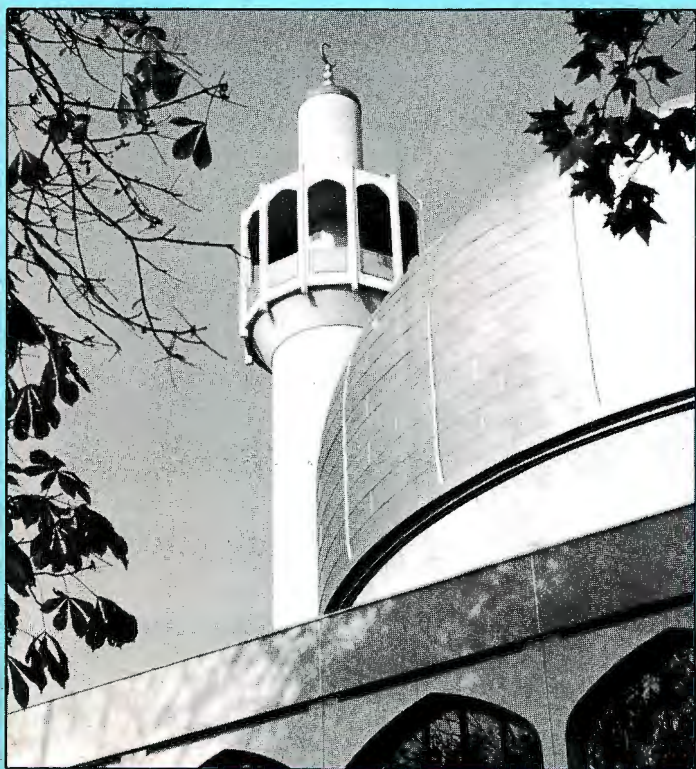

REFORMATION TODAY



MARCH-APRIL 1991

120



Grace Assembly Committee

Back three, from left to right – Brian Keen: David Knights: Alec Taylor
Centre five – Gary Brady: Nigel Lacey: Stephen Rees: Norman Foster:

John Miller

Front five – Malcolm MacGregor: Maurice Wade: Keith Johns: Geoff Thomas:
 David Ellis



Dr Don Garlington is welcomed as an associate editor of *Reformation Today*. While earning his Phd at Durham University he pastored the church at Langley Park, Durham, England. He is featured in the photo which was taken at convocation day at the Toronto Baptist Seminary in October last. With him is one of the students, Daniel Busakwe, of Northern Cape, South Africa.

Front Cover: Regents Park Mosque, London. The challenge of Islam in Britain and throughout the world is very great. See article 'The Imperative of Love', page 27. Photo by kind permission of London City Mission.

Editorial

Revival in the 20th Century

As readers will observe from the article on revival, the 20th century began with a decade of revival. A great international missionary conference took place in Edinburgh in 1910. Instead of that becoming the herald of continued dynamic advance of evangelicalism in every continent, it marked the beginning of the present day ecumenical movement. Instead of becoming the century of international revival, the 20th century became the era of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement which has advanced at the expense of truth and one which has been detrimental to the cause of the gospel. Through the ecumenical movement we stand to lose all the gains of the 16th century Reformation. What of this last decade of the 20th century? Will we see times of spiritual awakening and will the 21st century be a period of unprecedented international revival in the biblical sense of that term?

As Reformed Baptists how do we relate to the universal body of Christ of which we form a microscopic part? What are the obstacles to unity with other evangelical believers? We are closest to evangelical Presbyterians inasmuch as our churches subscribe to a Reformed Confession as many of their churches do. Separating us is the unsolved problem of baptism. Is baptism for believers only, or is it for infants as well? It is important to work together on this subject as on others. David Kingdon has continued to gather materials for his updated version of his book *Children of Abraham*. The review of the book *Reforming Infant Baptism*, in this issue is an indication of this. Eric Lane has written a fine exegetical article on the words of our Lord, 'Of such is the

kingdom of heaven' (Matt 19:14; Mk 10:14 and Lk 18:16). Awaiting publication is a 24 page treatise on infant baptism and its effects upon church membership. 'The entrants into the Church determine its character' is a principal consideration examined. The work is historical and expository in character.

Then there is the question of liberalism. Liberals use scholarship as a cloak to hide their unbelief. We believe in scholarship and appreciate very much the fruits of scholarly labour but we deplore the damage that has been done to the evangelical cause through liberalism.

Arminianism and Pentecostalism are further issues which hamper and restrict unity. These issues are discussed briefly in the article, *Revivals of the 20th Century*.

The formation of the International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists

The IFRB (see four page inset), has been formed to encourage unity among Reformed Baptists and at the same time provide a means of promoting the doctrines of grace among those who have not been exposed to what we call Confessional Christianity. By maximising our unity we not only gain the advantages of co-operation and mutual support but also become a savour of truth and life to other denominations of Christians, most of whom are struggling against the tide of apostasy. If they witness forces of self destruction at work in our ranks, that brings the truth into disrepute and tragically dismantles and destroys our cause.

Increasingly we have come to see that

while churches of all denominations are independent inasmuch as they conduct their own affairs, there is also the factor of inter-dependency. The degree to which churches everywhere depend upon each other and co-operate together in various forms of connectionalism, varies. Inter-dependency has been neglected. We are inter-dependent. In many ways we rely upon and depend upon each other. A schism in one church affects the others. A schism between two or more churches is injurious to the whole body of Christ. While all denominations seek to provide arbitration of some kind or another to settle disputes, for the most part we have none. It should be obvious that no local church can be coerced into anything. However where there is associational life or a covenant state between churches, then the moral power of commendation has to be reckoned with. Thus the Jerusalem Council could recommend decisions to all the churches. We have hardly begun to grapple with the issues of Church government but we have come to see the good sense of maximising our unity.

On the basis of Ephesians 4:4-6 we relate to all other believers in the world without exception. My unity with them is spiritually complete and eternal. However from a practical point of view with my very short span of life and limited energy I am compelled for stewardly reasons to co-operate most with those with whom I have doctrinal harmony, for doctrinal harmony lies at the foundation of practical enterprise.

With the launching of the IFRB we are publishing a short series of articles on principal subjects relating to our faith in the 20th century.

In this issue we look at martyrs of the 20th Century and revival in the 20th Century, and then cults in the 20th Century.

Possible articles *RT* 121 are as follows:

1. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a prophet of the 20th Century. (A review article of volumes 1 and 2 of the biography by Iain Murray.)
2. Saving Faith in the 20th Century
3. Ecumenism in the 20th Century
4. Scholarship and the 20th Century.

What is a Reformed Baptist?

