

REPENTANCE, FAITH, AND CONVERSION: AN APPROACH
TO THE LORDSHIP CONTROVERSY

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Theology in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1982

Title: REPENTANCE, FAITH, AND CONVERSION: AN APPROACH TO
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Degree: Master of Theology
Date: May, 1982

The Lordship controversy is a debate concerning the nature of saving faith, and the nature of saving repentance.

Those who espouse what is called the Lordship position believe that repentance involves a renunciation of one's sin and rebellion against God, and a corresponding turning to God in submission to His will. Such men similarly assert that the call to faith has within it a call from the Sovereign of the Universe to submit to His will.

Conversely, those who hold the Non-Lordship position deny that repentance involves a turning away from sin. These scholars believe that repentance is a "change of mind" about who Jesus is and about the need to turn away from one's unbelief. Likewise, their concept of saving faith is that it is a simple trusting of Jesus to save, without any call of commitment to His will.

In tracing the New Testament concept of *μετάνοια* through its Old Testament background embodied in the term *לָשׁוּב*, one arrives at the conclusion that indeed the repentance which is to be preached today carries within it the call to turn away from sin and rebellion, and return to a submissive relationship to one's God. In preaching repentance, however, one must not demand that men promise never to sin again, nor promise that one will always obey Christ from henceforth. Rather, the repentance preached today calls upon men to turn away from sin and accept God's enablement for holy living.

By examining the relationship between repentance and faith in the Scriptures, one finds that at times the apostles used these terms interchangeably. One is thereby forced to the conclusion that saving faith, since it is used as a synonym for repentance in certain places, must itself include an element of submission to Christ.

An examination of the uses of *πίστις* and *πιστεύω* in Paul and John confirms this understanding. Both men use the terms, at times, to indicate that the essence of faith includes not only trust in Christ, but also submission to His will. Again, however, in preaching true faith one must not call upon men to promise never to sin again, nor promise that they will always henceforth obey Christ. Rather, preaching faith emphasizes that no man has the capacity within himself to be reconciled to God or be freed from the sin which dwells within him. The proclamation of faith calls men to receive God's mercy to sinners through the cross of Christ, wherein God enables all men to be freed not only from the penalty of sin, but also from its power.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Controversy

"What must I do to be saved?" is a question of vital importance to the witnessing Christian as well as to the sinner. As the sinner needs to know what conditions must be fulfilled, the witnessing Christian needs to know what conditions must be demanded. But what answer shall we give?

Evangelical Christians are not agreed. Some evangelists are content to say "only believe," and consider that surrender to the Lordship of Christ is a later stage belonging not to conversion but to discipleship. Others take the view that it is impossible to divorce the Saviorhood from the Lordship of Christ, and that He who gives all, asks all, and that evangelistic preaching is a total demand, as well as a total offer.¹

So wrote John R. W. Stott more than twenty years ago. The question is today, as then, hotly debated between men who are orthodox in scholarship and deep in their love for Christ and His Word.

That this is no small issue is clear when one examines some of the published writings on the subject. Charles C. Ryrie, in his book, Balancing the Christian Life, levels the charge of heresy against those who demand surrender to the Lordship of Christ as a condition for receiving salvation:

The message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel; therefore, one of them is a false gospel and comes under the curse

¹ John R. Stott, "Must Christ Be Lord To Be Savior?--Yes," Eternity, September 1959, p. 15.

of perverting the gospel or preaching another gospel (Gal 1:6-9), and this is a very serious matter.¹

On the other side of the debate are men such as J. I. Packer and Walter Chantry. Chantry, in his work, Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?, gives his opinion of the seriousness of this issue:

In the central issue of the way of salvation, large segments of Protestantism are engrossed in neo-traditionalism. We have inherited a system of evangelistic preaching which is unbiblical.

The difference between today's gospel and Jesus' Gospel are not in minor details, but in the core of the matter.

Evangelists and pastors are forgetting to tell sinners to repent. Consequently, this misinformed age imagines that it can continue in its old ways of life while adding Jesus as a personal Hell insurance for the world to come.

Confession of sin is not enough. There must also be a full purpose of heart to turn from sin to have eternal life.²

Packer as well, while writing in a more restrained vein, insists:

The repentance that Christ requires of His people involves a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims which He may make on their lives. . . . He has no interest in gathering vast crowds of adherents who would melt away as soon as they found out what following Him actually demanded of them. . . . In common honesty, we must not conceal the fact that free forgiveness in one sense will cost every thing; or else our evangelizing becomes a sort of confidence trick.³

Such is the state of the debate today. No one seems

¹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Balancing the Christian Life (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 170.

² Walter J. Chantry, Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic? (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), pp. 12, 16, 50-51.

³ J. I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (Downers Grove: IV Press, 1975), pp. 72-73

to have come up with a solution upon which all agree.

The Essential Issue

Some have approached this issue as if it were a debate over whether salvation is appropriated through faith alone, or through faith plus some other requirements. Lordship preachers are regularly charged with adding conditions along with faith as the means by which men must appropriate salvation. Harrison calls the Lordship position "a subtle form of legalism" which "brings works in by the side door."¹ Ryrie has been quoted above as saying that the message of faith only and the message of faith plus commitment of life cannot both be the gospel. This is, however, to misunderstand the issue.

No one who espouses the Lordship position, as far as this writer could discern, denies that salvation comes through faith alone. Stott clearly states that "salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. If I thought that to insist on surrender to Christ as Lord was to encourage a sinner to rely on good works for salvation, I would abandon such insistence immediately."² The issue, rather, concerns the content or nature of saving faith. Stott has grasped this accurately when he states:

Salvation is sola fide, but some modern evangelical preaching and teaching evacuate faith of some of its

¹ Everett F. Harrison, "Must Christ Be Lord To Be Savior?--No," Eternity, September 1959, p. 16.

² John R. Stott, "Must Christ Be Lord To Be Savior?--Yes," Eternity, September 1959, p. 15.

essential and distinctive elements. It is a misunderstanding of the nature of saving faith which lies at the root of this desire to separate Christ as Savior from Christ as Lord.¹

The crux of the issue is this: does saving faith include some sort of commitment of obedience to Christ, or is saving faith a simple trusting Christ to save, without any such commitment? Stott believes that saving faith does include a commitment of obedience to Christ, and explains the exact nature of this commitment as follows:

In saying that saving faith includes obedience, I mean that in true faith there is an element of submission. Faith is directed towards a Person. It is in fact a complete commitment to this Person involving not only an acceptance of what is offered but a humble surrender to what is or may be demanded.²

Chafer, however, argues against such a position, and defines saving faith as a "depositing of one's eternal welfare in the hands of another."³ Again it must be stressed, this is not a "faith alone" versus "faith plus something else" issue; it is the content or nature of saving faith which is disputed.

Analogous to the faith issue in this debate is the question of the meaning of repentance. Those who hold that faith includes a commitment of obedience to Christ define repentance as a turning from sin. Packer defines repentance as "a change of mind and heart, a new life of denying self

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 17.

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, Salvation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1917), p. 45.

and serving the Savior as king in self's place."¹ Stott, more succinctly, calls repentance a "renunciation of sin."² Those who hold to this understanding of repentance argue that men must both repent and believe in order to appropriate salvation: "Repentance plus faith equals conversion and no man dare say he is converted who has not repented as well as believed."³

Because of such statements, many have charged those who hold this position with denying that salvation is by faith alone. While it is true that Lordship adherents have made some unguarded statements which can be interpreted this way when taken out of context, it is clear that they are not denying that salvation is sola fide. Rather, they point out that in certain scriptural contexts salvation is said to come through faith alone (John 3:16), in certain contexts salvation is said to come through repentance alone (Acts 2:38), and that in still other places both repentance and faith are mentioned as the proper response to the gospel (Acts 20:21). Salvation is said to be sola fide in the sense that saving faith presupposes repentance.⁴ These men, therefore, argue that 1) repentance is presupposed in faith, 2) the meaning of repentance is renunciation of sin, and 3) therefore, saving

¹J. I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (Downers Grove: IV Press, 1975), p. 71.

²John R. Stott, "Must Christ Be Lord To Be Savior?--Yes," Eternity, September 1959, p. 15.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

faith presupposes a turning from sin and includes a submission to the will of Christ.

On the other hand, those who deny that saving faith includes a commitment of obedience to Christ either deny the necessity for repentance in this age, or they define repentance in a different way than as a turning from sin. Chafer states:

Repentance, which is a change of mind, is included in believing. No individual can turn to Christ from some other confidence without a change of mind, and that, it should be noted, is all the repentance a spiritually dead individual can ever effect. . . . The unsaved who come under this divine influence are illuminated--given a clear understanding--concerning one sin, namely, that "they believe not on me."¹

Here Chafer seems to be saying that 1) repentance is included in believing, and 2) repentance is a change of mind about the sin of unbelief. Thus the repentance required of man today is a turning from the sin of unbelief, or a turning from trust in self to a trust in Christ alone to save.

Chafer and others base this definition of repentance upon dispensational distinctions:

The preaching of John the Baptist, of Jesus, and the early message of the disciples was "repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; but it was addressed only to Israel (Matt 10:5-6). This appeal was continued to that nation even after the day of Pentecost or so long as the Gospel was preached to Israel alone (Acts 2:8, 3:19).

The conditions are very different, however, in the case of an unsaved Gentile, who is a 'stranger to the covenants of promise' having no hope, without God in the world, and equally different from any Jew in this age.

The conclusion of the matter is that, while covenant

¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, vol. 3, Soteriology (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), p. 374.

people are appointed to national or personal adjustment to God by repentance as a separate act, there is no basis either in reason or revelation for the demand to be made that an unregenerate person in this age must add a covenant person's repentance to faith in order to be saved.¹

Here Chafer seems to deny that repentance is at all required today.

Ryrie, in a similar vein, states that the repentance which Jesus initially preached was a different kind of repentance than is required of men today, in order for them to be saved.² The repentance which Jesus preached consisted in ethical commands which expose man's failure. The repentance for today is really a synonym for faith.³

Thus for these men repentance as a turning from sin was for Israel as a covenant people, and this is not required today for men to be saved. The repentance required today is included in believing and is synonymous with believing. The repentance required in this age is not a renunciation of sin, as Stott and the Reformed scholars affirm, but is a synonym for faith, a turning from one confidence to another, the placing of one's eternal welfare in the hands of Jesus.

One's understanding of repentance, then, also has great implications for this debate. What is the meaning of repentance? Is it a renunciation of sin and a committal to do the will of Christ, or is it a change of mind about the

¹ Ibid., p. 376.

² Charles C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 167.

³ Charles C. Ryrie, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 116.

sin of unbelief and the need to trust Christ alone as Savior?

The Lordship Controversy thus at its base is a controversy over the definition or nature of saving faith, and over the definition or nature of repentance. All sides in this debate agree that faith alone is the means for appropriating salvation; all agree that faith includes trust in Christ alone to save; but not all agree that faith includes a commitment of obedience to Christ. Those who argue that faith does include a commitment of obedience assert that repentance involves a renunciation of sin, and is presupposed in faith. Those who argue that faith does not include a commitment of obedience assert that the repentance required in this dispensation is included in belief, is a synonym for belief, and is a change of mind about the sin of unbelief.

The Aim Of This Paper

Since the basic issue in the debate concerns the nature of both saving faith and repentance, this paper will attempt to determine exegetically the exact meaning of the terms "faith" and "repentance" when they refer to the response God requires of men to the gospel.

The paper will not be an attempt to pick one side in the controversy and defend it. It is entirely possible that both sides in the debate have made some misguided or false statements. If a mediating position is possible, as determined by the exegetical work of the paper, such a position will be taken.

Likewise, this is not an attempt to describe the

subjective experience which is necessary in order for a person to be saved. Too often, this issue has been approached subjectively, e.g. "I did not surrender to Christ when I was saved, and I am saved, therefore the Lordship position is wrong." The Scriptures alone must be the authority in this issue, not this writer's or anyone else's experience.

Further, this is not an attempt to determine how little a man may respond to the message of the gospel and still be saved. It will not be an approach from subjectivism, "Person X did thus and so, therefore he is or is not saved." Rather, it will be an attempt to objectively define what must be preached or proclaimed when giving an answer to those who ask, "What must I do to be saved?"

A Word Of Warning

When attempting to determine the meaning of any biblical term, there is always the danger of improper methodology. A lengthy quote from the New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology is here reproduced in order to outline what this writer believes is a proper methodology to follow when doing a study of this type.

