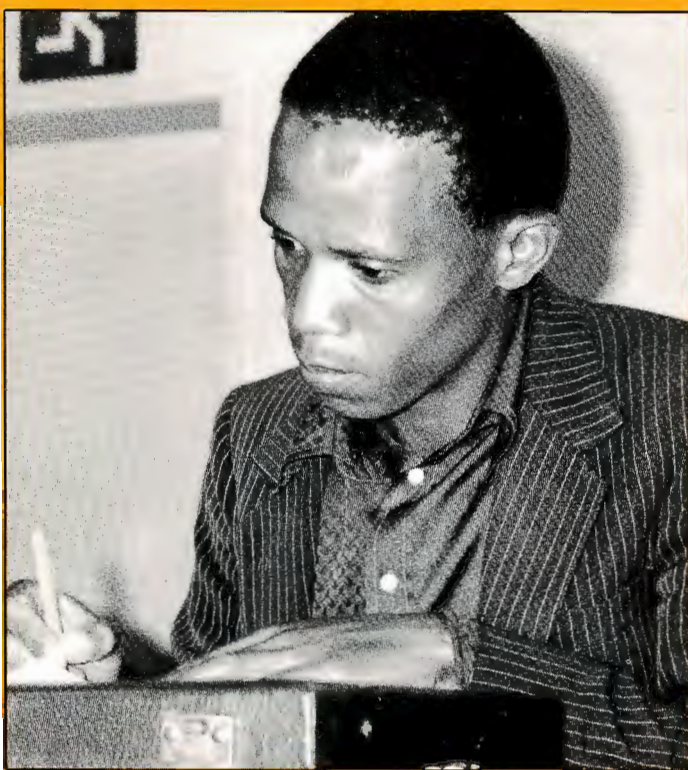


REFORMATION TODAY



MAY-JUNE 1990

115



From left to right: Pastors Gilbert Ndlovu, Lex de Witt and Bill Bartholomew. About eighteen pastors of different denominations including the Dutch Reformed Church met in Johannesburg to consider issues of common interest. Pastor Ndlovu is a Baptist pastor in Alexandria. He can speak nine languages. Lex de Witt pastors a coloured church in Kimberley, and in the same town Bill Bartholomew is minister of a Presbyterian church which was compelled to secede from the main Presbyterian body because of Modernism.

Editorial

South Africa

While waiting for my flight to Durban I was surprised to see a tall, distinguished gentleman come toward me as though he had walked straight out of the TV screen. It was Nelson Mandela. He sat down beside me. Providentially we were given an ideal opportunity for conversation. I told him what the gospel had done for me including the fact that it had instantly changed my views of race. When we arrived at Durban a crowd had gathered to greet their leader. The singing was awe-inspiring. The scene gave me some idea of what it was like for our Lord when he was thronged by crowds who sought to see him and touch him. The sight reminded me too of a central truth of our faith, namely union with Christ, to which we shall return presently.

ANC devotees follow Nelson Mandela. They believe in him and they love him. Spiritually they are united to him. They are united to him inasmuch as they

identify with him in their sufferings, but also they identify with him in their hopes and aspirations. For 27 years he has been a prisoner. As their leader he has suffered as they have suffered. Apartheid caused that suffering. Apartheid is now being recognised as a disaster. Now that change seems to be on the way, great numbers identify with Nelson Mandela in the hope of a better future.

No political leader is able to meet all the aspirations of the people. Especially is this true in countries like South Africa where the problem is enormous in its complexity. The divisions among the black people in Natal in particular seem insuperable. The deep division among the whites is frightening because the white right wing seems to be increasing. The end of that road is cataclysmic. The task ahead for President F. W. de Klerk and for Nelson Mandela and other leaders is formidable. 1 Timothy 2:2 urges that we pray for those who carry the responsibility of leadership and whose actions and decisions affect millions of lives.

Christians should never idolise political leaders. They are united spiritually to Christ their head. They are truly joined to him. They identify with him in the death he died. Each believer can say of his death, 'That was my death!' (Gal 2:20). Every time we celebrate communion we identify with Jesus in his agonies suffered for us and in our place. We identify too with him in his triumphant resurrection. So close are we to him that Paul uses the term, 'in Christ'. Our union with him is a union with his humanity. His life is ours. The completeness and fullness of his perfect life forms a robe of righteousness which is put over us and which is reckoned to us and which actually constitutes us righteous in the Father's sight. Our union with Christ is an extensive union. We are one with him in an absolute sense. We belong to him and he belongs to us. We are married to him. Nelson Mandela is 71 years old and is mortal. Mr Gorbachev is mortal and so is Mrs Thatcher. Our leader is immortal. He is God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal. We are loved by him with an incomparable love. We are joined to him. We are 'in him'. He will never disappoint those who trust in him. In him all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (Col 2:9). All power and authority is his in heaven and on earth. He has been exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high. He has been given the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Phil 2:10).

He is worthy of our love and adoration. He has bought us at great price. We are not our own. We are here to serve him and to fulfil his will. His cause is our cause and it is our great desire that his cause should triumph in the earth. It grieves and pains us when the churches are defeated or shamed before the world because of sin. That is why we are exercised about the subject of revival.

Jonathan Edwards and Revival

Edwards is called 'the theologian of revival'. As such he plays a crucial role because in his writings we have preserved a clear understanding of what revival involves. This is important because false views of revival are common. The background and the issues are presented in the article on Edwards. Is it biblical to pray for revival? It is straightforward to prove from the Psalms that we should pray for personal and corporate revival. There are examples of how to pray for revival in Isaiah. The best known passage is Isaiah 63:15 through 64. But what of the New Testament? That is not so easy. We have the example of Pentecost. After that the book of Acts is mostly a description of pioneering in church planting mixed with revival. In his article Michael Haykin links up Thessalonika and Corinth in terms of revival.

Our view of the promises that God will glorify his Son in the extension of his kingdom, influences and inspires prayer. That matter is taken up to some degree in the article, 'We must give God no Rest!'

Front cover: Simon of Johannesburg is preparing to enter the ministry. He is representative of a large number who need to be equipped with reliable theological books. He represents a need which is typical of many African countries. The weak state of the Rand makes it difficult to buy books even for those whose incomes are on a par with those in the UK, but almost impossible for those who struggle to survive. While the Rand is weak abroad it is powerful in South Africa. We should encourage more publishing within South Africa in which the most relevant books are chosen and reproduced by litho. Much more needs to be done too by way of evangelistic tracts and booklets as well as teaching aids in the various African languages. Warm appreciation is expressed by Zulu believers for the 1689 Confession in Zulu. A similar need for literature is seen in Eastern Europe especially since the recent changes make it viable to supply literature.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) — ‘theologian of revival’

In his famous book *The Mystery of Providence* Puritan John Flavel stresses the importance of noting outstanding events in our lives. He declares, ‘The remembrance of former providences will minister to our souls continual matter of praise and thanksgiving, which is the very employment of the angels in heaven, and the sweetest part of our lives on earth.’ Of exceptional encouragement to Edwards was the entrance into his life of David Brainerd, a matter which he often reflected upon.

It was on Thursday, May 28, 1747, the time when Edwards was preparing for publication the treatise calling for a Concert of Prayer that David Brainerd rode into the parsonage yard at Northampton. Edwards, whose mind was engaged in the vision of worldwide mission, had only met Brainerd once before. Now through close contact he was to share much more deeply in the experience of labouring among the Indians, and in particular in a detailed knowledge of the spiritual awakening among them. The story of Brainerd is a profoundly moving one; his struggle with the disease which was soon to claim his life, his wrestling with the total depravity and rejection of the gospel by the Indians, his near despair on that account, and above all his transparent godliness.

Although limited in physical strength Brainerd gave himself unremittingly and sacrificially to the Indians among whom he eventually came to witness a phenomenal spiritual awakening. He died of tuberculosis in Edwards’ home at the early age of 29, leaving his journals in Edwards’ possession. These diaries formed the basis of Edwards’ biography of Brainerd which in due course became by far his most popular book. It is reckoned that this was the first missionary biography to be printed in America. Some believe it has made a greater impact for the cause of missions on the Church than any other. It was the revival among the Indians that gave power to this biography and which is gripping in interest.

Of course there were many other aspects of providence which equipped Edwards to write on revival. He witnessed revival in his church at Northampton in 1735, and again a few years later when revival spread more widely across New England during the years 1740 to 1742 during which time he came to know George Whitefield.

These events in and of themselves would not adequately explain the role of Edwards as ‘the theologian of revival’. He was endowed with an unusual intellect which included an aptitude for analysis. His early development was evident inasmuch as he was proficient in Latin at the age of six. He possessed an astute theological and philosophical mind. Concentration was a discipline in which he excelled. When not away in travel he would spend thirteen hours a day in the study. Francis Bacon said, ‘Reading maketh a full man, conference

maketh a ready man, and writing maketh an exact man.' As far as writing is concerned that expresses well Edwards' forte. From the beginning he made it his rule to think clearly first and then write precisely. When eventually his papers were collected it was discovered that it was difficult to grade his materials into first and second degree categories. They were all of the same uniform high quality. Naturally some of the themes upon which he wrote are of more relevance to us now than are others.

Edwards was a Puritan in theology and practice. He not only fully concurred with the Puritans in their reformed theology of salvation but shared their emphasis on the centrality of practical and experimental Christianity. Edwards' brilliant mind and remarkable exegetical acumen equipped him for the task of describing and defending revivals. Subsequently historians have accorded to him the reputation of being the finest theologian in American history. His textual and sermonic work show that he was a proficient exegete. For instance he preached a series of sermons on Justification in which he expertly defends that truth from the error of introducing human merit on account of faith.

In all Edwards wrote five treatises on revival. The first was *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions* which describes the revival in Northampton in which 300 souls were added to the church in 1735. The second was *Thoughts on the Revival in New England in 1740*, the third, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741) the fourth, *A History of the Work of Redemption* (1744), and the fifth which was his deepest and fullest work *The Religious Affections* (1746). The latter was really a full development of the third title listed above. To these treatises we should add the biography of Brainerd because of the revival among the Indians therein described, a revival which in a very graphic way highlights the sovereign grace of God, since humanly speaking there seemed no hope whatever of the grace of God breaking through the darkness and enmity which held them in Satan's vice.