The 1689 Confession of faith represents a three fold legacy. It is Reformed (it represents the doctrinal inheritance of the Reformation), it is Puritan (rich in its development of the Reformed doctrines applying them to the believer's experience and to the practice of the Church), it is Baptist in ecclesiology, inasmuch as it confines membership to those who have a credible profession of faith. In spite of many editions (Carey Publications have printed six of their modern English editions) and translations into other languages, most Baptists in the world do not know of its existence.

The question arises, Do you have to embrace the 1689 to be a Reformed Baptist? What if someone goes as far as Calvin in the doctrines of grace but has never read the Puritans, is that person Reformed? The answer must surely be yes. Most of us came to the doctrines of grace before we knew anything of the 1689 Confession. Those who are isolated usually struggle to a balanced view of the doctrines. That is when they most need fellowship and that is where the IFRB has an extensive potential ministry. The IFRB is deliberately wider rather than narrower as the leaders are aware of the need to promote unity in diversity. The five International Baptist conferences held every second year since 1982 at Jarvis Street, Toronto, have shown that we can hold to truth passionately and yet respect those who may vary from us on details. Obviously

Martyrs of the 20th Century

A Review Article of the book 'By Their Blood: Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century' by James and Marti Hefley, Baker Book House, 1979 reprinted 1988.

What are our most urgent needs as we stand at the end of the twentieth century? We need an absolute assurance of the sovereignty of God in history. We need too an army of willing volunteers to take the gospel to the hard and unreached areas of the world, even at risk of death. Previous generations of Protestants in England were familiar with that great legacy of the Reformation, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Records of the supernatural endurance of believers under torture and death confirmed a robust view of history: God is building his Church, and not even the most Satanic opposition can thwart his purpose. And the testimony of those who remained faithful in death provided powerful inspiration to other believers to put the interests of the kingdom first.

There could be no more salutary challenge to Christians of our genera-

tion than to work through this twentieth century continuation of Foxe's work. It is not easy or pleasant reading. Some of the most appalling brutalities in all history have taken place this century; in many cases Christians have been singled out for direct attack. Our own century has probably seen more believers slain for the sake of Christ than any other century; some even estimate more than all previous centuries combined. And the suffering goes on. The Dragon continues to make war against the offspring of the woman (Rev 12:17). The Hefleys give the grim account of the appalling torture and death suffered by tens of thousands of those who in our own century have been 'slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held' and who 'did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death' (Rev 6:9; 12:11). *(continued on next page)*

(continued from page 2)

membership of the IFRB will not be open to the occasional 'stomper' (trampler) defined as a person bent on the pursuit of a particular sectarian issue out of proportion with the great body of revealed truth.

It may take time but as far as the UK is concerned the best prognosis is for the support of the Grace Baptist churches of which there are several hundred, and also of associations such as the Northern Fellowship of Particular Bap-

tists which includes about 18 churches. The committee of Grace Assembly (see front inside cover) have knowledge of the IFRB and generally acknowledge the potential for good that it has. In the USA there is an RB association in California, the constitution of which was published in *RT* 118. All over the world multiplication continues of those who are coming into the rich inheritance of the Reformed faith and of the 1689 Confession. Let us do all we can to encourage growth and mutual edification.

What is a martyr? Strictly speaking, one who dies rather than renounce the faith. The Hefleys work with the broader definition, 'One who dies, suffers, sacrifices everything for a principle, cause etc.' (p. 8). Many missionaries in volunteering for certain fields were, and are, more likely to die from disease than from violence. Others in choosing to stay in areas of danger and conflict lost, and are losing their lives in war. And there have been many instances of genocide where Christians died along with others. In such cases it is very difficult to draw rigid distinctions between those who are 'martyrs' and those who are not. This is as much as anything the chronicle of the suffering church of the twentieth century.

But the main purpose is achieved: the Hefleys have compiled a thorough survey of those who have lost their lives because of their witness to Christ in each major part of the world (except the Western nations). The sufferings of both missionaries and national believers are described. The work is carefully documented and they provide an exhaustive (22 pages) bibliography. Helpful background information and maps are given, with brief accounts of the initial evangelisation of each area where appropriate. Unfortunately, but inevitably, some of the information in a book with such a contemporary theme dates very quickly. First published in 1979 the sections on areas such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Eastern Europe need revision. Even so the book is most useful, and stands not only as an inspiration and challenge, but as a source of much helpful prayer material. Some readers may be in the

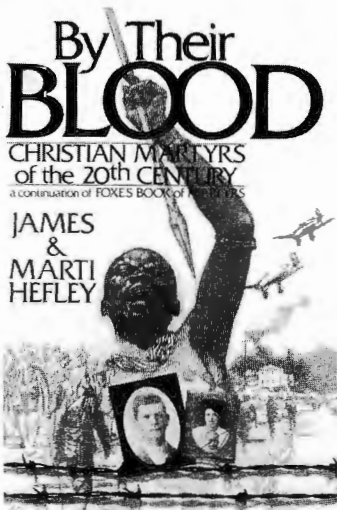
habit of praying each day for a different country from *Operation World*. In many cases the bare facts provided by that work could be valuably supplemented by the human stories in the Hefleys' description of that country which would greatly help meaningful, detailed and fervent prayer.

Revivals accompanying or following persecution

Particularly inspiring are the accounts of the grace of God when outpourings of the Spirit in revival accompanied or followed times of terrible persecution in nations such as Uganda and Ethiopia. Such was the case following the Simba rebellions in the (then) Belgian Congo when many missionaries and countless nationals perished; and also in Korea, when dreadful suffering preceded vast ingathering. Likewise in Vietnam awakening was experienced alongside the kidnapping and killing of believers by the Vietcong.

For example, the account commences in China. The Imperial Command was issued in June 1900 to exterminate the Christian religion: 'Death to the Foreign Devils!' 135 missionaries and 53 missionary children were brutally killed, along with numerous national believers. Far from exterminating Christianity:

Powerful, soul-cleansing revivals surged across north China. Missionaries confessed sins of arrogance, pride and ill feeling toward their co-workers and asked forgiveness. Chinese pastors and church leaders confessed failures to their flocks. Kinsmen who had long been estranged made tearful reconciliations. Prodigals came and



kneled at their parents' feet and asked forgiveness. Many parents asked their children for forgiveness. . . . Protestants more than doubled during the six years following the massacres (p. 41).

Forgiveness was extended to the perpetrators of the massacres by missionaries, Chinese Church leaders, and the bereaved families of missionaries. One Chinese pastor was invited to claim financial compensation as his father had been beheaded and his mother and thirteen-year-old sister hacked to death. He declined, asking only for the opportunity to go and preach Christ to the murderers (p. 42). Such testimonies made a powerful impact. The impact was also felt in the West where many volunteered for missionary service in China to take the place of those slain.

