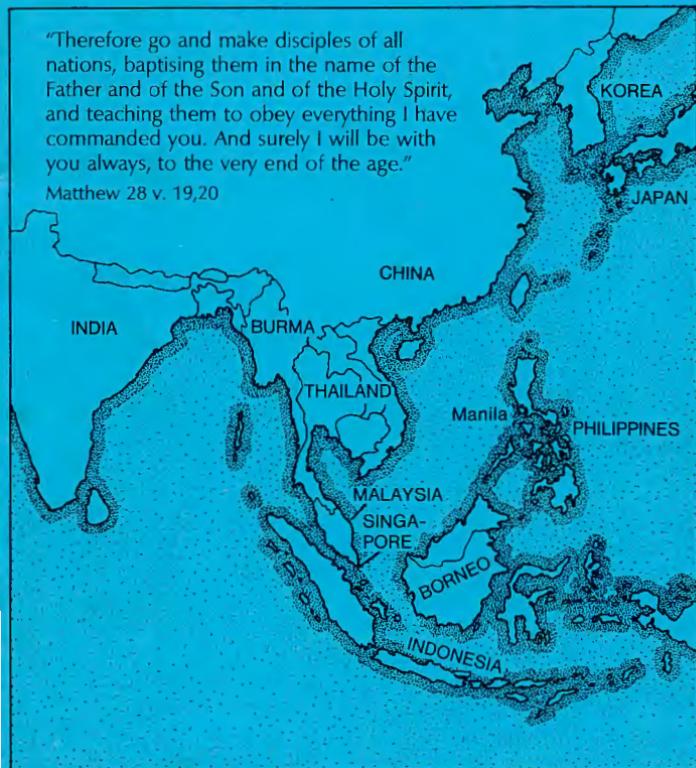


REFORMATION TODAY

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28 v. 19,20



Where will the
missionaries
come from? —
see overleaf

Where will the missionaries come from?

At the present rate of increase the population of the world will be 6.135 billion by the year 2000. Of these 81.4% will be living in non-Western countries. Half will live in urban environments and 75 per cent of the world's largest cities (over 5 million) will be in non-Western countries.

At present it is calculated that there are about 16,000 unreached peoples or cultures which do not have a significant gospel witness. It will require about 200,000 new missionaries to evangelize the unreached peoples of our generation.

The number of missionaries from the UK has decreased between 1976 and 1986 by about 1,000. The present number is about 5,500. But in that same period the number of serving missionaries worldwide of all denominations doubled. The number of non-Western missionaries is increasing steadily and at the present rate of increase could be 100,000 by the year 2000. The USA has about 40,000 missionaries serving in overseas countries.

South Korea (population 40 million) has the largest theological seminaries in the world. Several Presbyterian seminaries in that country have over 1,000 students. There are 283 theological institutions, 38 of which are seminaries turning out over 500 graduates a year. The largest increase of trained missionaries being sent out is from Korea, Nigeria, India and Brazil.

We should not think that non-Western missionary enterprise is a new phenomenon. When Alexander Duff landed

in Calcutta in 1830 he discovered that Tahitian missionaries had been working in the Samoa islands and five years later he found that there were 2,000 Christians as an outcome. The Karens of Burma founded their first missionary society in 1850.

When noting the rapid rise in the number of missionaries from non-Western lands we must avoid wrong conclusions. We should not think that the awakening missionary interest in non-Western nations lessens our own responsibility. There is a great deal that we can contribute not only in sending out our own missionaries but in providing knowledge and expertise to heighten and make more effective the resources of manpower available in other countries. Literature plays an important part. Urgent requests come from overseas countries asking for literature to help in the training of men for the ministry. It is vital that the theology that inspires worldwide missionary effort be pure. Their converts multiply. We have the study materials. May we be alert and generous in meeting the need!

In the introduction to the Southern Baptists (Carey Publications) Tom Nettles shows that the doctrines of grace inspired the mighty missionary impulse of the Southern Baptist Convention. Evangelism and missionary endeavour however can be ruined when solid theological foundations are not laid, and more harm can be done than good when the gospel of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is turned into easy believism, with no repentance and no regeneration.

Editorial

The Westminster Conference

The subject of this year's two day Westminster Conference was 'Divisions and Dissensions'. The merit and usefulness of the six well researched papers will be evident when they appear in paperback form. Here I will refer to four of them as they have a particular bearing on controversy today. In describing the Reformers' attitudes to Catholics and Anabaptists, David Boorman chose to concentrate on the example of Calvin. It was evident that both the magisterial reformers and the Catholics believed that it was the responsibility of the civil magistrates to enforce both tables of the law. While the Church had power over the State, heretics were subject to the death penalty.

Our debt to the reformers is enormous but we must be careful to observe that they made their mistakes and that some aspects of truth and interpretation take time to develop. With hindsight we can see how there was a failure to estimate the true position of the Anabaptists, the extent of that movement, and its diversity of character. William R. Estep's *Renaissance and Reformation* has a fine chapter on the Anabaptists. Included is a moving account of the life and martyrdom of Michael Sattler (1490-1527). 'Perhaps no other execution of an anabaptist had such far-reaching influence,' suggests Estep.

Balthasar Hubmaier described by Estep as 'the first major theologian among the Anabaptists', wrote one of the most important treatises of the Reformation titled *Concerning Heretics and Those who Burn Them*. This was an abstract of principles pleading for religious liberty. 'It was the first treatise on behalf of

complete freedom of religion that the sixteenth century produced, one that went beyond both Erasmus and Luther. In it Hubmaier argued that the nature of the gospel precludes coercion. To persecute a man for his religious opinions or affiliation is to deny the incarnation (art. 28). The nature of the church precludes persecution (arts 14,21)' [Estep p. 209]. This work did nothing to prevent Hubmaier's demise. Anabaptists were given precious little time to formulate anything systematically and still less to adjust, moderate or perfect their views. In 1527 Hubmaier was arrested, tortured, condemned to death, and burned at the stake. His last words as they rubbed sulphur and gunpowder into his beard were, 'O dear brothers, pray God he will give me patience in this my suffering. I will die in the Christian faith.'

Three days later his faithful wife was executed by drowning in the Danube.

During the lively debate that followed the first session at Westminster it became more and more evident that we need a well researched paper on the history of freedom of religion. This conference has been a great asset in the British evangelical scene as it has maintained a high standard of research. In 1975 Alan Kreider presented a paper on the Anabaptists which in itself was a reminder that if we want to know who the Anabaptists were and what they believed then we must be prepared to read their own works and assess their position correctly. That cannot be done if we confine our reading to those who were utterly hostile to the radical reformers.

A paper on Freedom of Religion could perhaps begin with Marsiglio of Padua

(1275-1342), and then trace out the theme through the centuries right up to the present. The paper by Gordon Murray on Oliver Cromwell revealed Cromwell was far ahead of his times in his understanding and promotion of religious freedom.

In his description of the early Separatists, Hywel Roberts outlined the life of Robert Browne (1553-1633). The errors of separatism can be more atrocious than the perils of staying in a mixed denomination as Browne discovered to his chagrin since he was excommunicated by his own separatist church and had no forum to which to appeal. Browne wrote a famous treatise advocating immediate secession from the Church of England with the title, *Treatise of Reformation Without Tarrying for Anie*. Browne returned however to the Anglican fold, and spent his remaining 43 years ministering within that communion.

Robert Oliver's presentation of the Arminian controversy of 18th century Methodism was most helpful in showing the patience and dignity of George Whitefield. Toplady was quite intemperate as a controversialist and his bad example should be avoided at all costs. The Wesley brothers never did understand Calvinism. Predestination was taken out of its biblical context. In their minds it made God an ogre. They proceeded to caricature Calvinism and then attack the image they had set up. This was a source of extreme embarrassment to George Whitefield. His response was one outstanding for its forebearance, patience and love.

The Present Controversy about Prophecy

We need to emulate Whitefield in the current controversy about prophecy. In this issue of *R.T.* I am compelled to differ with Roy Clements of Cambridge.

That is not something I relish. I listen with profit to his sermons on cassette. I am sure that he and other ministers for whom we have a high esteem are of such stature that if prophecies were attempted in their churches they would be scrupulously examined and any mischievous elements firmly repudiated. Roy Clements concedes that there are dangers and in the text where I use the word 'rapturous' to describe the reactions to prophetic claims, that word is not mine, I have quoted accurately what he has himself said in the UCCF booklet, and what he has said about the dangers is not exaggerated. (With regard to UCCF publications one ill-advised booklet should in no way blind us to all the good of the other UCCF materials!).

The dangers which attend opening up meetings to those who think they have the gift of prophecy are very real and not imagined. It is possible to make up horror stories but we do not make them up. Evil has resulted in evangelical churches where the claim to prophecy has been given license. To illustrate this I cite an example which was close by and which I know well. At the end of a worship service a so called prophet rose and made a prophecy which was in substance a criticism of the pastor for not being charismatic enough. Sides were taken and the church split into three separate factions or groups. Irreparable damage was done to the cause of Christ in that town. Such was the fervour for this gift in the area that our elders discussed what they would do if a visitor 'prophesied' in one of the services. The conclusion was that immediate repudiation would be made by way of assertion by an elder in the gathering that all our guidance must come from the appointed means of grace and not from intruders.

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Prophecy — Does it continue today?

Biblical Theology is another way of saying ‘the history of the manner in which God Triune has revealed himself to mankind in the Bible’. It is a subject of extreme relevance today. We should note well that the revelation has come in different ways and at different times (Heb 11:1). We have no warrant to go in an arbitrary way to any period of biblical history and try to reproduce what was done by God’s prophets at that time. There were special times of great supernatural power: Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and Christ and his apostles. We need to evaluate the reasons for that. Likewise with regard to prophecy there were special times which were characterized by unique revelations to unique men: Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. There were also times of silence, and one in particular should be noted, namely between Malachi and John the Baptist.

In dealing with this vital issue of prophecy we will work from the Old Testament through to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament using the following headings.