In using a work of this kind there is always a danger of what James Barr has called "illegitimate totality transfer" (The Semantics of Biblical Language, 1961, 218). This arises when the various meanings of a word in different contexts are run together and then presumed to be present on each and every occasion that the word is used. To quote Barr's own example, the ekklēsia (church) may in various contexts mean "the Body of Christ," "the first installment of the Kingdom of God," and "the Bride of Christ." It would be illegitimate to presume without further indication that in any given passage the word ekklēsia must bear all or even any of these meanings. To answer this question, one has to ask whether the author

is acquainted with a particular meaning and whether the context indicates that this was his intention. Similarly, it is illegitimate to apply without more ado the meaning of a word in secular Greek or even the Septuagint to the New Testament, unless there be some indication that the word is used in the same sense.

Heed must also be given to Barr's warnings about etymologies. To know the derivation of a word is no infallible guide to its meaning. Barr observes: "The main point is that the etymology of a word is not a statement about its meaning but about its history; it is only as a historical statement that it can be responsibly asserted, and it is quite wrong to suppose that the etymology of a word is necessarily a guide either to its 'proper' meaning in a later period or to its actual meaning in that period" (op. cit., 109). Words have histories as well as etymologies. The meaning of any given word in any given context depends at least as much upon the place and use of the word in that context as upon any supposed derivation.¹

Thus in studying the terms "faith" and "repentance" one must examine both the history of the terms biblically and their usages in various contexts. Such a procedure is what Walter Kaiser calls the hermeneutical principle of antecedent theology. In examining any given term in its context, one must recognize that such a word often has roots which were laid down antecedent to that text.² In Kaiser's words:

Many terms were invested with such significance either at the time of their first occurrence or in subsequent appearances that they came to act somewhat as trigger-words . . . to call to the audience's mind most (if not all) of the preceding theology which "informed" the texts in which they occur. . . . These words are especially important in passages presenting the messianic doctrine of salvation.

In these words, which received an extraordinary amount of attention, a technical status was born. Not

¹Colin Brown, gen. ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 10.

²Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward An Exegetical Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 136.

that the words became isolated and detached from their contexts, . . . (but) in fact, the reverse was true, for the whole context of what had been said on a previous occasion made the word all the more significant in its new context. The new writer obviously enjoyed recalling all that had been earlier specified as part of that word, and he made this the basis for what he went on to say by the revelation of God.¹

When doing a study of this kind one must always remember to closely examine the theology antecedent to the various texts examined. Since the present study treats terms which deal with the doctrine of salvation, such a procedure will be doubly important.

¹Ibid., pp. 127-128.

CHAPTER II

REPENTANCE

The Need For Repentance

Since many New Testament texts affirm that salvation is through faith alone, is there even a need to preach repentance today? Chafer states in his Systematic Theology that "it is clear that the New Testament does not impose repentance upon the unsaved as a condition of salvation."¹

A quick glance at a concordance shows that indeed repentance was preached in the New Testament period as a vital part of the Gospel message, and that it was not restricted to the covenant people Israel. After Jesus rose from the dead, He told a group of believers which included the apostles (Luke 24:33) that "repentance (μετάνοιαν) for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Whether one translates ἔθνη as "nations" or "Gentiles" is immaterial; the message of repentance for (or "and" in many MSS) was not to be preached to Israel alone by the church, but was to be proclaimed throughout the world. The Book of Acts clearly shows the apostles carrying out this commission both to Jews

¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, vol. 3, Soteriology (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), p. 374.

(Acts 2:38, 3:19) and to Gentiles:

Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent (μετανοεῖν) and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance (Acts 26:20; cf. Acts 17:30).

It is clear that Christ commissioned His apostles to proclaim the message of repentance to all nations, and that the apostle Paul preached the necessity of repentance in his evangelistic message, not only to Jews, but to Gentiles as well. Therefore, it is permissible and indeed incumbent upon preachers today to preach repentance as a condition for appropriating salvation. The fact that salvation is said to come through faith alone in so many passages cannot contradict this fact. One must understand correctly how repentance is related to faith. This will be discussed in Chapter IV. It must be strongly asserted at this point that repentance, whatever its exact meaning, was preached not only to Israel, but to the Gentiles as well, by New Testament evangelists.

The Meaning Of Repentance

But what did Christ mean when He told His apostles that repentance was to be preached to all the nations? Was this the Old Testament concept of repentance? Was it the concept of repentance as found in Jesus' ministry to the Jews in the Gospels? Or did the death of Christ, the birth of the church, and the ushering in of the new covenant and a new dispensation bring about a radical change in the concept of repentance? What was the nature of the repentance which Paul

states he declared to the Gentiles when defending himself before King Agrippa in Acts 26? As stated above, good and godly scholars differ over this issue, an issue which is probably the key to the entire Lordship Controversy.

The term for "repentance" which Jesus used in Luke 24:47 is *μετάνοιαν*, the accusative form of the noun *μετάνοια*. Paul uses the infinitival form of the verb, *μετανοεῖν*, in Acts 26:20. This term is a combination of the preposition *μετά* (after) and the verb *νοέω* (to perceive) or the noun *νοῦς* (mind). Thus etymologically, the term strictly means "to perceive afterwards . . . hence signifies to change one's mind or purpose."¹ Too often, New Testament commentators and theologians have depended upon the etymology of this word alone in their attempts to explain the meaning of repentance in the New Testament. Ryrie says, "The word (repentance) means to change one's mind about Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah. This involved no longer thinking of Him as merely a carpenter's son of Nazareth, an impostor, but now receiving Him as both Lord and Messiah."² But it is a well known rule of biblical exegesis that etymology alone does not determine the meaning of a word. It is context and usage which are determinative.

It was stated above that in order to understand the

¹W. E. Vine, A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n. d.), p. 962.

²Charles C. Ryrie, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), pp. 116-117.

meaning of any biblical term, one must both examine the history of the usage of the term biblically, and the contexts in which the term is used.¹ Thus for understanding the term "ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ" in the New Testament, one must first understand the antecedent theology behind the term, and then examine its usage in various New Testament contexts to see if there have been any small modifications in meaning.

Scholars are virtually unanimous in their conclusions that the Old Testament concept which lies behind the NT idea of ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ is conveyed by the verb יָשׁוּב.

Once, when puzzled by the Vulgate's rendering of the Greek for 'repent' (metanoete) by 'do penance', Martin Luther sought an answer from his friend Melancthon, an expert in Greek. Metanoete, he was told, means 'change your mind.' So T. R. Glover observed that Luther learnt the true meaning of 'repentance'--that it means rethinking--and grasped a new idea of God.

But did Melancthon and Glover, good 'Grecians' both, get it right? Was Jesus merely calling on his countrymen to change their ideas of God?

Expertise in classical Greek does not, by itself, make you always a sound interpreter of New Testament Greek, for the simple reason that all the New Testament writers (save Luke) were Jews, and their Greek words were often stained with Hebrew meanings. Metanoia, 'repentance', is one such. Nowadays, our scholars agree that for its true meaning we must consult the Hebrew prophets and their use of the verb shubh which signifies 'turn' or 'return'.²

Likewise, J. Goetzmann in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology states that the NT employs metanoēō to express the force sub,³ as well as do a host of

¹ See the quotes by James Barr and Walter Kaiser, above, pp. 9-11.

² A. M. Hunter, Jesus Lord and Saviour (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), p. 68.

³ The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, s. v. "ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ," by J. Goetzmann, 1:357.

other scholars.

The Old Testament Background

It is quite impossible here to study every usage of the term $\aleph\psi$ in the Old Testament, for it is used over one thousand times in its various forms. Fortunately, many of the times it is used have no real reference to repentance, but only to a return such as a return to one's home.

In a doctoral dissertation done at the University of Leiden, William L. Holladay classified all the usages of the root $\aleph\psi$ in the Old Testament. Of these classifications, one has special significance for the concept of repentance. Holladay found one hundred sixty usages of $\aleph\psi$ (including nouns and adjectives) which were found in a context which he called 'covenantal' where the term expressed a change of loyalty on the part of Israel or God, each for the other.¹ Such usages are the key to the Old Testament concept of repentance.

An examination of many of the usages of $\aleph\psi$ in the OT has led the present writer to the following conclusions: that repentance in the OT involved a turning away from sin, wickedness and rebellion, and a corresponding turn to God in obedience, to worship and serve Him; that repentance was a matter of the heart, and not legalistic; that repentance was a God-given enablement; that repentance was often associated with belief or trust in God; that repentance was not a meritorious

¹William L. Holladay, The Root Subh In The Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), p. 2.

work but that the forgiveness which came through repentance was based in the grace of God: that it was a special message of the prophets; that repentance was applied and preached to nations other than Israel; that it was associated with the coming of a Redeemer; and that the concept of repentance remained uniform throughout the Old Testament. Following are passages which seem to support these conclusions.

Repentance involved turning from sin

Perhaps the most forceful usage of $\lambda\psi$ in its relation to repentance is the constant usage as a turning away from sin, wickedness, rebellion, and idol worship. This usage is most prominent in the prophetic writings, but it is found elsewhere in the Old Testament as well.

When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee, and they pray toward this place and confess Thy name and turn from their sin when Thou dost afflict them, then hear Thou in Heaven and for- give the sin of Thy servants and of Thy people Israel (1 Kings 8:35-36).

Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments" (2 Kings 17:13).

If My people who are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin (2 Chronicles 7:14).

But they became disobedient and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs and killed Thy prophets who had admonished them so that they might return to Thee, and they committed great blasphemies. . . they, in their own kingdom, with Thy great goodness which Thou didst give them, with the broad and rich land which Thou didst set before them, did not serve Thee or turn from their evil deeds (Nehemiah 9:26, 35).

And a Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob (Isaiah 59:20).

If so be they will hearken and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent of the evil which I purpose to do unto them, because of the evil of their doings (Jeremiah 26:3).

But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness to burn incense to other Gods (Jeremiah 44:5).

If thou warn the wicked and he turns not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity (Ezekiel 3:19).

Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations" (Ezekiel 15:6).

"Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord God, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?" (Ezekiel 18:23).

As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the truth of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Thy truth (Daniel 9:13).

"Let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw his burning anger so that we shall not perish?" When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it (Jonah 3:8-10).

It is abundantly clear that the term וָשׁוּב is used in contexts where God calls upon men to turn away from their sin. This is not to say that all or even any of these usages are in salvation contexts, in the sense of New Testament salvation. The question of eternal salvation in the Old Testament is complex. The point made here is that the term וָשׁוּב , as the background term to the New Testament term $\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$, involves a turning away from sin, evil, wickedness, and idol worship. Further, this usage occurred in contexts where such turning was said to avert the judgment of God (see the above).

Repentance involved obedience to God

The repentance which the prophets preached and which God required of men in the Old Testament involved not only a negative turning away from sin, but also included a positive turning toward righteousness. This is seen in many of the passages above, and in the following texts.

Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets" (2 Kings 17:13).

If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them . . . I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell (Nehemiah 1:8-9).

Thus says the Lord God of Israel, "I made a covenant with your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, saying, 'At the end of seven years each of you shall set free his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to you and has served you six years, you shall send him out free from you;' but your forefathers did not obey Me, or incline their ear to Me. Although recently you turned and had done what is right in My sight, each man proclaiming release to his neighbor" (Jeremiah 34:13-15).

The person who sins will die . . . But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die (Ezekiel 18:21) . . . For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies, declares the LORD God. Therefore, repent (וָשׁוּבָה) and live (Ezekiel 18:32).

From this last text especially one can see that when God called upon men to turn from sin, He at the same time called upon them to turn toward righteousness. It is mere common sense that indicates that if a man is commanded to turn from his wicked ways, and he does so, he must of necessity

turn to righteous ways in order not to continue in wicked ways. Such repentance brought "life" at least in the physical sense (Ezekiel 18:21). God's judgment upon the nation and upon individuals could only be averted through repentance, a turning from serving foreign gods and rebellion and a corresponding turning back in loyalty to God to serve and obey Him.

Repentance involved an inner turning

Old Testament repentance was not legalistic; it was not a mere matter of putting one's outer actions in conformity with the Mosaic Covenant. On the contrary, it was primarily a matter of putting one's heart right with God. That God desired a heart which was right with Him had been emphasized from the first establishment of the Mosaic Covenant:

Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!
And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your might. And
these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be
on your heart . . . (Deuteronomy 6:4-6).

Similarly, when God commanded repentance of the nation and a return to covenant loyalty, He was commanding an inner turning as well as outer conformity with His will.

Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel (Joshua 24:33) (not a usage of $\lambda\psi$).

When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee, and they pray toward this place and confess Thy name and turn from their sin . . . then . . . forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, for Thou alone dost know the hearts of all the sons of men (1 Kings 8:33, 39).

But he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel (2 Chronicles 36:13).

And yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception (Jeremiah 3:10).

Thus says the Lord GOD, "Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and comes to the prophet, I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols, in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from Me through all their idols. Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Repent, (ושובו) and turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations" (Ezekiel 14:4-6).

