVE USED UP ALL THE COPIES OF "LEAD US NOT INTO DECEPTION "AND WOULD LIKE TO ORDER TWENTY [20] MORE, EN-CLUSED IS A CHECK FOR \$44500.

THE BOOKLET HAS HAD A VERY DEFINITE EFFECT AND HELPED US TO BETTER COMMONICATE WITH OUR FREINDS IN YWAM. AND THE IDEAS + TEACHINGS IN THE BOOKLET ARE TELD BY THE PANK + FILE STAFF MEMBERS OF YWART AND PROPAGATED IN THEIR HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM AS WELL AS THEIR DISCIPLESHIP TRHINING, PROGRAM. IN ONE DISCUSSION WITH AND LONG -TIME STAFF MEMBER WE WERE APPALLED TO HEAR THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE IT WAS (700'S WILL FOR JESUS TO GO TO THE CROSS! YWHM IS NOW BUILDINGS PACIFIC ASIA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY! YEURS IN CHRIST

The teaching is present; the book is helpful and accurate.

Canada T6C 4G1 July 11, 1984

Alan Gomes Box 1464 La Mirada, California 90637 - 1464 U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Gomes;

Thank you for the copy of your book <u>Lead Us Not Into Deception</u>. I have been able to read through the book quickly, and have a number of comments to make. But, for this letter, I would like to ask you some questions in regard to your INTRODUCTION. After I have read the rest of the book more thoroughly, I may be in touch with you again.

My basic concern lies in the fact that basically Youth With A Mission (YWAM) has been singled out as the organization that "teaches" moral government. I noticed that in your last of teachers and organization you failed to mention the following.

- 1. Winkie Pratney the author of YOUTH AFLAME, and a number of other titles. I know that he believes in the "Moral Government" teachings and teaches them in many places including Young LIfe, Last Days Ministries, Maranatha Ministries, and at a number of "Jesus Music Festivals."
- 2. Agape Force based in Lindale Texas. I have several friends who were in the Agape Force at one time, and they have spoken to me of the Moral Government theological system. I believe the Agape Force is currently starting churches throughout the U.S.A. and Canada.
- 3. Bethany Fellowship. Bethany Fellowship Publishers, publish books by Charles Finney (forward by Harry Conn), Winkie Pratney's books, and other books that espouse the Moral Government theology.

I was wondering why these influential teachers and organizations were not mentioned in your introduction. Are you not aware of these individuals or organizations? Mott Media as well, publishes books espousing Moral Government theology. Why are they not mentioned?

I would appreciate hearing from you about these questions. Thank you for your early reply.

In His Service

Moral Government is also taught outside YWAM.

W. A. WHITNEY CORP. 650 RACE ST., ROCKFORD, ILL. 61105

HARRY CONN MANAGEMENT-TECHNICAL CONSULTANT AREA CODE 815 964-6771

May 27, 1980

Mr. Allan W. Gomes Talbot Seminary 13800 Biola Avenue La Mirada, California 90638

Dear Mr. Gomes:

I was told yesterday that you had written a paper exposing the "errors" of Gordon Olson and a few other remarks.

Just thought you would like to have an incomplete set of his writings. The only reason they are incomplete is because I don't have a complete set. I was told you wrote these are kept secret. This isn't true, and I would like to mention that Men for Missions of Minneapolis has circulated or sold over 40,000 copies of his "Moral Government of God".

I was also told you wrote that he doesn't believe that Christ's death was vicarious or substitutionary. This is also untrue because his writings show this very plainly.

It is true that Youth with a Mission tells their kids to go back to their church and earn the right to be heard before trying to share their doctrine. I was taught the same thing at Moody Bible Institute.

I would like to say that Gordon Olson is the finest Christian scholar I've ever known, and I personally knew Harry Ironside, Wilbur Smith and Donald Grey Barnhouse. He is the most godly person i've ever known. His view of the "atonement" could be classified as the "governmental" or classical view, as described by Albert Barnes in his book, "The Atonement and Its Relation to Moral Government".

I thought you would like this and more information before you touch the "Lord's anointed".

Cordially in Christ,

ture being sent under te cover.

This and the next six pages contain correspondence between Conn and Gomes. 4 June 1980

Mr. Harry Conn W. A. Witney Corp. 650 Race St., Rockford, Ill. 61105

Dear Mr. Conn:

Let me at the outset express my sincere appreciation for your taking time out of an undoubtedly busy schedule to write and send me some of Mr. Olson's literature. I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the points you have raised in your letter. Hopefully this will enable you to better understand my position on the Moral Government issue.