- 1. The Importance and Relevance of this Subject**
- 2. The Origin of Prophecy**
- 3. The Nature of Prophecy**
- 4. What Prophecy Says About Itself**
- 5. The New Testament Prophets**
- 6. Prophets in the Church at Corinth**
- 7. The Consummation of Prophecy**
- 8. The Perfect Nature of Scripture and the Power of Preaching**
- 9. Application — No Room for Compromise**

1. The Importance and Relevance of this Subject

We can claim that we have in the Bible something which is perfect, ‘As for God, his way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is flawless’ (Ps 18:30). Hence the Scriptures are more precious than gold, than much pure gold (Ps 19:10). The words preserved in Scripture are unique (Ps 147:19, 20). It is right to conclude that Scripture is infallible and inerrant since, ‘All Scripture is God-breathed’ (2 Tim 3:16).

Throughout this dispensation the Holy Spirit has employed the Scriptures to bring people to regeneration (Jam 1:18). Throughout these last times God the Holy Spirit has used the Scriptures to build up and nurture the Church. The primary means of accomplishing this task is through preaching, which can be defined as the power of God through the application of the Scriptures to the souls of men. Nothing is envisaged that is more powerful than the Scriptures employed in this way. Every mighty spiritual awakening or revival has been the

outcome of the power of preaching and there is nothing to prevent the conversion of all nations under the sun to Jesus Christ by this means, as preachers are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today however there are those who do envisage something different. Up to twenty years ago an evangelical would unhesitatingly answer the question, 'How does God speak today?' with the response, 'In the Bible alone!' Today evangelical charismatics answer differently. They say, 'Through the Bible, yes, but also through the contemporary gift of prophecy!'

In many assemblies today a new outlook has been established in which the Word of God preached has a low profile, but when someone stands up with the words 'Thus saith the Lord!' then the response is rapturous. There is, they believe, something present which is far more exciting and significant than someone merely interpreting and applying the Bible by way of expository ministry.

So potent is this matter of prophecy that whole religions have been built upon it. The largest of these is that of Islam. Also Mormonism is structured on the idea of God having spoken through the 'prophet' Joseph Smith.

John Owen points to the exceedingly great virtue and excellence of the work of the Spirit in giving the truth of God to the Church, and then declares: 'According to the worth of things, so are they liable to abuse; and the more excellent anything is, the more vile and pernicious is an undue pretence. Because of the extraordinary worth and excellence of the truth how abominable and unspeakably dangerous are those who pretend to present their ideas as that truth, when in fact they are counterfeit.' Continues Owen: 'In the whole world there is nothing so vile as that which *pretendeth to be God*, and is not; nor is any other thing capable of so pernicious an abuse.'¹

The need to have biblical exposition on this subject can be seen by the increase of the popular idea that the modern church requires the exercise of the gift of prophecy for its full edification. This concept is promoted in the literature produced by the U.C.C.F. (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship). In advocating modern prophecy Roy Clements argues, 'Nothing, it seems to me will break down the vicious pyramidal hierarchy and male chauvinism that still afflicts so many churches more quickly than teaching people that the Holy Spirit can lead them to make useful contributions to the spoken ministry in the Church.'² (See editorial comment.)

2. The Origin of Prophecy

If we are to understand the prophet as the man who speaks on behalf of God to the assembled people, then we can affirm with confidence that prophecy began with Moses. How could God communicate his mind and will to over a million people? Previously he had spoken directly to the heads of his covenant family, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But how could he speak to six hundred thousand heads of families? Indeed Jahweh did speak to all his people from his throne on Mount Sinai but they could not bear it. 'Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire any more, or we will die' (Deut 18:16).

The LORD responded to their request and said to Moses: ‘What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account’ (Deut 18:17-19).

Observe that the climactic goal of the prophetic office is pointed to in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.³ If it was appropriate that Moses should speak on behalf of God to the people, how much more appropriate is it now for us to have as our personal prophet the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who nurtures us in the mind and will of God?

As kingship is typologically set before us in the persons of David and Solomon, and as the priesthood is typified in Melchizedek and then in Aaron the High Priest, so the prophethood of Christ is typified in the person of Moses. It is a prophet (singular) like Moses who will be raised up from the brotherhood.

There is finality in the words of Hebrews 1:2, God spoke ‘through the prophets at many times and in various ways but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.’ *He has spoken* by his Son who is the final and supreme prophet. The emphasis is that it is essential to listen to him! Deuteronomy 18 assures us that everything we need to know will be provided by this supreme prophet who will be like Moses. Christ represents the consummation of prophecy and to this we will return presently.

3. The Nature of Prophecy

If we think of the mountain of Sinai on fire with the earthquake and the smoke, depicting the holiness, majesty, glory, power and awesomeness of God, we can well grasp that the Israelites received the words spoken as the pure truth. This was in its very essence revelation coming direct from our Creator. They did not sit in judgement on the revelation as the liberals sit in judgement on Scripture, nor were they required to evaluate its merits and demerits. There was no fault in God’s word.

Likewise when God spoke to Moses personally as the mediator who had then to speak to the people, Moses bore the pure word of God and was responsible for conveying it in its purity. This idea of the literal and pure word of God coming directly from him is seen in several passages of Scripture. For instance in Exodus 4:15, 16 the LORD said that Aaron would speak to the people for Moses, ‘and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if he were God to him’. The concept of complete accuracy and purity is conveyed, ‘as if he were your mouth!’ Note also, ‘as if you were God to him.’

Further on in Exodus 7:1, 2, we see that the LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have made you God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet.’ In the NIV there is the insertion of the word ‘like’. In actual fact that *is* an insertion, for the language is literal, ‘I have made you God to Pharaoh!’ We should observe at

this point that all that was received came as exact revelation from God and had nothing whatever to do with the subjective feelings of Moses and Aaron.

Concerning the nature of prophecy perhaps there is no clearer statement than that which we find in 2 Peter 1:20, 21,

'Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.'

There was no question of the prophet having to analyse and evaluate which parts of the revelation he would repeat and which he might discard as inferior. In other words prophecy is always of one kind and essence. It is the pure word of God.

When we turn to Numbers 12:6 and 7 we discover a literalism in the Hebrew language which is designed to convey the idea that in its form, transmission and reception the revelation is direct. God is in complete control. In verse 6 the sentence should read literally, 'If your prophet is the LORD.' What form of prophecy was to continue after the demise of Moses? In Numbers 12 we see that God would give revelations of himself through visions and he also would speak to his prophets in dreams. In so doing he would ensure that in each case the prophet would be as though he were the LORD, that is the mouth of the LORD.

In other words in the coming age prophecy would continue and it would be as though the prophet saw the vision and as though he literally heard the exact words of Jahweh. Thus we observe that Isaiah *saw* the vision (1:1; 2:1; 6:1). Likewise the prophets Habakkuk, Micah and Amos report their prophecies as seen experiences, that which they *saw*. Habakkuk: 'I will look to see what he will say to me' (Hab 2:1).

The nature of prophecy as the pure word of God without any admixture of error is illustrated by the fact that there were prophetesses in the New Testament. We read of Philip 'who had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy' (Acts 21:9). Women are forbidden the office of preaching since that contradicts the headship of man in creation. 'I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man' (1 Cor 14:34; 1 Tim 2:11). The nature of prophecy is such that whether in a predictive or fortelling way there is no exercise by the prophetess of her mind or judgement over her hearers. She is not telling her hearers what to do by an exercise of her authority. The prophetic word she utters is the very word of God and could not be regarded as such if it was a mixture.

The nature of prophecy as the infallible and inerrant word of God explains the severity of judgement on those who try to imitate it (Deut 18:20; Zech 13:3). Those in Jeremiah's day who prophesied their own false visions, divinations, idolatries and delusions of their own minds were to 'perish by sword and famine' (Jer 14:15). Ezekiel declared that the false prophets of Jerusalem as well as those who trusted in them would be put to shame when their message of peace was exposed as a shameful fabrication of lies and deception (Ez chs 13,

14). The LORD destroyed both false prophet and those who consulted him' (Ez 14:9).

Those who seek to establish an inferior kind of prophecy, a mixture of truth and lies, are compelled to find an example in the Bible. They all seem to resort to Agabus (Acts 21:10, 11). The only worthy response is to deal with the Agabus prophecy thoroughly. This Victor Budgen does. The subject is most interesting and Agabus is vindicated completely as a true prophet.

4. What Prophecy Says About Itself

We have been observing that whether revelation came by theophany, that is face to face, as was the case with Moses (Num 12:8), or through visions resulting in the clear articulation of words; or dreams, resulting in the perfect speech of Jahweh, the nature of prophecy is always the revelation of God's truth. We now consider whether there was to be a terminus to this process of revelation.

Daniel 9:24-27 declares that a specific period is described when, 'The vision and the prophecy would be sealed up'. This would be the time when iniquity will have been atoned for and everlasting righteousness brought in. It would also be a time when desolation would come to the city of Jerusalem. It is vital that we should note that the term for prophet or prophecy is the same which is used for all the prophets who uttered words taught by the Holy Spirit.⁴ The prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 tells us clearly that the prophetic vision and the prophets were to be sealed up by the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. This does not mean however that any one apostle would have to cease with his prophetic visions before AD 70. The apostle John did continue prophesying for some time after the destruction of the holy city. What is important is the observation that the purpose of prophecy will have been fulfilled in all the accomplishments of the Messiah. Once his testimony had been fully ratified, explained and confirmed by the apostolic witnesses, then there would be no further use or place for prophecy.

Further evidence of the fact that prophecy was to cease when its purpose had been fulfilled is found in Zechariah 13:2-6. The context is messianic and the message is that the time would come when any form of prophecy will be regarded as utterly repugnant. Even parents would execute their own children if they dared to proclaim a vision or purport to have any additional prophecies.⁵

We are now in the position to observe that Joel declared that the prophecies of the messianic time will be revelational in the same way as they were with the Old Testament prophets. He uses precisely the same terminology as Moses with regard to dreams and visions. The Holy Spirit will be poured out in a universal fashion, no longer on Jews only but also on Gentiles, so that they might be incorporated into the body. Joel prophesied a great cataclysm by which we understand the end of Judaism and its sacrificial system. The New Covenant would be ushered in. Peter claims the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel for the time of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). The great outpouring of the Holy Spirit to give revelatory gifts leads us to our next consideration.

5. The New Testament Prophets

The idea popularized today is that only the apostles were needed to establish the New Covenant, and that the prophets were there in a secondary role rather like preachers.⁶

However Paul in the letter to the Ephesians makes it clear that the gospel rests upon the foundation of both apostles and prophets together (Eph 2:20). The apostle joins these apostles and prophets to the chief corner-stone which is Christ Jesus, and he continues his exposition with the following paragraph which we should examine closely:

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph 3:2-6).