Yet even now, declares the LORD, Return to Me with all your heart and with fasting, weeping, and mourning, and rend your heart and not your garments and return to the LORD your God (Joel 2:12-13).

From these passages it is clear that God, when He called men to repentance, required first a true, inner turning of the heart, and not a mere outward compliance with the Law. Those who refused to repent were said to have hardened their hearts (2 Chronicles 36:13). God desired Israel to rend the heart, not the garments (Joel 2:12-13) when returning unto Him. An outward ceremony of mourning was not enough; God desired a turning to Him in truth. This was inner turning, a turning with the whole heart (Jeremiah 3:10); anything less than this was deception (Jeremiah 3:10). God saw idol worship not as mere outward disobedience but as fundamentally a matter of the heart (Ezekiel 14:4-6) and thus the people were estranged from Him. When He called Israel to repentance, He called them back to what was the basic element in the Mosaic Code from the beginning, for Israel was to love God with all

the heart (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). The Old Testament concept of repentance embodied in $\bar{\imath}\psi$ was therefore not only a turning from sin outwardly, but was fundamentally, first, an inner turning of the heart.

Repentance was a God-given enablement

While the Old Testament generally presupposes man's ability to turn from sin unto God, it nowhere denies that it was actually God who enabled men to repent. There are some indications that the repentance which God demanded was actually dependent upon God's grace and mercy and enablement.

At the end of the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah, after mourning for Israel, ends his book by pleading, "Restore us to thee, O Lord, that we may be restored; Renew our days as of old" (Lamentations 5:21). The KJV renders, "Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned." Note that the text does not say "restore us to our land" but "restore us to Thee." The NASV has taken $\bar{\imath}\psi\bar{\imath}\bar{\imath}$ as purpose, "that we may be restored" while KJV has taken it as future, "and we shall be turned." Keil believes that this is not a reference to restoration of the people to the land or the restoration of the theocracy, but the re-establishment of the gracious relation which had existed between God and Israel.¹ Whatever the exact manner of restoration, it is clear that it is God who must do the restoring: "turn us and we shall be turned." After all

¹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Minor Prophets, vol. 10, trans. James Martin in Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), p. 454.

the preaching of the necessity of repentance to Israel by Jeremiah, which had gone unheeded, the prophet now pleads with God that He Himself cause the people to repent, that a proper relationship may once again be restored between Him and His people. Here is, therefore, an indication that God is the one who enables men to repent.

Further, David's comments about his experiences in Psalms 32, where God's hand was heavy upon him until he confessed, shows the place of divinely wrought conviction in the Old Testament. It was under the pressure of this conviction that David repented and acknowledged his sin. Other prophets as well interceded on behalf of God's people when they came under conviction concerning the sins of the people (Daniel 9:3-19, Nehemiah 1:4-11). While these examples are probably not sufficient to prove that God enabled men to repent when He issued the call to repentance in the Old Testament, they suggest that God's Spirit was behind the scenes as God called the people back to Him.

Repentance began with belief in God

The concept of repentance in the Old Testament embodied in the term *shuv* was sometimes closely associated with belief or trust in God. The author of 2 Kings, speaking about the idolatry of Israel in connection with the destruction of the northern Kingdom, states:

And they served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My

commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God (2 Kings 17:12-14).

A second significant passage is Jonah chapter 3.

Jonah preaches to the Ninevites, and the result was:

Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on ashes. And he issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh be the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it (Jonah 3:5-10).

In the New Testament, Jesus states that the men of Nineveh repented (μετενόησαν) at the preaching of Jonah (Luke 11:32). The repentance which took place here began with a belief in God, and took the characteristic form of turning from wicked ways. This averted the judgment of God. The construction is similar to the 2 Kings passage above: they believed in God (אָמְנָהּ). This is the same verb and prefix used in Genesis 15:6 where it states that Abraham believed in the Lord and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. The least that may be said is that repentance is associated with belief in God, and in the case of the Ninevites, their repentance began with belief in God. Belief is thus, at times, associated with repentance in the Old Testament.

Repentance was a special message of the prophets

The preaching of repentance is often connected with the message of a prophet in the Old Testament:

Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets" (2 Kings 17:13).

But they became disobedient and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and killed Thy prophets who had admonished them so that they might return to Thee (Nehemiah 9:26).

Further, a study of the messages of the prophets find a general consistency of preaching to Israel when the nation was going astray from the will of God. Theirs was a message of the necessity of repentance in order to avert the judgment of God.

Other nations were called to repentance

There are indications in the Old Testament that all the nations of the earth are held accountable by God to repent and do His will whenever God spoke to them.

At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it, if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it, if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

A well known example of God actually calling a Gentile nation to repentance is the case of Jonah's ministry to the Ninevites. Jonah 3:5-10, cited above, clearly shows God calling a Gentile nation to repentance, a Gentile people believing in the Lord,

and a Gentile people humbling themselves in repentance before God by turning from their wicked ways. Thus the demand for repentance was not restricted to Israel alone as a return to the loyalty of the Mosaic Covenant. Even in the Old Testament, God called Gentiles who were outside the range of the Mosaic Covenant to repent by turning from their wicked ways.

Forgiveness was conditional upon repentance

Often, repentance in the Old Testament was associated with confession and forgiveness of sins.

When Thy people Israel are defeated before an enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, if they return to Thee again and confess Thy name and pray and make supplication to Thee in this house, then hear Thou in heaven and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel . . . whatever prayer of supplication is made by any man by all Thy people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart, and spreading his hands toward this house, then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, for Thou alone dost know the hearts of the sons of men (1 Kings 8:33-40).

When they sin against Thee (for there is no man who does not sin) and Thou art angry with them and dost deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, if they take thought in the land where they have been taken captive, and repent and make supplication to Thee in the land of those who have taken them captive, saying "We have sinned and have committed iniquity, we have acted wickedly," if they return to Thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive and pray to Thee toward the land which Thou hast given to their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name, then . . . and forgive Thy people (1 Kings 8:46-50).

If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:13-14).

Especially in this last passage, it was only when sin was confessed and forsaken that God promised to forgive the sin of the nation.

Repentance was not meritorious

Nevertheless, repentance was not conceived to have been a meritorious work on the part of man which earned him God's forgiveness.

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness, and relenting of evil (Joel 2:12).

Here the forgiveness was conditional upon repentance; yet God forgives not because of the merit of the penitent, but on the ground of His own grace, compassion, and mercy.

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the LORD, say to Him, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips" (Hosea 14:2).

Here again Israel is to confess iniquity and return to the LORD. The people were not to trust in their own merit or turning, but in God to take away iniquity. Repentance was not meritorious; but it was the condition upon which forgiveness was granted.

There was a false repentance

That there was a possibility of a false repentance is seen in some of the above texts. When God said, "Rend your heart, and not your garments" in Joel 2:12, He was pointing out that repentance was a matter of the heart. A mere outward

show of tearing one's clothes in mock grief was not the kind of repentance God required. God speaks of Judah as repenting falsely in Jeremiah 3:10: "And yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but rather in deception." False repentance was a repentance that was not a matter of the heart. Only a true repentance, originating in the inner man, would result in forgiveness and restoration of a proper relationship with God.

Furthermore, true repentance was that repentance which placed trust in God. In Jonah 3:9, the king declared, "Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" These Gentiles did not trust in their repentance to avert God's judgment; they turned from their wicked ways, but still trusted in the goodness of God as the ground of forgiveness. This follows upon the fact that repentance is not meritorious; if it were, there would be no need to trust in God. True repentance placed trust in God for forgiveness, not one's own repentance.

Repentance associated with a future Redeemer

Isaiah 59 speaks of the future coming of a Redeemer and the salvation of the Lord. Isaiah here speaks of the fact that the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save (59:1) but that Israel's sins have separated the people from God (59:2). The Lord therefore one day will come so that all nations will fear the Lord from the west to the east (59:19). Isaiah then states that "A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob" (59:20). While

this probably speaks of Christ's returning in power and glory to inaugurate the millennium, nevertheless the salvation of the Lord, coming through the Redeemer, is said to come to those who turn from transgression (59:20) in Jacob. Even here, only those who repent will enjoy the salvation/deliverance of God.

The concept of repentance is uniform throughout the OT

James Barr's warning about "illegitimate totality transfer" has been noted above. Briefly, his warning concerns the problem of taking the meanings of words in different contexts and assuming that all these meanings are present on each and every occasion the word occurs. Barr also warns that one must study the history of terms in order to understand their meaning at any particular time.

This writer has attempted to meet the first difficulty, that of taking the meaning of terms from different contexts and assuming they are all always present, by restricting his discussion of נָשׁוּב to those covenantal contexts described by Holladay in his dissertation. In this way he has hoped to arrive at a fairly consistent picture of Old Testament repentance.

On the other hand, it would be desirable to find direct biblical evidence that the concept of repentance remained fairly constant throughout the period of Old Testament history. This writer believes that there are several texts which indicate that this is indeed the case.

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses prophesies that Israel will

be dispossessed from the land, and will one day be scattered among the nations (Deuteronomy 4:26-27). He states that when this happens, Israel will return (שׁוּב) to the LORD and listen to His voice (4:30). Moses promises that God's compassion will not fail them in that day. Here is a reference to repentance in the Mosaic Code that looks ahead to the restoration of Israel in a future day.

Again in Deuteronomy 30, Moses speaks of Israel's future captivity:

When they call them to mind in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return (שׁוּב) to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you (Deuteronomy 30:2-3).

Here is seen a banishment from the land because of sin and rebellion and worship of other Gods (29:26), repentance by the people from the heart, a turning to do His will, and a gracious forgiveness by God.

After the Conquest, the settlement of Canaan, the period of the Judges, the time of the United and Divided Monarchy, and the final Exile, Nehemiah calls to mind this prophecy:

Remember the word which Thou didst command Thy servant Moses, saying, "If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return (שׁוּב) to me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from here and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell (Nehemiah 1:8-9).

Daniel as well recalls this Mosaic passage in his great prayer

in Daniel 9. He declares that Israel did not listen to the prophets (9:6); Israel has rebelled and not obeyed God (9:9-10). He states that this was in fulfillment of the Law of Moses; yet Israel "has not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning (לָשׁוּב) from our iniquity and giving attention to Thy truth" (Daniel 9:13). Thus Daniel regards the Mosaic concept of repentance, in his own day, as unchanged. It is a turning from iniquity and to the truth of God. When Nehemiah and Daniel make reference to the repentance spoken of in the Law of Moses, they do not redefine it. Their understanding of the turning required by God is consistent with the Mosaic picture, and the picture throughout Old Testament history. The message of all the prophets, from Moses through the period of the Monarchy, through the destruction of the northern nation and finally the southern kingdom, was a message of turning away from iniquity, turning to the will of God, a turning of the heart, and a trusting in the graciousness of God to forgive. All the texts cited in the entire Old Testament concept section above bear testimony to this fact. The message of the prophets and their usage of לָשׁוּב was consistent, from the time of the Exodus through the Exile.

Conclusion To The Old Testament Background

What then may be concluded about the concept of repentance in the Old Testament? What is that antecedent, or informing theology, upon which the New Testament doctrine of repentance must be constructed?

Repentance as preached by the prophets involved a

turning away from one's wicked ways and a corresponding turning to the will of God. Yet this was an inner turning, a matter of rending the heart and not the garments. Repentance at times was said to begin with belief in God; thus it was not regarded as a meritorious work which earned God's forgiveness, but rather involved trust in God's graciousness and goodness for forgiveness. Although forgiveness of sins was conditional upon repentance, the ground of forgiveness was always the character and grace of God. While repentance was a special message of prophets to the covenant nation Israel, there were indications that God might justly call any nation to repentance. The example of Jonah's prophetic preaching to Nineveh clearly showed that God did in fact call a Gentile nation to repentance in the Old Testament period, and that the repentance of the Ninevites was essentially the same as that of Israel; a turning from wicked ways and a trusting in the goodness of God to forgive.

There are even hints in the Old Testament that repentance was a God-given enablement, and that the future Redeemer would deliver only those who exercised repentance.

Finally, it was asserted that this concept of repentance is consistent throughout the Old Testament period.

How do these conclusions compare with those of scholars who have spent years of study considering the concept of repentance in the Old Testament? Considerable support for the above position is given below.

The Bible is rich in idioms describing man's responsibility in the process of repentance. Such phrases would

include the following: "incline your heart unto the Lord your God" (Joshua 24:33); "circumcise yourselves to the LORD" (Jeremiah 4:4); "break up your fallow ground" (Hosea 10:12), and so forth. All these expressions of man's penitential activity, however, are subsumed and summarized by this one verb שׁוּב. For better than any other verb it combines in itself the two requisites of repentance: to turn from evil and to turn to the good.