First of all, while it is true that I have written a paper dealing with some of the problems of the governmental view, it is not the case that I have put into print statements concerning the "secrecy" of Olson's writings. In this connection let me say that I have been informed from a couple of independent, reliable sources that there have been occasions where YWAM students were discouraged from coming right out and teaching Moral Government concepts upon assimilating back into the local church since, it was maintained, the Moral Government teaching is "too revolutionary" or "too radical" a form of teaching to be readily accepted in many traditional churches. While my personal conviction is that this information is accurate, I have refrained from putting statements such as these into print because information of this sort is difficult to document. In any event, my paper concerns itself solely with the theological content of the governmental system.

Secondly, it is true that I have written that Olson denies Christ's death was vicarious and substitutionary in the sense that the terms are commonly used. I fully realize that Olson speaks of a "substitute for a penalty" (Historical Opinions p.2/(3)) and a "substituted procedure" (W-Me-VI-5) in connection with the death of Christ. But in Moral Government we are not dealing with an exchange of persons whereby Christ bears the penalty for the sinner in his stead (i.e. a "substituted penalty"). Rather, what is substituted is the procedure in dealing with sinners (i.e. a "substitute for a penalty"). In other words, rather than a penalty having to be paid for sins, the atonement enables God to "substitute" the procedure of punishing sin with "free forgiveness". This falls far short of the biblical view of the atonement.

Thirdly, you devote a paragraph to inform me of Gordon Olson's outstanding moral character and godly life. As I have already stated, my paper concerns itself solely with the theology of moral government as outlined in Sharing Your Faith. Since I have never met Mr. Olson, I am in no position to pass ethical judgment on the nature of his character. Furthermore, I have no desire to do so for this is quite apart from the point. The teachings of all organizations and individuals—no matter how "godly", "scalous, or sincere—must be evaluated in terms of how they square with the Word of God. Even Paul the Apostlc—who was most assuredly the "Lord's anointed"—stated that even if he were to preach another gospel, he should be accursed (Gal. 1:8). Paul encouraged his hearers to evaluate even his own feaching on the basis of Scripture (Acts 17:11 c.f. 1 Thess. 5:21). If the Apostle Paul's teaching was not to escape careful scrutiny, neither should Gordon Olson's.

At this juncture my paper is not available for distribution. At such time as it is made publicly available, I will certainly forward you a copy.

Respectfully,

Alan W. Gomes

P.S. I would appreciate it if you would send me the balance of Mr. Olson's writings should they become available.

W. A. WHITNEY CORP. 650 RACE ST., ROCKFORD, ILL.

HARRY CONN
MANAGEMENT-TECHNICAL CONSULTANT

AREA CODE 815 964-6771

June 10, 1980

Mr. Alan Gomes 14209 Syracuse Street - #14 Whittier, California 90604

Dear Mr. Gomes:

Thank you for your kind letter of June 4 concerning my friend, Gordon Oison.

His latest or most recent piece of literature is being sent to you under separate cover. The name of it is "Truth Shall Make You Free". He treats the "Atonement" in Sections VII and VIII. I have two of his looseleaf lesson sections on this subject both of which are of 28 or 29 pages of single spaced typed material that several publishers have wanted to publish both sections. I do not have copies available to send.

I am also sending you two books under separate cover. One is by Albert Barnes on "The Atonement" who pastored the largest Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. during the last century.

The other book is "Christus Victor" by Gustaf Aulen, a Swedish theologian. On page 85 he shows you the origin of the payment theory. He also shows that Martin Luther never believed it nor did Augustin.

A few more that believed the General Governmental or Classical view of the Atonement are Charles G. Finney, Hugo Grotius, Arminus, John Wesley, Johnathan Edwards II, Burge, Beman, Butler-Dunn, (the great Baptist theologian of the last century), Benjamin Randall, M.W. Taylor. The "New School Presbyterians" and also the Cumberland Presbyterians embraced the classical view not the Catholic nor St. Anslmian view often called the "Limited Atonement" as also the Free Will Baptist and the General Baptist did. Those people did not have to battle the ridiculous view of putting physical healing in the Atonement.

The only reason I mentioned Olson's life was for your own good so you would know you were not dealing with the average armchair theologian.

I trust the information being sent will be of interest and a blessing.

Cordially in Christ,

Harry Conn

HC/1f

July 13, 1981

Mr. Harry Conn C/O W.A. Whitney Corp. 650 Race Street, Rockford, Ill. 61150

Dear Mr. Conn:

This is in response to your letter dated June 10, 1980. I realize this reply has been a long time in coming. I felt it would be inappropriate to answer a letter such as yours without first taking time to consider carefully the various pieces of literature which accompanied it.

