If John MacArthur doesn't teach salvation by works, what happened in the first edition of his book Hard to Believe?
Code: QA509

One paragraph in the first edition of *Hard to Believe* contained a glaring error that has the potential to mislead readers about the book's whole intent. The problematic passage is the opening paragraph of chapter 6 (page 93), which seems to suggest that salvation is the fruit of godly living. The truth is exactly the opposite.

That error was inadvertently introduced into the manuscript in the late stages of the editorial process. Phil Johnson has been John MacArthur's primary editor for more than twenty-seven years. He helps him assemble *most* of his major books from sermon transcripts.

Hard to Believe is one of only three or four books since 1981 that Phil Johnson had no part in during the editorial process. At the publisher's behest, the editor of that book was a free-lance editor with no connection to our ministry. He was a highly competent man whose editorial skills are impressive and whose work is generally excellent. He assembled and edited the first draft of *Hard to Believe*.

John MacArthur read the manuscript, made revisions and corrections, and was generally pleased with the editor's efforts. Phil Johnson read a few samples only and agreed that the portions he read were excellent.

However, some reviewers on the publisher's side felt there was too much repetition in the book and that it was too long.So during a meeting to discuss final details about the book just before it went to press, the publisherdecided to delete four chapters from the heart of the manuscript.

John MacArthur agreed to the deletions, assuming it would be a simple process. The problem was that the original opening of (what is now) chapter 6 referred to some of the material that was deleted. So the chapter-opening was rewritten to make a different transition. To this day no one at Grace to You knows if it was an editor on the publisher's side or the free-lance editor who rewrote that opening paragraph. No one ever wanted to "fess up."

But somehow, owing to the late deletion and the need to keep printing on schedule, the revision (deemed "simple" by the editors involved because it was less than 8 sentences) was never sent to John MacArthur for approval. Obviously, the paragraph was written by someone whose grasp of

doctrine is minimal.

That botched paragraph contradicts what John MacArthur teaches everywhere else about justification by faith (click here). In fact, John immediately issued a corrective statement and sent a revision to the publisher for future editions of *Hard to Believe* (click here).

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