

**Ordination Report: Berachah Church, 22-25 June 1995**

NOTE: No Bible classes Thursday, 22 June or Sunday, 25 June 1995, both sessions. Participating on ordination council at Berachah Church, Houston, Texas, 24-25 June 1995. (See R. B. Thieme, Jr. "Spiritual Dynamics," lessons 653-654. Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries.)

Jo Henra and I flew out of St. Louis last Thursday headed for Houston where I was to participate in this year's Ordination Council at Berachah Church. The entire experience there this past weekend was one of the most enjoyable, stimulating, encouraging, and motivational ones I have had in quite some time.

On Thursday evening we attended the evening services at Berachah. In Bible class that night Colonel Thieme continued in his current series on marriage. During the lesson he confirmed what I told you I suspected just before leaving for Houston—that the divine institution of marriage has a special application in the Church Age. As I am able to develop this information in my own stream of consciousness, I will pass it along to you. The implications on the Christian marriage are tremendous and has direct impact on the Appeal Trial of Satan.

After class Thursday, I was invited along with all the pastors who were in town, to meet with Colonel Thieme at his office in Thieme Bible Ministries. There and later during the weekend, I was able to talk to other theologians who communicate doctrine to congregations or write materials for those who do.

As you know, I have been concerned for years over the trend which sees pastors stray from the doctrines of orthodox theology. They have a tendency to deviate from grace and emphasize works, to abandon the principles of sound exegesis and add human energy and ideas to the established revelation of Scripture.

Colonel Thieme informed the eight pastors assembled to form the Ordination Council for this year that he considered us to be the Young Turks. I was, of course, excited to be identified by the adjective "young."

I must say that I was truly impressed with the determination expressed by those assembled to maintain the orthodox view of theology in the face of ever mounting opposition to it. The Lordship Salvation Movement, the Progressive Dispensational Movement, the Promise Keepers Movement are all indeed movements which are spewing skubalon into the souls of the God's flock in this client nation.

Seminaries, churches, and Christian organizations have bought into the notion that freedom and grace cannot be applied and enforced very efficiently by God, so they must help out by imposing legalism and tyranny. In order to save the flock's souls, they must destroy their souls.

I was very impressed with the depth of doctrinal knowledge of the following men who joined the council: Robert L. Dean, Assistant Publications Editor at R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries.

Daniel W. Hill, Pastor of Southwood Bible Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Rick Knapp, Pastor of Tetelestai Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Incidentally, Rick is an avid baseball fan in addition to the fact that his church members have developed an interesting cult following of the movie Tombstone. I asked Colonel Thieme what he thought about this movie and he said it was as historically accurate as one could make it. Turns out that when the Colonel was a small boy, his father introduced him to Wyatt Earp. Mr. Thieme was close friends with Tom Mix and it was from him that he first learned of the details of the stories Tombstone portrays. The Colonel said he later did research on the history of Wyatt Earp, Doc Holiday, and the Clantons while attending the University of Arizona.

Robert R. "Bob" McLaughlin, Pastor of Grace Bible Church in Somerset, Rhode Island. Bob has a new church building outside of town but unfortunately it happens to be just over the line into Massachusetts. However, *vincit omnia veritas*.

Alex Monti is ordained and is currently working on his doctorate in theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. If Alex can stay humble, and he is very humble right now, then he has the potential of becoming the next generation's Bob Thieme. Alex is very objective about the issues which face orthodox Protestant theology. He has a perfect attitude which enables him to successfully enter into the arena of idea and engage in the spirit of the debate. He can confront error without hostility, defend truth without arrogance, and present his argument without boorishness.

Alex told me that he choose Trinity because it has an outstanding faculty and the School is widely respected within the Christian community. He told me that a doctorate from Trinity would carry with it great credibility. With the credibility, and the prestige which a doctor's degree from Trinity would carry, Alex believes he will be able to authoritatively present and defend orthodox, premillennial, dispensational theology more effectively.