The material you supplied has proven invaluable in helping me formulate my views on the Moral Government position. Enclosed please find a copy of my recently published booklet, And Lead Us Not Into Deception. In it I express my observations on some of the literature you sent as well as other books dealing with the Moral Government system. Additional copies are available through CARIS (Christian Apologetics: Research and Information Service), P.O. Box 1783, Santa Ana, Ca., 92702, for a cost of \$1.35 cach.

I voild now like to comment on some statements made in your letter. First of all, you claim Martin Luther did not hold to a "payment theory" of the atonement. This is patently false. Martin Luther most definitely did view Christ's death as of the nature of payment. I'm sure Luther would appreciate being allowed to speak for himself:

An eternal and unchangeable sentence of condemnation has been passed on sin, for God neither can nor will connive at sin. Thus His wrath remains over it eternally and irrevocably. This is the reason why this redemption could not be effected without a <u>payment</u> or recompense which would make satisfaction for sin, would take the wrath upon itself, assuage it, and so take away and blot out sin...

We should realize the great, severe, and terrible wrath of God against sin because of the fact that this wrath could be turned aside in no other way and atonoment could be made by no other payment than by this one

sacrifice, that is, the death and blood of the Son of God...(Plass, Ewald W. What Luther Says: An Anthology, Vol. III: Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959, pp. 1554-1555. Emphasis mine.)

In the event Luther's own words are insufficient to convince you, let me point out that Gordon Olson, whomyou refer to as "the finest Christian scholar" you have ever met as well as "the Lord's anointed," very clearly indicates that Luther regarded Christ's death as a payment for sin, in contradistinction to the Noral Government position (Olson, Sharing Your Faith, Historical Opinions, p.1).

Your letter then goes on to state: "A few more that believed the General, Governmental or Classical view of the Atonement are Charles G. Finney, Hugo Grotius, Arminius, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards II, Burge, Beman, Butler-Dunn, (the great Baptist theologian of the last century), Benjamin Randall, F.W. Taylor (sic.)." Aside from the fact that neither Arminius or Wesley believed the governmental theory, your statement does not speak to the issue. What if every theologian since the death of John the Apostle taught the governmental theory of the atonement? Mould this somehow make it true? This theory must be rejected because it controverts the clear teaching of the Scriptures. The Bible and the Bible alone must determine the true view of the atonement. If Finney et al. taught a view which is at variance with the Word of God, then so much the worse for Finney et al.

I trust you will find my booklet informative. I hope you will prayerfully consider its contents.

Sincerely, A.W. Homen

A.W. Gomes

knew that His Son was pure gold, and no impurities would surface no matter how hot the fire. Had Jesus sinned, God would have lied when He promised a Redeemer. The Bible plainly declares that God cannot lie, and there is absolutely no possibility that Jesus might have sinned. No matter how hungry He was, He had perfect self control and could not be tempted to turn the stone into bread. We are often tempted to eat that which is not good for our health, but the fruit of the Spirit is temperance (self control) and with His help we are able to resist the appetites of the body. "In Him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He had perfect self control and the temptation only proved that fact.

Jesus was tempted to jump from the pinnacle of the tempte. But there was no desire to be an exhibitionist (like some faith healers) or to tempt God to work miracles without a good reason. Many tempt God today by asking Him to heal them when medicine in available, or they take unnecessary risks.

He was offered glory and honour and power if He would fall down and worship Satan. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Rev. 5:12. These were rightfully His, and yet "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised. and we esteemed Him not." Isa. 53:3. In due time, God was going to highly exalt Him and give Him a name which is above every name. At the name of Jesus, every kire would bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Ahead of Him lay many humiliations and the unspeakable humiliation of the cross before His glorious exaltation at the right hand of God the Father. If there was any pride in Him, He would have been tempted to accept Saten's offer, and thus escape the awful suffering shead. "For the Lord God will help Me: therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set My face like a flint. and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Isa. 50:7. Nothing could turn Him aside from the very purpose He came to the earth. Many today have tried to capture for themselves fame and power and glory, but instead have made fools of themselves. "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." 1 Tim. 3:6. They forget God's unchanging principle--"Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." We who have shared His sufferings on earth will also share in His exaltation in heaven.

"Be not carried about with varied and strange doctrines." "In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." Mr. Eleeth has used many scriptures to try to prove a false premise. If you were to study the writings of the false cults, you would find that most of them back up their false teachings with scriptures. The devil knows and uses scriptures to lead men astray, as he did when he tried to lead Jesus into sin. Scriptures have been used to prove there is no hell and that Jesus was not God. You have a free will, Greg, and you can choose to follow the counsel of godly men or to follow after those who privert the clear teachings of God's Word. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Sincerely yours,

A friend tries to persuade Robertson to turn from Moral Government views.