Jim Packer in a paper given at the Puritan Conference in London in 1961 helpfully summed up Edwards' teaching on revival under three headings which with a few principal comments of explanation run as follows:

1. *Revival is an extraordinary work of God the Holy Ghost reinvigorating and propagating Christian piety in a community.*

Revival is an extraordinary work, because it marks the abrupt reversal of an established trend and state of things among those who profess to be God's people. To envisage God reviving his Church is to presuppose that the Church has previously grown moribund and gone to sleep.

2. *Revivals have a central place in the revealed purposes of God.*

'The end of God's creating the world,' declares Edwards, 'was to prepare a kingdom for his Son (for he was appointed heir of the world). This end is to be realised, first through Christ's accomplishing redemption on Calvary, and then through the triumphs of his kingdom. All the dispensations of God's provi-

dence henceforward (since Christ's ascension), even to the final consummation of all things, are to give Christ his reward, and fulfil his end in what he did and suffered upon earth.' A universal dominion is pledged to Christ and in the interim before the final consummation the Father implements this pledge in part by successive outpourings of the Spirit, which prove the reality of Christ's kingdom to a sceptical world and serve to extend its bounds among Christ's erstwhile enemies.

3. *Revivals are the most glorious of all God's works in the world.*

Edwards insists on this, to shame those who professed no interest in the divine awakening that had come to New England, and insinuated by their attitude that a Christian's mind could be more profitably occupied with other matters.

'Such a work is, in its nature and kind, the most glorious of any work of God whatsoever,' Edwards protests. 'It is the work of redemption (the great end of all the other works of God, and of which the work of creation was but a shadow). It is the work of new creation, which is infinitely more glorious than the old. I am bold to say that the work of God in the conversion of one soul . . . is a more glorious work of God than the creation of the whole material universe.'

Having outlined the subject in general there are three particular subjects related to revival which Edwards handles skilfully and which are particularly relevant for us today.

The first is that revival is a mixed work. Satan comes in all kinds of ways in revival times. He will tempt those involved with pride. He will promote fanaticism by which revivals will be discredited and discounted. He will sow tares among the wheat. The second subject of major interest to us today is that Edwards was a cessationist. He did not believe in the continuation of apostles or of extraordinary supernatural gifts. The third is Edwards' great stress on the importance of praying for revival.

1. **Satan's tactics in revivals**

The first and worst enemy in revivals is spiritual pride. The adversary is the Prince of Pride. 'This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of religion. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit.' Giving to human instruments the glory of God is a curse to be avoided. Edwards urges the necessity of humility and cites Psalm 25:9, 'The meek will he guide in judgement and the meek he will teach his way.' He points out too that the spiritually proud man is beyond correction because he esteems himself to be full of spiritual light already.²

The next warning in which Edwards addresses the question of prophecies and visions which are claimed to come by direct inspiration, could hardly be more apposite for us today. By such a notion the devil has a great door opened for him, because once this principle of 'inspiration' is accepted Satan has the opportunity to have his word regarded as the infallible rule, and soon bring the Bible into neglect and contempt.

With heightened levels of spiritual experience in revival there comes the temptation to make more of passionate inward experiences than is warranted. Satan will especially tempt some to think they are converted because they are convicted of sin, but conviction is not the same as repentance. Edwards points out that inward experience is a mixed thing. It is not necessarily pure and without self-interest. Even the most exalted spiritual experiences can have defects. Passionate experiences with hindsight can be recognised as having carnal elements. That the fruit of the Spirit and sound Christian practice is the ultimate proof of genuine experience is firmly established in his treatise 'The Religious Affections' where the theme of experience is extensively analysed.

2. The apostolic gifts and miracles have ceased

This issue has been debated in great detail during the 1980s. Some have claimed with great confidence that it is impossible to establish from Scripture that tongues and prophecies have ceased. The idea has prevailed that no self-respecting expositor would dare to try and establish the cessation of tongues and prophecies on the basis of 1 Corinthians 13. Edwards did not attempt to do that exegetically in the way that authors do today, among whom are Douglas Judisch in his *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*,³ and Victor Budgen in his book *Charismatics and the Word of God*.⁴ Edwards simply asserts the orthodox position concerning the cessation of tongues, miracles and prophecies and then expounds on the fact that grace and love are infinitely more excellent than special gifts designed to assist in the establishment of the Scriptures. That to Edwards is the message of 1 Corinthians 13. That is what Paul was seeking to establish in the minds of the believers at Corinth.⁵

It is a fact that there is a constant tendency to be preoccupied with phenomena. A weak faith desires proofs of God. A strong faith rests in the authority of Scripture and the perfect and completed work of Christ. In revival there is the ever present danger of concentrating on the spectacular and the outward, to be excited about crowds, or sensational features such as the conversion of a famous person, or, as has been the case in parts of Indonesia, to be largely taken up with 'healings', but at the end of the day it is progressive sanctification that counts. The more Christians are obsessed with the outward and external the less they will concentrate on the Word which alone is able to build them up and make them strong in Christ.

3. Prayer for Revival

Besides his 'Humble Attempt' treatise seeking to promote the Concert of Prayer for revival, Edwards stresses the importance of intercession in his work *Thoughts on Revival*.⁶ He reasons there that the great and glorious work that had been witnessed was in itself a major reason to pray for yet greater things. He goes on to maintain that 'it is God's will that the prayers of his people should be one great principal means of carrying on the designs of Christ's kingdom in the world'. He then maintains:

‘When God has something very great to accomplish for his Church, it is his will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of his people; as is manifest by Ezekiel 36:37. ‘I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do this for them.’ And it is revealed that, when God is about to accomplish great things for his Church, he will begin by remarkably pouring out the spirit of grace and supplication, Zechariah 12:10. If we are not to expect that the devil should go out of a particular person, under a bodily possession, without extraordinary prayer, or prayer and fasting; how much less should we expect to have him cast out of the land, and the world, without it!’

How should we then pray for worldwide revival?

As we have just seen, if the devil is to be cast out of his strongholds there will be need for prayer and fasting by the Church.

Edwards had an extensive vision for the world which 250 years ago was very much smaller than our world, that is as far as the advance of the gospel is concerned. If Edwards could have read what is now a bedside book for many, namely OPERATION WORLD, he would have been amazed. Now we can have at our command detailed knowledge of every nation and province under the sun, forty to fifty times more than could have been assembled in the year 1750. How does this affect the way in which we pray?

Part of the answer is that we should respond to the needs that surround us. It is helpful for carefully prepared information nation by nation to precede times of prayer. We should think in terms of much more time being devoted to such exercises and for churches to come together for special seasons of prayer. An example has already been afforded in this by those who have organised weeks of prayer in which times have been designated to prayer for up to thirty different nations. It is important to appreciate that while the principles involved in revival are always the same nevertheless God moves in unexpected ways. He works varyingly in different societies and every revival has stamped on it MADE IN HEAVEN. This feature of divine originality is important. In timing and in style every revival has divine genius as its hallmark. When we look at revivals in history we are constrained to stand back and say, ‘This could not have been done by men and nor could men at their best ever have conceived of such spiritual creations, which is what true revivals are in essence.’

We should prepare for times when the heavens will be opened and the promises realise their fulfilment. Surely it is our responsibility not only to pray for revivals but to prepare ourselves theologically for them. Here it is that Edwards’ writings are so useful to us. As he held the glory of God as the supreme end of all things so ought we. ‘For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever, Amen.’

¹ John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*. Banner of Truth paperback edition, 1976, p. 158.

² Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts on Revival*, Banner of Truth, vol. 1, p. 398ff.

³ Baker Book House, 1978, 95pp.

⁴ E.P. Second edition 1989, p. 73ff.

⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and its Fruits*, Banner of Truth, 1969. This is a separate book not included in the large two volume works.

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts on Revival*, Works, vol. 1, p. 426.

Jonathan Edwards – the new biography

This review by William H. Kooienga of Iain Murray's biography of Jonathan Edwards was published in OUTLOOK, an American magazine with which we have reciprocal arrangements. The biography is published by The Banner of Truth in hardback, 534 pages. It is helpful to have a review from a quarter closer to Edwards' origins.

Jonathan Edwards, the Northampton preacher, theologian, apologist, revivalist, missionary to the Indians, philosopher, and briefly, seminary president, is the subject of an outstanding new biography. If you're looking for a discussion with a modern historian's 'objective viewpoint' (some call it bias), this book will not please you. It's written in open sympathy with the Calvinistic expression of the Christian faith.

Most people know Edwards as a philosopher/theologian of eighteenth century New England who had some strange notions about revival and who preached an awful sermon on hell. Murray's book reveals a highly sensitive and devout person whose faith and commitment God shaped on the anvil of necessity. Philosophy, for Edwards, was a lesser concern, almost a hobby. His strangest thoughts grew out of that soil. His theology however, grew out of struggle, both personal and ecclesiastical. Struggle compelled him to study the Scriptures and read solid works of the past. His study brought him to a sense of God's greatness and the truth of sovereign grace. He ought to be remembered as a preacher and also as a theologian.

Edwards was born in East Windsor, studied at Yale and began his ministry while in his early twenties. He was capable of preaching earnestly and with pathos, but always sought to bring the Word. His preaching shaped his Northampton congregation. Through his preaching the Spirit brought marvel-

ous times of renewal. He, as do all faithful preachers, wrestled with the opponent. Eventually his enemies got the upper hand and they forced him out of the pulpit. With an amazing level of enthusiasm the philosopher/theologian, at a dangerous time of uprisings, became a missionary to Indians. An appointment as president of Princeton followed, but after one month of service he died of smallpox. He went home to glory looking for his dear friend, Jesus.

Christians are often urged to read the biographies of great people of the past. Here's an example of why that's good advice. Edwards' biography warmed my heart and gave me added determination to preach the Word.

What struck me as I read this book is how little things change. Eighteenth century New England is, culturally, a long way from our day and age. But the Word of God hasn't changed. People have similar problems. The sins of today are recognisably similar to the sins of yesterday. The tactics of Satan show little innovation. You can easily recognise a heart melted by the gospel or a life dedicated to the Lord from two centuries away.

How little theological issues change! The question of the authority of Scripture surfaced in Edwards' life and ministry. He refused to judge belief by standards of success, failure, or level of popularity, but indeed by the Scriptures. It was, says Murray, 'the dominating conviction in his intellectual life'

(p. 71). He refused to follow those who made distinctions between 'spiritual' and 'secular'. He maintained a keen interest in scientific matters throughout his ministry.