Determination to continue the work started by loved ones

Also most moving are the testimonies

of those left bereaved by the death of relatives or friends. Often widows resolve to continue the work their martyred husbands had engaged in. Hank Blood was captured in 1968 in Vietnam and died of malnutrition and pneumonia. He had been working with Wycliffe on the translation of the Bible into Mnong, and his widow Vange chose to continue that labour. Another example was the widow of Ralph Hult, an outstanding Lutheran missionary in Nigeria and Tanzania who volunteered after the death of her husband for mission service in Bolivia as matron of a home for missionary kids. As she said, 'I'm convinced that this business of taking the gospel to all the world is so important that even we grandmothers have to go' (p. 420).

Frequently the children of martyred missionaries later volunteered for service. For example little Thyra Beckman was only four when her mother and six siblings were killed by a mob in China in 1911. She and her father escaped, and she later served as a missionary in China herself.

The willingness of parents to sacrifice children, children to sacrifice parents and wives to sacrifice husbands is most challenging. For example there is the now legendary courage of Sabrina Wurmbrand, who demanded that her husband 'go wash this shame from the face of Christ' when other clergy were publicly compromising with the Romanian Communist authorities. When he responded that he would be taken away she simply replied, 'I don't need a coward.' Wurmbrand was able to rise and powerfully denounce the compromise, but from that day he was a marked man (pp. 308-9).

Holy Spirit power granted at the time of trial

The supernatural grace and courage given by the Holy Spirit at the moment of crisis is much in evidence in these accounts. Even very young people met (and are no doubt meeting) death with glorious faith. Such a one was Private 'Vanya' a young Russian tortured to death during the seventies. He testified, 'I have one higher allegiance, and that is to Jesus Christ. He has given me certain orders, and these I cannot disobey' (p. 255).

A passion for Christ's kingdom

Just one example of a believer driven on by a passion for the kingdom is William E. Simpson, missionary to the China-Tibet border. A 'missionary kid', he lost his mother and sister early on, but returned to Tibet as a young bachelor to take up an itinerant ministry among the border herdsmen. In one year he travelled thirty-eight hundred miles on horseback, writing afterwards:

All the trials, the loneliness, the heartache, the weariness and pain, the cold and fatigue of the long road, the darkness and discouragements, and all the bereavements, temptations and testings, seemed not worthy to be compared with the glory and joy of witnessing to the 'glad tidings of great joy' (p. 147).

Refusing to leave Tibet even when numerous murders were being perpetrated by Moslem fanatics, he was killed while travelling in 1932.

Quote after quote could be given to illustrate the spirit of these martyrs

and those who suffered alongside them. Nate Saint, who lost his life in Ecuador in 1956 observed, 'During the last war, we had to be willing to be expendable. A missionary constantly faces expendability' (p. 570). Bruce Porterfield, whose colleague was killed in Bolivia in 1951 expressed the faith of many:

It is for us to furrow the ground. It is for others to plant the seed and reap the harvest. And as surely as day follows night, the harvest will come. And it will be rich, the result of all the hard ploughing, sowing, and watering that has been done, in tears, heartaches, suffering and blood . . . (p. 567).

Applications

Many lessons and challenges await the reader of this book. Four applications are drawn out here:

1. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts us to remember 'those who are being mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering' (Heb 13:3). This book is recommended as a salutary reminder to such prayer. There are pleas recorded to those of us in peace and freedom — that we should not forget the plight of those less fortunate. One Bulgarian Church leader says: 'My people accept their suffering. . . . But they don't understand why their brothers and sisters in the free world seem to have forgotten them — even in their prayers' (p. 267). Cambodia fell to the Khmer Rouge in 1975. One church leader wrote to his wife, who was abroad, telling of how he and other leaders met when they knew they were facing certain death. They read John 13 and washed each other's feet. But he pleaded in the

letter: 'Tell Christians around the world not to forget to pray for Cambodia' (p. 141).

2. A remarkable feature of this work is the response to missionary martyrdoms. Time and time again, far from deterring others from taking the 'risk' of serving in dangerous areas, the example of martyrs has inspired many others to volunteer. The execution by Communists of the gifted young couple, John and Betty Stam, was used by God to move many to volunteer for service in China. Speaking of their execution, one missionary wrote: 'A life which had the longest span of years might not have been able to do one-hundredth of the work for Christ which they have done in a day' (p. 59). And when facing imminent death, often believers strengthened each other by remembering God's sustaining grace poured out on others who had given their lives.

3. This book forces us to re-evaluate our own commitment and zeal. Are our prayer meetings characterised by fervent and informed prayer for the suffering Church? For missionaries serving in situations of danger? For missionaries to be raised up who will risk their lives to reach the unreached with the gospel? Do we allow time in our meetings for carefully prepared presentation of information on the needy areas of the world? Is such information presented with genuine concern? In 1901 John Chalmers was killed by cannibals in the Pacific. Chalmers had been challenged to

missionary service as a teenager in Scotland when his minister read a missionary letter from Fiji, ending in tears and asking whether perhaps a young man present would take the gospel to the cannibals. Do our young people see such passion and concern in our meetings?

4. This book is strongly recommended as proof that zeal, passion and sacrifice for the cause of Christ are, by God's grace, 'for real' in our own century. If men and women are willing to risk their lives by enlisting for military service, then as believers we must not slip into the 'guaranteed risk free' mentality as far as Christian service is concerned. *By Their Blood* is recommended as an impetus for prayer that God would raise up another generation of believers as courageous as those commemorated in this volume. Let us pray that God would raise up many like the young John Stam, who when speaking for the class of 1932 at Moody said:

Shall we beat a retreat, and turn back from our high calling in Christ Jesus; or dare we advance at God's command in the face of the impossible? . . . Let us remind ourselves that the Great Commission was never qualified by clauses calling for advance only if funds were plentiful and no hardship or self-denial involved. On the contrary we are told to expect tribulation and even persecution, but with it victory in Christ (p. 56).

Sharon James



Visitors from Romania

*Marinella Anna Dorina Ekaterina Peter Parkinson Valentin
Rebecca Mircea Viorica*

News

Romania

Allied to Leeds Reformed Baptist church and inspired by pastor Peter Parkinson is CFLI (Caring for Life International). CFLI has just become a registered Trust in Romania, this being the first ever evangelical Trust to be registered in Romania and the first Trust to be registered in Romania for 47 years. Only a year ago that nation was tyrannised by a regime which included in its program the eradication of biblical Christianity. Careful preparatory work and research was essential and this foundational work was done by director general of CFLI, Alfred Eagers.