The word ‘mystery’ in the New Testament never means something which is abstruse, vague, indefinite or nebulous. Rather it means something which was concealed, but has now only been revealed in these last days of the Messiah. The truth was perfectly clear but it was a mystery inasmuch as it had not pleased God to reveal it yet. Paul is now saying that that which was kept a mystery or secret was now fully known. The term ‘mystery’ is used in the New Testament about 28 times and in at least 24 of these the meaning points to the revealing of what was before concealed.

The Old Testament prophets did reveal a great deal about the Messiah and they also pointed to the coming of the Holy Spirit which is especially discerned in Ezekiel and Joel. What they did not reveal was that the old theocracy would be completely abolished and in its place would arise a new organism in which the Gentiles and Jews would be placed on a footing of perfect equality.⁷

That which had not been known now was revealed and unveiled by the Holy Spirit. All that pertained to the establishment of the universal body of Christ was not readily grasped by the Jews in particular, and even the apostle Peter struggled to understand the implications of the universal Church. We see that Peter required a revelation by way of a vision which was repeated three times (Acts 10).

We can proceed directly to the conclusion that the ministry of prophecy was very important during the time of inauguration and establishment of the Christian Church. The prophets were active in establishing the union of Jewish and Gentile believers, and in clarifying the terms and administration of the New Covenant.

6. Prophets in the Church at Corinth

Many today have been misled into thinking that the extraordinary gifts of prophecies and tongue-speaking in the Corinthian church had to do with the subjective feelings of those members who exercised these gifts. There is nothing in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 to suggest that members were exercising gifts which had to be evaluated for their content; what was true and accurate, and what was false and misleading.

In adding three words to verse 29, namely, the words ‘what is said’, the NIV is unhelpful, since the Greek text simply declares that those present had to discriminate between the prophets as to the order in which they contributed their revelatory messages. The Greek word *diakrinō* is used in other places such as Acts 15:9 and 1 Cor 6:5. It always means to judge between people. The text is not suggesting that those who spoke in the name of the Lord were presenting a mixture of truth and lies and that those who were the hearers had to sift out the wheat from the chaff.

The contributors who spoke in tongues were involved in revelation just as were the prophets who likewise were involved in a revelatory exercise as is asserted in verse 30. 1 Corinthians 14:21 explicitly declares the fulfilment of Isaiah 28:11-13 and Deuteronomy 28:49.

The tongue-speakers were fulfilling these Old Testament predictions that there would be foreign languages spoken of as a covenantal sign, that an epoch had come to an end, and that the new epoch was beginning in which the gospel would go out in all the languages of the earth. The tongues at Corinth were foreign languages and the mysteries of 1 Corinthians 14:2 were revelations in which an interpreter was necessary if the congregation was to be edified.

Not a mixture of truth and lies, still less gibberish, but spoken revelations were uttered by the Corinthian prophets.

7. The Consummation of Prophecy

Prophecy is the distinctive method by which God has revealed himself to his people from the time of Moses right up to the apostolic era.⁸ In the course of this revelation more prophets were involved than the ones named in the Bible, but what is necessary for us has been compiled and preserved in Scripture through the all-wise inspiration and oversight of the Holy Spirit.

As we study prophecy as a whole we see that the Old Testament Scriptures all move toward a goal or climax in which the Mediator is revealed, the Son of God. He is called, ‘A light for the Gentiles, — to bring salvation to the ends of the earth’ (Is 49:6), and the Shepherd who will tend all his sheep (Ez 34:23), so that it will no longer be necessary for anyone to go on a journey to consult a prophet because in the new covenant, ‘they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD’ (Jer 31:34).

We can say that the ultimate goal and purpose of God's establishment of the new covenant in which every believer is ministered to personally by God Triune, the Father by adoption, the Son by union, and the Holy Spirit by indwelling, cannot be realized so long as there is need for a prophetic mediator to whom the people must go, as they had to do in the time of Moses. The instrument by which God in covenant union with his people now teaches and edifies them is *The Word*. Therefore anything and everything which contributes toward a well-educated, powerful, Holy Spirit-filled expository, practical and evangelistic ministry represents progress, and everything which distracts from that and concentrates attention upon finding a new prophet with a new message is distracting and retrogressive. Seeking a new prophet is not only dangerous, as recent misguided efforts have shown,⁹ but it is a denial of God's purpose which is to consummate all prophecy in the person of the prophetic mediator. Christ is now our prophet. It was this glorious fact which Peter proclaimed when he asserted the fulfilment of the Mosaic prophecy, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people' (Acts 3:22).

What Moses could not do for his people Christ can do. The climactic goal of prophetic history has now been realized in the person of this Prophet, the only mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5). We are spiritually united to him. All we have to do is listen to everything he tells us. All he has to tell us without exception is found in his Word. Christ is in himself the embodiment of all God's revelation. To help us grasp that, he himself is called THE WORD, *ho logos* (Jn 1:1; Rev 19:13), God's full and complete revelation of himself to mankind. Christ is fully expounded to us in the Scriptures, which by his constant mediatorship are alive and relevant to us every day and every moment that we live.

Prophecy which is the verbatim Word of God moves in its development toward the consummation which Moses predicted from the beginning. The Supreme Prophet would by the very nature of his accomplishments terminate the need for any further prophecy. He ended and sealed up the vision and the prophecy as Daniel predicted he would (Dan 9:24). The ministry of all God's prophets from the beginning point to and expound the Prophet *par excellence*. He is greater than Moses because as the God-man he unites himself to us. We now by him have the gift of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. Day by day the Holy Spirit teaches us and nurtures us in the Word. For this reason we now have no further need of a prophetic mediator who has to go up and down the mountain of God to fetch the message of God for us. 'The word is near you. It is in your heart' (Rom 10:8).

The prophets of the New Testament were there to confirm and establish Christ's supreme kingship, priesthood and prophethood. They have fulfilled their work. We need no further confirmation. The Word is complete and in the

hands of the Holy Spirit is alive and powerful and can convert the whole world (Heb 4:12).

8. The Perfect Nature of Scripture and the Power of Preaching

Preaching the Word now fulfils the role of declaring God's mind and will. It is through preaching that the world is warned that 'anyone who does not listen to Christ our prophet will be completely lost' (Acts 3:23).

Perceptively does Geoff Thomas suggest that the universal problem for the Church of Christ today is lack of power in the pulpit. He says, 'There is not a denomination or fellowship of pastors that does not designate powerlessness in the pulpit as its greatest weakness'. He goes on to point out that some Pentecostalists have resorted to *glossalalia* 'but the same powerlessness is evident in Pentecostal pulpits as non-Pentecostal'.¹⁰

Power on earth is in the preaching of the gospel which 'is the power of God to salvation' (Rom 1:16). What revelatory gifts did at the time of the apostles this perfect gift of God's Word has done ever since and will do until the parousia when we will all see the Son of Man at the right hand of power coming in his glory.¹¹

When Peter preached there was mighty power. Can we preach like that? There is no reason why not. George Whitefield did and so have countless others. Preaching must be inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit. Why is there a lack of power? There are many reasons. Powerlessness is due largely to an unconverted ministry. Those who busy themselves denying the Scriptures are false prophets and hardly likely to know the power of God. There are a variety of reasons why evangelical ministers lack power in preaching. One has to be called to the office. Nothing is more miserable than not having the gifts or the calling. However the most talented preacher will lack power if he fails either in the ministry of intercession or in maintaining the hard work of study. With all their extraordinary gifts the apostles were obliged to succeed in prayer and intellectual exercise (Acts 6:4). The most gifted preacher will lack power if he is not supported by the Lord's people. Their laziness is a sure recipe for powerlessness in the pulpit. There are other causes, but I come now to our final consideration.

9. Application – No Room for Compromise

Nothing is impossible with God (Lk 1:37). The creation of the universe proves the omnipotence of God, and the incarnation illustrates the almighty of Deity. Yet there is one thing that God cannot do. It is impossible for him to lie (Heb 6:18). It is impossible for God to speak a mixture of truth and lies. This leads us to one of the most critical and crucial issues which faces us today: the claim that God continues to speak by way of prophecy, not after the order of Scripture prophecy which is perfect, but after a secondary order which consists of a mixture of truth and error.

During the last twenty years there has been an increase of popular ideas about the continuation of prophecy. A popular claim is that there are no proof texts in the Bible to show that prophecy has ceased. That claim is false as I have shown, but in any case the subject of prophecy is not built on single statements of Scripture alone, no more than the momentous doctrine of the Trinity is built on single statements of Scripture. It is most important that a subject of this importance, basic to everything we believe, should be built up on the foundations laid in the Bible itself.

There is room for accommodation and compromise in several areas of our faith and practice. With regard to eschatology, the ordinances, and church government we have our differences. But in the nature of the Person of Christ we can never compromise. It is, Two complete natures in One Person. There is no room for negotiation. Likewise on the subject of prophecy we cannot compromise. The nature of the subject constitutes the reason for this. Balak made elaborate plans to get Balaam to curse God's people but to no avail. Immediately true prophecy took over, all Balak's ideas were seen to be futile. Likewise when Jehoshophat compromised with King Ahab and the two of them together consulted the false prophets they were pleased to find the hirelings mouthing just what they wished to hear. Sensing they were only deceiving themselves Jehoshophat insisted on calling Micaiah. He exposed all the false prophets as liars. He also predicted the outcome, the death of Ahab. Although persecuted for it, Micaiah was vindicated in due course (2 ch. 18).

A church or Christian Union can make elaborate plans to have a speaker come on the understanding that those present believe in the continuation of prophecy. The speaker may avoid reference to the subject, but if in the course of a series of expositions it falls to him to preach on 2 Peter 1:20, 21 (which can hardly be done without an application), then an explosion is inevitable. This has actually occurred and the result was that the speaker trod all over the elaborate plans to avoid offence and be very diplomatic. There can be no compromise. It was not possible with Micaiah and it is not possible today. God speaks with one voice not two. He speaks only truth. He has spoken once and for all. He has nothing to add. He means what he says and requires that we do no other than obey his Word.