To be sure, there is no systematic spelling out of the doctrine of repentance in the OT. It is illustrated (Ps 51) more than anything else. Yet the fact that people are called 'to turn' either 'to' or 'away from' implies that sin is not an eradicable stain, but by turning, a God-given power, a sinner can redirect his destiny. There are two sides in understanding conversion, the free sovereign act of God's mercy and man's going beyond contrition and sorrow to a conscious decision of turning to God. The latter includes repudiation of all sin and affirmation of God's total will for one's life.¹

It was common knowledge in Israel at all periods that one could not merely hope and pray for pardon, but must humble oneself before God, acknowledge one's unrighteousness, and have an earnest will to turn away from sin . . . There are many expressions for this action on the part of man; to seek Yahweh (2 Sam 12:16), to search for him (Amos 5:4), to humble oneself before Him (1 Kings 12:29), to direct one's heart to Yahweh (1 Sam 7:3), to soften one's heart (2 Kings 22:19), to confess oneself to Yahweh (1 Kings 8:33, 35), to lay to heart (1 Kings 8:47) . . . at the same time, numerous new expressions are developed to describe really genuine turning to God, either characterizing it as a conscious moral action--to seek the good, to hate the evil and love the good (Isa 1:17), to be ready to obey (Isa 1:19), to amend one's ways and one's doings (Jer 7:3)--or stressing the necessity of a changed inner attitude--to incline one's heart to Yahweh (Josh 24:33), to make oneself a new heart (Ezek 18:31), to circumcise oneself for Yahweh, and remove the foreskin of the heart (Jer 4:4), to break up one's fallow ground (Hos 10:12).

It was the word sub, turn, however, which summed up all these descriptions of the right human attitude to God's saving action in a single pregnant phrase. The metaphor was an especially suitable one, for not only did it describe the required behaviour as a real act--to make a turn--and so preserve the strong personal impact, it also included both the negative element of turning away from the direction taken hitherto and the positive

¹Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, s. v. "שׁוּב," by Victor P. Hamilton, 2:909.

element of turning towards, and so, when combined with the prepositions *min*, *'el-*, and *le-*, allowed the rich content of all the many other idioms to be reproduced tersely and yet unmistakably. Thus it came to be used intensively in the prophetic preaching, whereas previously it had occurred only in isolated instances (Josh 24:33; 1 Kings 18:37; 1 Sam 7:3) and the way in which it is used provides an instructive insight into the Old Testament conception of man's turning to the forgiving God.

It was of fundamental importance for the Israelite understanding of conversion that there were two sides to the prophetic preaching on the subject. The prophet made it dependent upon the prevenient operation of God's favour, thus teaching men to understand forgiveness from this angle also as the free action of the divine majesty; but emphasized the total character, embracing a man's¹ whole being, of turning to God in conscious decision.

Likewise, Wurthwein and Behm in TDNT state that the prophetic concept of repentance involved obedience to Yahweh's will, trust in Yahweh, and turning from everything ungodly.² They further remark that the prophetic concept of conversion as carried by this term corresponds to and prepares the way for the *μετάνοια* of the NT.³

The Old Testament concept of repentance, then, was a rich concept which involved many factors. An understanding of the New Testament concept of repentance must therefore take into account the fullness and richness of the idea of repentance as contained in the Old Testament.

¹Walter Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 2, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 466-470.

²TDNT, s. v. "*μετάνοια*, *μετανοέω*," by J. Behm and E. Wurthwein, pp. 985-986.

³Ibid., p. 980.

The New Testament Concept

It remains to be seen if the New Testament modifies in any way the Old Testament doctrine of repentance. Our English terms "repent" and "repentance" translate two Greek word groups, *μετανοέω / μετάνοια*, and *μεταμέλομαι*. Since the *μετανοέω / μετάνοια* word group is used predominantly in the New Testament, and since Ἰησ prepares the way in the Old Testament for an understanding of *μετανοέω / μετάνοια*, the following discussion will deal only with the *μετανοέω / μετάνοια* word group.

The preaching of John the Baptist

The central theme in the preaching of John the Baptist is stated in Matthew 3:2: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John, for the most part, does not explain what he is asking his listeners to do when he commands them to repent. This is understandable, since he was a Jew, speaking to Jews. He assumes that the people will understand perfectly well what he means when he tells them to repent, for the Old Testament prophets had preached repentance throughout Israel's history. Every Jew should have known what God demanded when He called His people to repentance. The Old Testament had made this clear. One must assume, therefore, that John preached the Old Testament concept of repentance, namely, to turn away from evil and submit to God, until contrary evidence is found.

In examining the sermons of John, one finds that his understanding of repentance is in accord with the Old

Testament doctrine. In both Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 it is stated that John came proclaiming a baptism of repentance for (ἐἰς) the forgiveness of sins. The preposition ἐἰς has many possible meanings. In this context, it may carry the ideas either of result or cause. If result, the thought is that the result of repentance would be forgiveness of sins. If cause, the idea is that the person underwent baptism because of, or as a sign of the fact, that his sins had been forgiven. This understanding of ἐἰς is in agreement with the Old Testament teaching that forgiveness of sins is conditional upon repentance.

Matthew 3:6 records the peoples' response to John's message of repentance: "and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins." Confession of sin accompanies repentance here, just as in the Old Testament. As it was noted above that confession brought forgiveness in the Old Testament, so it does here, as the Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 passages above show.

In Matthew 3:7 the Pharisees and Sadducees come to John for baptism. John responds, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." Here John speaks of the possibility of a false repentance which was a matter of outward ceremony only, and not a matter of the heart. The

Pharisees, as often in the Gospels, are pictured as those who are content with mere external religious observances. John will not accept such false repentance. John demanded first, as did the Old Testament prophets, an inner heart repentance. Furthermore, one can see that because the Pharisees were saying that they had Abraham as their father, they were trusting not in God for forgiveness, but in their descent from Abraham. John demands trust in God, as did the Old Testament prophets. John also here demands fruit in keeping with repentance; an outward conduct which is in conformity with the inner turning, a conduct which was in accord with the will of God. Thus one may see the possibility of a false repentance, John's refusal of it, John's demand for an inner turning and trust in God, and a demand for changed outer conduct. All these demands are found, as seen above, in the Old Testament concept of repentance.

In Luke 3:8 John warns the multitudes to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. The multitudes ask what to do, and John gives instruction to the multitudes, to tax gatherers and to soldiers. All of these instructions concern moral uprightness, a doing of the will of God. John demands outward actions in keeping, according to the standard of, the true inner repentance. Since the outer actions were to be according to the standard of the will of God, it must be that the inner turning demanded in repentance here was also a turning to do God's will. John preaches a repentance consisting of turning away from evil and bringing oneself into

conformity with the will of God.

From other texts outside the Synoptic Gospels we also learn that John preached a repentance which included trust in God. In John 1:29 and 36, we find John saying, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He thus pointed people to Christ as the sin-bearer in his preaching. In Acts 19:4 we find a summary of his message, given by the apostle Paul: "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." John, who was recorded in Matthew 3:2 as preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," is said by Paul to have preached that people should believe in Christ. Thus repentance, for John, as well as for the Old Testament prophets, included an element of trust or faith in God (or Christ).

In Luke 1:17 the angel Gabriel had announced to John's father, Zacharias, that when his son would go as a forerunner before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah, that his task would be to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and (to turn) the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. John's message thus required a response of turning from disobedience to an attitude of righteousness. Again the idea of an inner turning from sin to an inner turning toward righteousness is seen.

From this brief glimpse of John's preaching, it may be concluded that he in no way diminished the concept of

repentance which was present in the Old Testament. He did, however, correct those who misunderstood the Old Testament concept as a mere external conformity to the law. He as well demanded that men rend their hearts and not their garments. His demand was for an inner turning from sin and an inner turning toward righteousness, a confession of sin, a trust in God (Acts 19:4), and outer actions which were in accord with this inner turning. The idea of $\lambda\psi$ as an inner turning from evil and positive turn toward righteousness, with inner trust in God, seems to be present in John's preaching and usage of the term "μετάνοια ."

The preaching of Jesus

Jesus' central message was as well, "Repent, for the kingdom of God (or, "heaven") is at hand" (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15). Again, since he did not explain repentance in detail, it must be assumed until contrary evidence is found that He was referring to the Old Testament concept of repentance.

In Matthew 11:20-24 Jesus begins to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent:

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And you Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless, I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.

Jesus here speaks of Gentile cities, and that these Gentiles

would indeed have repented if miracles had been done in them such as had been done for the Jews. Jesus here makes no distinction between the repentance required for Jews and the repentance required for Gentiles. Further, He states that such lack of repentance will figure in the day of final judgment. Because Capernaum did not repent, it will not be exalted to heaven, but shall descend to Hades. Lack of repentance is here said to result in eternal damnation. This implies that repentance will result in eternal life.

In Matthew 12:41, Jesus states:

The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

This is a crucial text for understanding the New Testament doctrine of repentance. Jesus says that the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. It was seen above that this repentance began with belief in God and consisted in a turning away from wicked ways. Jesus expected His generation to repent in the same way as did the men of Nineveh. He must therefore have expected them to turn away from their rebellion against God and place their trust in Him.

It must be noted carefully that Jesus said that the men of Nineveh would "stand up" (ἀναστήσονται) with the present generation at the judgment. The term ἀνίστημι means in future middle "to rise, stand up, get up . . . come back to life . . . used especially often of the dead . . .

particularly of Jesus' resurrection."¹ Thus the Ninevites will rise from the dead and condemn (κατακρίνοσιν) the Israelites of that generation. The term κατακρίνω is significant: "The conduct of one person, since it sets a standard (author's emphasis) can result in condemnation before God of another person whose conduct is inferior."² Thus the repentance of the Ninevites set a biblical standard: it met God's requirements of repentance, and served as a biblical model from that time on which pictured the meaning of true repentance.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables: one about a lost sheep, one about a lost coin, and one about a lost son. In the context tax-gatherers and sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him (Luke 15:1) and the Pharisees and scribes grumble against Him (Luke 15:2). Jesus had undergone such treatment earlier in Luke chapter 5; at that time He told His opponents that He had not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). He answers similarly this time. The parable of the lost sheep shows the initiative of God and His love for lost sheep. This parallels Jesus' love for lost sinners and tax-gatherers. Likewise the parable of the lost coin shows God's love for sinners. Jesus tells His opponents that "In the same way, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). But what does Jesus mean by such repentance?

¹BAGD, p. 70.

²Ibid., p. 412.

The Pharisees and scribes had been rebuked by John the Baptist for their false understanding of repentance as mere external show. Jesus now tells a third parable which will instruct the Pharisees both of God's love for sinners, and the nature of true repentance.

In this familiar third parable of Luke 15, Jesus gives an illustration of the nature of true repentance. The younger son had been engaging in a life of "loose living" (Luke 15:13). He becomes destitute, and finally "came to his senses" (v. 17). He had a change of mind, an inner awakening. He resolved to go to his father and confess his sins (v. 18 "I have sinned against heaven and in your sight"). He confessed his total unworthiness to receive his father's favor (v. 19 "I am no longer worthy to be called your son"). Thus he did not trust in his repentance or in his own goodness, but in the goodness of his father, to accept him. He further resolved to commit himself to doing his father's will (v. 19 "Make me as one of your hired men"). Further, by his return to his father, he had thereby turned away from his life of loose living.

All the Old Testament richness of ἁγία is seen in this parable: the turning from sin; the return to God and personal commitment to God's will; confession of sins; trust in God's goodness and not one's own repentance; the inner turning; a sense of unworthiness. Some object that this is repentance of an already saved individual. This cannot be, for all three parables climax in the rejoicing of the shepherd, woman,

and father, over the one which was lost. The father states of his younger son, "This brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:32). The younger son represents the tax-gatherers. They were lost sinners.

As far as this writer can discern, Jesus nowhere redefined the Old Testament concept of repentance in His preaching. He used the term "μετάνοια" in a rich, full, meaningful way throughout His ministry, in a way which was consistent with the antecedent theology found in the Old Testament doctrine of repentance.

A final key passage in Jesus' usage of μετάνοια is found in Luke 24:47. Here Christ, on the first Easter, appears to a group of believers including the eleven (Luke 24:33-35). At this time He gives them a lesson in Old Testament exposition concerning His death, burial, resurrection, and the preaching of the gospel which was to follow:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:44-47).

Jesus here tells these believers (including the eleven) the message which they are now to proclaim, the message which is to be proclaimed by believers today. It is a message of repentance for (or, "and") forgiveness of sins. What does Jesus mean by His usage of μετάνοια here?