Eight Romanian believers (pictured above), have just spent ten days in Leeds, a time packed with training and preparation for the opening of a new children's home in Arad which is to be the home for up to forty children in four

family units. Viorica (see front cover) has overall practical care and responsibility for the children's home while Valentin is the director of CFLI in Romania.

Heavy goods vehicles have been used to transport equipment, furniture, bedding, clothing, food and medicine to equip the orphanage. Six such missions have been accomplished.

CFL (Caring for Life) is the Trust from which CFLI grew. CFL provides homes for homeless young men in Leeds. A close practical unity has developed between Leeds Reformed Baptist Church and Garston Bridge Chapel in Liverpool. Pastor Bill Bygroves, Steve Cossack and Phil Robinson of Garston, together with Graham Sharkey, Jon O'Mara, Wendy Pollard, Joanne Hulse, David Ford and Tamsin Waterhouse of

Leeds; Harold Rushbrook, Steve Wincoll, Geoffrey Whatling and Nigel Brinkley from Suffolk have all participated in driving vehicles to Romania.

It was a joy for the eight visitors to share fellowship at a Lord's Day service with the ten year old Garston assembly which now has a thriving congregation of about 300.

There is a continuing need for supplies for the new children's home at Arad, especially building and kitchen equipment. Viorica needs our prayers as she locates needy children and in some cases seeks to reunite brothers and sisters who lost their parents in the revolution. A further matter of concern is safety in travel, especially in winter. On the way to England the minibus carrying the eight visitors was struck by a large truck with such force that the seats were fractured, sending the minibus veering off down an embankment narrowly missing trees which if impacted would have been fatal to the occupants. The Romanians were wrapped in duvets to help keep out the freezing cold and this helped cushion the impact. No one was seriously injured, but the minibus was a total wreck. The party arrived in England when the country was snow bound. The only way to reach headquarters at Crag House Farm was by trudging through the snow.

A highlight of the trip was a reception at the House of Commons. Several MPs have shown interest in CFLI. One MP expressed the view that the reason for the Trust's success in caring for those whom others have been unable to help is the clear evangelical Christian basis of the work.

Information about CFL and CFLI can be obtained from Crag House Farm, Smithy Lane, LEEDS LS16 7NH (phone 0532 612131).

Mrs Lloyd-Jones

On Saturday, 9th February the funeral service of Mrs Bethan Lloyd-Jones took place at Bethel Chapel, Newcastle Emlyn. Three weeks earlier she had broken her hip in a fall, and succumbed to pneumonia.

Her grandfather, Evan Philips, had pastored Bethel Calvinistic Methodist Chapel for over 50 years. He lived from 1825 – 1907, witnessing the last two revivals in Wales of 1859 and 1904.

Pastor Vernon Higham, who preached at Dr Lloyd-Jones's funeral service in the same chapel ten years earlier, referred to a verse that she had quoted to him: Psalm 119:165, Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.

The congregation of about 100 sang hymns both in the chapel and at the snow-sprinkled graveside where she was laid to rest beside her husband.

Harrogate, North Yorkshire

After ten years of worshipping together in rented accommodation the Jennyfield Evangelical Church finally moved into its own purpose built premises on Saturday, 26th January, 1991. The church, which meets on the large Jennyfield estate to the north west of Harrogate, had been working towards this goal for the past five years.

The handsome building was designed and supervised by Roy Rayfield, one of the deacons. Much of the work was done by the members. Two-thirds of the £120,000 cost has been provided. The rest is still being sought.

A feature of the work has been the close unity and co-operation with the Leeds Reformed Baptist Church. About 250 gathered over the weekend to share in the significant occasion. It is most encouraging to observe the steady

growth of the work and the appearance of folk from the surrounding estate in the congregation.

Speakers over the opening weekend were Pastor Gareth Crossley of Wolverhampton, who was very active in the inception of the work, Peter Parkinson and Erroll Hulse.

Zambia and Africa South

Conrad Mbewe, Alfred Nyirenda, Choolwe Mwetwa and Ronald Kalifunga of Zambia recently visited South Africa to attend the annual Reformed Baptist Association meetings and to preach in South African churches. The RBA meetings took place in Newcastle, Natal, where Alpheus Sbiya pastors a Zulu church and Vernon Light an English speaking church.

It is evident from the 32 page quarterly magazine *Reformation Africa South* that the work is growing and RB unity increasing across Africa South. For instance there is an interview article with Pastor Joachim Rieck of Windhoek, Namibia, and a testimony by Emmanuel Matafwali of Zambia. The magazine is edited by three pastors, Martin Holdt, Trevor Roberts, and Brian Stone.

If readers would like to contribute funding toward expository books for Zambia a well organised scheme is operated by Pastor Ian Jemmett, 38 Kent Avenue, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8NQ. The books are published by Banner of Truth, EP, and Wakeman Trust.

Victorville, California

Pastor Steve Marquedant of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Ontario, California, writes to say that a small but dedicated nucleus of believers are involved in a church planting effort in Victorville which is about 45 miles

north of Ontario. There are about 100,000 in the area which offers considerable scope for outreach. Steve's address is 1168 East 2G2 Street, Ontario, CA 91764 Phone (714) 986-9476. The church at Ontario is one of five churches in RB association described in *RT 118*.

Operation World

Patrick Johnstone is author of *OPERATION WORLD*, a day to day guide to praying for the world, the last edition of which was published in 1986. This 500 page volume is an invaluable guide to the evangelical cause in approximately 200 nations of the world. Mrs Johnstone is receiving treatment for cancer in the spine but in spite of that has worked on a *Children's Operation World* which should be published this year. Patrick Johnstone welcomes accurate articles describing the spiritual situation in specific areas. He is now hard at work on the next edition.

Bishop David Sheppard and the Jews

In an article in *The Times* (Feb 8) the bishop suggested that there should be a renunciation of deliberately targetting Jewish people for evangelism and that this should be part of our repentance for the terrible things done to the Jews down the centuries. Jews for Jesus evangelists believe that Britain is approaching a Jesus Revolution similar to that in the US. In a letter in *The Times* (Feb 13) Moishe Rosen, Jewish born executive director of Jews for Jesus, repudiated the notion that the holocaust was a merely Christian caused problem. He pointed to the fact that hatred of the Jews stretches from Pharaoh to Haman to Hitler to Saddam Hussein. Moishe rightly insists on the distinction between evangelical and nominal Christianity. Jesus never taught that it was right to kill people who did not agree with him: he taught the exact opposite.

Carey Ministers' Conference '91

Held from January 2-4 at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Take one Irishman, Scotsman, American and Guernseyman. Add some South African and Welsh flavouring. Mix well and warm, and you have just the right ingredients to produce a three day spiritual banquet for 130 guests.