Arminianism penetrated the New England churches of that day, not because preachers' and theologians warmly embraced the teaching, but because they didn't think related issues were worth their attention. Election, sovereign grace, justification, and other distinctive doctrines were treated by both pulpit and people with benign neglect.

A neglect of the doctrine of sin also marked Edwards' day. A spirit of indifference and unconcern fogged the minds of many. Formal preaching, with sermons dominated by logic, reigned in most pulpits. In 1735, however, the Northampton church saw a time of renewal. When he looked back on that experience Edwards commented that preachers beat the air when fighting lassitude unless they begin where the Holy Spirit begins. He quoted John 16:8, 'When he is come he will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment' (p. 131).

Vigorous preaching of biblical truth also marks times of renewal and change. Edwards reacted against cold, lifeless sermons that failed to reflect the authority of the Scriptures. His own preaching showed careful preparation. He shaped his sermon to the occasion, as shown by choice of words, metaphors, allusions and other aspects of style. He believed that sermons must grow out of a consciousness of the presence of God and convey that reality to the congregation. God must be startlingly real to preacher and hearer.

Six years later another time of renewal, the Great Awakening, spread through the churches of the colonies. Edwards stood at the centre of the new move-

ment in New England, although it was not limited to Northampton. Edwards refused to number the converts, but many in his own church and throughout the land gave evidence of genuine and lasting change. Excess, however, marred this period of renewal. Satan is capable of going with the flow, of pushing people to extremes to mar the merit of a cause. In the minds of many, supporters and detractors, renewal meant excess: visions, prophecies, ecstasy, physical motions and gestures of various kinds. Direct guidance by the Spirit through impressions supposedly supplemented the teachings of the Scriptures.

Some pastors who gladly saw renewal in their churches resisted the excesses and were evicted from the pulpit. Their positions were usurped by lay preachers who appointed themselves as prophets, condemned 'book-learning' and preached 'in the Spirit'. Groups of like-minded people organised their own congregations.

Edwards, reflecting on the phenomena, saw the presence of spurious conversions and was convinced that some merely turned from worldly ways to spiritual pride. Of the two conditions, the second is worse. The excess, the subjectivism, the emphasis on phenomena, and the fanaticism discredited the biblical faith.

In a day when church membership comes easily, discipline is a dirty word, and the Lord's Table is left unsupervised, it's helpful to learn of Edwards' struggles with these issues. He inherited a policy of easy membership and a belief that the Lord's Table is an evangelistic tool that can lead a person to salvation. When his own views on these subjects matured, he attempted to change the policies of the Northampton congregation. The church deposed him and he with his large family moved to Stockbridge to serve the Housatonic.

How could this happen? Easy admission means the church and the world cease to be distinguished. When a godly preacher promotes biblical standards in such a congregation, the world rises to its own defence. After all, 'in church' is the only place an unconverted person can remain unconverted and have some claim to eternal security. That, in part, explains why Edwards, who stood at the centre of a movement of renewal, experienced painful rejection only a few years later.

Edwards struggled over other biblical teachings. What is true assurance and how do you distinguish it from the false variety? What is the relationship of the providence of God to the actions of men? He faced these and other issues not so much because he got them out of a book; rather, he struggled with the practical implications of the teachings of Scripture in his life and ministry. That's where doctrine belongs.

The author doesn't paint a lily white figure. He raises the sleeve and shows the sores. Edwards failed to befriend his people. He preached 'publicly', but not 'from house to house' (Acts 20:20). Edwards claimed no gift for that practice. That's a common 'cop out' offered by preachers. But people do grow and change and can even turn a weakness into a strength. Preachers who are uncomfortable in social circumstances can learn the graces necessary to serve their people. Edwards failed his people in that way. The failure helps explain the rejection. He also failed to promote a biblical church policy. Had he a body of devout, trained elders leading the congregation and supervising him, his ministry in Northampton might have survived the attacks of his enemies.

The leaders of the renewal movement naively believed that biblical preaching blessed by the Spirit must be accepted by all. They failed to anticipate the resistance to and the attacks upon the movement from the left and from the right. Greater maturity might have headed off some of the excesses of the Great Awakening.

The author hints of an approval of Puritan preparationism. Even Edwards' ideas on the matter differed from the Puritans'. The author also indicates that enthusiasm for missions must be tied to a certain millennial view. A better link, I think, is to the Scriptures and God's plan for the nations.

There are poignant moments revealed in Murray's biography. He gets out of Edwards' study and into family life. The women of the Edwards' household come alive and show amazing strength and godliness. The relationship with David Brainerd and how Edwards got to write of him is interesting. Some Edwardian myths dissolve, especially those that surround the preaching of 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God'.

Here's a book that's a 'must read' for every preacher. It will encourage you in your high task. Here's a work that all Christians who love the church will want to read. Read the biographies of great people! That's still good advice. Learn that renewal can come to churches that slumber. Learn also from the failures of the past and then wonder why some today are so anxious to repeat many of them.

Rev. Wm. H. Kooienga is the pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Crown Point, Indiana.

Praying for Revival: is it Biblical?

Michael A. G. Haykin

Of the major cities in the ancient world, Corinth was one of the worst for immorality and flagrant sin. Poised at the centre of trade routes which ran from the western to the eastern Mediterranean, the city prospered greatly. But along with wealth and luxury came vice and decadence. In fact, the Greeks had coined a verb, 'to Corinthianise', that is 'to live like a Corinthian', which meant to be sexually immoral. This verb alone speaks volumes about the state of the city. One gets another picture of the normal activities of city life in Corinth in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. (In order to highlight the interaction between Corinth and Thessalonica I will indent and italicise the most relevant quotations, and then at the conclusion use the same method of emphasis in order to drive home the practical conclusions for us today.)

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. (1 Cor 6:9-11a. All my biblical references are from the NKJV.)

As Paul implies in verse 11, all of the sinful practices listed in the previous two verses were commonplace in Corinth; they were all part of a day's activities. Yet, if we read the account of Paul's ministry in Corinth in Acts 18, one sees that this situation of sin and immorality *totally insurmountable to men* was overcome by the living God, who created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. For Acts 18 describes a revival in this city of

decadence. Two aspects of this revival bear further study:

1. The roots of the revival. What lay behind the revival? What preparation had there been for this deep work of God? One item is especially prominent: prayer.
2. The effects of the revival. What were some of the effects of the revival? How did God answer the prayers of his people?

1. Prayer: a root of Revival

Robert Jewett dates Paul's arrival at Corinth in the winter of AD49-50.¹ A few months later, probably in March or April of AD50, he was joined by his two fellow-workers, Silas and Timothy (see Acts 18:5). Timothy came from a church which Paul had planted a year or so earlier in Thessalonica in northern Greece (see 1 Thess 3:2,8). It appears that he arrived with questions from the Thessalonian believers and a report of problems in their church. Paul's response was to write the letter we now know as 1 Thessalonians. Roughly five to seven weeks later he wrote a second letter to this church: 2 Thessalonians. This second letter was mostly devoted to the subject of the last days, but in chapter 3 Paul makes a very interesting and highly significant request of the Thessalonian believers: he asks them to pray for his ministry at Corinth.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith (2 Thess 3:1-2).

Here, Paul requests prayer regarding

two matters, the progress of the gospel and the opposition to the gospel. What is Paul specifically requesting in these two matters?

The first request relates to the triumphant progress of the gospel. The Thessalonians are asked to pray that 'the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified just as it is with you'. What an odd image: the word of the Lord running swiftly! Immersed as he was in the Old Testament, Paul almost certainly has in mind Psalm 147:15, where we read: he sends out his command to the earth; his word runs very swiftly.

In this verse 'the psalmist glories in Yahweh's word of power. He issues his command and it is executed; he speaks and . . . it is done.'²² The verses which immediately follow reinforce verse 15: he gives snow like wool; he scatters the frost like ashes; he casts out his hail like morsels; Who can stand before his cold? (Ps 147:16-17).

Severe winter conditions as are described in these verses were, and are, rare in Palestine; but the Psalmist delights in them like a North American child romping in the snow. For he sees the irresistible power of the God of Jacob in the snowflakes, the frost and the icy hailstones. He sees in the weather of winter far more than the elements of nature; he discerns the hand of a Sovereign God: he sends out his command to the earth; his word runs very swiftly. . . . Who can stand before his cold?

In like fashion Paul urges the Thessalonians to pray that God would cause his word, the gospel, to work with irresistible power in the lives and hearts of sinful men and women in Corinth. Pray, Paul is saying, that the warmth of the gospel would melt the ice-cold hearts of pagans in Corinth and cause them to be alive to God.

He also asks his Thessalonian friends to pray that the 'word of the Lord . . . might

be glorified'. What does the Apostle mean by this phrase? 'Be glorified' is normally an expression used with reference to God or Christ.³ Here, though, it appears to refer to the way the gospel is received and treated. Pray, Paul asks, that the word of God might be received with reverence and obeyed. The phrase 'just as it is with you' would remind the Thessalonians of the way that they had received the word of God:

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe (1 Thess 2:13).

Pray, Paul requests the Thessalonian believers, that the Corinthians might receive God's word in just the same way. Paul's request here reflects the conviction that, as John Calvin would later state:⁴ 'As God alone is a fit witness of himself in his word, so also the word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. . . . (Scripture) seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit.'

In one word, for what is Paul asking? *Revival!*⁵ He is pleading that God would sovereignly move in the hearts of unbelievers in Corinth and give them a hunger for the word of God, give them a love for it, cause them to reverence it, and eagerly embrace its truth about themselves and about Christ. The very way that Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for this work of God shows his clear awareness that revival does not come through human engineering, but is a sovereign work of God in response to the prayers of his people. Revival, or renewal, is God's work, and unless God draws men and women to himself, none will be converted. Does that mean then that we sit back, put our feet up, and do nothing? By no means, Paul says. Pray!

Pray that God the Holy Spirit would clear away the fog that hides people from the truth of the gospel, that he would show sinners their sin and rebellion before God and melt their icy hearts, that they would be moved to cry out to Christ for salvation.

Paul's second request concerns the opposition shown to the gospel.

And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith (2 Thess 3:2).