12720 First Ave. La Mirada, CA 90638 January 27, 1985

Dear

In accordance with your request, I am writing this letter as a brief written confirmation of my words to you concerning the Christian character and integrity of Mr. Alan Gomes, author of ". . . And Lead Us Not into Deception."

I have known Mr. Gomes since 1979 as a Christian friend, and I have been one of his teachers during his M.Div. (3 yrs.) and Th.M. (1 or more yrs.) programs at Talbot Theological Seminary (Graduate Theological School of Biola University, 13900 Biola Ave., La Mirada, CA 90639) where I have taught for over 10 years as professor of Systematic Theology. I also served as Mr. Gomes advisor for his theses.

Alan is first of all a very committed Christian and an extremely capable student of Scripture and Bible doctrine. He has taught several courses at Talbot as part-time faculty, and only exceptional graduates are privileged to do this. He is highly respected by the faculty as a very capable and accurate student of Scripture and Systematic and Historical Theology. Alan is not a person who is divisive or dwells on hair-splitting issues. Actually he has an aversion to controversy, but he does seek to rectify major doctrinal aberrations from sound biblical teaching. In his research, teaching, and writing I have found him very honest, objective and careful to document what he sets forth.

The Lord has not only used Alan at Talbot Seminary but also at Grace Bible Chapel of Fullerton California, where he presently teaches one of the adult Sunday School classes. He is highly respected by the elders of this assembly and appreciated for his teaching ability.

I trust that this letter will meet your need for a brief evaluation of Mr. Gomes as a Christian brother and faithful servant and teacher of the Word. You are welcome to distribute this letter to other concerned brethren relevant to Mr. Gomes authorship of the above mentioned booklet. If I can be of further help in regard to this matter concerning the Lord's work and his servant, Alan Gomes, please feel free to contact me.

Be sure that you are in my prayers for the Lord's blessing upon your life and ministry and upon the assembly of the Lord's people that you represent (2 Thess. I:11-12).

In Christ's service,

Henry H. Holloman

A character reference for Alan Gomes.



BETHEL Chapel

Secretary Grace Bible Chapel 1119 S. Lambert Dr., Fullerton, California U. S. A. 92633

DearBrother

Many thanks for all of your assistance during the past couple years, beginning with your "first alert" re YVAM and continuing with various other contacts since then.

We met with Loren Cunningham. He came to our chapel for a meeting with the elders, and he brought along "The Galloping Gourmet" of TV fame, Graham Kerr, and also Peter Jordan, our own missionary who has been working with YWAM for some years.

They admitted to having avery large worldwide organization with rather loose controls and with a good deal of scope for variations in doctrine from place to place and from time to time. They feel the variety is a good thing.

They claimed that the kind of error described in Alan Gomes' book is no longer to be found in YWAM schools. We pointed out that some of the books associated with such error can still be purchased in YWAM bookstores, and that some of the titles have been dropped from their recommended reading lists.

We asked that they remove all such books from their book stores and they declined. We also recommended that they should have a very strong specific doctrinal statement, but they declined; they say that some of their participating churches do not go for doctrinal statements. They agreed to modify their Statement of Purpose to include a specific control to the bodily resurrection of the Lord.

As a result of our discussion, our elders have written to Loren Cunningham, indicating that in the circumstances, we can no

Canadian church confronts Mr. Cunningham about YWAM's Moral Government involvement.

no longer recommend any of our young people for studies in YWAM schools, and in fact, we have already discouraged at least two of our young people from going ahead with plans to attend a YWAM school.

We still have a problem, of course. Our assembly commended the s and a single missionary to the work with YWAM some years ago, and we are still working on the problem of deciding what to do about our own missionaries, who initially went with our support and commendation. You might pray that the Lord will give us real wisdom as to how to resolve this particular aspect of the problem here at Bethel.

Again, many many thanks for all of the assistance which you have so kindly rendered to our assembly in this matter. We regret that communications have been so very very slow from this end, but we have not been unmindful of your labor of love.

Yours very sincerely, with Christian love and greetings,

P.S. Actually, I am not the assembly secretary, but I have handled certain aspects of our research on this matter.

P.P.S. You will be interested to know that when he was with us, Loren Cunningham implied certain things about Alan Gomes and we were in a very strong position to refute these implications. He mentioned that Alan had left the church where he was, but that he didn't know why, or where he had gone. The implication stopped short of accusing Alan of anything specific, but one was left to infer whatever one might wish to imagine. We stated the facts as we knew them, and Loren said he was pleased to hear them.