This writer believes that Jesus uses *μετάνοια* in the same sense that He has used it throughout the Gospels as was discussed above, in a way analogous to the Old Testament concept of repentance. There are two main reasons which support this conclusion. First, Jesus does not here redefine the term; since He did not redefine it, He must have assumed that the hearers understood what He meant, for He had been using *μετάνοια* consistently throughout His ministry. Those present included the apostles (Luke 24:33). They had heard Jesus use this term throughout His ministry. If He had meant anything different from how He had used it before, now was the time to inform them. He would have been misleading them if He did not tell them so, for here He is giving the message that they and the church were to proclaim until His return.

A second reason for understanding *μετάνοια* here as being used in the same sense as Jesus used it throughout His ministry is the fact that He declared that this was an Old Testament message. He speaks to them about the whole of the OT: Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, and declares that all things spoken about Him there had to be fulfilled (Luke 24:44). Then He opens their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Then He says that it is written, not only that He would suffer and rise again, but it is also written (in the OT) what message should be proclaimed, the message of repentance. Now, if the Old Testament foretold that the message of repentance was to be proclaimed to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem, this message of

repentance must of necessity be the very Old Testament concept of repentance. This writer has attempted to exhaustively and thoroughly understand the Old Testament doctrine of repentance. He has found nowhere a passage which redefines or speaks of a different kind of repentance which was to be proclaimed after the death of Messiah. The concept of repentance throughout the Old Testament is uniform, as was seen above. Jesus and John used *μετάνοια* consistently throughout their ministries as well. Jesus does not redefine repentance for the new dispensation. He positively identifies it as having been foretold in the Old Testament. One must, therefore, conclude from this that He uses here as He had throughout His ministry, in a way analogous to the Old Testament usage of *תשובה*. If the Old Testament foretells that repentance is to be preached to all nations after the death of the Messiah, it seems clear to this writer that the repentance to be preached must be the Old Testament concept of repentance.

In order to further test this conclusion, one must turn to the sequel to the Gospel of Luke, the Book of Acts, to see how the apostles carried out this commission given in Luke 24:47.

In apostolic preaching

In the forty day period after the resurrection when Jesus remained upon the earth, Luke gives no hint that Jesus redefined the content of repentance in the message which was to be preached to the nations. The only question the apostles

have is the time of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6).

In Acts 2:38, Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, tells the Jews who hear his sermon that they must "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for (εἰς) the forgiveness of your sins." Peter does not redefine the term for these Jews. He apparently assumes that the Jews know exactly what is meant.

In Acts 3:19, Peter again is preaching, and says:

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent, therefore, and return, that your sins may be wiped away.

How does Peter use *μετανοήσατε* here? He goes on to tell the Jews that this was prophesied in the Old Testament, that God would send a prophet like Moses (Acts 3:22) and that those who did not heed that prophet would be destroyed (Acts 3:23). He asserts that Samuel and his successors (the prophets) announced these days. Peter is thus carrying out Christ's commission as given in Luke 24:47. Peter repeats to the Jews that Old Testament prophecy has been fulfilled. He then tells the Jews that they are sons of those very prophets, and of the covenant which God made with their fathers (Acts 3:25). He pointedly tells the Jews that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Acts 3:25). How were these Jews to partake of the blessing? "For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:26). Thus Peter connects repentance with a turning

from wicked ways.

Here is a crucial text (3:19, 26) for understanding the doctrine of repentance in Acts. The key grammatical feature is the infinitival phrase *ἐν τῷ ἀποστρέφειν*. This phrase may be understood in one of two ways. It may be temporal, with *ἕκαστον* acting as the subject of the infinitive. In this case, one would translate the passage, "when each one of you turns from his wicked ways." The meaning would be that each individual must turn from his wicked ways in order to receive the blessing of Abraham and have his sins wiped away (3:19).

The phrase may also be regarded as expressing the means by which the verb acts. In this case, the subject of the infinitive would be *θεός*, and one would translate, as do most of the versions, "in turning each one of you from his wicked ways." The meaning would be that God is the active agent who turns the people from their wicked ways, so that they might receive the blessing of Abraham. This would be in agreement with the doctrine that it is God Himself who grants repentance to individuals, and that in actuality He is the One who enables any individual to repent.

Whether one understands the infinitival phrase as temporal or as expressing means, it is clear that repentance involves a turning away from wicked ways on the part of the individual.

The other term that Peter uses in 3:19 (besides *μετανοήσατε*) in order to indicate the action that the Jews

are to take that their sins may be wiped away is the term

ΕΠΙΣΤΡΕΨΑΤΕ. Haenchen comments:

Where, as in the present verse, the two concepts are found together, *ΜΕΤΑΝΟΕΙΝ* will express more the turning away from evil, *ΕΠΙΣΤΡΕΨΕΙΝ* on the other hand the positive new direction, the turning to God and his kurios and the new way of life.¹

Thus Peter obeys to the letter Jesus' command given in Luke 24:47. He understood Jesus' commission to preach repentance for forgiveness of sins as a commission to call upon men to end their rebellion against God and turn away from their wicked ways, with the expectation of beginning a new way of life with Him.

In Acts 5, Peter and the apostles stand before the Council. They state:

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him (Acts 5:30-32).

Here Peter and all the apostles again follow Jesus' commission in Luke 24. They preach repentance and forgiveness of sins; such repentance has been granted, it is a gift of God. Further, forgiveness is conditional upon repentance. The gift of the Spirit is given to those who obey. Notice also that such repentance is not meritorious. The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey. He is not earned or deserved but given. Nevertheless, the giving is only to

¹Ernst Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 208.

those who obey.

In Acts 17:30, the apostle Paul, preaching in Athens, declared to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers that God is now commanding to men that all everywhere should repent. Luke does not define for us what Paul means by this term. In the same way, in Acts 20:21, Paul tells the Ephesian elders that when he first came to them, he preached repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. What did Paul mean by his usage of *μετάνοια* ?

As far as this writer can determine, the answer to this question is found in Acts 26:18-20. Here Paul is on trial before King Agrippa. Paul states that when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, Jesus gave Paul a commission to preach to the Gentiles. Paul says that in obedience to this commission, he preached "to those of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." Thus Jesus gives to Paul the same commission He gave to the eleven in Luke 24. There is no indication that Jesus redefined repentance for Paul. Further, Paul's message presupposed an inner turning: men should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. This is analogous to the message of John the Baptist. An inner turning is expected.

One must compare Paul's summary of his message in 26:20 (that men should repent and turn to God) to the previous

verses. When Jesus told Paul that He was sending him to the Gentiles, He said that Paul was going "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:28). Paul thus equates repentance and turning to God with Jesus' statement that men "should turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God." To turn from darkness to light seems to mean to turn from living in the sphere of darkness or evil, and turn to the light, or the sphere of moral purity. Such an understanding is supported by John 3:19-21:

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

Men who live in darkness practice evil deeds. God calls upon men to turn away from that sphere of darkness, where they are practicing wicked deeds, and turn to the light, where righteous deeds may be manifested.

This understanding of turning from darkness to light as a moral turning is also supported by the following exegetical phrase in Acts 26:18. Men are to turn from darkness to light, that is, from the dominion of Satan to God. Repentance involves a turning away from the rule of Satan in this life. Man has joined Satan in his rebellion. God calls on men to turn away from this rebellion which has placed all men

in the kingdom of darkness, and to turn toward His domain and kingdom where righteousness dwells.

Paul also states in this same sermon that his is, in fact, an Old Testament message. Verse 22 states:

And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying to both small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer and that by reason of resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:22-23).

Again the pattern is the same. As in Luke 24 Jesus declared that the OT not only foretold His death and resurrection but also the message to be proclaimed, so Paul states that the Prophets and Moses foretold the resurrection and subsequent proclamation of light to the whole world.

Paul, like the other apostles, received a commission from Jesus to preach repentance to the Gentiles. This repentance involved a turning away from one's rebellion and wickedness, and a submissive turning in contrition to the God of light.

Thus in apostolic preaching, both by the original apostles and by Paul, one finds a carrying out of the commission given by Jesus in Luke 24:47. Peter preaches repentance to Jews, and defines it as a turning away from wicked ways (Acts 3:26) and a corresponding turning to God (Acts 3:19). He declares that forgiveness of sins is conditional upon repentance (Acts 3:19) and that such forgiveness is a gift of God (Acts 5:32). He does not redefine repentance for the Jews to whom he is speaking. He further connects his

preaching with the message of Moses and the Prophets (Acts 3:19). Paul as well equates repentance with a turning from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). This was a turning away from living in the sphere of darkness where wicked deeds reign, and where Satan is master, and returning to a submissive position before one's Creator in the kingdom of righteousness and light.

The apostles therefore never redefine repentance as something which has changed in the preaching for the new dispensation. They invariably connect their message with that of the prophets (Acts 3:19; 26:22-23). Their message is everywhere consistent with the antecedent theology found in the Old Testament, the preaching of John the Baptist, and Jesus in the Gospels. Repentance involves a turning away from evil and wickedness, and a corresponding turning in contrition and trust, to God.

Repentance in the Epistles

Little is said concerning repentance unto salvation in the Epistles. This is understandable, since the Epistles were not primarily evangelistic publications but attempts to edify believers.

Romans chapter 2 contains one of the rare references to repentance in Paul's epistles. After having listed the wickedness and vice of men who do not acknowledge God, Paul states:

And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. And do you suppose this,

O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same, that you will escape the judgment of God: Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, (Romans 2:2-10).

As far as this writer is able to discern, this is a salvation context because Paul speaks of those who do good inheriting eternal life. In these verses there seems to be an equation between those who practice "such things" (the wicked deeds of chapter 1) and those who have an unrepentant heart. Further, those with the unrepentant hearts are those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey truth but obey unrighteousness. The implication seems to be that those with the repentant hearts are those who have turned to obey the truth, and abandoned their evil deeds.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul describes the response of the Thessalonians to his evangelistic message when he founded the church there. He states that they "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God." While the term "repentance" is not used here, the concept of repentance is seen. It involved a turning from the service and worship of idols to the service and worship of the true God. A change of loyalty took place analogous to Paul's statement that the Gentiles should turn from the dominion of Satan to

God, in Acts 26.

In the book of Revelation, Christ exhorts his churches to repent (2:5, 2:16, 3:3, 3:19). The concept of repentance in these verses is that the churches should turn away from the practices which are not according to the will of Christ, and do that which is according to His will:

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent (Rev 2:4-5).

But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. . . . Repent, therefore (Rev 2:4, 16).

While some of these references are not in salvation contexts, they do serve to show the basic usage of the term "μετανοέω" as a turning away from that which is contrary to the will of God.

There are also some usages of *μετάνοια* in Revelation which have reference to those outside the true church of Christ. In Revelation 2:20-22 Jesus speaks of the woman, Jezebel, who is leading His bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. Of her He says, "And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold I will cast her upon a bed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her (or "their" in some MSS) deeds." This seems to be a clear usage of *μετανοέω* as a turning away from evil.

Revelation 9:20 speaks of men in the period of Tribulation. John writes of their response to the plagues which God brings upon mankind during that period, and the purpose God has for the plagues:

And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts (Rev 9:20-21).

This appears to be a clear reference to unsaved individuals. The repentance required here is a turning away from idol worship and evil deeds. John uses *μετανοέω* here as a renunciation of sin.

In Revelation 16:9-11, John speaks of the response of men in the Tribulation Period to the bowl judgments:

And men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent, so as to give Him glory . . . and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

Again, John seems to be using *μετανοέω* as a description of a turning away from evil deeds, and submitting to the righteous will of God.

Conclusion Concerning The New Testament Concept

How then does the New Testament use the term "*μετανοία*?" Does it retain the concepts inherent in its predecessor in the Old Testament, *נָחַם*, or does it redefine repentance as a changing of the mind about Jesus?

It seems clear that the New Testament writers retain

the Old Testament concept of repentance in its fullest sense. John the Baptist and Jesus preached the necessity of repentance for forgiveness of sins and entrance into the Kingdom of God. Neither man redefined the term; they properly assumed that their hearers understood it, since as Jews they should have been familiar with the Old Testament concept of repentance. John rejected a false, merely ceremonial, outer repentance, and demanded an inner turning to God in truth (Matt 3:7). He demanded that men confess their sins (Matt 3:6), and place their trust in the One to come, Jesus Christ (Acts 19:4). His demand that the multitudes bring forth fruit worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8) implies that the turning demanded was an inner turning away from evil and toward submission to the will of God. Those who repented, would as in the Old Testament period, receive forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).