Paul's second request is closely bound up with the first, for wherever the Spirit makes the truths of the gospel relevant and alive, there will be opposition. Pray, Paul asks his Thessalonian brothers and sisters, that he and his companions, Silas and Timothy, 'may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men'. Paul has in mind some specific adversaries of the gospel. Turning to Acts 18, we find them identified in verses 5-6. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'

Pray, Paul asks, that this opposition will not hinder the spread of the faith.⁶

2. Revival and its Fruit

Did God answer these prayers of the Thessalonian believers on behalf of Paul's mission in the city of Corinth and if so, how? For the answer to the second request one can look at Acts 18:12-16: And when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, 'This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.' And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews,

'If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters.' And he drove them from the judgment seat.

Paul's request that he and his companions be 'freed from unreasonable and wicked men' found a clear answer in Gallio's refusal to listen to the Jewish charge against Paul. Gallio was the most powerful Roman politician Paul had met to this point in his life; as the brother of Seneca, who was the tutor of the emperor Nero, Gallio's decisions carried great weight.⁷ By refusing to involve the Roman state in what he considered to be an internal Jewish quarrel, Gallio set an important precedent which would allow the Church to expand without interference from the Roman state, at least for another 15 years or so. As believers prayed in Thessalonica, God moved in the halls of power and caused a pagan Roman governor, Gallio, to show favour to his man in Corinth, Paul. Even though Gallio did this cynically it allowed the gospel free course in the city. No wonder that Paul, a number of years later, urged prayer for those in authority as a priority of the Church (1 Tim 2:1-2). The prayers of God's people are intertwined by God's grace in his sovereign purposes in human history.

But what of the other prayer request — that revival would come to Corinth? Again, look at Acts 18: When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus,

one who worshipped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptised (Acts 18:5-8).

A multitude of Corinthians were saved, including Crispus, the leader or ruler of the synagogue, who would have been responsible for arranging the services of the synagogue and taking care of the synagogue building. Further evidence of the way that God moved at Corinth is found in the text which was cited at the beginning of this article:

Namely, that every kind of sordid and scandalous sinner had been brought to repentance, justification and sanctification, a fact further attested to by the testimony of Acts 18:9, where we are told that Paul was assured that God had many people in the city of Corinth.

Here is a graphic description of the depth of the Holy Spirit's work. J. B. Phillips, who penned a scintillating paraphrase of the New Testament, says of verse 11 in his autobiography, *The Price of Success*: 'I think that this single sentence is one of the most important ever written.'⁸ One can see why he came to this conclusion when verses 9-10 are studied in their historical context and it is seen what God did in the lives of the Corinthian believers. The sexually immoral, those involved in the worship of false gods, those who were adulterers, male homosexuals and their effeminate lovers, thieves, those whose religion was the acquisition of money and possessions, alcoholics, those whose mouths regularly spewed forth abuse and slander, swindlers — none were able to stand before the irresistible Breath of God:

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:11).

They were cleansed from their guilt and shame, and their sins, like filth, had been washed away. Those who had devoted themselves to sin and shameful deeds were now set apart to be used for God's glory. They were clothed in the seamless robe of Christ's righteousness. This is the fruit of revival!

Application for us today

God does not promise that wherever there is prayer for revival there will be revival.⁹ But 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 and Acts 18 do demonstrate what is generally the relationship between prayer and revival: no prayer, no revival. This is a truism which finds ample confirmation in a number of other Scriptural texts. For instance, the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, though secured by the sufferings of Christ, was a donation given to believers who 'continued with one accord in prayer and supplication' (Acts 1:14). Again, in Ezekiel 36:37, God's people are encouraged to pray for the restoration of their nation, even though the previous verses, verses 33-36, indicate that this restoration was something God had already sovereignly ordained.¹⁰

Church history also bears witness to the importance of prayer in relationship to revival. For example, prior to the evangelical revivals of the eighteenth century there were some Puritan pastors like Cotton Mather (1663-1728) who had literally spent days and nights praying for worldwide spiritual awakening. Mather, for instance, was convinced that the vitality of the Church in any era was ultimately dependent on the Holy Spirit's sovereign power. He thus emphasised that the most significant practical response to spiritual decline was concerted prayer. As he stated in *The Nets of Salvation* (1704):¹¹

Praying for souls is a main stroke in the winning of souls. If once the Spirit of grace be poured out upon a soul, that soul is won immediately. . . . Yea, who can tell,

how far the prayers of the saints, and of a few saints, may prevail with heaven to obtain that grace, that shall win whole peoples and kingdoms to serve the Lord? . . . It may be, the nations of the world would quickly be won from the idolatries of paganism, and the impostures of Mahomet, if a spirit of prayer were at work among the people of God.

In a later work, *Suspiria Victorum* (1726), Mather suggested the establishment of a monthly midweek prayer meeting for revival. Now, Mather's suggestion received its most far-reaching application in 1784, when a group of English Calvinistic Baptists, acting upon the proposal of John Sutcliff (1752-1814), pastor of the Baptist Church in Olney, Buckinghamshire, established a regular prayer meeting for revival on the first Monday evening of every month.¹² Eight years later William Carey (1761-1834), a former member of the Baptist Church in Olney, could state of these prayer meetings:¹³

I trust our monthly prayer-meetings for the success of the gospel have not been in vain. It is true a want of importunity too generally attends our prayers; yet unimportunate and feeble as they have been, it is to be believed that God has heard, and in a measure answered them. The churches that have engaged in the practice have in general since that time been evidently on the increase; . . . there are calls to preach the gospel in many places where it has not been usually published; yea, a glorious door is opened, and is likely to be opened wider and wider. . . . These are events that ought not to be overlooked; they are not to be reckoned small things; and yet perhaps they are small compared with what might have been expected, if all had cordially entered into the spirit of the proposal, so as to have made the cause of Christ their own.

Over the next few decades these churches continued to pray and a rich measure of revival came to many of them. They learned from first hand experience the intimate relationship which the Apostle Paul draws between

revival and prayer in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2. As Thomas Blundel (*ca.* 1752-1824), a friend of both Sutcliff and Carey, stated in a sermon on this very text:¹⁴

It is chiefly in answer to prayer that God has carried on his cause in the world: he could work without any such means; but he does not, neither will he. . . . He loves that his people should feel interested in his cause, and labour to promote it, though he himself worketh all in all.

¹ *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 60.

² Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), p. 310.

³ William Neil, *The Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950), p. 187.

⁴ Institutes 1.7.4,5 (trans. Ford Lewis Battles in his and John T. McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1:79,80).

⁵ Compare the remarks of J. I. Packer, *God In Our Midst* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1987), p. 34.

⁶ The Thessalonian Church knew of such opposition from personal experience; see 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4.

⁷ On Gallio's career, see Richard N. Longenecker, 'Acts' in Frank E. Gaebelin *et al.*, eds., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 9:485.

⁸ *The Price of Success* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), p. 147.

⁹ This fact is brought out forcibly by Iain H. Murray, 'The Necessary Ingredients of a Biblical Revival', *The Banner of Truth*, 184 (January 1979), 21. This article is very helpful with regard to the whole matter of revival.

¹⁰ For other Biblical examples, see Daniel 9 and Ezra 1; Acts 4:23-31. See also Iain H. Murray, 'Prayer and Revival', *The Banner of Truth*, 132 (September 1974), 20.

¹¹ Cited Richard F. Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather. Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1979), p. 244.

¹² For a fuller account, see Michael Haykin, 'Can we Pray and Work for Worldwide Revival? Revival — The Perspective of John Sutcliff (1752-1814)', *Reformation Today*, 104 (July-August 1988), pp. 9-17.

¹³ *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* (Leicester: 1792), p. 79, 80.

¹⁴ *The River of Life Impeded* in his *Sermons on Various Subjects* (London: J. Burditt, 1806), p. 183, 184.

We must give God no Rest!

*I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem;
They will never be silent day or night.
You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest,
and give him no rest
till he establishes Jerusalem
and makes her the praise of the earth (Is 62:6,7).*

In viewing the future glory of the Church, Isaiah depicts her as arrayed in robes of righteousness and spiritually prospered in such a way that all nations and kings will see her glory. Her righteousness will shine out like the dawn and her salvation will be like a blazing torch. She will be a crown of splendour in the LORD'S hand (Is 62:1-5).

Today the Church worldwide is weak and struggling. In spite of that she has advanced into more places and nations than ever before. Yet at the same time she faces defeat in many ways. Often she is inept, divided and feeble. Only heaven-sent revivals around the world can change the situation and give the Church victory, making her 'the praise of the earth'.

God himself has instituted prayer as a means of grace. Although revival is usually preceded by prayer, we have in all humility to recognise that prayer too is a spiritual gift, something that cannot be artificially created or regimented. Therefore we are not to think that we can organise prayer as though we were in control. Certainly we should do all we can to make our regular prayer meetings informative, interesting and vital, at the same time seeking to stir up participation and zeal. Nevertheless true intercession cannot be measured in terms of good organisation or eloquence. The most powerful prayers have sometimes consisted of the groans of God's suffering persecuted people. What were desperate cries out of weakness proved to be the most effectual prayers (Ps 102:17; Ex 3:7; Dan 9:7-19; Neh 9:32-37). Our present weakness and discouragements may be turned to our advantage as we pray, remembering that it is the Lord's name that is at stake and his cause that is contested by the powers of evil. In our feebleness we must recall that he is strong and full of sympathy:

The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left (Deut 32:36).

and again,

*I looked, but there was no one to help,
I was appalled that no one gave support;
so my own arm worked salvation for me (Is 63:5).*

The latter quotation comes in the context of judgement which is closely connected to revival, as we have seen in the recent events in Romania.

The very ability to pray with unction and faith, is given by the Holy Spirit and although that activity largely precedes revival, it is also part of it.

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child (Zech 12:10).

Returning at this point to Isaiah 62:6,7, we can observe three salient points.

1. The watchmen are posted on the walls of Jerusalem by the LORD.
2. These watchmen believe that Jerusalem will be made a praise in the earth.
3. These watchmen are so confident that Jerusalem *will be made a praise in the earth* that they give themselves no rest in prayer, and they give the LORD no rest until he comes and makes it so.

1. The watchmen are posted on the walls of Jerusalem by the LORD

It is the LORD himself who posts the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem. The duties of a watchman are described in the commission given to Ezekiel, who was made a watchman for the house of Israel (Ez 33). Ezekiel was not only to warn all to turn from their wicked ways and so avoid death, he was also to interpret providence, such as the fall of Jerusalem to them. In other words he was to be their eyes and ears, spiritually speaking. A watchman is just that. He blows the trumpet of warning at the first sign of enemy approach. He also watches for messengers of peace. His task is not only negative, it is positive as well. The watchmen are to know the times and the needs of God's people. They are to inspire and direct. They are to call them to repentance and to prayer. They are to heed the promises and interpret them, and then plead fervently for their fulfilment.