References

- ¹ John Owen. *Works* Vol. 3, p. 29.
- ² Roy Clements, *Word and Spirit*, UCCF booklet.
- ³ Dr. O. Palmer Robertson, *Prophecy Today*, Cassette (not available from UK) — Annual Evangelical and Reformed Conference, Natal, South Africa, 1987. I follow the general line of thought taken by Dr. Robertson from this point up to point 7.
- ⁴ Douglas Judisch. *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*, Baker. p. 55ff. It is important to note that *hazon* and *habi* are collective nouns, referring to prophetic visions and prophets in general.
- ⁵ *ibid.* p. 65.
- ⁶ *ibid. Word and Spirit*, p. 22ff.
- ⁷ William Hendrikson, *Ephesians*. Banner of Truth. p. 154.
- ⁸ By the ministry of Moses we have Genesis which includes the revelation of God to the patriarchs.
- ⁹ Victor Budgen, *The Charismatics and the Word of God*, E.P. This book documents the tragic failure of modern efforts to restore prophecy, pp. 31-44.
- ¹⁰ Geoff Thomas, 'Powerful Preaching' in *Preaching*, edited by Samuel T. Logan, Pres. and E.P. and Ref. p. 369ff.
- ¹¹ *ibid.* p. 370.

Prophecy in the New Testament

The Need for a Clear Test Case

by Victor Budgen

It has become widely held by those who follow the views of Wayne Grudem in *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* that the Bible itself furnishes evidence for three types of prophets. Firstly, there are the 'primary' prophets who claim to speak infallibly in God's name and who, being subject to the stringent test of Deuteronomy 18:19-22, do emerge as genuine. Secondly, there are false prophets who, claiming to bring an infallible message from God, err, undermine the word of God and lead people astray. But thirdly, there is also a 'secondary' type of prophet who does not fit into either of these groups. This prophet does not claim 'word' authority for his message. Therefore it can be legitimately accepted as a 'mixture' and the wheat sifted from the chaff with no undermining of the prophet's credibility.

Elsewhere I have sought to show that within the pages of Scripture we do in fact find only two sorts of prophets, and I have recently sought to give particular attention to the thesis of Wayne Grudem that we can in fact discover in the Old Testament evidence for this 'secondary' type of prophet.¹ In my view, the evidence simply evaporates under careful scrutiny. Within the whole of his book he provides not one actual example of prophetic speech in the Old Testament which can be treated as 'secondary'. He simply infers that some instances (where no content of prophecy is given) belong to this category. It is an unwarranted inference as the contexts of these passages show. For instance, he provides Numbers 11:24-28 as a case of 'secondary'

prophecy whereas verse 17 would lead us to believe that the same Holy Spirit inspired Eldad, Medad and others, as inspired Moses! Another example which he gives is 1 Samuel 19:24. Yet on this verse Herbert Carson comments in his recent book, 'The words he spoke were clearly from the Lord'.²

What of the New Testament evidence? In a review of Wayne Grudem's book Bob Sheehan rightly drew attention to the pivotal nature of the second prophecy of Agabus in this connection.³ While a detailed discussion of this prophecy may seem to some like taking a sledge-hammer to crack a monkey nut, or perhaps suggest time-wasting when so many other things demand attention (I have sometimes wondered this myself!), yet since so many modern writers have alluded to it, and since it is often brought as the clearest New Testament example of this 'secondary', mixed type of prophecy, it would seem profitable to look in some detail at it, and then afterwards ask some further questions about the issue of scriptural interpretation and the kind of consequences that follow from the two divergent views held by Evangelicals. This may lead us to revise our view of whether this is in fact a small matter.

Acts 21:10-14 does present us with a recognized prophetic figure, tells us the source of his prophecy, gives us details of the actual content and describes both how it was received and whether it was in fact fulfilled. One of the largest of the recent works on the subject of prophecy is *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* by David

E. Aune. ('D. E. Aune whose work surpasses anything so far written on the subject,' was the enthusiastic verdict of Max Turner of the London Bible College.)⁴ In actual fact the book is full of sheer modernism. It refers to 'Deutero-Isaiah', sees Daniel as a compilation of the 'wise', constantly weighs up which sayings of Christ are authentic and rejects the Pauline authorship of Ephesians and the Pastorals.⁵ Therefore it is not surprising that the author never really makes clear in his discussion of Acts 21 whether he even believes the incident to be historical or not! In the end he gingerly drops down from his fence and does say this: 'Yet, in the light of Paul's "disobedience" to the oracle, which is not regarded by Luke as a violation of the will of God (Acts 21:14), this may be an instance in which prophetic speech is "evaluated".'⁶

In his book on *New Testament Prophecy*, David Hill, a Reader in Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield, writes: 'In the case of Agabus, one may be forgiven for wondering if he was not actually trying to cast himself in the role of an Old Testament prophet, but not quite succeeding: for the fact that his word did not strictly come true would have made his prophecy "false" by Old Testament standards.'⁷ There is much more in this vein.

Readers of the *Evangelical Times* will have found Wayne Grudem commenting on Paul's response to the prophetic warning in Acts 21:4 as follows: 'He disobeyed it! He would never have done this, if this prophecy had contained God's very words.' He then refers to the prophecy of Agabus as 'a prediction that is nearly correct but not quite. The *Romans* bound Paul (verse 33) and the Jews, rather than delivering him voluntarily, tried to kill him and he had to be rescued by force (verse 32). The prediction was not far off, but it was an inaccuracy in detail that would have

called into question the validity of any Old Testament prophecy.'⁸

And Roy Clements, writing in the Scripture Union Daily Bible Reading Notes for January 1985, asks with regard to Acts 21:4, 'Do you think their anticipation of trouble was entirely supernatural?' He then continues, 'Agabus was a well accredited prophet of many years' standing. How would you explain the minor differences between the prediction he gives and the fulfilment (27-36)?' and, 'Why do you think Paul was so obstinate in his determination to go to Jerusalem? If a Moses or Jeremiah had told him not to go, would he have felt able to reject their advice?' A big question mark is thus put over the inspiration and the activity of the various prophets. Recently Roy Clements has amplified these comments in a booklet where he writes that 'the details of Paul's arrest, which Agabus the prophet predicts, are wrong in a number of significant respects as a careful reading of later verses shows'.⁹

Roy Clements acknowledges his indebtedness to Wayne Grudem who indeed writes the foreword to his booklet. His views are little more than a summary of the American as are those of Herbert Carson who also constantly acknowledges indebtedness. Here he is commenting on the word of prophecy at Timothy's ordination of which no details are given in Scripture. 'Once again one is seeing the fact of two levels of prophecy — the infallible biblical oracle and the occasional personal or local message. The former is to be received both "in word and words", the latter "in word only", to use Grudem's useful distinction.'¹⁰ And again, with regard to the second prophecy of Agabus, he writes, 'There is the infallible and universally binding prophecy of Scripture and there is the prophecy that truly reveals something from the Lord but does not have the

infallibility of Scripture.¹¹ Again Agabus is seen as being mistaken in detail.

It would seem that the book by Wayne Grudem and the booklet by Roy Clements have been strongly recommended at a recently formed conference entitled 'Reformed and Renewed'. Certainly in a session on

prophecy at the conference in 1987 Bernard Thompson began by reading the second Agabus prophecy. Then he continued by saying that there were 'two clear kinds of prophecy', that in the Old Testament which is infallible and that in the New Testament which is 'different'.¹² Without exaggeration one can say that there was no biblical exposition at all in the talk.

Agabus — A Truly Inspired Prophet

It is my considered judgement that it is wrong to regard Agabus as a prophet of error. Such a view has dangerous and far-reaching consequences. I wish to list nine arguments as to why the Second Agabus prophecy must be considered God-given and infallible as it is presented to us in Scripture. Not every point is of the same weight but together they form what I would consider an overwhelming case for establishing the fact that New Testament prophecy was just as inspired, infallible and authoritative as Old Testament prophecy.

1 Agabus had a fine reputation. His track record was excellent. Roy Clements is in fact correct in describing him as 'a well-accredited prophet of many years standing'. In Acts 11:27f he is seen as travelling from Jerusalem to Antioch with other prophets. On arrival Agabus is the sole spokesman in the prediction of the severe and great famine about to 'spread over the entire Roman world' (v. 28). Luke simply tells us, 'This happened during the reign of Claudius.' There is evidence also in other sources of this momentous event. Because of this prediction, relief was not a belated last-ditch measure but was immediately got under way. Think what a colossal waste of time, energy and resources there would have been if

Agabus had been wrong. Moreover, consider how the character of the God of truth would have been dishonoured in the Christian community and beyond it. But he was not wrong.

2 Agabus was a man who was moved periodically by overwhelming conviction at which point the question of distance or the discomfort of travel were of no consequence. When he travelled from Jerusalem to Antioch he covered about two hundred miles and when he uttered the second prophecy his journey from Judea to Ptolemais was approximately eighty miles as the crow flies. Agabus was not a crow. In fact he was a man with a burden. In his very journeying we have little difficulty in envisaging him like one of those gaunt, God-impelled figures of the past, determined to find their man and complete their mission. On the second occasion one commentator has even seen his seemingly abrupt entry and confrontation of Paul as an echo of the dramatic encounters of Old Testament prophets. Agabus was certainly no lazy lay-about with his little 'word from the Lord'! He was a travelling man impelled by a sense of mission.

3 His message was in harmony with the other prophetic utterances spoken by many. In affirming this I am agreeing

with Wayne Grudem that the likely interpretation of verse 4 of Acts 21, is that these were also prophetic words, and I am following many commentators who similarly interpret Paul's word in 20:23 where he asserts, 'I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.' Prophecy was evidently not a hit-or-miss affair with some saying one thing and some saying another. It is true that the prophets of Tyre would seem to have gone a step further in urging Paul not to go to Jerusalem as did the hearers of the prophecy of Agabus (but not Agabus himself). This is an important point which must be dealt with but it does not affect the fact that all the prophets with one voice predicted hardship and suffering. The unanimity was striking. The Holy Spirit does not contradict himself.