Grace Bible Chapel

_1119 S. Lambert Dr., Fullerton, California 92633

Telephone: 77 - GRACE

January 27, 1985

Dear Brother

Nearly a year has expired since you wrote me regarding the alleged problems with the teachings that Y. W. A. M. promulgates to those who go out under their auspices.

Apparently this matter has not been resolved as I am informed that you have arranged to meet with Mr. Cunningham of Y. W. A. M.

Alan Gomes tells me that someone has been spreading rumors regarding his being discredited and under discipline by this local Church. In case this report comes to your attention, we want you to know it is completely untrue. In fact, Gomes is presently teaching one of our six adult bible classes on Sunday mornings.

I would be interested in hearing about the results of your meetings with the Y. W. A. M. leadership.

Yours in His service.

Secretary

False rumors about Mr. Gomes have no foundation.

A SYNOPSIS OF MY MEETING WITH LOREN CUNNINGHAM ABOARD THE M/V ANASTASIS ON 27 AUGUST 1982

Pastors Jack Goffigon, John Reid and I arrived at the gangway of the Anastasis at 4:00 p.m. We were directed to the lobby and Rev. Cunningham was summoned to meet us. Mr. Cunningham was accompanied by Mr. Don Stephens (Director of the ship ministry) and Gary Stephens, a member on staff in Hong Kong.

Mr. Cunningham invited us to view a film which was showing in one of the lounges; he needed to make a few phone calls in the mean time. We viewed the film, which was about the history of missions and ended with an explanation of YWAM's missionary endeavor in the Anastasis. The film lasted approximately 30 minutes.

When the film was completed, Mr. Cunningham came in for us and then gave us a guided tour of the ship, explaining as he went along YWAM's various ministries world-wide. This tour took perhaps another half-hour.

After the guided tour, we were directed to a small cabin. This was where the discussion was to take place.

Pastor Reid began by explaining his concern as a shepherd of a local church. He indicated that after reading Alan Gomes' book, speaking with many members of his church who had received training at YWAM, and investigating some of the literature these church members studied during their training, he became alarmed at the anti-biblical implications of some of the doctrines they had been taught. Mr. Reid explained that he was now in an uncomfortable position as a local pastor. With the Anastasis prominently located in San Pedro Harbor, many people in his congregation would undoubtedly express an interest in this ministry. This would make it necessary for him as a pastor to take an appropriate stand.

At this juncture, Mr. Cunningham spoke. He said it was important for us to have some background about the organizational structure of YWAM. Without this background, he maintained, we could not grasp properly the nature of YWAM's teaching ministry. In essence, Mr. Cunningham stated that each YWAM base has its own semi-autonomous leadership. Mr. Cunningham said he felt it best to allow a variety of view points among the teachers at the YWAM schools. This latitude, we were told, is healthy and that theological censorship would stifle the creativity of YWAM's teaching ministry. In fact, YWAM has deliberately avoided precise doctrinal formulations, allowing YWAM to appeal to a wide range of Christians from varying denominational backgrounds.

- 1 -

Notes from a meeting between Mr. Gomes and Mr. Cunningham.

Pastor Reid spoke next. Reid agreed that there are numerous topics about which Christians can "agree to disagree." But he strongly emphasized that we are not talking about such issues here. We are here speaking of the constitutive doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the atonement and the attributes of God. Pastor Reid then explained in a cursory fashion precisely where some YWAM teachers have erred in their teaching on these crucial fundamentals. I added a few words of clarification during his explanation.

Mr. Cunningham at that point certainly assured us that he himself did not ascribe to the erroneous positions Reid described and emphasized that he (Cunningham) indeed believes in the efficacy of Christ's atonement. Mr. Cunningham, along with Mr. Don Stephens, stated that although they were aware something called "Moral Government" had been taught on occasion, they were sincerely surprised to hear that the view of the atonement we carefully described was part of Moral Government teaching. They all claimed, however, that they had not really read Olson's and Otis' material all the way through.

As I probed Mr. Cunningham further, I began to see that he was not too clear on some basic issues related to the nature and process of salvation, such as the meaning of "repentance" and whether salvation is by faith alone. I explained briefly my view of salvation (which I believe to be the biblical view): that the sole condition for salvation is faith in Christ, and that a faith which is of a truly saving character will and must necessarily produce works. Mr. Cunningham agreed that this made sense and said that he himself could ascribe to this position.

Throughout this discussion, they made no attempt to vindicate Moral Government's a correct doctrinal system. In fact, all the YWAM representatives here stated that they felt YWAM had erred in allowing this form of teaching to become controversial within their organization during the 1970's. They said they felt the "sin" of YWAM was to have allowed a "spirit of controversy" to abide, with some individuals rallying around one point of view and others around another. They made no apology for having allowed Moral Government to be taught (indeed, Don Stephens admitted the "strong likelihood" that Moral Government is still taught by "some" teachers), but only expressed regret for the atmosphere in which discussions were sometimes carried out.