2. These watchmen believe that Jerusalem will be made a praise in the earth

These watchmen posted on the walls by the LORD believe that, in spite of all the weakness and smallness of the cause they represent, the glory of the Messiah is bound up in it. They know that is the absolute determination of the LORD they serve to promote the glory of his Son. In spite of all his enemies, he will make his cause and their cause the praise of the earth. These watchmen are interpreters of God's promises. They see that following the death and resurrection of the Messiah, he is exalted to the highest place from which he will exercise his power on earth until his enemies will be made his footstool (Ps 110:1). Then he will appear in his great second coming and utterly destroy our worst enemy which is death (1 Cor 15:25,26).

Having bound Satan, that strong man, this mighty Lord of life despoils his kingdom, so locking him up that he is no longer able to deceive the nations (Rev 20:1-3). The consensus of expositors is that Revelation 20:1-6 describes the whole period from Christ's first coming to his second coming and that 1,000 years is a symbolic expression of the fullness of that time. During that whole period all God's people, united to him by faith, reign with Christ. His cause is theirs, his victory is theirs too. When his cause is shamed, they too are shamed. The Son of God did not immediately bring about the undeceiving of the nations. That is a progressive work for he will go on reigning and exercising dominion until his enemies become his footstool. Many nations today, especially Islamic nations, are locked up. They are deceived. But the watchmen must give the LORD no rest until those nations are liberated and made free for the gospel.

3. These watchmen are so confident that Jerusalem will be made a praise in the earth that they give themselves no rest in prayer, and they give the LORD no rest until he comes and makes it so

Note that these watchmen are motivated by the promises of God. It is precisely because they believe that the LORD has promised that Jerusalem will be made a praise in the earth that they give themselves no rest about the matter.

We are not to think of these watchmen as obsessed with one idea only. Ezekiel was a watchman, so was Daniel. They were exceedingly hard worked. Ezekiel was a busy pastor, Daniel a high ranking statesman. Few in this world are more pressed than men of that calibre. Yet we can see from the Scriptures that they always bore on their hearts the state of God's cause. That was uppermost in their minds and prominent in their prayers. Our daily prayers compass many burdens as we seek faithfully to remember churches, situations and individuals. This inevitably requires discipline and order if we are to have meaningful prayer lives. Yet such is our desire for the glory of our triune God that we are incessant, or should be incessant, in our prayers for revival. Is that so? The very Word of Jahweh requires that it be so. He says: 'Give yourselves no rest until he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth!' That is, take my promises seriously! Do not give up!

We are to remember what our Lord said about the persistent widow. Her cause was a just one, she had a right to ask. She knew that and she kept asking without giving up. In present day terms imagine someone being telephoned every day about a problem; whether at office or at home there is no escape. This is just too much. Even though he is a worldly man, not a God-fearer and does not really care about the outcome, he will grant what is requested to get rid of the nuisance.

We come to One who does care and who is just. Our cause is righteous and concerns our great, omnipotent God who loves us and is concerned for us in a most fatherly way. We often miss the point of what Jesus says in this illustration: 'Will he keep on putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.' But sadly, the fact is that few are like that woman who kept up with her request. Our Lord asks the question: 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:8). The question surely, in the context, is: will he find that kind of persevering believing faith like that of the widow woman? The coming referred to need not be the great final second coming because the Lord also comes to the earth in judgements and revivals. The verb used is a common one for coming (*elthon*) and is not one which is necessarily associated with the great unveiling or the final appearing of Christ. Peter speaks of persevering through suffering, so that when the Lord visits us on the day of revival there will be those who, coming to faith, will give him glory for the testimony of faithful believers (1 Pet 2:12).

Whenever he comes, even if it is today, will he find *that* faith, the faith which perseveres, the faith of this widow? (See Hendriksen's commentary on Luke.) And if we do apply the text to the final second coming of our Lord, it certainly would not mean that there will be no Christians on the earth, but rather that cold winds might be blowing, as they were when the letter to the Hebrews was written to warn against apostasy. Will there then be that living tenacious faith that believes absolutely and which keeps on unflinchingly without giving up?

Not to give ourselves rest implies that we are to take the promises of God very seriously. We are never to give up on them. Moreover we must not tire or relent in our prayers. As watchmen we must be very well informed about the needs of God's cause and exceedingly persistent in our intercessions.

But will this not be tedious? Surely we must not be repetitious? Won't the Lord become bored with our incessant petitioning? His answer is clear; he says, 'You who call on the name of the LORD, give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.' Only when he has accomplished that, need you think about giving up. We are to be scrupulous about the meaning of his Word. He says *the* praise of the earth, not *a* praise of the earth. We are not to be content with a remnant mentality. It simply is not good enough that true Christianity is relegated to the league of queer cults and sects, and certainly not good enough that in some nations, for example, in Italy, adherents of cults and sects outnumber Bible believers. Only powerful heaven-sent revivals of the kind that have already adorned the history of the Church can possibly redress the situation worldwide today.

Reformation on the Road!

Graham Heaps



It is estimated in South Africa that over 300 people are killed on the roads every time there is a holiday weekend. It would appear that most deaths occur because of badly maintained Kombis which are used as taxis. Sixteen people are transported at a time, often by unlicensed drivers. The above scene is one in which a fire brigade is being used to pull a Kombi out of a cactus plant. Happily there was only the driver and no passengers. The vehicle went out of control due to a burst tyre. The cactus was a lifesaver as it softened the impact. In Zimbabwe the difficulty of obtaining new tyres causes many accidents. Reformation on the road includes not only our attitudes in driving but also the careful maintenance of our vehicles.

1 Corinthians 10:31 tells us, 'So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.' Everyone would concede that a considerable part of our time is spent at meals. In our modern age many spend much time in travelling to places of employment or in taking their children to and from school, not to mention longer journeys for other reasons. Since so much time is spent on the road it is worth our while to examine ourselves whether we also drive to the glory of God.

Two principles are relevant.

The first is: *A Wholehearted Obedience to the Law of the Land.*

Many laws have been established by the government (Rom 13:1) for the safety of drivers. Christians require by way of example to heed these laws (1 Pet 2:13-17).

If we consider this in more detail it will mean first of all that we heed the speed limits. It is quite common for people to ignore these limits and to criticise them as unreasonable. However the reason for their imposition is an obvious one,

namely, to protect the lives of children and elderly people in particular, since adequate time must be allowed to come to a halt in an emergency, which from proven experience is not possible at higher speeds in built-up areas. On motorways, where there is better visibility, everyone can appreciate that higher speeds are warranted. It is very common, unfortunately, to find that professing Christians are careless about safety, which the law is designed to ensure.

Other laws are also to be heeded, namely, those which relate to the condition of the cars we drive. It is rightly regarded as a serious offence against the law to drive with worn tyres. The penalty for breaking this law is fairly severe, just as it is for driving a car which has not passed its road safety test. These laws should not be regarded as unreasonable, since in so many cases fatal accidents have taken place because of their neglect.

The second principle which should be observed is to have *A Wholehearted Regard for Other Drivers*.

Do you have an attitude of love and care for others on the roads? Is your driving characterised by a self-denying love for other road users or is it marked more by selfishness, aggression and intolerance? Just what does it mean to drive with genuine concern for others? Surely if we are to drive to the glory of God then we will be careful to safeguard pedestrians and not to take risks at zebra crossings. Also we will try to let other vehicles out of side roads where they could easily be trapped. If the Lord's people do not show such consideration then who will?

Driving to the glory of God also means being patient with the shortcomings of other drivers. It is common to react impatiently when others offend us inadvertently. We need not make a fuss about it, especially since we cannot say that we are without our own shortcomings and errors in our conduct on the highway. Again, when we are at fault and others react against us should we not take a humble and apologetic attitude, rather than being aggressive as is so common today?

If we are to drive to God's glory then we need to follow simply principles to avoid temptation. One of the most basic is to allow ourselves adequate time to reach our destination so that we are not pressed to break speed limits in order to keep appointments. Also it helps foster attitudes of self-criticism in seeking to attain high standards in driving.

Yet another important factor is consideration for passengers, who are often nervous. The thoughtful driver will not only drive carefully but reassure those passengers who may be nervous.

We will conclude at the point where we began. An average driver will spend 300 hours a year in the driver's seat. Surely this factor should enforce the need for reformation on the road so that in all things we may glorify our God.

News

Nepal

At the end of February, medical missionary friends wrote from Kathmandu:

‘The young man lay on the bed in the emergency room at Patan Hospital, panting for breath. He had been shot by police during a demonstration. The bullet had passed just two inches from his heart and had gone on out through his back. The tragic confrontation between demonstrators and police has erupted since Sunday, February 18th, which was a national holiday called Democracy Day.

However, with political parties banned and tight censorship on newspapers, many people feel there is little sign of democracy to celebrate! The king is an absolute monarch who has said there will be no change in the system and no discussion with, or recognition of, the opposition. Consequently hundreds of students and politically active people have been put into jail since the crisis has started. The streets are patrolled by riot police wearing tin helmets and padded vests. There is an air of change coming in this city. But what change will eventuate? We are praying for a responsible government, accountable to the people. We are also praying for greater freedom of religion.

Just a few days before Christmas two old friends were imprisoned by police. They had both been convicted of changing their religion to Christianity some time ago. But it is only now that they have been taken into custody. They have sentences of 13 months and 12 months respectively. Several friends supply them with food as the government rations are inadequate. Nevertheless, we hear that they are both in good spirits, although they are not allowed a Bible in the prison. Please pray for these men.’

Since that time continued demonstrations culminated in another tragedy when at least fifty lost their lives in a similar confrontation. This time however, the tables were turned and within two days curfews were lifted, political parties unbanned and elections promised. As yet the situation is far from clear especially with regard to the Christians. We need to continue to pray for believers in this troubled land.