I believe he is right. I heard discussions on seminaries while in Houston and the bottom line is that there are no seminaries which currently teach orthodox Protestant theology. The one which comes closest is Trinity. Its faculty is sound and its reputation is solid. Another mentioned in a positive light was Capital Seminary in Washington, d.c., whose faculty is made up of many of Dallas Seminary's "old guard." So, keep your eyes and ears open for the name, Alex Monti. I expect to hear great things about him.

Michael J. Smith, Pastor of Bible Doctrine Church in Brenham, Texas. He played football under Coach Gene Stallings at Texas A & M. After he first told me that I didn't know whether I liked him or hated him. If he played for Stallings's team which beat Alabama in the 1967 Cotton Bowl then I would have to hate him. But if he played for Coach Stallings after that game, then I could like him. It turned out I was able to like him.

Robert B. Thieme, III is Vice-president and Publications Editor for R. B. Thieme, Jr. Bible Ministries. His task is to reduce to writing all the Colonel's doctrines and research over the past 45 years. The task is obviously ongoing and overwhelming. Efforts are being made to scan the Colonel's class notes, enter them into computers, and then develop a sophisticated search system to access the information. Bobby's understanding of orthodox theology is enormous. He is eminently qualified to manage this project and the outcome will aid and comfort many a pastor in the generations to come.

In fact, I believe we are in the incipient stages of an orthodox Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther rediscovered salvation by grace in the early 1500s but could not resolve the issues of spirituality by grace before he died.

The major breakdown in Protestant circles since the Reformation has been an inability to correlate the doctrine of salvation by grace with the doctrine of spirituality by grace. The human mind simply cannot get it clear that God can manage His own creation without the help of human assistants. God's policy is grace--not legalism, not works, not despotism. God permits man to be free so that he may respond to the divine plan of grace without coercion or cajoling. When man inevitably screws it up, God is able to handle it. Man does not have to prove anything to man about the status of his spiritual life. He does have to prove it to God under the principle of imperative moods. When there is a failure on man's part, the justice of God executes penalty clauses. This is, however, a matter between the sinner and God, not the sinner and another sinner prone to plunder into private affairs.

Too few leaders in the Christian church properly distinguish their proper place in the evaluation of God's plan and the presentation of it in their lectures, their writings, their sermons, and their lives.

Bobby Thieme understands the grace program completely and thoroughly and is the man for the crisis when it comes to preserving the voluminous work his father has compiled over the past half century.

Taylor L. Williams, Pastor of Grace Bible Church in Campbell, California. Taylor, by the way is probably as old as I am and he too was classified as a "Young Turk." What Taylor is however is the First Turk. Taylor has been teaching clear,

orthodox, Protestant theology in the San Jose area for as long as I can remember. He has never wavered, he has never strayed. He is steady as she goes. In addition, he is originally from Jackson, Mississippi and carries with him the poise and grace of a true Southern gentleman. A class guy all the way, Taylor has to be classified as one of the Turks no matter what the generation.

It was up to us to participate in the evaluation of this year's candidates for ordination. Each man had submitted what is called the Berachah Church Doctrinal Questionnaire, posing 85 questions on the eleven areas of Systematic Theology plus the definition of 25 technical terms.

Their responses had been reviewed and graded by the deacons of Berachah Church as well as by certain ones at Thieme Bible Ministries. We pastors were to read their responses and be prepared to question them on any problem areas we might have discerned.

The oral phase of the ordination took place Saturday afternoon, June 24<sup>th</sup>. It began at 2:00 and lasted till around 5:30. During that time Colonel Thieme quizzed them one by one on various aspects of theology, doctrine, and hermeneutics. We and the deacons were permitted to ask questions at certain points during the examination.

At the end the Colonel, the pastors, and the deacons convened to vote on the candidates and all were passed unanimously. This qualified them to attend the ordination ceremony Sunday evening at Berachah Church where they would receive their ordination certificates and commemorative Bible from the church.

Those whom we all voted to ordain included:

Bruce M. Bumgardner of Houston, Texas. He is completing his studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is married and has three children. Jo Henra and I knew his wife Cindy while at Berachah. Bruce is currently pastor at Grace Evangelical Church in Deer Park, Texas.