Another New Year. Another Carey Conference. This time by way of a change (and financial constraint) we met at Swanwick. Gone were the black puddings, superb cuisine and friendly waitresses of Ripon. Now it was coffee breaks without chocolate biscuits and pass-the-plates-down-the-table catering. But no-one complained, and it probably did us good.

There were other changes in the programme. The man from Aberystwyth did not delight us with a biographical paper. (Much missed!) It fell instead to Norman Porter, pastor of Orangefield Baptist Church, Belfast, to get us under way on the Wednesday afternoon.

This was a substantial starter. Basing his thoughts on 1 Kings 18 and the theme, 'The challenges of our times', he gave us three headings:

1. A challenge to thought
2. A rebuke to compromise
3. A call to action

The ecumenical movement was like a great octopus, he said, but adored by many. Congregations are suffering from a lack of teaching. We must expose that which is erroneous. For us there must be no neutrality, no compromise. Elijah didn't turn round and say to the prophets of Baal, 'I respect your views'!

It was a stirring message, capably delivered. Elijah would have been pleased.

The evening session brought Professor Donald Macleod to the lectern. Considering the idea of Preaching in the New Testament he carefully examined the New Testament words used by the inspired writers relating to this activity.

It is a proclamation
It is good news
It is informative teaching
It is conveyed by servants
and ambassadors
It means pleading with people

Moving on to the content of preaching in the N.T. he reminded us that it was announcing the fact of the Kingdom of God. The central theme must be Jesus Christ and him crucified. Preach repentance — not a lecture, but a sermon demanding response.

Professor Macleod asked the question, To whom was this message carried? The NT reveals a wide variety of people and situations, from huge crowds to isolated individuals. From 'captive audience' to desert roads, in the market place, the synagogue, homes and even jail. Our Lord preached on the mountain, on the sea and in the upper room. And what is the preacher's aim? To persuade. 'I want them to believe what I believe.'

Closing his first address by examining our methods and techniques, he concluded that the Bible frustrated us by saying little on this subject. He observed that the Apostle experienced weakness, fear and much trembling. He

did not use enticing words. We should be the same. At the point of delivery we depend on the Holy Spirit. We preach as shepherds of the flock. The most important thing for the preacher is his relationship with God, the Word of God, and 'our people'.

Thursday morning dawned bright and fair, with a good attendance at the prayer meeting before breakfast.

Don Garlington, an American lecturing at the Toronto Baptist Seminary, stretched our minds (and our vocabularies) with a scholarly paper on Hermeneutics and Preaching. His major headings taught us that:

1. Truly biblical preaching depends on correct biblical interpretation – and correct biblical interpretation depends on an adequate grasp of the context.
2. The function of the context is to give perspective (keeping things in proportion) and to set boundaries (show us how far we are allowed to go). There is a dialectical relationship between the text and context.
3. There are different types of context – lexical, ideological, literary and historical.

We learned about dialoguing with the text, hermeneutical circles and macrosyntax. It was enthralling and helpful. His illumination of Christ's teaching in opposition to that of the Zealots was of particular value.

Jersey has Bergerac. Guernsey gave us John Blanchard. This statesman of Reformed evangelism brought us the second paper of the morning. In his eloquent and uniquely communicative style he dealt with the impact of our preaching.

His key word was 'passion'. His address, rich in biblical content and references, called us to:

1. A passion for God (Rev 2:2, Ps 42, 63:1,143:6,119

2. A passion for holiness (Is 52:11, 1 Cor 4:4, Ph 3:4, 1 Th 2:10)
3. A passion for souls (Ro 9, 2 Cor 11, 2 Cor 2:4, Ga 4:19)

After lunch, two sessions were given to discussion and prayer. Under the chairmanship of David Kingdon, Stuart Pendrich addressed the subject of 'The Baptist Union Crisis'. Geoff Thomas spoke about the Fellowship of Grace Churches, and Erroll Hulse introduced us to the new International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists. These brief contributions excited much discussion and comment. David Rushworth-Smith brought news of his contact and interaction by correspondence with 2000 ministers in the BU! Others spoke of their experiences and problems with the BU.

Bob Sheehan noted the historical reasons which gave rise to baptised and unbaptised churches. Would everyone be genuinely welcome at the Grace Conference? Geoff Thomas said 'yes'. Others were not so sure, but the debate was conducted in good grace. John Rubens brought encouraging news of the work of the Evangelical Press in Eastern Europe, and in response to his appeal for Ultimate Questions to be published in Albanian £3000 was raised.

The evening session was, perhaps, the high point of this year's conference. Donald Macleod addressed the subject of The Holy Spirit and preaching. Five points introduced his subject:

1. The Holy Spirit is the source of and dynamic behind our own spiritual lives.
2. The Holy Spirit is the source of all our natural gifts.
3. The Holy Spirit is the source of our specific gift for the proclamation of the Word of God.
4. The Holy Spirit is the guide in the exercise of our ministry.
5. The Holy Spirit is the secret of our power.

He reminded us that the message is offensive to the world. Men are spiritually dead, but the gospel is the saving power of God.

God's people can also be unresponsive. We need power, and then the Word becomes the Sword of the Spirit.

What can we do? Three activities were suggested:

1. We must labour in the Word and doctrine. (Spurgeon read six books a week.)
2. We need to really feel our own helplessness. (We can't reach even the most 'regeneratable' person.)
3. We need to cultivate a proper relationship with the Spirit of God. (Grieve not the Spirit.)

We ceased to be delegates listening to a professor. A quiet change came over the meeting. We were sinners captured by the preacher. This was preaching at its highest. Time stood still, and God graciously visited his people. It was a breath of heaven.

Friday morning after breakfast we continued our study of hermeneutics and preaching under Don Garlington's tutelage. After a brief reminder of his previous paper our attention was given to the problems of translation. Three false approaches were identified:

1. That once we have determined the original meaning of the text our task is over.
2. To ignore the meaning of the text and give it an allegorical meaning.
3. Over-emphasis of the differences between the author's context and that of modern readers.

As specialists in the Bible we must bring out its teaching. There is a need to make a fresh impact on our hearers.

It was John Blanchard's responsibility to bring the conference to a close, under the heading, The evangelistic thrust of our preaching.

CAREY CONFERENCE

for ministers

has been booked at

Swanwick, Derbyshire

8th-10th January, 1992

'Things are not what they ought to be,' he began, 'but things are not what they seem to be.' This was John Blanchard at his best. He dealt with our work under the headings of its Commitment, Confidence in the gospel, Content, Context and Concern.

His grasp of Scripture coupled perfectly with his rich treasure of Puritan quotations. It was both challenging and encouraging to all who heard.

By any standard this conference excelled. All the speakers were outstanding. The fellowship was warm and friendly.

Tapes of all the sessions are available from: Carey Cassettes, Crag House Farm, Smithy Lane, Leeds, LS16 7NH.