The YWAM leaders then went on to explain that since this "controversial period" of the 70's, Moral Government has been de-emphasized in YWAM. Gordon Olson (a major Moral Government teacher) is now an old man, and consequently does not teach at any of the YWAM schools. Harry Conn allegedly has not lectured at the YWAM schools in about 3 years. Mr. Cunningham said he personally took steps to see that Elseth's book, Did God Know?, was removed from the shelves of the YWAM bookstores (and interestingly, Cunningham did not harmonize this statement with his earlier remark about not wanting to stifle the creativity of YWAM's teaching ministry through censorship). In time, they said, Moral Government would simply die off through lack of emphasis.

At this juncture, I pointed out that I had telephoned the YWAM bookstore (called "The Porthole") in Hawaii at 7 p.m. the night before. The bookstore manager told me I could purchase all the books we objected to, except Elseth's Did God Know?, which is currently out of print. The person on the phone told me she would have to back order Otis' The God They Never Knew because "We sell them very fast." I added that a Triend of mine recently purchased a copy of Did God Know? at the Springdale, Ark. YWAM bookstore. Mr. Cunningham stressed that as far as Elseth's book was concerned, this must have been an exceptional case since he took steps to remove the book. I did not press the issue of Elseth's book (though I believe I could have done so), but pointed out that there is nothing in Elseth's book that isn't in the others which clearly enjoy wide popularity within YWAM.

At any rate, I expressed that I felt it was unsatisfactory to hope that Moral Government would simply "just go away" on its own accord. I told Mr. Cunningham that as a leader he has a biblical responsibility to deal with this teaching head-on. I pointed out how the New Testament writers did not simply hope the heresies they encountered would merely "go away" on their own. I even used the example of Paul, who in Galatians 2 confronted Peter to his face for compromising the truth of the gospel.

Mr. Cunningham again stressed that he did not want to play the role of censor and dictate what can and cannot be taught at YWAM schools. He indicated that teachers are carefully chosen on the basis of exemplary character and zeal for Jesus Christ. I then interjected that character and zeal are necessary but not sufficient, and that teachers must also conform to the Word of God in all they teach.

At some point in the discussion John Reid turned to me and asked what I would do if I were in the position of leadership in YWAM. My response was that I would remove all Moral Government literature from YWAM bookstores, I would come out publicly against the teaching so there could be no mistake about where YWAM as a ministry stood, and I would do whatever I could to re-educate those who have been damaged as a result of this heretical teaching.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he agreed the Moral Government teaching might not have been the best thing for YWAM, but felt the difference between my approach and his merely reflect a difference in leadership style. He stated that by ignoring this teaching, it will fade away in time. He also said that if he were to pull the copies of these books off the shelves this action would only draw attention to the subject and generate more interest in these books. Again, Cunningham seemed oblivious to the inconsistency between this statement and his earlier defense of having done the proper thing in removing Elseth's offending book from YWAM bookstores.

At this point I asked Mr. Cunningham a telling question. I queried, "Even if, for the sake of discussion, we assume this teaching will go away on its own, what about the thousands of individuals who have <u>already</u> been damaged by this teaching in the past? Doesn't YWAM have any responsibility to these people?" The answer I received was amazing: Mr. Cunningham stated

that in his experience, he has found that if a person is walking closely with the Lord, no teaching will be able to damage him. The only ones who would be hurt by a false teaching are those who are inclined to be contentious anyway.

I then turned to Mr. Cunningham and said, "I am very sorry to hear you say this. What you are saying is unbiblical and terribly distressing." I then went on to explain how the New Testament writers dealt with heresy. They did not assume there was nothing to worry about, and that any believer "who is really walking with the Lord will not be affected by false teaching anyway." I showed him that the Scripture writers combatted the heresy because they felt false teaching could damage a believer's walk. I explained that it is one thing to give Olson's manual to someone like myself; I have had the proper training in theology to be able to discern what is true and false. But many of the people who are exposed to this teaching in their schools are new converts. I drew the following analogy: it is like putting a small child in a room with both candy and rat poison on a table. Are we to blame the child if he dies from eating the rat poison instead of (or in addition to) the candy? Does it make sense to say, "the child would no doubt have eaten something else that would have killed him anyway," or "After all, didn't we leave candy there for him to eat as well? Shouldn't he have known better than to choose the poison instead of the candy?"

Mr. Cunningham did not respond to this.