4 We also note the clear display of Old Testament symbolism: 'Coming over to us, Agabus took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it, and said . . .' (21:11). He affirms his identification with Old Testament figures. Commentator after commentator acknowledges this. Even Fairbairn, who argues that not all the symbolic acts (e.g. Isaiah walking naked as recorded in Isaiah 20) were carried out literally, does see that Scripture demands that we affirm that some were. He places the action of Agabus alongside such episodes as 1 Kings 22 and Jeremiah 28 where the symbolism was embodied in definite action.¹³ Moreover, as J. A. Motyer points out, this kind of symbolism was more than an attractive visual aid. It implied that the message would definitely be accomplished. The prophet's symbolic action meant God's sure action. Underlining the significance of this the same writer states, 'Prophecy and the prophets form the greatest line of continuity between the Old and New Testament.'¹⁴

5 Our next point reinforces this argument. Agabus begins his prophecy with the formula, 'the Holy Spirit says'. On this David Hill comments: 'Among the most striking of the phrases characteristic of prophetic speech is the messenger-formula (*Botenformel*), "*tade legei*" ("the words of" or in the NEB "these are the words of..."). Each of the seven letters in Revelation chs. 2–3 begins with these words – found nowhere else in the New Testament except in the Acts 21:11, on the lips of Agabus – which often form the Septuagintal rendering of the Hebrew for "Thus says the Lord", and which, functionally, form an exact equivalent to the more frequently used Greek rendering of the Hebrew words, viz. *houfōs legie Kyrios*. This says P. S. Minear is "John's use of an Old Testament formula. The Old Testament prophets had established this formula as the appropriate introduction for God's address to the people. . . ."¹⁵ Indeed in his larger work on prophecy Wayne Grudem also acknowledges that the phrase used here is very similar to the 'common LXX equivalent' for 'the divine messenger formula used by O.T. prophets'.¹⁶ Of course if we believe that the Holy Spirit is God, then it is obviously God speaking. This can be recognized without the more complex linguistic argument which is, however, interesting.

6 The Spirit who inspired this message is the 'Spirit of truth' (John 14:17). Scripture shows how much he hates lying, and particularly lying in a Christian context (Acts 5:3, 4). Where people prophesy in his name and do so truly, it is he who inspires the message and who protects the prophecy from start to finish from error. 'For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:21). This is the consistent biblical emphasis. Agabus was prompted and

carried along by the Holy Spirit in the same way as other prophets.

7 As in the case of the earlier prophecy of Agabus this is also prediction. It is the 'delayed miracle' so common in Old Testament prophets. Again, J. A. Motyer comments: 'Almost every prophet first appears as a foreteller....'¹⁷ It would of course be quite wrong to limit prophecy to foretelling. Bishop Butler was clearly wrong when he said that 'Prophecy is nothing but the history of events before they come to pass.'¹⁸ None of us wish to be restricted to such a crudely narrow definition of prophecy, which is indeed wide-ranging and varied both in content and format. Yet the predictive note must not be played down. It is not merely forthtelling. It is often also fore-telling.

8 The sequel underlines the power of the prophetic word. When Paul deter-

mined to go to Jerusalem notwithstanding, there were deliberate attempts to win round the local Jews, and to head off any likely conflict (vv. 20-26). The Christian believers are quite confident that their human strategy will work. 'There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law' (vv. 23, 24). Of course the sequel shows that all this was of no avail whatever in preventing the opposition of the Jews to Paul. A tumultuous riot against the apostle broke out within a week of his acquiescing in this stratagem. But the interesting fact is that shrewd local people thought that suffering could be avoided. A series of prophetic words could not so easily be circumvented.

Was the Prophecy Fulfilled?

9 More space must be given to our last point for there remains the simple fact that it is true that the Jews did not in person bind Paul. They sought to kill him and the Romans rescued him and bound him. So what do we make of the word of Agabus who proclaimed, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and *will hand him over to the Gentiles*' (21:11)? Simply what Paul himself made of them. The last chapter of Acts records his arrival in Rome where summoning the leaders of the Jews he told them why he had come. This is how he puts it. 'My brothers, although I have done nothing wrong against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem *and handed over to the Romans*' (Acts 28:17). He uses exactly the same phrase as Agabus. Now one can be forgiven for assuming that he was

not inferring that it was the inhabitants of Malta or even Syria who handed him over. There is only one group who can fill this role. It was undoubtedly the Jews of Jerusalem.

Many have drawn an illustration from the apostolic preaching of the passion narrative where, despite the obvious fact that the Romans actually crucified Christ, Peter can address the listening Jews and say, 'You killed the author of life' (Acts 3:15). Ultimately they were responsible. I believe that there is a similar element in this situation. And yet I feel that we should in fact dig deeper and see that the prophecy has remarkable fulfilment throughout a whole sequence of events from the riot in Jerusalem, right to the close of the book of Acts.

Obviously the Jews did seek to kill Paul

during this riot. There were also two later attempts on his life (Acts 23:12, 25:3). When one considers the violent fury of the crowd in the initial attempt, and all the fanaticism and cunning of the later plotting, it is amazing that Paul was not in fact murdered. If he had been, the prophecy would have failed. The very divine protection of his life through the intervention of the Romans in the nick of time at Jerusalem, the role of Paul's nephew and the non-cooperation of Festus with the Jews at a crucial point were all part of the Holy Spirit's implementation of the original prophecy.

Yet what we do see repeatedly throughout these chapters is the Jews from Jerusalem ensuring that Paul remained bound and in the hands of the Romans even when it is quite apparent that the Romans themselves would have been willing to release him. The very fact of his being bound is often stressed. Immediately after the riot he is allowed to address the crowd, and mainly because of the vehement rejection by the Jerusalem Jews of his message, we learn that the Romans 'stretched him out to flog him' until Paul asserts his Roman citizenship. We then read that 'the commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, *in chains*' (22:22-29).

When Paul is transferred to Caesarea, the letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix makes it clear that there was 'no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment' (23:29). It is merely the pressure of the Jews from Jerusalem that prevents his release from captivity. When Tertullus, accompanied by leading ecclesiastics from Jerusalem, arrives to keep up the pressure we learn that 'because Felix wanted to grant a favour to the Jews, he left Paul in prison' (24:27). It was quite unrelenting. The new man Festus is soon confronted by the familiar spectacle of 'the Jews who

had come down from Jerusalem' bringing countless false accusations against Paul so that in the end he has to appeal to Caesar and thus remain in bonds (25:7-12).

When Agrippa arrives on his state visit Festus makes it abundantly clear that there is no real crime but that *it is solely because of the persistent attacks of the Jews from Jerusalem that the situation is unresolved* (25:15-20). In fact it has reached such a scale that when Paul is brought in he is greeted with these words: 'King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! *The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem* and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer' (25:24). Once again Festus acknowledges that Paul is innocent, permitting him to make his great and famous defence which concludes with — 'I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, *except for these chains*' (26:29). It almost seems now as though the whole body of Jerusalem Jews is responsible for those chains — a far more remarkable fulfilment of the prophecy than if four or five representative figures had trussed him up and passed him over to the Romans.

Beyond any doubt in the deepest sense it was the Jerusalem Jews who had put the chains on Paul ('the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt') and kept them there ('and will hand him over to the Gentiles'), despite all the knowledge of successive Roman officials that Paul was a privileged Roman citizen and was in fact innocent and should be freed. Why should such a succession of normally powerful and domineering men be browbeaten in these circumstances by the Jews from Jerusalem in this way were it not that it had been prophesied? Indeed Paul refers to all this as he speaks to the Jews from Rome and sums up the story. '... I

was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. For this reason I have

asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that *I am bound with this chain*' (28:17-20). Is the content of this speech and the concluding reference to the chain purely fortuitous? Of course not. He was acknowledging the detailed fulfilment of the prophecy of Agabus.

Prophecy Has Varied Fulfilments

True prophecy was always fulfilled. Sometimes it was very precise and easy to assess. Paul predicted to the distraught sailors during the storm that they would land on an island (not a peninsula), that the ship would be lost (not salvaged) and that all 276 men would get safely to shore (not 275). Sometimes the fulfilment was surprising. John the Baptist was the new Elijah but he was not of course Elijah come back to life (Malachi 4:5f and Matthew 11:14 and 17:12). A study of the New Testament fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies would show that they were of course always accurate but there were surprising twists. Patrick Fairbairn's old book on prophecy is worth almost all the modern ones put together in its discussions of the various types of fulfilment and its deep perception of spiritual issues. For example, his defence of scriptural prophecies about Tyre and Edom against the rationalistic or crassly literalistic critics is well worth reading in this connection.¹⁹

Yet in these surprising twists there must be no deception or dishonourable 'get out'. For example they are not of the type where the prophets predict the recovery of someone, sometimes with distraught relatives taking comfort from this, and then, when the person dies, there is an instant claim that there was a deeper fulfilment since the person has now fully recovered in heaven!²⁰ Nor are the prophecies like that given through the ministry of the charismatic

group who announced a military take-over in 1975 in England after which opportunities for ministry would be curtailed. The alleged fulfilment was that because of rising petrol prices ministry had in fact been curtailed! (It is significant that in this case the group was still trying to say that the original prophecy might in fact come true — later!) By contrast Paul indulged in no explaining away and no verbal somersaults!

As I have shown, Paul confirmed in a totally transparent manner that what Agabus had prophesied, had been fulfilled, indeed fulfilled even more thoroughly and profoundly than those who heard and saw Agabus' prophecy might have imagined.

Therefore we are honestly astounded to read Herbert Carson in his endeavour to show that Agabus was not fully accurate, writing thus: 'Further, although Paul was bound by the Romans with two chains, Luke notes that his hands were free so that he could use them in his characteristic manner when addressing a public meeting — he "motioned to the crowd" (Acts 21:40).²¹ Do we have to believe that Agabus meant in this case that Paul's hands and feet had to be tied by a struggling group of Jews any more than we have to believe that Jeremiah threatening the Babylonian yoke and himself wearing one meant that ultimately all the Jews of his day would be walking round with literal yokes round their necks?'

Of course there are still problems. Why did Paul disregard the prophecies and particularly the advice that he should not go? (See Acts 21:4.) It is possible to take the view of Calvin that the foreknowledge was inspired but the practical advice was not. (Once again we note that Agabus did not proffer this further advice.) Another view is that even Paul should not have disregarded the Holy Spirit through the prophets and that, though it was God's will that he should eventually go (Acts 20:22), yet the timing was wrong. We incline to the latter view but we state them both.

In a second part of this article we will seek to deal with other vital matters that arise from this study.

¹ See my book *The Charismatics and the Word of God*, Evangelical Press, 1985, pp. 12ff and a leaflet containing a review of the books by Wayne Grudem and David Hill which is obtainable from 361 Aigburth Road, Liverpool L17 0BP.