Next year's Carey Conference has been booked at Swanwick for January 8-10, 1992.

Make a note of it in your diary and plan to come!

Andrew Spreadbury

We are grateful to Andrew Spreadbury for assisting in the production of *Reformation Today* between pastoring Carey Baptist Church in Jersey, Channel Islands, and taking up the pastorate of Grace Memorial Church, Refton, Pennsylvania, USA. Andrew and Angela, with Jonathan, Philip and Hannah are scheduled to leave for America during April. Andrew has helped to advance *RT* in the sphere of computer technology.

Why do we need the Puritans?

J. I. Packer's book, *Among God's Giants*, has just been published. It is a classic.

Among God's Giants. A Puritan Vision of the Christian Life. J I Packer, Kingsway, Eastbourne, England, 447 pages medium sized paperback, £9.99.

Why do we need the Puritans? 'The answer, in one word, is maturity. Maturity is a compound of wisdom, goodwill, resilience, and creativity. The Puritans exemplified maturity; we don't. We are spiritual dwarfs. A much-travelled leader, a native American (be it said), has declared that he finds North American Protestantism, man-centred, manipulative, success orientated, self-indulgent and sentimental, as it blatantly is, to be 3,000 miles wide and half an inch deep. The Puritans, by contrast, as a body were giants' (page 24).

The author goes on to substantiate this claim by explaining the conflicts and circumstances that produced a race of spiritual giants. He outlines those areas where we can learn from the Puritans: the organisation of daily life, the quality of spiritual experience, a passion for effective action, a programme for family stability, a sense of human worth, the ideal of church renewal. (They used the word reformation to describe what we usually convey by the word renewal, this being discussed on page 30.)

Who can benefit most from the legacy of the Puritans, a legacy which is wonderfully brought together and

summarised in a sparkling and lucid style in the 20 chapters of this book? The author describes three categories of religionists who can find healing through the Bible as it is interpreted through the Puritans: the restless experientialists, the entrenched intellectualists and the disaffected deviationists. For a fuller description of such you will need to read from page 35 following.

It is seldom that one finds a book that is pure gold from cover to cover. How can the most personal good be extracted from it? I would suggest that the first four chapters be read first. For beginners this will provide an introduction and background. After that chapters can be chosen for their relevance. Although I listened to ten of these subjects when they were originally presented at the Puritan Conference at Westminster Chapel in London, I note that they have not just been put in a microwave and heated up but rather reworked, improved, refined and polished. Chapter 17 on Puritan preaching appeared in *RT* 68. The chapters on Justification, Interpreters of Scripture, the Lord's Day, Marriage and the Family, Evangelism, and Worship are priorities.

Suggestions? It would have been enormously helpful to have a chapter outlining the period 1558 to 1662 for novices, and within that framework fit in the leading Puritans. A formulative history of the Puritan epoch has yet to be written. Who is equal to the task? Puritanism represents a huge corpus of literature. Packer majors on John Owen

Has Rome Changed?

Salvation, The Bible and Roman Catholicism by William Webster, 183 pages, small sized paperback, Banner of Truth, 1990, £3.50.

For a long time we have lacked a book which provides a decisive answer to the question, Has the Roman Catholic Church changed? The author, now a member of River Oaks Reformed Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Memphis, was brought up and educated with the Roman Catholic system. We have had to rely on Lorraine Boettner's comprehensive treatise *Roman Catholicism* which is too large an artillery piece for most personal situations with contemporary Catholics. While serving as a handbook for reference Boettner's work lacks a chapter on personal salvation (justification by faith).

Webster's study falls into two parts. First in 72 pages he deals specifically and briefly with the central issues:

1. Tradition and the Word of God
2. The Mass
3. The Priesthood
4. Confession and Penance
5. The Eucharist
6. Baptism
7. Roman Catholicism, the Judaisers, and the Book of Galatians.

Part 2 consists of 30 pages in which the way of salvation is clearly presented, sin, the work of Christ, repentance and faith, justification, sanctification and glorification. Then follow 40 pages of seven appendices which is a vital part of the whole book because it consists of documentation from Vatican II and contemporary catechisms and documents which show the basic teachings of Rome to be inconsistent with Scripture. We are grateful for this most timely, useful and reasonably priced paperback.

The answer, in one word, is maturity. Maturity is a compound of goodwill, resilience, and creativity.

(continued from page 14)

tans. Ever so many receive inadequate treatment or are omitted. John J Murray is due to give a paper at the next Westminster Conference on the Puritan Brotherhood. That is the story of how the movement developed during the Elizabethan period. It will surely be a valuable addition of a further 20 or so pages. I mention that only to drive home the point that the

full story of the rise, progress, struggle, apex and decline of Puritanism is now an aching void in the field of evangelical history.

The value of *Among God's Giants* is that it is likely to introduce a whole new generation to our Puritan inheritance. May the inspiration, correction, guidance and solace of that be beyond measure.

Reforming Infant Baptism?

Reforming Infant Baptism, Clifford Owen and Allan Wright, Hodder and Stoughton, 124 pages, £5.99

A review by David Kingdon

This is a fascinating book. Allan Wright wants to reform infant baptism by abolishing it. His chapter 'A parish priest looks at baptism' is an excellent plea for believer's baptism which ends with a challenge to those within the Church of England who argue for infant baptism on the basis of covenant theology. They are, avers Wright, highly selective in the use they make of it. 'They are prepared to teach that a baby can only become a Christian through the faith of the parents, but they are not prepared to accept the corollary, namely that if the parents do not have faith, then there is no valid baptism' (p 48, his emphasis).

Colin Buchanan must be in Allan Wright's sights for he argues that 'Children are to be baptised in believing families' (p 63) and then attacks Mark Dalby's *Open Baptism* (1989) plea for indiscriminate infant baptism. He suggests that Dalby 'must surely suspect himself of finding a cobbled-up excuse for giving baptism on no conditions whatsoever, and without any regard for plausible boundaries for the church' (p 99).

Yet although Bishop Buchanan can write of the church 'as a gathered company with a true mission to the world' and in consequence advocate the disestablishment of the Church of England in very Baptist-sounding language he sets out back down the road to indiscriminate infant baptism when he writes that 'We do not necessarily have to examine too closely how credible the parental profession is (and

the degree of investigation will vary from place to place) . . .' (p 100).

Clifford Owen argues in his chapter 'Grasping the Nettle' that for baptismal discipline to be reformed two steps need to be taken. First, there should be the formal approval (by Synod?) of 'discriminate infant baptism as a normal pastoral practice. Second, in order to effect this clergy should be granted the right of discretion to accept or delay individual baptisms' (p 87).