Jesus as well uses *μετάνοια* consistently, in accord with the Old Testament doctrine of repentance. He made no distinction between the repentance required of Gentiles and Jews (Matt 11:20-24). He states that the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah (Matt 12:41). This repentance consisted of belief in God and turning from wicked ways (Jonah 3:5, 8, 19) and a waiting upon the mercy and grace of God (Jonah 3:9). In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus gave an illustration of repentance which involved a turning from evil, a confession of sin and unworthiness, a trust in the goodness of God, and a decision to submit to the will of

God (Luke 15:11-32). In Luke 24:47, Jesus commissions His followers to preach repentance for forgiveness of sins to all the nations. He does not redefine the term here, but positively points to the Old Testament moorings of the message of repentance which was to be preached.

In the book of Acts one thus finds the apostles preaching repentance, identifying it as a turning away from wicked ways (Acts 3:36), a turning away from the domain or rule of Satan, and a turning in submission to the kingdom of light (Acts 26:20).

In the Epistles, the Thessalonians were said to have turned from idols to serve a living and true God (1 Thess 1:9). The book of Revelation clearly uses *ΜΕΤΑΝΟΕΩ* as a turning away from wicked deeds and a turning in contrition to God.

How do these conclusions compare with the findings of scholars in New Testament language and theology?

METANOEO, lit., to perceive afterwards . . . signifies to change one's mind or purpose, always, in the N.T., involving a change for the better, an amendment, and always, except in Luke 17:3, 4, of repentance from sin.¹

METANOIA . . . is used of repentance from sin or evil, except in Heb. 12:17.

In the N.T. the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God. The parable of the prodigal son is an outstanding illustration of this.²

¹W. E. Vine, A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n. d.), p. 962.

²Ibid., p. 962-963.

Repentance (metanoia) is an Old Testament idea, and means simply to turn (shub) from sin to God.¹

μετάνοια represents the Aramiac ܠܘܫ = Hebrew 𐤠𐤒, "to turn," which refers to the turning away from sin and turning back to God, and also to an inward change as revealed in deeds.²

For the Greeks μετάνοια never suggests an alteration in the total moral attitude, a profound change in life's direction, a conversion which affects the whole of conduct. Before himself and before the gods the Greek can μετανοεῖν a sin in actu . . . but he has no knowledge of μετάνοια as repentance or conversion in the sense found in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Whether linguistically or materially, one searches the Greek world in vain for the origin of the New Testament understanding of μετανοεῖν and μετάνοια.

The terms have religious and ethical significance along the lines of the Old Testament and Jewish concept of conversion for which there is no analogy in secular Greek. . . . What the religious language of the Old Testament expressed by 𐤠𐤒 . . . the New Testament, like the Jewish Hellenistic writings, expresses by μετανοεῖν and μετάνοια, (emphasis added).³

The New Testament does not follow the LXX usage but employs μετανοεῖν to express the force of shub, turn round.⁴

While not all scholars would agree with the above opinions, it is significant that men from all theological spectrums agree that the New Testament concept of repentance expressed by "μετάνοια" is analogous to the Old Testament concept expressed by the term "𐤠𐤒," and that it indicates

¹George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 38.

²Norval Geldenhuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, NIC, gen. ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 143.

³TDNT, s. v. "μετάνοια, μετανοεῖν," by J. Behm and E. Wurthwein, pp. 979-1000.

⁴The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, s. v. "μετάνοια," by J. Goetzmann, 1:357.

a turning from sin to God.

It is interesting to compare the above conclusion with the definition of repentance given by the Old Puritan divines in the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.¹

Thus the above conclusions about repentance are not a new feature of orthodox theology; Christians for centuries have understood repentance as a turning away from sin and a turning to God.

Implications For The Lordship Controversy

If the above understanding of repentance is correct, several implications for the Lordship controversy emerge.

First, the idea that one need not preach repentance in this dispensation is incorrect. Luke 24:47 shows Christ telling the apostles that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed to all nations. In Acts 26:20 Paul declares that he preached repentance both to Jews and to Gentiles.

Secondly, the idea that in the Bible only the covenant people Israel are called to repentance is incorrect. This was not even true in the Old Testament, as the book of Jonah shows; Jesus says that the men of Nineveh repented at

¹From the Westminster Shorter Catechism, cited in George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, vol. 1 reprint. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 515.

the preaching of Jonah (Matt 12:41), while Jeremiah states that God may properly call any nation to repentance (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

Third, repentance is not a mere change of mind about the sin of unbelief. It includes a definite renunciation of sin, and a turning to God with the purpose of following Him in obedience.

These three conclusions lend some weight to the Lordship position. However, the question about the relationship of repentance to faith and the nature of saving faith have not yet been dealt with. How is it that in Luke 24:47 Jesus says that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, but in John's Gospel, Acts, and the Epistles, faith was preached as the proper response to the gospel, and salvation is said to come through faith alone? Can it be shown that saving faith includes a commitment of obedience to the will of God or Christ? Does saving faith presuppose repentance? Is repentance a synonym for faith? An attempt to answer these questions is made below.

CHAPTER III

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Stott, in arguing for the Lordship position, asserts that saving faith presupposes repentance,¹ while Ryrie states that repentance is a synonym for belief.² There is really very little difference in these positions, for both men are grappling with the question of the relationship between repentance and faith. Since both believe that salvation comes through faith alone, they must somehow reconcile the fact that at times the Scripture declares that salvation comes through repentance alone (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38, 3:19), at times salvation is said to come through faith alone (scores of passages), and that sometimes both repentance and faith together are preached (Acts 20:21). An examination of the way the terms are used, especially in the book of Acts, should answer this question.

In The Old Testament

It was mentioned above that even in the Old Testament, the concept of repentance was, at times, closely associated

¹John R. W. Stott, "Must Christ Be Lord To Be Savior?--Yes," Eternity, September 1959, p. 15.

²Charles C. Ryrie, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 116.

In The New Testament

It is in the book of Acts that one finds the greatest source of information concerning the relationship between repentance and belief. In the first volume of Luke-Acts, Jesus tells the eleven (Luke 24:33) to proclaim the message of repentance throughout the world (Luke 24:47). How then did these men carry out this commission?

In Acts 2:38, on the day of Pentecost, Peter instructs the Jews that they must repent. In his commentary on this event, however, Luke calls the persons who repented "those who believed" (Acts 2:44). Apparently, Luke may say in one breath, that those who repent are those who believe.

In Acts 3:19, Peter again preaches the necessity of repentance. He tells the Jews to repent and return that their sins may be wiped away. Yet in his commentary on the event, Luke in Acts 4:4 says that "many of those who heard the message believed." Again, Luke uses the term "believe" to describe those who have repented.

An extremely significant passage is Peter's encounter with Cornelius. As Peter preaches to Cornelius and his household, after giving the good news of the gospel, he states concerning Christ, "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name every one who believes in Him has received forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43). Now, this was the same Peter who had been present in Luke 24:47 and had heard Jesus tell him that the prophets declared that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed. But now Peter declares

that the prophets state that those who believe in Jesus are forgiven. And earlier, this same Peter had proclaimed that repentance brought forgiveness (Acts 3:19). Clearly, for Peter, the terms can be used interchangeably.

Equally interesting is the Jews' response to Peter's preaching. When Peter returns to Jerusalem, some take issue with him for eating with uncircumcised men. After explaining his mission and the response of the Gentiles to the message, he states, "If God therefore gave to them the same gift as to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17). The Jews' reply was, "Well, then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance to life" (Acts 11:18). Apparently, for these Jews, when Peter says the Gentiles believed in the Lord Jesus, they understand such belief as repentance unto life. Again, the terms are used interchangeably.

The apostle Paul as well, in the book of Acts, seems to use the terms "repent" and "believe" interchangeably, at times. In Acts 13:39, preaching in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, after declaring Christ's resurrection from the dead, "Therefore let it be known to you brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed from the Law of Moses." Paul here characteristically preaches salvation through faith alone. Again in Acts 16:31 one finds Paul and Silas telling the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you

shall be saved."

Yet compare this preaching with Paul's statements in Acts 17:30 and Acts 26:20. Paul, preaching to the Athenians, says that "God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:30). Before Agrippa, he describes the commission given to him by Christ, and he says, "I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (Acts 26:19-20). Here Paul preaches repentance alone, with no reference to faith.

Now Paul cannot be preaching two different ways of receiving salvation, nor can he be in error nor contradicting himself. It seems obvious that if he and Peter can preach in one place that salvation comes through faith alone, and in another place preach that salvation comes through repentance alone, then they must be using the terms in these contexts as interchangeable concepts. Furthermore, in his epistles Paul lays great stress on salvation through faith alone. Yet here in Acts, Luke portrays Paul preaching repentance as the proper response to the gospel. Surely, Paul uses these terms, at times, interchangeably.

In Acts 20:21 Paul speaks of the fact that when he came to Ephesus he preached "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The nouns *μετάνοιαν* and *πίστιν* are preceded by the article and linked by *καί*. The

Granville-Sharp rule indicates that the two terms are thus identical or closely related concepts.

Are the two terms exact synonyms? One must remember that the Old Testament concept of repentance was rich and full, and that the New Testament seems to maintain this fullness of sense in the meaning of repentance. The concept of repentance always did have a measure of trust within it. It is most likely, then, that the terms, when spoken of as the sole condition for appropriating salvation, are used synonymously. However, in their basic idea, they reflect different emphases.

Stott defines the relationship between faith and repentance as follows:

Conversion therefore involves a twofold turn, a turn from idols and sin on the one hand, and a turn to the living God and to the Savior and Shepherd of souls on the other. The "turn away" the New Testament calls repentance; the "turn toward" the New Testament calls faith.¹

This would be true when one is considering the basic emphasis of the terms, and when one is speaking of the necessity of exercising both faith and repentance. However, when speaking either of repentance or faith alone as the sole means for appropriating salvation, each term would include the meaning of the other.

Chantry in a similar vein says:

Repentance and faith are Siamese twins. Where one is found, the other will not be absent . . . True faith always involves repentance. True repentance always has

¹John R. W. Stott, "Must Christ Be Lord To Be Savior?--Yes," Eternity, September 1959, p. 15.

faith mixed with it.¹

Perhaps one might say that saving repentance is a believing repentance, and that saving faith is a repentant faith.

Conclusion

There is clearly a close relationship between repentance and belief. The book of Acts shows the apostles using the terms interchangeably. Therefore when salvation is said to come through faith alone, such faith includes the concepts inherent in repentance. Similarly, when salvation is said to come through repentance alone, such repentance includes the concepts inherent in faith. Both terms are full and rich, each including the meaning of the other when used in contexts where either faith alone or repentance alone are said to be the sole condition for appropriating salvation.

As to their basic emphases, the terms stress the negative and positive sides of conversion. Negatively, repentance involves a renunciation of sin. It is an inner turning from sin with full purpose to do the will of God. It must not be confused with the works that issue from such inner turning:

Repentance, in each and all its aspects, is wholly an inward act, not to be confused with the change of life which proceeds from it. True repentance is, indeed, manifested and evidenced by confession of sin before God . . . and be reparation for wrongs done to men . . . These do not constitute repentance; but they are the fruits of repentance.²

¹Walter J. Chantry, Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic? (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), p. 57.

²Emery H. Bancroft, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 70.

Faith, on the other hand, stresses that positive trust in Christ which must be exercised by the lost sinner who realizes that no work and indeed no turning from sin in itself can save him. It becomes clear, then, that if the term "faith" is used interchangeably with repentance (at times); and if saving repentance includes a turning from sin and a turn toward God for the purpose of obedience; then of necessity, saving faith must include a turning from sin and a commitment to do the will of God.

Ryrie and Stott have thus seen clearly the relationship between repentance and faith. One may properly say that faith presupposes repentance, or that repentance (saving repentance) is a synonym for faith. It is thus one's understanding of repentance which determines his understanding of saving faith. To repeat, if repentance involves a turning away from sin (rather than a change of mind about Jesus) with the purpose of obeying God thereafter, then, since repentance is used at times interchangeably with faith, saving faith must of necessity involve a renunciation of sin and a purposeful turning to end one's rebellion against God and His will.

Some may object that one's definition of faith should not rest on his understanding of repentance. Indeed, it would be profitable to examine passages which speak of faith alone as the means of receiving salvation, for the purpose of finding some indications that faith involves a turning from sin and a commitment of obedience to Christ. An examination of a few such texts follows.

CHAPTER IV

FAITH

No one in this controversy denies that salvation is by faith alone. Neither does anyone deny that faith is more than an intellectual assent to the truths about the gospel. All agree that faith involves trust in the person of Christ. But not all agree that saving faith includes a commitment to doing the will of Christ.

Is it possible to examine the New Testament and find evidences that faith includes a commitment of obedience? This writer believes that the proper way to approach the issue is first to define repentance, and then to understand faith in the light of that definition. However, it is possible that he has incorrectly defined repentance above. If obedience is included in saving faith, one should expect to find evidences of this in Scripture, even apart from the relationship of repentance to faith.