The meeting then began to wind down, with the main point of the YWAMers being that they appreciated our concern and hoped we would realize they were dealing with the problem in the best way they felt they should. Mr. Cunningham stated that we could feel free to contact him at any time and that he would receive letters if they were marked "personal."

The meeting concluded some time after 7:00 p.m.

E. Calvin Beisner

May 17, 1982

Mr. Alan Gomes 14612 San Bruno Dr., #3 La Mirada, CA 90638

Dear Alan,

First, an explanation for the formality of the above: not that I want to be cold, but that since this letter will contain some specific information about my dealings with YWAM, I want to be sure that anyone who might in the future see it for any reason will know exactly who was writing whom and when. This isn't to say I'd think you'd break a confidence: you wouldn't, and I'm not even asking you to keep this confidential. But even if I did, it could, if ever some legal action were taken by YWAM against you (as the Local Church has done against Jack Sparks), and you were subpoenaed to provide all records you have of any communication with anyone about YWAM.

1. Re: W.R. Martin's and My Talk with Loren Cunningham, YWAM President.

Walter and I arranged for the talk after I'd been researching moral government theology, sometimes haphazardly and sometimes very systematically, for about a year-and-a-half. I had spoken at length with Walter about it and about the encounters I had had with some former YWAM trainees, and Walter and I had spoken with Graham and Trina Kerr (formerly the "Galloping Gourmet") and had encouraged them to re-think their decisions to join with YWAM (which, unfortunately, they didn't do).

Walter was convinced at that time that moral government theology as taught by Gordon Olson and as apparently pervasively taught in YWAM was diametrically opposed to orthodox Christian doctrine regarding the nature and attributes of God, the nature of man, original sin, human ability, the nature of salvation, the atonement, and several other matters. He did not take it lightly.

We met with Cunningham sometime in October of 1978 in the office of Pastor Ralph Wilkerson of Melodyland Christian Center, with someone else from the pastoral staff of Melodyland present at the meeting (I don't recall his name right now).

Walter told Cunningham basically the objections we had to moral government theology and emphasized strongly that he thought that if it were not removed completely from YWAM's program, it would eventually be the downfall of YWAM as a truly Christian witness to the world. He spoke mainly in generalities, and then asked me to go into some specifics, which I did.

I went over the basic theological criticisms of moral government theology which you and I are familiar with and which are presented in your booklet, and pointed out the connections between Olson's teachings and those of Roy Elseth. When I'd finished with the details, Martin again emphasized how serious we thought the matter was, and offered to have CRI help YWAM to develop a sound

Dr. Walter Martin and Mr. Beisner warn Mr. Cunningham about dangers of false teaching.

Alan Gomes, May 17, 1982

Page Two

theological curriculum to replace moral government for YWAM.

Cunningham then spoke. He told us that he was essentially unaware of what moral government theology was, didn't even know the basic ideas it taught. He added that YWAM has no official teachings just because it attempts to be cross-denominational. He said they invited many different Christian teachers to come share their insights about reaching the lost, and were not very particular about the theological views held by those teachers. He said that he himself was not a theologian or a theologically sophisticated thinker, and that really what we'd said about moral government had to a large extent gone over his head.

However, he said, based on his respect for Martin, he would assume that moral government theology was certainly not good. He added that because of numerous complaints, he had already had Elseth's Did God Know? removed from the shelves of YWAM bookstores. He would not agree, however, to stop having Olson and Harry Conn teach for YWAM, because he didn't want to commit YWAM to some particular theological system. But he said he would talk with the council of presidents of YWAM worldwide and bring the problem to their attention, and would try to bring about a change from moral government ideas to orthodoxy, as we had outlined, among the staff of YWAM, though he denied that a significant number of the staff taught it at that time and said he thought surely it was a quite isolated phenomenon. He added that since YWAM was not officially endorsing moral government theology, he didn't think it was so bad that it was being taught under the aegis of YWAM.

Walter then responded that since moral government theology was heretical, it was just as bad for YWAM to $\underline{\text{allow}}$ it to be taught as to officially endorse it.

Cunningham said that he didn't have the authority single-handedly to banish moral government teaching from YWAM, but that he would discuss it with the council of presidents and see what could be done.

The meeting ended without specific agreements as to what would be done. There was no agreement that Cunningham would do anything substantive to counter moral government in YWAM. I think, in retrospect, that that was a mistake, tactically, on Walter's and my part. As long as we had Cunningham saying that, having heard us, he could agree that moral government theology was bad, we should have pressed for some kind of promise of substantive action to end it in YWAM. We didn't.

You do have my permission to reproduce this letter for proof to anyone who challenges you on whether Cunningham has ever been contacted.