Texarkana, Arkansas, USA

Pastor Randy Booth has written to describe a Concert of Prayer gathering which took place on February 16th and 17th. Pastors and elders along with several other men from ten churches and five states, about 50 in all, engaged in two sessions of prayer. The first on the Friday evening was of three hours duration and on Saturday morning three and a half hours. Pastor Andy Hamilton took the lead at the beginning to provide directives concerning the need for clarity, brevity and fervency in prayer. These times were well structured into thirty minute segments, beginning with prayers of thanksgiving and then moving progressively to confession, family, local church, national and world missions and revival. Each session began with the reading of Scripture, a hymn, and then men leading in prayer. There were short breaks taken during the two sessions. Pastor Booth testifies to very real benefit accruing from this spiritual exercise and urges that others should implement similar occasions for special prayer for revival in our day. He reports of his own congregation that there has been encouragement by way of deep conviction of sin and conversions.

A Downgrade in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa

Under the mantle of scholarship a tidal wave of Liberalism has engulfed the main Dutch Reformed Church in South

Africa (NG – Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk). It is reported that there is not one seminary in the Pretoria faculty who is not liberal in theology. Stellenbosch which was for generations a bastion for the truth is reported to be even more liberal in its theological teaching than Pretoria. Bloemfontein has for many years been regarded as more conservative but has now been sold out to Liberalism. Worst of all is UNISA (University of South Africa with its headquarters just outside Pretoria). UNISA is so extreme that it is feared even by moderates. The idea of a literal devil, or of hell, is scorned as medieval thinking which is employed to make people fear. Most tragic is the fact that there is no one like C. H. Spurgeon who is able or willing to blow the trumpet like a watchman on the walls of Zion. Spurgeon sounded the alarm and blew the trumpet when he saw that Modernism had not only infiltrated but taken over the Baptist Union. The Baptist Union was sold out to Modernism just as the DRC in South Africa is today. I spoke to a Dutch Reformed minister about the situation and suggested to him that this is the worst judgement ever to hit South Africa. He agreed with that statement

entirely. If the ministry of the gospel is destroyed the Holy Spirit moves out, regeneration ceases, and the churches continue as empty shells to be used for political purposes and to support the ministers of Baal who preach no more than pathetic moralisms from the Bible.

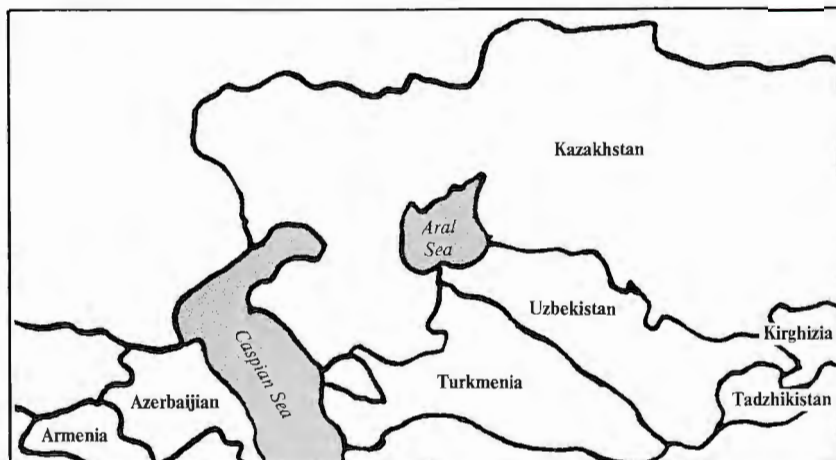
What of the much smaller more conservative Dutch Reformed Church, Die Gereformeerde Kerk, which is about one fifth the size of the aforementioned NG Kerk? Well informed ministers on the inside of that denomination greatly fear that Liberalism has been making inroads into their principal seminary which is in Potchefstroom. During the last five years Reformed men from the USA, including Jay Adams, have been invited to minister in Die Gereformeerde Kerk. Also on the brighter side there is a group of about 200 in Potchefstroom who are committed to pray for revival in the form of a Concert of Prayer. With a situation so desperate nothing but revival will save South Africa. The Reformed Baptist churches have a significant role in the present situation to minister to DRC believers who complain that they hear nothing but Liberalism and politics from their pulpits!



Martin and Beryl Holdt feeding their sheep. There is a parable here. The principal task of pastors is to feed the lambs and the sheep. When that main work is neglected because of too much administration (Acts 6:2), there is always unhappiness. Some pastors avoid the hard grind of the study and substitute entertainment for feeding the sheep. The sheep shown above were interested in food not entertainment. Unfortunately human sheep are stupid because too often they prefer amusement instead of the discipline of hearing and doing the Word of God. When the sheep lose their appetite for the Word they are spiritually sick.

People in the Shadow of Death

Getting the Gospel to the Uzbeks¹



Islam, the world's fastest growing religion, also has a strong influence on key parts of the U.S.S.R., including Uzbekistan in Soviet Central Asia. Rare is the Muslim who has heard the Gospel, and even rarer the one who gives his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Former prisoner Sergei Bogdanov, who lives in Uzbekistan's fertile Fergana Valley, prays that the Lord will use him to reach the Uzbek people in the small villages. In July 1986, at the age of 32, Sergei was arrested and sentenced to two years in bonds for his Christian activities. Since his release, this father of six spends his free time witnessing to his Muslim neighbours.

Strong cultural and religious traditions make Sergei's mission field especially complex. He discussed his lay ministry in a recent interview.

Can you, as a Russian, freely enter Uzbek villages?

I frequently visit the villages. The

Uzbeks are very hospitable, but you must pay careful attention to their customs. To gain access to their home, first you go to the front gate, but you never cross into the yard. You stand by the gate and shout, "Anybody home?" You might have to keep shouting that for a long time if the house is set quite a distance back from the gate, but you don't dare enter until the man hears you, makes his way to the gate, acknowledges you, greets you, and invites you in. To enter any other way shows great disrespect for the Uzbek.

The Uzbek asks, "What business do you have?" And I answer, "Oh, I have very important business!" This conversation takes place, of course, in the Uzbek language, which really warms his heart. All Uzbeks speak Russian, but it's very special for them when a European Russian speaks in their native tongue.

Then the Uzbek asks, "Are you Russian or Tartar?" (Although Tartars are Muslim, their features don't always

reveal their roots since over the years many have intermarried with Russians.) ‘Russian!’ I answer. ‘So why are you speaking in Uzbek?’ ‘I like speaking your language,’ I say. ‘Well, then come in. We’ll have some tea.’

My host seats me at the table and tells his wife and children to bring the customary green tea and some sweets. Although the home is equipped with a gas stove, the tea is always prepared on a special coal fire. When the tea is ready, it’s served in a special cup called a *pial*.

A genuine Uzbek will serve himself and as many as three or even four guests from one *pial*, although he really has enough to go around. If he serves you a full *pial* of tea, this indicates that you should drink it and leave: there’s something about you he doesn’t like and he doesn’t want to talk any more: However, if he pours just a little in the *pial*, that’s a sign that he respects you. He sips a little, then serves me a little, holding his right hand to his heart and bowing slightly. Why does the Uzbek drink first? He’s showing that the tea is safe to drink. Sharing the cup back and forth, this tea drinking could continue all afternoon a sip at a time. It is also a test. He’s checking to see if I will drink after him from the same cup. When I do, it is the beginning of a real friendship.

After we finish our tea, the sweets are served. And only after we’ve eaten our sweets does the real conversation begin. ‘How can you, a Russian, believe in God?’ The Uzbek is amazed.

So I tell him about Jesus Christ. An evangelist has never been in this village and no one has ever heard of Jesus Christ, so the Uzbek is very interested in what I have to say.

Why is it important to observe Uzbek customs?

In the book *Share Your Faith With a*

Muslim, the author stresses the importance of learning the language and customs of the people to whom you want to witness. We Russians have lived among the Uzbeks for many decades, yet we never wanted to learn their customs or language. We were concerned only about maintaining our own faith, but now our churches are trying to reach the Uzbeks for Christ.

What are some other Uzbek customs?

Well, when first meeting an Uzbek, it is very important to shake his hand. Simply saying hello is unacceptable. If there’s a group of twenty, you must greet each one with a handshake. In Uzbek society, men and women never shake hands in greeting. They merely nod their heads and ask, ‘Are you feeling fine?’

Uzbeks really respect the elderly. In any group, it’s important for them to know right away who is the oldest so they’ll know how to treat that person. If you’re older, they treat you with greater respect, and at the end of every sentence they add a word that means ‘big brother’. If you’re younger, they say, ‘little brother’.

For example, one of my Uzbek friends always calls me ‘Sergei atya’ which means ‘big brother Sergei’ because I’m older. In the Bible it says to stand up before an older person and to honour the elderly. In this we Russians and other people are backward.

Uzbeks also have a reverent attitude toward bread. Russians are often careless with bread, throwing a stale piece into the garbage. An Uzbek will always find a place to set the bread so that birds or small animals may find and eat it.

Cultural traditions are probably best preserved in the small villages. Even

today, women in the villages don't cut their hair, but wear a long braid of up to fifteen smaller braids braided together. That is considered honourable. In the villages, the men shave their heads and wear a *tybeteika* (little embroidered cap). That's why we also wear one when we go to visit them.

So now you see that Russian believers need to reach out to Uzbeks?

Yes, and the Lord himself is prompting us to do this because the Uzbeks don't know the Good News yet. Many have never even heard of Jesus. Some Uzbeks who live in large cities have at least heard of Jesus Christ, but those who live in mountain villages have never even heard his name.

Not long ago some believers from the West came to visit us. I took them to some of the mountain villages. They remarked, 'People here still live in the 15th century. Everything is so primitive!' The Uzbeks live off the land and go down to the cities only to buy sugar and clothing.

The Bible hasn't been translated into their language, and we haven't been involved in evangelising them. But now we are. I don't know what their Muslim teachers will say, although this hasn't become a problem for us yet because there haven't been any conversions resulting from our witness. The people we visit still go to the mosques.

How do the Uzbeks relate to Islam, their national religion?

Nominally. It's become fashionable to

go to the mosque. Even the young people go, though they never used to. It used to be that only the elderly would go to the mosque on Fridays. As in all Eastern cultures, the bazaar is the city's trade and cultural centre and it's right next to the mosque. For Muslims, Friday is the holy day. At rush hour on Fridays, crowds flood to the mosque. Even traffic stops for the crowds headed for the mosque.

How do you relate to the Uzbeks' spiritual leaders?

If I do not show respect to the Muslim leaders, I will lose all contact with the very people I'm trying to reach. It is forbidden to say anything bad about the mullah. Yet we must tell them that Mohammad was wrong, and since that is always received as an insult, we walk a very fine line. We have seen very little results so far in our witness. The Uzbeks accept us, listen willingly, and agree that God is God. But when we try to explain the gospel, they tell us they have the Koran. These people today are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. God's light has not yet shined upon them.