Michael E. Gavigan of Central Falls, Rhode Island. He was a member of Bob McLaughlin's church in Somerset and currently is pastor of the Church of the Redeemer in Central Falls. I had an affinity for him. He also had a family of five when he discovered his gift. He tried out Moody Bible Institute for a year and had to quit though reluctantly. I attended Houston Baptist College for year and had to quit, though reluctantly. He spent three years as a driver for Federal Express. Not unlike my time spent driving a truck for Rainbo Bread. He should do well in the ministry if for no other reason than he has a huge backlog of examples.

Anthony S. Hewitt of Oakmont, Pennsylvania. He is a member of Rick Knapp's church in Pittsburgh and a graduate of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore. He is presently employed as an insurance broker. If you are an insurance broker that means that you have sold and are selling a lot of insurance, unlike me during the time I worked two years for Great Southern Life Insurance Company not selling insurance.

Moses C. Onwubiko of Nashville, Tennessee and a citizen of Nigeria. Moses is a pre-med student at Vanderbilt University. He hopes to eventually return to his country of Nigeria where he intends to function under his spiritual gift of evangelist. He speaks broken English which is his second language. But of all the candidates, Moses was the most impressive. It was his task to be interrogated on the various categories of systematic theology but also the intricate discoveries which have been developed by Colonel Thieme over the last 45 years. He had to hear, metabolize, and formulate an answer to these questions in a language not his own and respond in a like manner.

Someone I spoke with after the orals made the comment that they couldn't understand all the questions in English yet this man, whose primary language is Nigerian, understood them perfectly and responded perfectly. Moses has a marvelous attitude as well and will surely expand the kingdom once he returns to his native land.

Orlando J. Salas of Katy, Texas. He has been in the Colonel's ministry for about 18 years and is pastor of Iglesia Cristiana De Houston in Katy, Texas. There he teaches the theology developed by Colonel Thieme to the Spanish community of Houston and he does so in fluent Spanish. He is also assisting R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries in translating some of its publications into Spanish. In order to support his ministry, he simultaneously operates a restaurant in Katy called Orlando's Seafood Restaurant. Incidentally, Orlando was a CLU in the insurance business which means he sold a lot of insurance as well. So, you can see there are many reasons for me to be impressed with Orlando Salas.

The ordination service and ceremony held at Berachah Church Sunday evening was absolutely magnificent. This is one of the notable times when things can get emotional at Berachah Church. Women cry and men want to.

Colonel Thieme's message to the pastors contained a comparison between the pastor's responsibility to his flock in much the same manner as the husband's is to his wife. He noted the unique Christian marriage and how it illustrates the relationship between Jesus Christ and His church. Pastors are delegated the authority and responsibility to teach the bride of Christ. He referenced Ephesians 4:15 where pastors are to speak the truth in love so that his congregation can grow up into Christ in all things. His presentation was very motivational and it will be one of my priorities to take copious notes once I receive the tape.

Following the service Taylor Williams opened the ordination ceremony in a very well-stated prayer asking God's blessings on those who were about to be entered into the Gospel ministry.

Vernon Bartee, Chairman of the Board of Deacons at Berachah Church gave the charge to the church which exhorted them to pray for these men as they enter into the duties of pastoring sheep and evangelizing the lost.

I was next on the program having been assigned the task of giving the charge to the candidates. I first encouraged them to orient to the reality that the most accurate reference they may consult in their preparation is the accomplished work of Colonel Thieme over the past 45 years.

I must say to those of you in my congregation—Jo Henra and I have been gone from Berachah for over 10 years now. But I can assure you that Colonel Thieme sounds no different, looks no different and certainly communicates no differently than when we were there on a day-to-day basis. His recent developments on the mysteries of New Testament theology are absolute awesome and will contribute to many of the things we are going to attempt to learn here at Grace Doctrine over the years to come. Any criticisms which you may have heard about his so-called waning years are nothing more than Satanic assaults communicated by his willing emissaries.