In The Old Testament

Even in the Old Testament one can see evidences that the concept of faith included both trust in God and obedience to Him.

Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I

sent to you through My servants the prophets." However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God (2 Kings 17:12-14).

This text appears to equate unbelief with a stiffening of the neck, a refusal to obey God by turning from wicked ways.

The example of the response of the people of Nineveh to the preaching of Jonah, which has been frequently cited above, also points to obedience in faith. The people "believed in God" (Jonah 3:5). This resulted in a turning away from their wicked ways (Jonah 3:10). True belief, an inner reality, expressed itself in obedience to the will of God, by turning away from wickedness.

Thus in the Old Testament, the concept of belief in God was closely related to obedience to the will of God.

In The New Testament

In the New Testament, the term "faith," as one might expect, does not always occur in salvation contexts, nor does it always mean exactly the same thing every time it occurs. Even the same writer may use the term differently, depending upon the context in which it is found. The burden of this section is to find some uses of faith or belief in salvation contexts which include the idea of obedience to God and a submission to His will.

In Paul's writings

The apostle Paul is the champion defender of justification by grace through faith alone. Why his great emphasis on faith in his epistles, when he is seen preaching both

repentance and faith in Acts? C. W. K. Gleerup's dissertation on the use of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ by Paul gives a clue: "It is clear that the closer defining and establishing of Paul's teaching of justification and faith is the result of his controversy with Rabbinical Judaism, which he himself had belonged to, and occurs in answer to the question it poses."¹ What was this controversy?

George Foot Moore, in his work Judaism of the First Centuries of the Christian Era, quotes several rabbis who reflected the predominant teachings of Jewish religious leaders concerning their concept of repentance and conversion:

Maimonides formulates the consistent teaching of Judaism when he says: "What is repentance? Repentance is that the sinner forsakes his sin and puts it away out of his thoughts and fully resolves in his mind that he will not do it again; as it is written, 'Let the wicked man forsake his way and the bad man his thoughts' . . . O God, I have sinned, I have done iniquity, I have transgressed before thee, and I will never do it again" (from the Hilkot Teshubah I, I).²

This writer believes that here is a real key for an understanding of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. The quote above, if indeed it does formulate the consistent teaching of Judaism, assumes that the sinner within himself has the power to turn away from sin and the power never to commit sin again! If Paul had such an understanding before his conversion, it is no wonder that he stressed the aspect

¹Henrik Ljungman, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ : A Study of its Presuppositions and its Meaning in Pauline Use (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1964), p. 46.

²George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, vol. 1, reprint. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 510.

of faith in his writings. It is apparent that because of the power of sin dwelling within man, that no person can make the promise to God that he will never sin again. It is only God through the work of regeneration and the new birth who can free one from the power of sin. Paul in using the term "faith" to describe man's proper response to the gospel, is stressing that the repentance required by God must be a believing repentance. That is, Paul would never say "I promise never to sin again" but rather, "I know I cannot promise never to sin again; O God, cleanse me, forgive me, and enable me to do that which is in accord with your will." Faith does not exclude obedience to God; it rather emphasizes that no one has the power within himself to obey God; it is therefore a trusting in Christ to make one what God desires him to be, to free him not only from the penalty of sin, but also its power.

Do these preliminary statements coincide with Paul's use of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ in salvation contexts? A full discussion of this would take a dissertation. Several scholars do agree that Paul does intend for his readers to understand that saving faith does indeed include a call to loyalty and obedience toward God or Christ.

Paul states in his epistle to the Romans that he received apostleship "to bring about obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake" (Romans 1:5). Much discussion has centered about this phrase, "obedience of faith." It is entirely possible to interpret ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ here

as a genitive of apposition. Cranfield takes the phrase in this sense:

The equivalence for Paul of faith in God and obedience to Him may be illustrated again and again from this epistle (cf 1:8 with 16:19; 10:16a with 10:16b; 11:23 with 11:30, 31; and 15:18 with 1:5). Paul's preaching is aimed at obtaining from his hearers true obedience to God, the essence of which is a responding to His message of good news with faith. It is also true to say that to make the decision of faith is an act of obedience toward God and also that true faith by its very nature includes in itself the sincere desire and will to obey God in all things (emphasis added).¹

Murray likewise:

Faith is regarded as an act of obedience, of commitment to the gospel of Christ. Hence the implications of this expression "obedience of faith" are far-reaching. For the faith which the apostleship was intended to promote was not an evanescent act of emotion but the commitment of wholehearted devotion to Christ and to the truth of his gospel (emphasis added).²

Here, then, is an indication, as one ought to expect, that obedience to God is an integral element of true, saving faith.

Likewise, in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 Paul speaks of the Thessalonians' response to his preaching of the gospel, how they "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven." This turning was a turning in service to God. The infinitive δουλεύειν may be taken as a purpose infinitive; they turned for the purpose

¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, vol. 1, ICC, ed. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1979), p. 67.

² John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans, 1 vol. edition, NIC, gen. ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 13-14.

of serving God. When one compares this statement with Luke's account in Acts concerning Paul's ministry in Thessalonica, he records that "some of them were persuaded (ἐπεισόθησαν) and joined Paul and Silas" (Acts 17:4). Their saving belief was a response which involved a turning away from their worship and service of idols to service of the true God.

Thus in Romans and in 1 Thessalonians, one finds evidence in Paul's writings that saving faith does indeed involve a commitment of obedience to Christ.

In the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John has been called "the Gospel of belief." And indeed it is, having been written for the purpose that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing they might have life in His name (John 20:31). What is John's conception of belief?

Before considering this question, it is well to consider the fact that the apostle John was present (Luke 24:33) when Jesus gave the commission to preach repentance for forgiveness of sins to all nations (Luke 24:47). Yet here is John writing an evangelistic book without one mention of the term *μετάνοια* ! It is probable that he, like Paul, chose *πιστεύω* as a more suitable term than *μετάνοια* to convey what response man should make to the gospel. At any rate, he cannot be contradicting by this usage of *πιστεύω* what Jesus told him to do in Luke 24:47.

John uses *πιστεύω* in many grammatical constructions: *πιστεύω* is followed by the dative of the person or object

believed eighteen times; two times by ἔν; thirty six times by εἰς; twenty eight times it is used absolutely; twelve times it is followed by a ὅτι clause.¹ Because of this grammatical variability, one initially suspects that John is using the term in a varied way. Just as μετένοια involves a fullness of meaning, so πιστεύω may carry a rich content, and at times, even in the same Gospel, be used with different emphases or meanings.

John Painter has attempted to catalogue some of John's distinctive uses of πιστεύω, and has come to the following conclusions:

The idea of believing is indicated by a number of symbolic parallels. The symbols do not have exactly the same meaning as πιστεύω, but focus on what is a complex response to the revelation of Jesus.

From the symbols certain aspects of what it means to believe may be outlined. Believing involves: 1. Perception, recognition, understanding; 2. Decision; 3. Dependence and obedience. Some of these terms overlap from one group to another so that "to hear" and "to worship" can involve all three categories and "to follow" can involve obedience as well as decision.²

Following is an adapted chart of Painter's classification of the meanings of πιστεύω as indicated by the symbolic parallels in John.³

1. Believing as perception, recognition, understanding.

To see (1:14, 39, 46, 51; 6:40, 62; 11:10; 12:40; 14:7, 17).

¹J. Painter, "Eschatological Faith in the Gospel of John," in R. Banks, ed., Reconciliation and Hope (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 38-40.

²Ibid., p. 41.

³Ibid.

To hear (4:42; 10:20; 5:24, 25, 45; 8:43, 47; 10:3, 8, 16:27).

To remember (2:17, 22; 12:16; 14:26).

2. Believing as decision.

To come (1:39, 46; 3:20, 21; 6:35, 37, 45, 65; 7:37; 14:6).

To receive or reject (1:5, 11:12; 3:11, 32, 33; 5:43; 12:48; 13:20; 14:17; 17:8).

To love or hate (3:19, 20; 8:42; 12:25, 43; 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 28; 16:27).

To confess or deny (9:22; 12:43; 13:38; 18:25, 26).

To follow (1:37, 38, 40, 43; 6:2; 10:4, 5, 27; 12:26).

3. Believing as dependence and obedience.

To drink (4:13, 14; 6:35; 7:37).

To eat (6:35; 6:51; 7:37).

To be a disciple (6:45; 9:27).

To learn or be taught (6:45).

To keep (8:51, 52; 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 28).

To abide (6:56; 8:31; 12:46; 15:4, 5, 6, 9, 10).

To serve (12:26).

To worship (4:23, 24; 9:38).

Here, then, is one scholar who has found much evidence that both obedience and dependence are part of John's usage of the term *πιστεύω*. John does not always use the term in this way, but he seems to be pouring into the term a fullness of content, which, when taken as a whole, includes the idea of obedience as well as dependence upon Christ.

The text of John 3:36 supports this assertion. Here John the Baptist (or John the Apostle) uses *πιστεύω* in parallel

with ἀπειθεῖν : "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him." Arndt and Gingrich state that the basic meaning of ἀπειθεῖν is to disobey. They admit the possibility that in the New Testament, it may have the general meaning "be an unbeliever" although they state that this sense is greatly disputed.¹ Here is at least a possibility, however, that John is using πιστεύω with the sense of obedience.

John 12:25 as well supports this idea. Here Jesus says "He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal." It is often supposed that Jesus is speaking of Himself here, and His soon-to-come death on the cross. It may be that indeed in verse 24 the grain of wheat which falls into the earth is a reference to His own death. But in verse 26 Jesus speaks of others serving Him. So at least in context, Jesus is referring to others, as well as to Himself. Further, what would Jesus mean by referring to Himself as, "He who loves his life loses it." Was Jesus in danger of losing His life if He loved it? Indeed, what would He mean in reference to Himself when He said, "He who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal?" Was Jesus in danger of not keeping His life? Did He need to die on the cross in order to obtain eternal life for Himself? Jesus was not in danger of losing His eternal life by not going to the cross; He did

¹BAGD, p. 82.

not need to hate His life in order to keep it to life eternal. He therefore must speak of the response men need to make in order to keep their lives to life eternal. Since throughout this Gospel it is belief which brings eternal life, John and Jesus must be equating belief with a hating of the life, a renunciation of the self-principle.

In John 20:26-29, the climax to the book of John, Jesus has an encounter with Thomas, who was not present at Jesus' earlier appearance to the other apostles. Jesus tells him to examine His body and "be not unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answers, "My Lord and My God!" Jesus' response is "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." John then goes on immediately to give the purpose of the book; that those who did not see, may themselves believe. It seems to this writer that John is using the example of Thomas to stamp upon the mind of the reader what true, full, authentic belief involves. Throughout his book he has been developing the concept of belief, and contrasting true from false belief. Now comes one who confesses Jesus as his own Lord and God. Jesus equates Thomas' response with belief: "Because you have seen Me, have you believed?" While it is probably true that Thomas was already saved before this encounter with Jesus (John 13:10), John seems to be saying that this is what belief today involves, now that Jesus has been raised from the dead. John has poured into the content of πιστεύω the final element so that his readers may have no misunderstanding of the

response they should make. Thomas saw and believed, an inner decision. The reality of this decision reflexively expressed itself in immediate confession of Jesus as his Lord and his God. This presupposes an inner response in accord with the outer confession; in the inner man, Thomas not only came to a realization that Jesus was in fact Lord, but Thomas personally committed himself to Jesus as his own Lord and God. John writes that others might believe, and make the same inner response as did Thomas.

Mention must be made of John's usage of πιστεύω εἰς . The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology states that such a construction "is a striking departure from ordinary Greek and the LXX."¹ Ladd states, concerning this construction:

This is a unique Christian idiom that has no parallels in secular Greek or in the LXX, and may have been patterned after the Semitic idiom, he^e min b^e. However, since the LXX does not render the Hebrew preposition by eis but uses the simple dative, it is more likely that the idiom pisteuo eis is a distinctive Christian creation designed to express the personal relationship of commitment between the believer and Jesus. This is supported by the parallelism between the idiom of belief and baptism. One must believe on (eis) Christ or on the name of Christ (1:12, 2:23, 3:18), and be baptized into Christ (Rom 6:30, Gal 3:27) or into the name of Christ (1 Cor 1:13; Matt 28:19; Acts 8:16). As baptism into Christ represents union with Christ in death and newness of life (Rom 6:4-5) so faith in Christ means personal identification with him. It is obviously far more than intellectual assent to certain facts, although this is included, or to creedal correctness, although it includes affirmation about Christ. It involves much more than trust in Jesus or confidence in him; it is an acceptance of Jesus and of what he

¹The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, s. v. "πίστις," by O. Michel, 1:599.

claims to be and a dedication of one's life to him.¹

The phrase *πιστεύω εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ* as well is acknowledged by C. H. Dodd to mean "not simply to accept His claim, by intellectual assent, but to acknowledge that claim by yielding allegiance."² Thus here are two more scholars who find the concept of obedient trust in John's usage of *πιστεύω*.