Approximately 16 million people live in Uzbekistan. Please pray for Sergei and other believers in the Central Asian republic as they take the gospel to the Muslim people.

¹ Published with permission of the Russian Gospel Ministries, Inc.

Bearing One Another's Burdens

'Bear One Another's Burdens': Galatians 6:1-5

An exposition by Don Garlington

In this the first of two articles on this theme we consider the context of Paul's exhortation concerning love as the fulfilment of the Law.

Galatians is arguably the most intense of Paul's letters, both doctrinally and in tone. Because of its decidedly polemical character, it pinpoints as none of the other epistles the bone of contention between the apostle and his judaising opponents. Among the most important insights offered by Galatians is Paul's method of dealing with the errors of the circumcision party, which becomes evident when we read his letter *backwards* as well as forwards.¹ That is to say, the *practical consequences* of the Judaisers' position is brought to the fore in the exhortations of chapters 5 and 6. Accordingly, the theological themes developed in chapters 1-4 are to be interpreted in light of Paul's parting 'word of exhortation'.² Our special interest is in the pastoral situation depicted in 6:1-5: the restoration of the offending brother in a spirit of gentleness. However, to grasp Paul's intention, it is necessary, first of all, to set the backdrop and context of his injunction to bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.

One of the conspicuous themes of the concluding section of the epistle is Paul's depiction of Christianity as a religion of love.³ According to Paul's portrait, the false teachers in Galatia 'bite and devour one another' (5:15); in spite of their claims, they do not abide by 'all things written in the book of the law' (3:10) because they have neglected the principal part — *love* (cf. Matt 23:23). Over against them, 'the whole law' for the believer is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (5:14). For the Judaisers circumcision was the acid test of one's loyalty to the God of Israel. However, for the Christian circumcision now counts for nothing; what matters in the new creation is faith working through love (5:6; cf. 6:15) and serving one another through love (5:13). For this reason love heads the list of the fruit of the Spirit (5:20). If one walks by the Spirit (5:25), instead of being conceited and provoking others (5:26), one will bear the brother's burden and so fulfil the law of Christ (6:1-2). Even this sketch of the love motif in Galatians informs us that the theology of the new creation was important to Paul because *the lovelessness of the Judaisers was the product of their exclusivistic theology*.

The same perspective is evident in Romans, particularly in chapters 12-15. Having laid the salvation-historical basis for the mutual reception of Jew and Gentile in chapters 1-11, Paul comes in the final chapters to speak directly of the social ramifications of believers in one church. Therefore the practical directives of these chapters bring to the fore the very genius of the Christian Church as it consists of peoples of divergent backgrounds inseparably joined in the one body of Christ. In the words of H. Strohl:

They are the charter of the new humanity. They indicate the relations which love has created among the different members of the body of Christ. Everywhere the

dominant idea is that the (individual) man forms part of a whole; he never lives alone in the world, but is joined by the lines of a close solidarity to others with whom he shares in responsibilities and blessings.⁴

Paul speaks explicitly of love in 13:8-10. Instead of being overcome with evil (i.e., the evil of seeking vengeance, 12:21), the Christian is to leave the debt of love outstanding,⁵ thus fulfilling the law. (That such a reminder was necessary for the Romans becomes evident in chapters 14-15.) Verse 8a is written directly in view of verses 6-7. In other words, although there are debts which are never to be left outstanding, there is one debt which is always to be left outstanding – the debt of love: we are always to owe our brethren this debt which can never be fully paid. But almost paradoxically, verse 8b explains that the unpaid debt of love is the fulfilment of the law: what from one point of view is an outstanding debt is, from another, a full payment to the law. Note how 8b is answered by 10b: the two in combination give us the essence of Paul's commendation of love. We are reminded again (from Gal 5:6, 14-15, 20,22; 6:1-2) that love characterises the community of the new creation and is the outgrowth of the obedience of faith, which alone satisfies the demands of the law. Both interesting and significant is the fact that the 'works of the flesh' in Galatians 5:19-21 are mainly attitudes and activities which are disruptive of the life of love and fellowship. As such, they find an important point of contact with Romans 2:8: the divisiveness so characteristic of those who 'disobey the truth' represents a return to moral chaos, a reversal of God's creation plan for his people.

It is in contrast to Paul's characterisation of the new covenant as a community of love that we are to understand one of the New Testament's most fundamental complaints against then contemporary Judaism. To appreciate the issue at stake, it is necessary to take into account the 'theology of zeal' which originated in the intertestamental period. In brief, the Maccabean 'zealots', the forerunners of the first-century group bearing the actual name, are consistently marked out as defenders of the Jewish way of life as embodied in the law of Moses. Not only so, they were ready not only to die for the purity of the covenant but to kill for it as well – and they did just that.⁶ Philo tells us the 'zealots for the law' were merciless to any who would subvert the ancestral ways. One of the Dead Sea Scrolls characterises the righteous man as one who is 'to bear unremitting hatred towards all men of ill repute'.⁸ Paul himself was once such a 'zealot' (Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:6).⁹ To those 'zealous for the law' Christianity appeared to subvert loyalty to Judaism and was for that reason rejected by the mass of first-century Jews. As Martin Hengel puts it:

That it was misunderstood from the Jewish side at that time as a new sect urging apostasy from the law and assimilation is indirectly the last and most grievous legacy of those Jewish renegades who, between 175 and 164BC, attempted to do away with the law and 'make a covenant with the people round about'. The zeal for the law aroused at that time made impossible all attempts at an internal reform of the Jewish religion undertaken in a prophetic spirit, as soon as the nerve centre, the law, was attacked.¹⁰

It is in opposition to such zeal for the law, and its by-product of hatred for anyone not belonging to Israel (or even specific groups within Israel) that the

New Testament sets forth love not only as the ideal of the new creation but the actual fulfilment of the law. Much has been written in recent days on the law and its fulfilment.¹¹ Without prolonging that discussion, we wish merely to state the obvious: *the law of Christ (Gal 6:2) is to be fulfilled by love and cannot be fulfilled without it.* Over against zeal for the paternal traditions which used to characterise his own life as a Pharisee (Gal 1:14), Paul specifies that the irreducible minimum between his gospel and the ‘other gospel’ of the Judaisers (1:6) is love which fulfils the law (of Christ). Among many things which could be said, we note with V. P. Furnish:

Paul’s preaching of love does not just stand alongside his emphasis on justification by faith but is vitally related to it. To believe in Christ means to belong to him, and to belong to him means to share in his death and in the power of his resurrection. Thereby one’s whole life is radically reoriented from sin to righteousness as he is freed from bondage to himself and placed under the truly liberating dominion of God’s grace.¹²

It is precisely here that 6:1-5 enters the picture. Paul envisages the reality of sin and restoration from sin. However, the all important question is, How am I to engage in this work? or, With what attitude am I to approach the unpleasant but necessary ministry of mending a disjointed member of the body of Christ? This way of phrasing the matter implies that it is not enough simply to rebuke a person and bring him/her to account: *the manner in which sin is dealt with makes all the difference.*

We recall another injunction of Paul’s: ‘*Speaking the truth in love, let us grow up unto Christ, who is the head*’ (Eph 4:15). The circumcision party, no doubt, was capable of speaking the truth (at least as they saw it). Yet we were led to believe that, because of their lovelessness, they treated truth, for all practical purposes, as an abstraction: people and their feelings were a secondary issue to them. Certainly the variety of teacher encountered in 2 Corinthians was not above using the following tactics to intimidate and subdue the people of God: ‘For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face’ (literally!) (2 Cor 11:20).

Acts 15:5 informs us that these Jewish ‘Christians’ who insisted on circumcision for salvation were of the party of the Pharisees. This in itself is instructive because, in the words of our Lord, we are to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Matt 16:6). Though the historical Pharisees have been dead for centuries, they continue to exert their pervasive influence through their spiritual descendants. If anything, such individuals are both orthodox and keen of mind (as the original Pharisees). Yet they betray their true nature (wolves in sheep’s clothing) by their consistent treatment of people – especially those who sin – in a manner altogether contradictory to that of the great Shepherd of the sheep, who is touched by the feeling of our infirmities (Heb 4:15). Surely a sober warning for us is Paul’s prediction in Romans 12:19 of the coming wrath, which has directly in view those *within the Christian community*¹³ who have sought to avenge themselves and have, in the process, exhibited a love which is hypocritical (v. 9).

Such a one was Diotrephes (3 John 9-10), certainly one of the most formidable characters in the New Testament. In him it is possible to envisage a man of extraordinary ability and particularly leadership capacity. Furthermore John gives no hint that Diotrephes' orthodoxy was ever called into question; the disagreement between the two was not *doctrinal*.¹⁴ However, there is reason to believe that Diotrephes, for all intents and purposes, was a 'Christian Pharisee' moulded in the image of his Jewish counterparts. John's depiction of him is chilling:

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church (NIV).

Note the characteristics of this man.

(1) He loves to be first. It does not require too much imagination to deduce that Diotrephes was always calling attention to himself, if not to autobiographical details, then certainly to his virtues, abilities, and authority in the church. No doubt, his insistence in having his own way was rooted in his awareness of his gifts and of the position of high profile which those gifts had procured for him.

(2) When Diotrephes was crossed, he responded with malicious slander of other Christians: the apostle John himself did not escape the verbal barrage of this man. To say that Diotrephes 'gossiped maliciously' does not necessarily mean that he told out and out lies about people. But he did bend the truth to his own advantage, with the effect that truth was distorted, and untold damage was done to the reputation — not to mention the feelings — of many. In short, Diotrephes left behind a trail of blood — the blood of the brethren!

(3) As though this was not enough, Diotrephes fortified his own position by insulating himself from undesirables: 'He refuses to welcome the brethren. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.' Here we see precisely the opposite of Paul's exhortation to the Galatians. Instead of using church discipline to recover an errant believer, Diotrephes employed it as a tool for ridding himself of opposition. To be a friend of Diotrephes, one had to have the same enemies as Diotrephes; and those who persisted in associating with his enemies were summarily dismissed from the church: charges were made to order, and people were excommunicated — to be sure, on very plausible-sounding grounds.