Opposition to the Colonel's ministry is Satanically inspired. It is unwarranted. It finds its source in cosmic thought. Such opposition is going to intensify as the strange voices of Lordship salvation, progressive dispensationalism, and I-know-you-by-your-fruits apostates grow louder in the land.

I would wish a pox on such tripe but that is much too lenient. Consequently, I wish upon them the ebola virus!

Therefore, the first part of my charge was to emphasize the value of exact exegesis of the Scripture provided by the Colonel. Secondly to remind them of Peter's charge to pastors in 1 Peter 5:2, 1 Peter 5:3, 1 Peter 5:4. There the pastor is commanded to feed the flock of God which is assigned to him. They are to take the responsibility of enlarging the stream of consciousness of every sheep whom God assembles before them. Those who fulfill this imperative mood will qualify for the special escrow blessing imputed to pastors and conveyed at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**1 Peter 5:4 - When the Shepherd in Chief shall appear at the Rapture of the church, you shall receive at the Royal Award Ceremonies of the Judgment Seat of Christ the unfading crown of glory.**

Following this charge, Colonel Thieme along with deacons Kermit Lewis, Wes Knebel, and Jim Adams presented certificates of ordination along with commemorative Bibles from Berachah Church to each of the candidates.

Bobby Thieme then offered an ordination prayer which set the stage for the most solemn phase of the ceremony, the laying on of hands. This is a custom which has been practiced throughout the church age for the public identification of those which communication gifts. As each candidate comes forward and kneels on the steps of the rostrum, the Colonel, the deacons, and the pastors gather around them and place their hands on their shoulders.

Bobby's prayer was that they would take the responsibility conferred upon them seriously by loyally teaching the Word of God to their congregations.

Bob McLaughlin offered the benediction which concluded the ceremony.

Afterward the members of Berachah Church came forward to offer their congratulations.

It was a wonderful weekend which was orchestrated to perfection under the leadership of Colonel Thieme. Every aspect of the event was planned down to the most minute detail. I was reminded during it all of why I was reluctant to sponsor a Bible conference in St. Louis. The Colonel sets one heck of a precedent. When it comes to attention to detail, none excels the Colonel and Berachah Church. I was adamant about the fact that if we sponsored a conference we would have to all come together as a unit and put on a performance which would measure up to the same high standards established at Berachah. I believe we have accomplished the objective of coming as close as we can but we must remain vigilant. The 1995 St. Louis Bible Conference is only 4 and one-half months away.

In closing I would like to solicit your prayers for a number of people. They are not only fellow members of the Royal Family but ones who are on the front lines of the Angelic Conflict. We need in this time of a degenerating

Zeitgeist, to pull together as one by means of the power of the Holy Spirit.

I would ask you to pray for this new evangelist, Moses Onwubiko. The four new pastors, Bruce Bumgardner, Michael Gavigan, Tony Hewitt, and Orlando Salas.

I would ask you to pray for the Young Turks, Robbie Dean, Dan Hill, Rick Knapp, Bob McLaughlin, Alex Monti, Mike Smith, and Bobby Thieme, as well as the two old guys, me and Taylor Williams.

Pray for the Board of Deacons of Berachah Church. Almost every one of these men are friends of mine--men I knew and, in many cases, worked with on various functions around Berachah.

Vernon Bartee is chairman. The Colonel says that Vernon is the best chairman he has ever had. Vernon ensures that all committees take care of their assigned tasks so that the Colonel doesn't have to worry with the day-to-day details of administration.

Wes Knebel is vice-chairman. Wes and I used to talk baseball every Wednesday night before Bible class. He, along with Vernon and Earl Hornberg of Bible Doctrine Cassettes form a rather traumatic threesome on some of the better golf courses around the Houston area if not the most awe inspiring.

Marty Cameron is Treasurer. Marty was a Godsend for me. He used to cast in my direction his insurance clients he decided were such small fish he didn't have time to deal with them personally. His crumbs contributed to keeping bread on my family's table for about two of our years in Houston.