What this book does is to expose significant differences between advocates of baptismal reform in the Church of England. But it never really faces the ecclesiological issue which always lies behind the baptismal question: What is the church? Yet it is how this question is answered that determines who should be baptised.

Postscript. There are two intriguing references to Allan Wright and Colin Buchanan in the foreword by Clifford Owen. Allan Wright had at the time of writing expressed 'a wish to be baptised as an adult' and has pressed for a theology and liturgy which would legitimise such a 'supplementary baptism' (p 12). A note (2) on page 114 informs us that 'Allan has now gone through such a rite'. The reference on page 14 to Colin Buchanan's "brinkmanship" renewal of vows with immersion' seemingly to keep within the fold of the Church charismatics and others who desire believers' baptism, confirms what I have learned from other quarters of a new rite which employs water but is not baptism!

Revivals of the 20th Century

It has been suggested that every revival in the past 300 years has revived less of the church, and each was less and less an enduring revival.¹

Although erroneous and ludicrous this suggestion stirs up vital questions to do with the nature and history of revival. An initial response to the above statement is that the records suggest that every successive great awakening has been more widespread than the spiritual awakening which preceded it. A further observation is that every successive worldwide awakening has been less pure as far as theology and clarity of doctrine is concerned. The subject is colossal in proportions and rests on the research materials which unhappily are scattered, neglected and difficult to collate. In spite of the difficulties it is important that we remember the reality and possibility of revival today and treat the subject much more seriously than we do.

In order to explore this theme we will proceed as follows:

1. A survey of worldwide revival
2. The worldwide revival of 1900-1910
3. Two perplexities that confront us
4. Six reasons why we should seek revival

1. A survey of worldwide revival

As we approach our subject it will help to define the terms that we use. I take revival to be a widespread reviving of the Christian Church. The word awakening refers to non-Christians who are awakened during a time of revival and added to the Church.² A visitation of the Spirit I take to be a powerful work of the Spirit in a local church, in a town or city or school or prison or in any particular grouping. The term renewal is used to describe spiritual quickening whether in doctrine or worship or evangelistic effort. Often the word revival is used when the word renewal would be more appropriate. We should note that in the southern states of America the word revival is wrongly used when employed to describe a series of meetings featuring a visiting speaker.

It is preferable to call a local outpouring of the Holy Spirit a visitation rather than a revival as this preserves the term revival to describe something that is covers a wide geographic area. Periods of great spiritual awakening spreading from nation to nation could be regarded as general umbrellas under which innumerable visitations took place. For instance, Brian Edwards in his popular book on Revival devotes five pages to references to general revivals and to specific visitations including a one day manifestation of power in Scotland (John Livingstone at Kirk of Shotts 21 June 1630).³ It would be helpful if a scholar

could tackle the mammoth task of collating revival records. Since the decease of Edwin Orr I do not know of any trained historian who is devoting his life to this important subject.

There are some dangers we should avoid. One is to think in romantic terms as though revival will solve all our problems. Jonathan Edwards declared that 'revivals are the most glorious of God's works in the world'. Great numbers are brought to salvation. Yet there is no such thing as a pure revival. It is always a mixed work. Problems multiply. As a church we have been brought into contact with the revival in Romania and as a result have seen how mixed a work it is, and also how easily it could go wrong. Every work is tested and the test facing believers in liberated Eastern Europe is the test of materialism, covetousness and the corrupt moral standards of the West.

Part of the romantic fallacy is the notion that revivals are neat and tidy and would make life easy, whereas in fact all that we have stored up by way of hard work will be expended in a time of spiritual awakening. There is an analogy in military terms. Professional soldiers are always in training but an actual conflict may last no more than three months or a year. Revivals are times of intense toil. Seth Joshua at one stage during the 1904 Welsh revival worked at harvesting for a week in which he had less than four hours sleep.⁴ A further extension of the romantic idea is that revivals are the same. The sense of God's holiness is the same; a heightened sense of the reality of hell and the heinous nature of our sinfulness is the same; the awesome cost to our Lord of his death for us on the cross is the same. But other aspects are not the same. The methods used and subjects employed to arouse the churches and awaken souls out of spiritual death can vary enormously. Christian unity has been a factor contributing toward revival in some instances but in others revival has healed the disfigurement of disunity. One of the marvellous features of revival is diversity and the sheer ingenuity of the Holy Spirit to establish reconciliation and break through impenetrable barriers. Often the way is the way of the cross. An illustration of this can be found in Russia. G K Kryuchkov describes how the church was grey and wrinkled; 'eighty percent were women and most of them old.' Now after twenty years along the path of revival there is a great contrast.⁵ But that path has been costly with leaders spending the best part of their lives in prison camps. The book *By Their Blood*, reviewed in this issue, provides many examples of the connection between suffering and revival.

The 16th Century Reformation. This was a time of great spiritual revival. For instance the Huguenot Church in France increased from small beginnings in about 1555 to three million within the next 100 years, out of a population of twenty million. It was a Church bonded together by one unified system of church government (Presbyterian) for the whole period 1559 to 1659. A national synod met 29 times during that epoch which was terminated by the severity of persecution.⁶

The Puritan Times in England (1558–1662). The Puritan pastors and theologians did not use the terms for revival that we use. You will not find the word revival in the indices of their literature. The Puritans did not formulate the idea of cyclical (successive) revivals in the way that Jonathan Edwards did. From his experiences of the phenomena of revivals Edwards with his exceptionally astute theological insight wrote five treatises on revival. The breadth and quality of his work earned him the title ‘the theologian of revival’.

Jim Packer in his book on the Puritans which has just been published, devotes a chapter to the theme ‘Puritanism as a Movement of Revival’.⁷ In this chapter he develops three main points. Firstly he argues that spiritual revival is what the Puritans professed to be seeking. Secondly he demonstrates that personal revival was the central theme of Puritan devotional literature, and thirdly he provides some documentation to prove that the ministry of the Puritan pastors under God, brought revival.

Under the second point he refers to the extensive success of the evangelistic literature of the Puritans. For instance Richard Baxter’s *A Call to the Unconverted* sold 20,000 in the year of its publication. This scintillating exposition of the text from Ezekiel ‘Why will you die?’ has just been transposed into modern English by John Blanchard to be published shortly by EP. Fine work that it is, in today’s non-revival climate it will be considered very successful if 5,000 sell in the first year and 3,000 the second and 1,000 annually thereafter. And we need to remember that the national population is about ten times what it was in the mid 17th century. If 200,000 copies are purchased mostly by non-believers in the first year, that could well be a sign of a new spiritual awakening.

Following the Puritan period we can demarcate four distinct periods of spiritual awakening.

1. *The First Great Awakening from about 1735 to 1742*

This is sometimes called the Methodist revival which mostly affected Britain and America. This revival would include the Moravian missionary movement.