Thus for John, as for Paul, the term "believe" is a rich, full term. Its emphasis is trust in Christ, but it also seems to include the element of obedience.

Conclusion

This writer does not believe that he has proven conclusively from the examination of the few above texts alone that saving faith includes a commitment of obedience to Christ. However, he does believe that he has shown that at least there are hints and indications of such in the way Paul and John use the terms in the *πίστις / πιστεύω* word group.

It is grammatically permissible to take Paul's term "obedience of faith" in the book of Romans as a genitive of apposition, and conclude that faith includes a response of obedience. As well in John, the formula *πιστεύω εἰς* or *πιστεύω εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ* may be taken in the sense of yielding up allegiance to Christ when one puts his trust in

¹George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 272.

²C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: The University Press, 1953), p. 184.

Him.

Paul and John were both Jews. Just as the New Testament writers used *μετάνοια* in a way which followed its Old Testament anchors and thus gave it a meaning which was not present in the Hellenistic world, so most probably Paul and John used the terms *πίστις* and *πίστεύω* in a way somewhat differently than the normal, secular usage. In addition, Paul's controversy with the rabbis must also be taken into account when attempting to understand his usage of *πίστις*. With this conclusion (concerning Paul) Cranfield agrees:

The fact that these words (metanoia, metanoein, ametanoetos) are so seldom used by Paul certainly does not mean that repentance is not important for him. The explanation of it is rather that repentance is for him an integral part of *πίστις*. He may well also have felt that the word itself had been devalued by the tendency in Judaism to understand it legalistically.¹

It has been noted above that repentance and faith are used, at times, interchangeably in the book of Acts. If the concept of repentance as defined in this paper is correct, one ought to find some evidences of turning away from sin and a submission to the will of God in usages of *πίστις* and *πίστεύω*. While the evidence cited above is not overwhelming, there are at least indications that *πίστις* and *πίστεύω* signify both trust and loyalty to Christ.

¹C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, vol. 1, ICC, ed. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), p. 145.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Review of Findings

The Lordship Controversy is a controversy about the nature of saving repentance, and the nature of saving faith. On the one hand are good men who believe that repentance is a changing of the mind about who Jesus is, and about the sin of unbelief. On the other hand are men who assert that repentance includes a renunciation of sin and a decision to follow and serve Christ. Similarly, these two positions define saving faith differently. Non-Lordship advocates believe that saving faith is trusting Christ to save without any commitment of obedience to Him; Lordship adherents believe that saving faith includes not only trust in Christ but also a commitment of obedience and loyalty to Him and His will.

This paper examined both the nature of faith and repentance in an attempt to resolve this issue. The following conclusions have been drawn.

It seems clear that in order to understand the New Testament usage of the term "*μετάνοια*" one needs to study the history of the idea of repentance in the Old Testament. The term "*ἁγία*" is generally agreed to be the term which lay behind the New Testament "*μετάνοια* ." A study of *ἁγία* shows

that it was a rich and full concept, and included the ideas of turning from sin and commitment to the will of God. When one turns to the New Testament, one finds John the Baptist and Jesus using *μετάνοια* in this sense throughout the Gospels. This is generally admitted by all sides in this controversy.

It is the preaching of *μετάνοια* after the death of Christ and the birth of the church, however, which causes division. Some assert that repentance was preached only to the covenant people Israel, and is not to be preached today. This is clearly false, as Luke 24:47, Acts 26:20, and even the Old Testament show. Others who hold the non-Lordship position state that the concept of *μετάνοια* is redefined for New Testament gospel preaching so that the repentance preached today is different in concept from that of the Old Testament and the Gospels. An examination of Luke 24:47 and the apostolic preaching in Acts does not support this conclusion, but points to the opposite conclusion: that in fact, neither Jesus nor the apostles redefine *μετάνοια* but, use it consistently throughout their ministries, in a way very similar to the Old Testament concept of repentance. It therefore seems that the repentance preached today does include a call for men to renounce their sin and decide to follow and obey Christ.

How then does this conclusion fit the New Testament emphasis on salvation by faith alone? An examination of the Book of Acts shows that, in fact, on many occasions, *μετάνοια* is used interchangeably with *πίστις* or *πιστεύω*. Thus the

terms are at times used synonymously. The emphases in these terms are different, *μετάνοια* emphasizing the turning away from sin, *πίστις* and *πιστεύω* the turning to God and trusting in Him. But when the terms are used absolutely, that is, when it is said that repentance alone is the condition for receiving salvation, or that faith alone is the sole condition for receiving salvation, each term must include the thought of the other. To deny this is to charge the New Testament writers with contradiction.

Acts 20:21 confirms this inter-relationship between repentance and faith, for here the Granville-Sharp rule dictates that repentance and faith are either identical or very closely related concepts.

On the basis of the observation that in Acts the terms "repentance" and "faith" are used virtually interchangeably, one must conclude that indeed saving faith does presuppose repentance and does include the concept of repentance. Therefore, if repentance is indeed a turning from sin and commitment of obedience to God, because saving faith presupposes repentance, saving faith of necessity must include a turning from sin.

Upon testing such conclusions by the uses of *πίστις* in Paul and *πιστεύω* in John, one finds indications that such is the case. Paul preached to bring about the obedience of faith; John preached belief in Jesus' name. Both concepts seem to point to saving faith that is an obedient faith, a faith which is not only trust in Christ but also a commitment

of loyalty to Him.

Implications For The Lordship Controversy

How then do these conclusions affect the Lordship Controversy? It does not appear that either side in the debate is entirely correct.

The non-Lordship advocates have a false understanding of repentance. Repentance is not a mere change of mind about Jesus; it is a turning away from one's sin and rebellion against God.

The non-Lordship definition of saving faith is not so much false as it is somewhat misleading. This writer would agree with the terminology of these men when they state that saving faith is a trusting alone in Christ as Savior. Where then does any commitment of obedience to Christ come in? The answer comes when one asks the question, "Savior from what?" In Matthew 1:21, an angel of the Lord said to Joseph, "You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." Sin has had at least two effects upon man. Man is under the penalty of sin: eternal death. Further, man has fallen under the power of sin; he cannot escape its hold on his life. Thus in preaching saving faith, one may properly call upon men to trust Christ and Him alone to save them, but because repentance (as defined above) is included in saving faith, one must stress that God is calling upon men to trust Christ to save them not simply from the penalty of sin, but from its power as well.

On the other hand, Lordship preachers also make some

misleading statements. Often they assert that sinners must be encouraged to count the cost before they make a commitment to Christ. While at times it may be necessary to warn those who are seeking to manipulate Christ for their own purposes that following Him is not an easy path (see an example of Jesus doing this in Luke 14:25-35), this writer believes that such ordinarily ought not be done in gospel preaching. To encourage unregenerate men to count the cost of following Christ gives the impression that the men themselves must be able to carry out a lifelong commitment of unconditional obedience to Christ in their own strength. This is misleading, for it is Christ who saves one from sin (and its power).

Lordship preachers also sometimes state that in order to be saved, men must "make Christ Lord of their lives." Again, this is to cloud the issue. One must remember that Paul's stress on faith came about because of his controversy with the rabbis, who were fond of making the promise, upon repentance, that they would never sin again. Now this is one promise that sinful man cannot make! Sin dwells within, and no man has within himself the strength to overcome the power of sin in his life. Rather in preaching faith, it must be made clear that the commitment Christ asks one to make is not a promise that one will never sin again, nor is it a promise that one will always obey Christ no matter what the circumstances. It is a realization that one cannot be free from sin on his own power, and that one is trusting Christ to cleanse him not only from the penalty of sin, but also to

free him from the power of sin in his own life, so that he will be enabled to begin a new way of life with God.

Such a position is taken by Clarence B. Bass, who defines repentance unto salvation as "a renunciation of sin and an acceptance of the Holy Spirit's enablement to holy living."¹ Similarly, John Stott says, "What Christ demands is a readiness on our part to let Him cast sin out of our lives."²

At the beginning of this paper, it was declared that this was not an attempt to describe the normative, subjective experience which one must undergo in order to be saved. It is an attempt to describe what should be preached when explaining to the sinner what one means when he says "you are saved by faith," or when he preaches "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." One should preach that God is calling upon man to end his rebellion, to renounce his sin, and to place his trust in Christ to cleanse him from the penalty of sin and to empower him to live in victory over it.

It needs to be remembered that before one ever gives an invitation or directs a sinner to respond to the gospel, that much teaching should be done beforehand. Unless such teaching is given and understood, no man can properly

¹Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, s. v. "Repentance," by Clarence B. Bass, p. 711.

²John R. W. Stott, Personal Evangelism (Ontario: InterVarsity Press, 1964), p. 13.

understand what his response must be to the gospel. Packer's analysis is helpful in this regard:

The gospel is a message about God. It tells us who He is, what His character is, what His standards are, and what He requires of us, His creatures. It tells us that we owe our very existence to Him, that for good or ill we are always in His hands, and under His eye, and that He made us to worship and serve Him, to show forth His praise and to live for His glory. These truths are the foundation of theistic religion, and until they are grasped the rest of the gospel message will seem neither cogent nor relevant. It is here, with the assertion of man's complete and constant dependence on His Creator, that the Christian story starts.

The gospel starts by teaching us that we, as creatures, are absolutely dependent on God and that He, as Creator, has an absolute claim on us. Only when we have learned this can we see what sin is and only when we see what sin is can we understand the good news of salvation from sin.

The gospel is a message about sin . . .

There is a pitfall here . . . For the very idea of sin in the Bible is of an offense against God, which disrupts a man's relationship with God . . . We never know what sin really is till we have learned to think of it in terms of God, and to measure it, not by human standards but by the yardstick of His total demand on our lives. . . . To be convicted of sin means . . . to realize that one has offended God and flouted His authority, and defied Him, and gone against Him, and put oneself in the wrong with Him. To preach Christ means to set Him forth as the One who through His cross sets men right with God again. To put faith in Christ means relying on Him and Him alone to restore us to God's fellowship and favor (emphasis added).¹

Thus in preaching the gospel, much is included.

Preachers are to inform men about who God is and about His absolute sovereign claim upon their lives. Men are to be told that God created them to be in fellowship with Him. But man rebelled, and all men are in rebellion today. Such rebellion has brought about both estrangement from God and the

¹J. I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (Downers Grove: IV Press, 1975), pp. 58-61.

penalty of eternal death. Further, man, trapped in sin, has not within himself power to end his rebellion and return to God and be reconciled to Him, even though it is his responsibility to do so. God in His grace has provided a means of reconciliation, through Christ and His cross work. Through Christ man now may end his rebellion and be suitably reconciled to God. God therefore is commanding all men to end their rebellion, and renounce their sin by placing their trust in Christ unreservedly, as the One who alone provides both payment and also power to live henceforth a life pleasing to the God to whom men owe total allegiance.

If such preaching is done, God will Himself enable men to respond properly. Such preaching gives due weight to both the idea of renunciation of sin and rebellion as carried in the term "*μετάνοια*," and the idea of total trust carried by the term "*πίστις*."

Epilogue

Much of today's popular preaching of the gospel has so far departed from the truth of the Word of God that what is being preached is no longer the gospel. This is true not only of liberal preachers but of those who call themselves fundamentalists and who assert that they believe the Word of God. Evangelicalism is not, as a whole, calling upon men to end their rebellion; too frequently men are not being called to reconciliation with God; men are not being informed about God's absolute, sovereign claim upon their lives. Christ is too often preached not as Savior from sin but as a blessing.

A popular song, sung at evangelistic crusades, says, "All you have to do is come up and take it." A popular tract has a picture of a present wrapped with a red bow, coming out of a puffy cloud in the sky, offered to men by the hands of God; all one must do is accept it! As a result, many are being deceived about the way of salvation.

On the other hand, through the sovereign grace of God, many are being saved today, even though sometimes the gospel is not being presented as accurately as it should be. It must be remembered that the repentance and/or faith that God requires is an inner turning. Furthermore, the faith and repentance God demands, although man's responsibility, are themselves gifts of God. Thus many who hear gospel messages which leave out the aspect of repentance as a turning from one's rebellion are still saved, because, even if they are not conscious of it, God has enabled them in the inner man to make the proper response. His word does not come back void.

It is this writer's hope and earnest prayer that God Himself would begin to call all preachers who truly love Him and His Word to examine that Word and compare it with their own gospel preaching.

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