² *Spiritual Gifts for Today? Evangelical and Charismatic Come Together*, H. M. Carson, Kingsway Publications 1987, p. 161.

³ See Review in *Banner of Truth Magazine*, December 1985 and especially p. 23.

⁴ Article 'Spiritual Gifts Then and Now' by Max Turner in *'Vox Evangelica'* Vol. XV, 1985, p. 10.

⁵ *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, David E. Aune, Erdmans 1983, pp. 96, 111, 163, 178, 184 and 248.

⁶ *ibid.* p. 264. See also p. 263.

⁷ *New Testament Prophecy*, David Hill, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1985, pp. 107-8.

⁸ Article in *Evangelical Times*, April 1986.

⁹ *Word and Spirit*, U.C.C.F. Booklet, Roy Clements, 1986, p. 26.

¹⁰ Carson, p. 165.

¹¹ Carson, pp. 173ff.

¹² Tape *Speaking the prophetic word into people's lives*, Bernard Thompson.

¹³ *Prophecy*, Patrick Fairbairn, Baker Book House, Reprint 1976, pp. 113, 117-8, 501-9.

¹⁴ *The New Bible Dictionary*, Edited by J. D. Douglas, IVF 1962, p. 1044. See also p. 1040.

¹⁵ Hill, p. 77. David Aune writes, 'Early Christians characteristically claimed divine authority for their message, and there is no reason to regard the claims of Agabus (Acts 21:11) or Ignatius of Antioch (*Philad.* 7:1) as in any way inferior to John the prophet' (p. 208). Just prior to this he alludes to the striking claim of Revelation 22:10f. See also pp. 328-9 for a discussion of 'messenger formulas'.

¹⁶ *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, Wayne Grudem, University Press of America, 1982, p. 79.

¹⁷ *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 1038.

¹⁸ Quoted in Fairbairn, p. 80.

¹⁹ Fairbairn, pp. 212-9. See also pp. 79, 98 and 159ff.

²⁰ *The Charismatics and the Word of God*, pp. 166 and 190f where I give two examples of this kind of false prophecy.

²¹ Carson, p. 174.

World Itinerary

From March 7th to May 7th Lyn and I plan to visit several countries, DV. A round world ticket is the most economic way to accomplish this purpose. Conditions permitting, the itinerary will include Malaysia and Singapore, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, New Orleans, Memphis and Greenville SC.

The Annual Sovereign Grace Family Conference, Australia is scheduled for April 1st-4th: venue, Newcastle, NSW. Various aspects of family life will be addressed by John Paterson, lessons from Baptist history in NSW by John Bull, and the practical relationship of assurance to Christian practice in four expositions is my task. Don McMurray requests that Australians write to him for details. His address: 133 Grinsell Street, Kotara, Newcastle, NSW 2289 (telephone [049] 43 2279).

Tom Nettles discusses Spurgeon and the Downgrade controversy and compares conditions which prevailed then, with the situation as it pertains now within the Southern Baptist Convention. The size and influence of the SBC can be appreciated by the fact that 25,000 delegates attend the annual convention. The annual SBC budget is 140 million dollars, 66 million of which is used to support over 3,000 missionaries in overseas countries.

Upgrade in a Great Denomination

It is now a melancholy but well-known fact that very few evangelicals took Spurgeon seriously when in 1887 he exposed the 'Downgrade' which had infiltrated, and was infecting, the doctrinal purity of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Those most closely involved, and who were actually a part of the problem (such as John Clifford, a General Baptist, who was at that time an officer within the Baptist Union), should have acted with integrity and admitted that they knew the charges were true, or that they themselves were perpetrating the errors Spurgeon lamented. When the great tide of criticism came upon Spurgeon for the articles written in the *Sword and Trowel*, he replied in September 1887:

Had there been a right spirit in those who resent our warning, they would either have disproved our charge, or else they would have lamented its truthfulness, and have set to work to correct the evil which we lamented. Alas, the levity which plays ducks and drakes with doctrines, makes game of all earnestness, and finds sport in Christian decision! Yet, surely there is a remnant of faithful ones, and these will be stirred to action, and will cry mightily unto God that the plague may be stayed.

Spurgeon's confidence was unfortunately shown to be misplaced. Even those who agreed with him theologically could not see the dangers. Hindsight and greater experience of the deviousness of many liberals reveal that Spurgeon should have been detailed and precise in publicly listing persons and data involved in his charges, even though it would have been distasteful and painful. The Pauline example in 1 Timothy 1:18-20 should have been followed. Instead of causing the problem to be remedied, Spurgeon left the Baptist Union.

Doubtless Spurgeon would not have done this had there been a groundswell of support to work with him in correcting the theological downgrade he saw so clearly. He would have been willing to tolerate a fight for years had he been convinced that a significant number wanted to see the Baptist Union return to the foundations and fundamentals of the Christian faith. In the Downgrade, Calvinism was not a prominent issue, but rather the basic evangelical doctrines. The inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the eternality of punishment, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the doctrines of Christ's imputed righteousness and justification by faith; these were the issues most ardently pursued and jealously guarded by Spurgeon. In a famous paragraph written in November 1887 Spurgeon points this out:

As a matter of fact, believers in Christ's atonement are now in declared religious union with those who make light of it; believers in holy Scripture are in confederacy with those who deny plenary inspiration; those who hold evangelical doctrine are in open alliance with those who call the fall a fable, who deny the personality of the Holy Ghost, who call justification by faith immoral, and hold that there is another probation after death, and a future restitution for the lost. Yes, we have before us the richest spectacle of professedly orthodox Christians publicly avowing their union with those who deny the faith, and scarcely concealing their contempt for those who cannot be guilty of such gross disloyalty to Christ. To be very plain, we are unable to call these things Christian unions, they begin to look like confederacies in Evil.

Later, in the same article, Spurgeon says:

The largest charity toward those who are loyal to the Lord Jesus, and yet do not see with us on secondary matters, is the duty of all true Christians. How are we to act towards those who deny his vicarious sacrifice, and ridicule the great truth of justification by his righteousness? These are not mistaken friends, but enemies of the cross of Christ.

Because of this open and aggressive denial of basic Christian truth, and the refusal of any others within the Baptist Union to confront error and cleanse the Union of it, Spurgeon retired 'at once and distinctly from the Baptist Union'.

Southern Baptists have experienced their own Downgrade in the last three decades, but a cry has been raised against it, beginning in the late 1950's at one of the Southern Baptist seminaries. This protest over the encroachment of subtle liberalism in the form of propagating the higher critical theories of biblical inspiration, especially in connection with the Pentateuch, has been continuous, yet largely ignored by those who had power to do something. However, in 1979, concerned conservatives devised a plan by which the controlling powers of the Southern Baptist Convention structures could be moved into the hands of those who held to the basic orthodox doctrines of the faith. It was estimated at that time that it would take approximately ten years for such control to be gained. This appears to have been a remarkably correct forecast.

The Convention, which met in June 1987 saw a real turning point in the struggle between what the Baptist press in America has called the 'Conservatives' and the 'Moderates'. In the years 1985 and 1986, when the Conventions met in Dallas and St. Louis, turmoil reigned, with the so-called moderate group constantly challenging the conservative president over his decisions and appointive powers. During 1987 the challenges were very few, and those that came were feeble. The trustees of the institutions have begun to reflect the traditional conservatism that characterizes mainline Southern Baptists.

A staunch knowledgeable conservative is now president of the Home Mission Board. This Board sponsors over 3,000 missionaries in the home field. Larry Lewis, formerly a pastor in St. Louis, Missouri, and then president of a Baptist college in Missouri, now serves as president of that Board. He has said, 'We must give careful attention to the doctrinal integrity of our agency.' Lewis represents Southern Baptists as 'solid, Bible-believing, Bible-preaching folks. Southern Baptists refuse to accept muddled, watered-down, neo-orthodox theology.'

Other agencies are also showing the influence of the conservative movement. In addition, such institutions as Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Louisville, Kentucky; Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Christian Life Commission are having strong theological checks placed on them that have been absent for some years.

Again, all of this was reflected in many of the reports and reactions presented at the last Southern Baptist Convention. This Convention enrolled over 25,000 messengers from Southern Baptist churches, with only the 1985 and 1986 Conventions being larger. I will mention several highlights of this Convention, in addition to the obvious mood-change toward conservatism.

The Report of the Peace Committee was adopted. This 'Peace Committee' was elected two years ago to investigate the charges of liberalism within the Convention. Although no one was completely satisfied with the recommendations and report, it definitely affirmed the concerns and ideas of the conservative element of the Convention. One notable paragraph of the report said, 'We call upon Southern Baptist institutions to recognize the great number of Southern Baptists who believe this interpretation of Article 1 of the *Baptist Faith and Message* statement of 1963 (that is the phrase 'truth without mixture of error for its matter' affirms the traditional evangelical understanding of inerrancy) and, in the future, to build their professional staffs and *faculties* from those who clearly reflect such dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptists at large'. Many within conservative ranks feel that this is a major step forward in arresting the Downgrade.

A second major item included the presence of two preachers on the programme who are unapologetically Grace preachers. At the Pastors' Conference, David Miller preached a message on 'Christ as Prophet, Priest, and Potentate.' I wish first generation Southern Baptists like W. B. Johnson, the Basil Manlys (father and son), P. H. Mell, J. P. Boyce and others, could have been there. They would have expressed humble joy in hearing what to them was the biblical gospel and distinctive Baptist orthodoxy. When Miller said:

Regarding soteriology, the church's prophet has declared that salvation is by grace, and grace by its very nature is sovereignly dispensed. In the mind of Jesus there would be nothing general, vague, or indefinite about his death on the cross, but rather he would make a definite atonement which would accomplish particular redemption for all those whom the Father had given him and of them NONE would be lost,

they would have said 'Amen' thankfully. Sam Cathey, a Southern Baptist evangelist, preached one of the messages interpreting the Convention theme 'To Know Him and Make Him Known.' When Cathey said, 'Our only hope is in a Sovereign God who invades the spiritual deadness of a sinner and brings him to saving grace through Jesus Christ,' and further stated that the Word goes forth in 'a general call of "whosoever will" and a particular and personal call that cannot be resisted by even the hardest of sinners,' Boyce, Mell, and others, would have confirmed it heartily from experience and Scripture. John A. Broadus would have felt right at home with such preaching.