There is here a matter of related interest. According to Marshall:

He (Diotrephes) represented the cause of independency at a time when the system of oversight by apostles and evangelists was beginning to be replaced by the development of independent churches, and the informal organisation of earlier days was being replaced by something more complex and formal.¹⁵

If he is right, we have fair warning against the sort of fiercely autonomous independency which refuses to be counselled (or rebuked) by sister congregations. Diotrephes was able to get away with his tyranny precisely because of his ecclesiology. In sum, we see in Diotrephes a man of great gifts and potential for good, but one who was ruled by paranoia, due mainly to the

fact that he loved himself pre-eminently and not the brethren. As Stephen Smalley puts it so well:

Like the presbyter (i.e. John), he was opposed to the secessionists in the Johannine community and their heterodox beliefs. But he assumed a position of leadership in his congregation because of an *egocentric lust for power, which he had confused with zeal for the gospel*. As such, he had won the allegiance of the majority of his church members . . .¹⁶

No wonder John can say to his friend Gaius: 'Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is evil is not from God' (v. 11). If John's portrait of Diotrophes is arresting, these words are even more so. He implies clearly that Diotrophes, for all his orthodoxy and ability, is no Christian.

A person who does evil – such as Diotrophes – has not seen God. He has no real Christian experience, and his conversion must be judged to have been an illusion. It is clear that the lack of Christian character is to be regarded as a mark of the absence of true Christian experience. Evil, unloving conduct calls in question a person's profession to be a Christian: 'For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen (1 Jn 4:20)'.¹⁷

Sad to say, as the poor, the spirit of Diotrophes is always with us. This makes all the more imperative Paul's directive that the church conduct itself in 'a spirit of gentleness'.

¹ The approach of J. M. G. Barclay's recent volume, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988).

² In this regard Galatians resembles Hebrews in that the exhortations are not incidental to the letter's purpose but lie at its very heart and illuminate to a considerable degree its content.

³ The love theme in Paul has been treated many times. Among the best are H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 293f.; V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), pp. 181f.; *idem*, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), pp. 91f.; W. Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), pp. 211f.

⁴ Quoted by A. Feuillet, 'Le plan salvifique de Dieu d'après l'Épître aux Romains', *Revue Biblique* 57 (1950) p. 508.

⁵ C. E. B. Cranfield's translation, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), II, p. 673.

⁶ See the famous 1 Maccabees 2:23-28, modelled on the episode of Phinehas in Numbers 25 (Ps 106:30-31). Zeal for the law is a recurring theme in 1 Maccabees 2 (vv. 27, 50, 58).

⁷ *Special Laws* 2:253.

⁸ *Manual of Discipline* (1QS) 9:22 (cf. 4:4; 9:23).

See as well Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:37 (271-72); 2:41 (292).

⁹ See further R. N. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprinted 1976), pp. 101f.; A. J. Hultgren, 'Paul's Pre-Christian Persecutions of the Church: Their Purpose, Locale, and Nature', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976), pp. 97-111.

¹⁰ *Judaism and Hellenism* (London: SCM, 1974), I, p. 314. See Hengel's important discussion of 'Zeal as a Typical Element of Piety in Late Judaism', in *The Zealots* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), pp. 177f.

¹¹ E.g., Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, pp. 135f.

¹² *Love Command*, p. 92.

¹³ Paul's reference is to Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 32:35, spoken to *Israel* and now *applied to the church*. Leviticus 19:17-18 is particularly relevant. 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbour, lest you bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.'

¹⁴ Cf. I. H. Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 88; R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 733.

¹⁵ Marshall, *John*, 89.

¹⁶ *Word Biblical Commentary: 1, 2, 3 John* (Waco: Word, 1984), 356 (italics mine).

¹⁷ Marshall, *John*, 92.

Wicked Men are like Wicked Angels

THE GRACE OF CHRIST by William S. Plumer. Odom Publications, Keyser, West Virginia. Small size bound volume. 456 pages.

The above book is the first to be produced by this new publisher. No zip code is given in the preface so it will be necessary to track the title by writing to *Great Christian Books* (see back inside cover).

William S. Plumer was a well-known Southern Presbyterian preacher and writer who spent the last thirteen years of his life as a Professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, South Carolina. His best known writing is the large commentary on the Psalms which extends to 1,211 pages which is twice the size of the pages of the above title. Dr Plumer was a man of outstanding spiritual calibre. Those who knew him well were as much impressed by the spirituality of his prayers as by his academic ability. How sad it is that spiritual qualities are not the priority in most seminaries today.

This title *The Grace of Christ* is an easy to read exposition of the doctrines of grace. There are 58 chapters. We can never take the doctrines of grace for granted. What do we mean by the doctrines of grace? In answer to that question we could turn to Ephesians 2:1-10 and show that sinners are dead in sin and are saved entirely through God's initiative and grace and not by anything they do. Faith too is the gift of God. The new birth is an act of creation in which man contributes nothing at all. Does this mean that man is not responsible? Not at all!

The best way to believe and embrace the doctrines of grace is to come to terms with the extent of the fall of man into sin. Plumer's book begins with ten chapters on the theme of sin. Those chapters are followed by seven on the subject of grace, then four on the person and work of Christ, and seven on justification by faith. Then follows a chapter on regeneration and two on sanctification. The rest of the book concerns the believer's experience right up through death, the resurrection, the final judgement and eternal glory.

Two chapters expound the free and full invitations of the gospel to all men indiscriminately. Chapter 52 has the title, 'The doctrine of free grace is safe and reforms sinners'.

There is spiritual insight in this author which manifests itself in unusual statements. The following example in which wicked men are compared with wicked angels should illustrate this:

'In some things wicked men do what fallen angels never did. They reject mercy and grace, kindly offered to them by the Lord. Devils never did that. You say they never had the opportunity. True, but they never did it. Neither did they ever laugh at eternity, judgement and damnation. They have too fearful a sense of the wrath of God to be able to mock and jest at the most terrible things. If these things be so, then we understand something of the import of our Saviour's words to the wicked of his day: "Ye are of your father the devil, and his works will ye do." How dreadful is sin! It converts angels into devils and men into fiends. There is no unfitness in the arrangement which God has

made for having one great prisonhouse for all his incorrigible foes. The very place prepared for the devil and his angels will be the abode of finally impenitent men. How dreadful hell will be, filled up with outlaws, robbers, murderers, liars, hypocrites, ingrates, enemies of God and of all righteousness, from among angels and men. And how startling is the thought that devils have stronger emotions pertaining to religion than some wicked men. "The devils believe and tremble". How many sinners neither believe nor tremble! And how many others who seem to believe laugh at things which lay hold of

eternity!" (page 39).

There is in the style of the writing a very happy balance by way of reference to the confessions of faith and to personal testimonies. There is throughout a stress on experience and practical godliness. The book is easy to read. Only occasionally does the author use structure since his thinking flows fluently. However when necessary he employs the 1, 2, 3, 4 method well, very effectively in the chapter, 'Temptation and How to Treat it'. There he lists 16 practical instructions. This is a useful book, highly commended.

No holy angel could ever have sympathised with man, either as a sufferer or as a sinner, to such an extent as would have fitted him to be a Redeemer. Angels know not what suffering is. In their natures they are quite ignorant of what are the real feelings of men. They know nothing by experience of the natural affections of men. They understand not the hard pressure of poverty, or shame. Being holy and yet finite in their compassions, no one of them could endure the recital of our offences without utter dislike to our persons. Before he had learned half of the details and aggravating circumstances of any one's crimes, he would have turned away with unspeakable loathing from the shocking tale of human guilt. He would have said, 'Such a sinner ought to perish – must perish – I can have no sympathy with him.' It is indeed well for us that our salvation does not depend on the mercies of an angel.

Wm. S. Plumer.

Editor
Associate Editors

ERROLL HULSE, 75 Woodhill Road, Leeds LS16 7BZ
DAVID KINGDON, JOHN DAVISON, JIM VAN ZYL, S.A.,
TOM NETTLES, WAYNE MACK, U.S.A.

Rates

1 year £7.00 – 2 years £12.00
1 year £7.00 – 2 years £12.00
1 year \$12.00 – 2 years \$20.00
1 year \$12.00 – 2 years \$20.00
1 year \$13.00 – 2 years \$22.00

Subscriptions

BRITISH ISLES
IRISH REPUBLIC
AUSTRALIA
NEW ZEALAND
U.S.A.

CANADA

SOUTH AFRICA
NETHERLANDS
MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE

Agents

Lyn Hulse,
27 Woodhill Road, Leeds LS16 7BZ.
Alan Barker,
Bethany, Cartron Hill, SLIGO.
Ray Levick,
27 Coven Avenue, Bayswater North,
Victoria 3153.
Sovereign Grace Books
P.O. Box 62-159, Sylvia Park,
Auckland 6.
Great Christian Books Inc.,
1319 Newport-Gap Pike, Wilmington,
DE. 19804-2895.
Tom Lutz,
Edgewood Baptist Church,
3743 Nichol Avenue,
Anderson, IN 46011.
Bill Ascol
PO Box 552, Clinton LA 70722
Max Latchford,
6020 154A Street, Surrey, B.C.,
V3S 7H6.
Patrick Palmer,
Box 33226, Glenstantia 0010.
D. H. Gritter,
Laaghalerstraat 12
9414 AK Hooghalen.
Good News Enterprise
Beg Berkunci 210, 43409 UPM
Serdang, Malaysia.

Single copies one-sixth the above in each case which includes postage.

For airmail add £4.50 sterling equivalent p.a.

Gifts are welcomed and those who wish to support the Magazine should make out their cheques to "Reformation Today".

Bound volumes available: 37-48 £8 or \$15, 71-90 £13 or \$25, post free

cut here

**SUBSCRIPTION
FORM**

Please send to:

Name:

Address:

Reformation

Today

Bound

Volumes

Tick

1 yr	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
37-48	<input type="checkbox"/>
71-90	<input type="checkbox"/>

I enclose..... Your name and address:

Please enclose gift card Yes/No

Please send me a receipt Yes/No

RT

1990

Nº115

May - Jun

CONTENTS

- ii Editorial
- 2 Jonathan Edwards — 'theologian of revival' Editor
- 7 Jonathan Edwards — the new biography Wm. H. Kooienga
- 10 Praying for Revival — is it Biblical? Michael Haykin
- 15 We Must Give God no Rest! Editor
- 19 Reformation on the Road! Graham Heaps
- 21 News
- 23 People in the Shadow of Death
- 26 Bearing One Another's Burdens Don Garlington
- 31 Wicked Men are like Wicked Angels Editor