2. Re: The girl I counselled who had been with YWAM.
I have searched diligently through my files on YWAM and cannot come up with the name of the girl I counseled after she left YWAM and began working with Brother Andrew's organization, God's Open Doors, at the Anaheim office. However, I can give the basics of what her problems were, her background, and what transpired in the course of our communication (all in person at the CRI office).

She came into the CRI office sometime in 1976, I believe it would have been around June, and asked to talk with someone regarding some personal problems she was having. I was on duty at the time, so I got the assignment.

She said she was struggling with guilt feelings and resentment toward YWAM because of what she described as severe spiritual problems she had resulting from her time with YWAM (she had been with it for some four or five years, most recently at their Lausanne, Switzerland, base). She said the spiritual problems had to do with doubting her salvation and doubting the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice to assure her of salvation through faith. She had been taught in YWAM, she said, that her salvation depended upon her continuing in good works and moving on to perfection. She brought up Gordon Olson's name, and it was she who first gave me a copy of his manual, Sharing Your Faith. She said that manual formed the core of the training in evangelism that all YWAM trainees in Lausanne took, and that Olson's teachings were the origin of her spiritual problems.

She said also that Olson had actually been there himself to teach, and that both in his manual and in his lectures he taught God's knowledge was limited, His moral attributes changeable, and that Christians must work to maintain their salvation. He denied, she said, the doctrines of original sin, human inability, total depravity, perseverance of the saints, the substitutionary atonement.

Olson's teachings were new to me at the time. This was my first encounter with them. I studied through his manual and met with her again, and then showed her the biblical answers to Olson's teachings. She was overjoyed as she saw that her salvation depended solely on the grace of an unchanging God, not on her fallible efforts at good works.

The changes that occurred in her over a period of just about two months were incredible. She went from being terribly insecure and deeply depressed to being quite assured and deeply rooted in Christian confidence. She attributed the changes to the changed theological viewpoint she held, and I must concur. There certainly were no changes in circumstances that could be blamed for the change.

Unfortunately, since a time about eight months after that, I have lost track of her completely. She later moved to someplace in Washington state.

I've got to cover a meeting tonight, and have lots of other work to do, so I'll have to cut this letter off now. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and Diane this summer. Look forward to hearing from you again soon.

In Christ's Joyous Service,

Soli Deo Gloria!



YOUTH WITH A MISSION and AGAPE FORCE

It is important to note at the outset that Professor Walter Martin and Christian Research Institute do not consider Youth With A Mission and Agape Force to be cults. However, we are concerned about their doctrine of moral government. We have enclosed a statement on this subject.

Agape Force and YWAM are closely linked in their theology and methodology. We have had numerous disturbing reports concerning the teachings and practices of both ministries. In addition to the moral government difficulties another problem exists that has apparently had some damaging effects on the lives of the youth involved. The unbiblical practice of "shepherding" is prevalent. Shepherding is synonymous with the discipleship and submission movement (see enclosed materials). The idea of discipling sprang from a proper desire for greater commitment in the body of Christ; however, it has gotten out of hand to the point where leaders are controlling the personal decision making of individuals. Unfortunately, some people have been spiritually and psychologically damaged by these teachings.

It is important to note that as each YWAM base operates somewhat autonomously, there is variance from base to base as to the degree of problems with moral government and shepherding.

In the past YWAM has done much good in the field of evangelism and training missionaries, but at present this shepherding problem and the moral government teachings must be dealt with.

The flow of bad reports pertaining to YWAM, from all quarters, is increasing at CRI, and the nature of the testimonies are becoming more disturbing. Much prayer and searching of the word is in order with reference to participation in YWAM.

We are presently in the process of compiling some more definitive information on YWAM and Agape Force. Any further information you might have would be greatly appreciated.

5/82 - EM

President Prof Walter Martin

Secretary Dr. Douglas F. Allen

Vice President/Treasurer Stanley Tonnesson Assistant Secretary Donald S. Reddington Everett R. Jacobson

Post Office Box 500 San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693 714/855-9926



September 24, 1979

Greg Robertson 932 E. Grand Blvd. Corona, Ca., 91720

Dear Greg,

Thank you for your letter of September 6.

You are correct in having many questions and suspicions concerning YWAM. At the present time they are under study and analysis for doctrinal aberrations concerning the nature and attributes of God and for their doctrine of original sin connected with the Pelagian heresy. Dr. Martin is not recommending YWAM to anyone until such time as their problems are cleared up.

We do not know when we will have an in-depth report available. Spiritual Counterfeits may be able to help you further at this time:

> Spiritual Counterfeits Project Box 4308 Berkeley, Ca., 94704

God bless you!

Yours in Christ, Christian Research Institute

hosman

Leah Grossman

Research Consultant

LG/jj

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