A massive return of a major denomination to conservatism may be unprecedented in modern times. While the battle in Southern Baptist life is not yet won and many problems remain unresolved, the direction is ‘upgrade’, and much good is being done.

However conservatism is not the only battle to win. There is still the issue of ‘What is the biblical gospel?’ There are a growing number within Southern Baptist life who perceive that winning the battle for the Bible without also engaging in the battle for the biblical gospel will result in only a temporary and insufficient gain. Though Miller and Cathey preached clearly and unreservedly essential elements of this gospel, many who heard doubtless did not even recognize what they were hearing. Some who did disagreed in a friendly manner, and others probably reacted with some hostility.

Bogue and Bennett, in the *History of Dissenters*, make an observation which appears to me to be true. At any rate, even admitting the possibility of it should sober all sensitive Christians:

Veneration for the sacred Scriptures may certainly be considered as a test of the general purity of religious sentiments. Whether any will be found to equal the Calvinists in this respect shall be left to the judgment of those readers who have made extensive observations on the subject. Perhaps it cannot be contradicted that, in proportion as any sect recedes from Calvinism, their veneration for Scripture is diminished. The Bible is the Calvinist’s creed. Whatever God has spoken, he feels himself bound to receive and believe, however mysterious the doctrine may be.

The quest for ‘conservatism’, if the above is true, will abort itself if its leaders become hostile to the doctrines which highlight God’s majesty, emphasize man’s abject spiritual poverty and absolute dependence on divine mercy, and enforce a confrontation over the justice of God in the damnation of sinners. In the light of this Baptists all over the world should pray that God’s Spirit may blow afresh upon Southern Baptist life, and once again bring it to a lively approval of those wonderful affirmations made by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:33-36, by which sinners are humbled and God is glorified:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!
For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?
Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?
For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever.
Amen.

With men this is impossible, but with God, who both creates from nothing and raises to life those who are dead, nothing is impossible.

Downgrade in another great denomination

The Synod and Homosexual Clergy

Whatever we may think of episcopacy, or of the Church of England as the Established Church, we must observe that throughout its 453-year history it has had within its ranks illustrious martyrs, reformers, evangelists, great preachers and missionaries, and in the last century leaders like J. C. Ryle.

Over the course of this century there has been a significant decline in the number of clergy from 25,000 to 10,000 and in attendance to less than two percent of the population. It can only sadden evangelicals to see a one-time great denomination sink into a condition in which it has lost its credibility. The Church is unable to bring discipline to bear on a leader who openly denies the virgin birth and resurrection of Christ. And now as we saw in *R.T. 100* negotiations are so far along the way to reunion of the Church of England with the Roman Catholic Church, that apart from some extraordinary intervention nothing can stop it. It will not be a pleasant sight to see that great ship sink inexorably into the ocean of Rome.

During November the Church of England Synod debated the issue of homosexuality. Pressure has been increasing from within the C. of E. to face this menace. The mass media gave extensive coverage to the debate and its outcome. The general public could see clearly that there was only one issue to be decided. Would the Church discipline homosexual clergy or would it fudge the issue and decide to do nothing? All that resulted was a statement declaring that homosexuality was sinful. One text of Scripture would have been more powerful. 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 declares, ‘homosexual offenders will not inherit the kingdom of God’.

The Daily Telegraph (17.11.87) reported in detail the assault of two C. of E. clergymen on a 15-year-old boy. Yet practising homosexual clergymen will continue in office in the C. of E. Little wonder that Tory MPs, following the decision of the Synod not to exercise discipline, accused the C. of E. of putting young people at risk. One MP described the decision as ‘disgraceful’ and another said it was ‘shameful and lily-livered’ (*Daily Post* 20.11.87).

One Anglican Church in London (St Botolph’s, Aldgate) is used as a centre to promote the “‘Christian’(?) Gay and Lesbian Movement.” Meeting at a London church is a gathering of homosexual Anglican priests one of the features of which is a bookstall full of hardcore male pornography (*The Times* 12.11.87) . . . ‘homosexual practices had become so rampant in one Anglican college that students from another had to be forbidden by staff to visit it’ (*The Times* 12.11.87). Little wonder that after the Synod ruling one MP said, ‘in stark language,

the Church has failed to purge itself of an evil rampant within its own ranks' (*Daily Post* 13.11.87).

Writing in *The Times* (16.11.87) a group of laymen pointed out that if the House of Laity had the authority discipline would be insisted upon, but when it came to the crucial part of the debate only 5 out of 53 bishops were prepared to take the pathway to action. (At the crucial point for a motion to take appropriate discipline the voting was 5 bishops in favour, 14 against with 34 abstaining, 82 clergy in favour of discipline and 138 against, and for the laity 136 for discipline and 84 against.) In desperation the group of laymen in their letter to *The Times* suggested, 'if the time has not come for the laity to ask the Prime Minister in future only to appoint bishops who will honour the solemn duties of their office'.

Romans 1:24-32 teaches that homosexuality and lesbianism is a sign of something that has already taken place. It is a sign that God has already given such people up to a reprobate mind. 'God gave them over to shameful lusts' (Rom 1:26). This does not mean that it is impossible for a person who has fallen into such sins to repent and be saved, because at Corinth there were some homosexuals who did repent. What it does mean is that sins against the creation of God (perverting God's creation), indicate a depraved mentality. When homosexual clergymen pleaded their cause on TV that was my impression. These people are depraved and they are depraved in the name of the very gospel designed to save mankind from depravity. The disease of AIDS is in most cases the outcome of unnatural and depraved sexual acts, and it would be thought that people could make their own conclusions about that. However the unmistakable impression has been given that the C. of E. is not going to do anything about the scandals in their own ranks. As one popular tabloid newspaper expressed it in headlines after the debate, 'C. of E. declares the poofs are okay for the pulpit!'

The brave evangelical rector of Hawkeswell, Essex, Tony Higton, was pleased with the outcome as he thought some action will result from the debate. This seems rather naive since only one bishop out of ten is willing to take appropriate action. The press correctly views the C. of E. to be 'disunited, leaderless and without a clear sense of purpose' (*The Times* 30.11.87).

To what conclusion do you come? What can we do who stand on the outside? We can be well informed about the situation and wherever possible strengthen the hands of those who are determined to contend for the truth in the C. of E. Hence the two articles, 'Anglican evangelicals have not cleared their conscience', and also 'A call to Anglican evangelicals'. editor.

A call to Anglican Evangelicals

WE VALUE THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AS A BIBLE-BASED NATIONAL CHURCH which accepts responsibility for the spiritual welfare of

all within its parishes, and which has been an instrument of God to bring the gospel of salvation to generations of English people. Its formularies (the Book of Common Prayer, the 39 Articles and the Ordinal) show the Church of England to be based firmly upon the Word of God, which is recognized as its only final authority (Canon A5).

2 WE AFFIRM OUR LOYALTY TO THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, and especially to the gospel of justification by grace through faith alone for the salvation of undeserving sinners. We do not regard ourselves as one extreme wing of the Church, but rather as the true Anglicans. We invite others to join us in our central position in the Church of England.

3 WE SEE GOD DISHONoured, AND THE CHURCH UNDER HIS JUDGMENT, BY HER DEPARTURE FROM HER BIBLICAL POSITION. The 39 Articles, which define the gospel of our salvation, are largely ignored. Their saving truths are not preached from the vast majority of Anglican pulpits. Ambiguity, questioning, doubt, unbelief and pluralism are more characteristic of the contemporary Church than the marks of the Church in Article 19 – faith, and the preaching of the pure Word of God. Where the truth is denied – whether by ambiguity, by false teaching or by evil living – God is dishonoured, Christ is blasphemed, God's judgment is incurred and unbelievers perish.

The contemporary Church of England is characterized *officially* and *practically* by:

a Rejection of the Bible

This has occurred officially in the Bishops' Report *The Nature of Christian Belief*, where the opinions of the scholars determine the beliefs of individual bishops, rather than the clear statements of Scripture (Paras 50, 62).

b Toleration of heresy and heretics

The Bishops' Report has allowed an official place for false teaching and for false teachers. It has not rebuked the Bishop of Durham, nor prevented views such as his being believed and taught by bishops and clergy. The General Synod motion passed in November 1986 states that the Virginal Conception and the Bodily Resurrection *are* the faith of the Church of England, but it does nothing whatever to prevent their denial from Anglican pulpits and by Anglican ministers. A motion passed by the House of Laity of the General Synod in February 1987 asked those responsible for the appointment of future bishops to ensure their orthodoxy in terms of the historic creeds.

c Official ambiguity

This is seen in the introduction to the Report on Series 2 Communion and finds liturgical expression in many of the services of the Alternative Service Book. Doctrinally, it is evident in the Report *Subscription and Assent to the 39 Articles* (1968) and in the Bishops' Report *The Nature of Christian Belief* (1986).

d A Romeward drift

This is evident in the passing of the ARCIC motions, in liturgical changes in the 70's and in the time and energy being devoted to forging closer links with

Rome. There has even been talk of the Church of England entering into uniate status with Rome under the Pope.

e A virtual refusal to discipline clergy morally and doctrinally

Homosexual clergy are not being disciplined for their teaching and lifestyle. The Bishops' Report virtually refuses any effective discipline on what clergy teach.

UNBELIEF is now the hallmark of official Anglican pronouncements. Ambiguity has replaced affirmation, and academic questioning the plain statements of the Bible. There are many exceptions; churches which preach the biblical gospel and where there is genuine spiritual life. Nevertheless, these trends do characterize official Anglicanism and are reflected in the 'grassroots' generally. They replace the revealed Word of God by the opinions of men. They dishonour the uniqueness of Christ as the only Saviour and his perfect and complete work of atonement on the cross. *We are not prepared to remain indefinitely within a Church which refuses to reform itself according to Scripture.* **SUCH A CHURCH IS UNDER GOD'S ACTIVE JUDGMENT!**

4 THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND REQUIRES A FUNDAMENTALLY NEW STANCE AND PROGRAMME FROM ANGLICAN EVANGELICALS

a We need to recognize the seriousness of the Anglican crisis. By now it is a technical nicety to decide whether or not the Church of England has already officially apostatized! *In practice* the Church is based on unbelief, syncretism and pluralism, the very things God condemns so severely in the Old Testament. We have not been able to discover a single example in history of a national or denominational church falling into such a state as the contemporary Church of England and being restored to purity of doctrine and life *without some kind of separation*, either through secession or by refusal to join an unbiblical union of churches. We sense a lack of spiritual and doctrinal conviction amongst Anglican evangelicals in this situation. *We must cry continually to God, 'Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains may tremble before you'* (Isaiah 64:1).

b We need a direct confrontation with the false teachers and the false gods in the Church of England

The following Anglican evangelical policies from the past have failed to achieve this confrontation, and we believe they cannot bring about the reformation of the Church:

- i. To withdraw from the battle for the gospel in the councils and synods of the Church and to retire to the parishes where we have freedom to preach the gospel.
- ii. To be negotiators who are willing to win some evangelical points and lose others, and to accept an unbiblical compromise.
- iii. To contend for the faith by appealing to the Protestant and Reformed tradition (precious though it is!), and by using the terminology of that tradition. People in the Church of England, and even many Anglican

evangelicals, are ignorant of the tradition and do not understand its terminology.