Kermit Lewis is secretary. He headed the membership committee when we first went to Houston. I told him this weekend that Jo Henra and I still have the letter he sent us in 1977 which informed us we had been accepted as members of Berachah Church.

Jim Adams was a close friend whose mother-in-law assisted us in finding a new home when the one we were in started to become more a part of a ghetto than a neighborhood. The home and the ghetto are still there but it is being absorbed by million-dollar homes and condominiums. Jim was in charge of the technical set-up for the ordination's oral examination.

Dr. L. D. Eckermann who gave us free vet treatment and care for our dear old dog Sweet. She was a collie/husky mix who lived up to every meaning of her name. He was and still is a dear and loyal friend.

Fred Hindle who was Headmaster of Berachah Prep School when we left Houston and still is so today. I was one of his teachers and benefited from his expert leadership in the development of curriculum. He also supervised a staff of visual-aid personnel who supported the faculty's efforts in teaching doctrine to the munchkins.

There are others whom we knew in our time there—Alan Gensemer, Kim Langridge, Ken Monroe (the best-dressed man at Berachah), David Stewart, George Williams, and Mike Winkler. Others include Mark Breeding, Alan Cannon, Dan Linscomb and Fred Oliver.

Incidentally, a former deacon and good friend, Bob Wooten sends his regards to a couple of former Berachah faithful here in Grace Doctrine, Ben and Sydney Gillis.

Please pray for those at R. B. Thieme, Jr. Bible Ministries.:

Katie Tapping. The professionalism which the Colonel demands finds its fruition in the executive skills of Katie Tapping. She must function as administrator, press secretary, fire extinguisher, social chairman, protocol officer, and FLOT Line coordinator in addition to supervising the varied department of Thieme Bible Ministries. She is a joy to be around and has always been very helpful to me and continues to offer great support for Grace Doctrine Church.

She is assisted very efficiently by Shirley Gensemer and Regina Taylor, and Nancy Crichton, ladies who function in the 1990s but who do so with the gentility of antebellum Southern aristocrats.

Then there is the Colonel. This man, in my view, is in his prime! He is discovering details about the Word of God which cannot be generally understood for another generation or two because so few have the requisite frame of reference to understand it. This is the secret behind the invisible impact of the Pivot. When only a few understand the powerful content of God's message to man, they must be protected until they can pass the information along to the next generation.

Thus, the things which are about to be taught at Berachah may well overshadow that which has already been communicated. And to top it all off, I learned during the weekend that the Colonel will begin a verse-by-verse analysis of the book of James as soon as he completes his current study. I know there was a reason I hadn't worked my way around to that yet.

I must say that this weekend was a treasured highlight of my career as a pastor. Why was the assignment by Colonel Thieme to present the charge to the candidates so important? Because it meant that he was granting me permission to stand in the pulpit of Berachah Church and teach. He never asked me what I planned to say. He never asked to see my manuscript. He simply delegated me the authority and then trusted me to do it right. I can't tell you what an honor this was for me. For him to place his confidence and trust in me, when he had such a large collection of qualified men he could have asked, is of great significance to me. I will always remember the moment as I recall the principle of *sic transit gloria mundi*.

In conclusion I offer this charge to you as my congregation. We are entering our second decade together. There has been a lot of spiritual growth and many doctrines have been taught and learned. But we have only just begun.

There are new things on the horizon which must be learned. Pray for me as I seek to understand these things so that I might communicate them properly to you. Pray for all those I have just mentioned to you. They are essential in the ongoing process which creates the environment by which Bob Thieme can develop the theology on which we all depend.

Remember, the issue is the Word of God. If that is true, and it is, then the most accurate interpretation of the original languages is the overriding issue in the development of our theology. There is no one better at such a process than the Colonel. Pray for him. For I can assure you that your spiritual growth is dependent upon the tandem principle working in this pulpit: The Colonel is the original thinker, while I am the master plagiarist. Together, we stand ready to take this congregation to new heights on the threshold of a new century and even a new millennium.