Like Elijah on Mount Carmel we need to confront the modern prophets of Baal and the modern false gods of Liberalism and Anglo-Catholicism in their many forms. To do this we must:

- i. Appeal directly to Scripture and from it explain today's problems in contemporary language. For instance, we can demonstrate how Liberalism has made its own 'gods', just like the Israelites made the golden calf, and how Anglo-Catholicism is a modern form of the 'other gospel' (Galatians 1:9).
- ii. Teach Christians in every evangelical church what the Bible has to say about the unbelief and heresy of the Church of England. People need to understand the issues and what is at stake.
- iii. Focus on the main issues of the false gods and other gospels, declaring God's judgement on them.
- iv. Go out into the Church of England challenging these things, initiating debates in the Synods on the vital issues, speaking boldly and biblically in the debates, bringing these issues before the Diocesan Evangelical Unions, making representations to the bishops, writing letters and articles for the Church and secular press, arranging meetings to air these facts, and doing things that will attract the attention of the media.

We believe that the Church of England must be called to decide which god she will follow (Joshua 24). Her false prophets must be exposed and confronted (1 Kings 18). *This is the only way ahead because nothing else can possibly bring about the biblical reformation of the Church.* We fear that such exposure of apostasy and unbelief may form part of God's preparation for further severe and just judgement if the Church will not repent. We pray that in his mercy it may not be so.

c We have to recognize that separation from an apostate Church can become a Christian duty. There is a clear line of teaching throughout Scripture that calls upon the faithful people of God to separate themselves from *all* evil – spiritual, doctrinal and moral.* Holiness is the first duty of the Christian and of the Church. Many of us have personal 'sticking-points' which would cause us to consider leaving the national church – whether it is union with Rome, or official approval of homosexuals being ordained to the ministry. What we must do is to examine the biblical principles of separation. We cannot rule out secession in the future, preferably as a group of local *churches* to form a continuing church or to join some emerging biblical church. We must get our thinking right NOW. *What matters is that God is dishonoured by an impure, unbelieving church.*

(* Amongst many other passages, see: Lev 11:45; 20:22-26; 1 Pet 1:15-16; 2 Chron 19:2; Ezra 9:1-2; Jer 16:10-13; Gal 1:6-9; 2 Cor 6:14-18; 2 Tim 2:15-21; 3:1-9; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 7-11.)

d **We need to affirm that the biblical gospel is the basis of spiritual and church unity amongst God's people.** We rejoice in signs of an increasing desire for evangelical unity in England. We thank God for Independent Christians and churches who want to encourage Anglican evangelicals to contend for the faith in the national Church. We support the Church Society concept of a 'continuing Church of England faithful to the 39 Articles of Religion if and when concrete steps are taken to unite the Church of England with the Church of Rome'. We recognize that the setting up of a Presbyterian Association in April 1987 with a view to forming an evangelical Presbyterian Church in England in the next few years may be of profound significance, and we want to keep in close touch with developments. *Ultimately, our longing is for a nationwide, Bible-based Church. And we invite others, both inside the Church of England and outside, to share this vision which we submit to the sovereign will of our gracious God. WE MUST BE MUCH BEFORE GOD IN PRAYER!*

Reg Burrows.

At a conference in the North East of England organized by the Church Society, Donald Macleod presented the following analysis of the contemporary situation in the Church of England.

Anglican Evangelicals have not Cleared their Conscience

This was the view expressed by Professor Donald Macleod of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, when he addressed a Church Society Conference in Newcastle-upon-Tyne on Saturday, November 7th. He believes that secession is not an **immediate** duty for Anglican evangelicals because both the New Testament and history are against it as the first line of action, even when the Church tolerates serious error. The primary duty of Christians is to remain in such a church and, like great men of the past such as Luther or J. Gresham Machen, to **pursue their protests to the uttermost limit** in a courageous and farsighted manner. This is precisely what Anglican evangelicals have failed to do. They have not yet earned the right to secede. It should not be easier to stay than to leave, as it is at present.

Earlier, Professor Macleod gave a penetrating analysis of what he considers to be a fourfold crisis in the Church of England. There is, firstly, the **theological** crisis brought about by two forces, Modernism and Anglo-Catholicism. This consists in a departure from the principle of 'by Scripture alone', in the relegation of the 39 Articles, in the denial of fundamental doctrines by the Church's representative theologians, and in confusion between reductionism and theological creativity – the failure to distinguish between questioning in faith and questioning the faith meant that ancient heresies sometimes masquerade as theological creativity.

He then outlined the **ecclesiological** crisis, problems in church order and polity. There is the emergence of denominationalism, with conflicting groupings co-existing by mutual toleration or indifference. The normal Anglican view of the

ministry has changed. The minister is no longer viewed primarily as a minister of the Word. His main role is now seen to be to preside at the 'Eucharist'. These tendencies have led to a separation from evangelicals outside the Church of England. Anglican evangelicals have accepted the view that they are sub-tenants in a church owned by the Anglo-Catholics and Liberals, and have lost the vision of winning the whole Church of England back to the gospel of the Reformers and Articles. The loss of this vision is, he felt, related to a mistaken 'fundamentalism' which believes it can function without institutions. All these problems are compounded by the patent impossibility of exercising discipline in the Church of England.

The third aspect of the Anglican crisis is the **ecumenical** dimension. Instead of the biblical gospel being fundamental, modern Anglicanism has made the three-fold order of ministers (bishops, priests and deacons), the one non-negotiable essential. It is simply assumed that any united church of the future would be episcopal. The Church of England has lost its Protestant character. If reunion with Rome took place on the basis of the Reports of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), that would be the final straw!

Professor Macleod then noted the **constitutional** crisis that would be created if the Church of England were to acknowledge the primacy of the Pope. This could even jeopardize the monarchy, for at the moment the Queen is the 'Supreme Governor' of the Church of England. Could the established church of the nation be a branch of the Church of Rome?

In his second paper, having rejected secession as the **immediate** course of action. Professor Macleod outlined a responsible programme for Anglican evangelicals. The first essential is to pursue our preaching and pastoral ministry with the utmost diligence. Let evangelicals be the best preachers, the best pastoral counsellors, those most concerned for the poor. Secondly, it is necessary to take our Anglicanism seriously. Local churches should not function as independent congregations, but as part of a national organism with a mission to the whole nation. If we are Anglicans then Archbishop Tutu and Bishop David Jenkins are our responsibility! Professor Macleod went on to appeal for political involvement, with evangelicals seeking positions of power in the Church to use them for the gospel. Yet there must be **separation from unbelief** within the denomination. Lay Christians should stay in a local Anglican church not a day longer than the gospel. There must be **confrontation** with heresy. At the academic level it must be demonstrated that it is not Christianity. Liberalism is an alternative to Christianity, not a variation of it. At the ecclesiastical level, those who teach heresy should be removed. **Anglican evangelicals must create situations where confrontation occurs. In this matter of confrontation they have failed conspicuously.** It is legitimate to disobey church authorities, or withhold finance from certain Anglican ventures, if they are against the gospel.

If such action fails to reform the Church of England, Anglican evangelicals must be ready for a new alignment. If they follow this suggested programme through,

EDITORIAL (*continued from page 2*)

A person claiming to be a prophet can use his claim in many ways. Such a person usually does not put his prophetic utterances on the same level as Scripture, nevertheless while the claim may fall short by way of verbal accuracy and have a lower level of authority than the Word, the claim to mean anything, means that the utterances claim to come direct from God. The uses for which the gift can be used are the reproof of sin, the provision of comfort, the prediction of future events, the relief of known anxieties and the promise of blessings in the future. The issue is an explosive one because no matter how much his role is subordinated, and no matter how much his words are insulated with apologies of being less than Scripture, the very nature of the act of prophecy is in essence the same, that is it claims to be speech from God.

The point is that we do not find two kinds of prophecy in the Bible, one inspired and the other subordinate or of an inferior kind. In seeking an example or precedent the case of Agabus is often quoted. Victor Budgen grapples with that subject, whereas my article is not intended to answer Grudem or give a detailed answer to Roy Clements. The purpose of my exposition is to explain the nature of prophecy in the Bible and trace out in a biblical theological way its development toward consummation in Christ. It would seem that only a small minority of Christians have a firm grasp of the subject. Far from being convinced one way or another the majority confess ignorance of the basic issues. Therefore a perspective view is important.

In the next issue, an important article on apologetics by Austin Walker.

The Evangelical Library in Danger

In *R.T. 60* (1981) it was suggested that the Evangelical Library was so valuable an asset to the evangelical churches of the U.K., that churches should include the support of that Library in the West End of London (78A Chiltern Street, LONDON W1M 2HB telephone 01-935 6997) in their annual budget. The Library is in need of urgent repair work, plus accumulated premiums that have suddenly overtaken the Library which now requires £25,000 by the end of March 1988. If every church allows a modest sum per annum for the Evangelical Library and multiplied that by a backdate for ten years, the above liability could easily be met. The service rendered by the Library to busy pastors is invaluable. All the Evangelical Library branches in overseas countries stand or fall (more or less) with the parent supply centre in the capital city.

(*continued from page 31*)

they will probably be thrown out! Luther and Gresham Machen spoke **provocatively** because the issues were vital. Such a stance is necessary today. It is possible that Anglican evangelicals may be abandoned if there is reunion with Rome. On either scenario it is necessary to **plan ahead** in order to avoid disorganized secessions, and so that ministers will not leave without their congregations. Action must be coherent, not atomistic; popular, not just clerical.

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