2. *The Second Great Awakening 1791 until about 1842*

This time of spiritual awakening likewise affected both Britain and America. In Britain this epoch of revival is nick-named the Forgotten Revival due to neglect by historians. Research is revealing that powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit during this period were more extensive and in some areas more intensive than the previous awakening. It is estimated that one and a half million, (ten percent of the population), were brought into membership with non-conformist churches in that period. The Particular Baptists, mostly by-passed in the previous time of revival, multiplied four-fold. Accounts of revival in America show periods of widespread revival during this period. For instance there is one book describing revival in New England from 1797 to 1803, and another covering the period 1815 to 1818, and yet another describing how churches of all

denominations except RC were revived in 1841 and 1842.⁸ If you possess Sprague's Lectures on Revival you will see that there is a section of 165 pages devoted to descriptions of revivals and visitations of this period.

3. *The Third Great Awakening 1859*

Yet again Britain and America were the principal areas affected, but the power and effects of the awakening spread all over the world.⁹

4. *The Fourth Great Awakening 1900 to 1910*

This awakening had its rise in small prayer meetings. Visitations began in the churches of Japan in 1900. In 1902, Boer prisoners of war, 10,000 miles apart, in Bermuda and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), experienced extraordinary visitations of the Spirit. In 1904 revival came to Wales and this was to prove the farthest reaching part of the spiritual awakening of the first decade of this century, for it affected the whole evangelical cause in countries like India, Korea and China. Revival was renewed in Japan and South Africa and sent an impulse of awakening through the African continent and many parts of Latin America.

2. **The worldwide revival of 1900 – 1910**

As we come to consider revivals in the 20th century it is important to observe that spiritual awakening, particularly during the first decade, was a worldwide phenomenon. It is common for Christians to think exclusively in terms of the 1904 revival and even with regard to that revival, to harbour popular misconceptions about it. Many seem to think that the 1904 revival in Wales was ephemeral, something largely shallow that did not last, a religious excitement in which those who professed conversion soon fell away. The period of extraordinary spiritual power lasted about a year. But the results were enduring. Even critics of the revival concede that eighty percent of the 100,000 converts remained in the churches after five years which is vastly different from the ratio of one in fifty or one in a hundred who stick in modern crusade evangelism. Edwin Orr points out that converts of the revival continued to be the choicest segment of church life. Even in the 1930s when Orr studied the spiritual life of Wales closely, he found this to be so.¹⁰ I remember meeting an aged convert (Powell Parry) of the 1904 revival in the early 1960s and could sense deeply the power of the revival that was burning in his heart even then. An elderly believer in Sussex used to tell of the indelible impression made on her mind during the revival when she witnessed Welsh miners coming out of the coal pits and falling to the ground to plead for God's mercy upon their souls.

Two disasters overtook Wales. The First World War tragically removed a high proportion of men in their prime and then in the 1920s and early 1930s unemployment caused large numbers to leave Wales.

A further misconception is that the Welsh revival was an isolated phenomenon with no connection to other nations. As intimated above, the facts show that the 1904 Welsh revival spread to many parts of the English speaking world

including the United Kingdom, USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

Church membership in the USA increased by two million in seven denominations from 1905 to 1910.¹¹

How many Christians today know that Norway was swept by a revival in 1905 as powerful as that which had come to Wales? In the same year Denmark, Sweden and Finland experienced awakening.¹²

In 1905-6 every part of the Christian Church in India was visited and the Christian population increased by seventy percent.¹³ The general pattern observed was increasing fervour in prayer, intense conviction of sin and often confession of sin, followed by great joy. Time and time again in reading the accounts there is testimony given of the suddenness of the Spirit's coming and that with such power as to defy description. 'Suddenly without warning the usual stoical mindedness of our Indian assembly was broken as by an earthquake. Everybody present was shaken.' 'The Spirit came in like a flood and we had three glorious weeks, which to experience is worth a lifetime.'¹⁴

Whole books could be written on the revivals that took place during the first decade of this century in China, Korea, Indonesia and Japan. There were several waves of revival in Korea bringing extraordinary numerical growth which has continued to this present time, the calculation being that 18 percent of the population of 42 million is evangelical, and Korea having the largest Bible seminaries in the world.¹⁵ By comparison the situation in the UK is pathetic. In contrast with Korea the story of the evangelical cause in Japan is very depressing, but it should be recalled that a powerful work of the Spirit did take place in Japan during the first decade of the century. One of these started in January 1907 in Tokachi prison in the north island of Hokkaido. The Holy Spirit swept through until almost every prisoner, as well as officer and guard, had made public profession of faith in Christ.¹⁶

The 1904 revival extended as far forward in time as 1934 when revival came to the Baltic States. This can be traced to the influence of William Fetler who trained at Spurgeon's College and who was profoundly influenced by his experience of the 1904 revival in Wales. He thereafter never ceased to intercede that his native Latvia would experience spiritual awakening. The story is told by Omri Jenkins in his book *Five Minutes to Midnight*.¹⁷ Space forbids the report of revivals in different parts of the world this century. There is an urgent need for thorough research to be done of the kind represented by the book already referred to namely, 'By their Blood'. There are tokens of the Lord's omnipotent power and infinite mercy in our modern world. The revival in Nagaland, a province of India, during 1976-1978 when the moral and spiritual climate was dramatically changed, is an example. Now over 60 percent of the population of just under a million profess faith, Nagaland being the only Baptist country in the world.¹⁸

3. Two perplexities that face us today

The first perplexity that we face is the prevalence of Arminianism and the second is Pentecostalism. I will explain what I mean.

Arminianism

Sometimes called Pelagianism (which is a more severe form of humanistic thinking), Arminianism is the teaching that people save themselves by the right use of their free will. In practice this leads to methods in which pressure is placed on people to make a commitment of their wills. I would like to emphasise that I am not suggesting that revival has not been experienced in Arminian denominations. John Wesley was an Arminian and this resulted in severe tension between him and George Whitefield. It should be noted that in Wesleyan preaching and methodology there was a great stress on repentance. Now repentance for the most part is bypassed. The primary evangelistic method of Arminianism in the 20th century is the altar call. The problem with this method is that for the most part it concentrates on the emotions and bypasses the heart and mind. It is a method in which assent to the gospel and its call is confused with saving faith. It is very evident that a law of diminishing returns has been operating. Genuine converts have become few and far between. The number of spurious converts has multiplied.

The transition from thinking in terms of revival to working on the basis of campaign evangelism is one which took place during the latter half of the last century and which gathered momentum. I describe the history of the altar call in chapter 6 of my book *The Great Invitation*.¹⁹ The way in which we are talking about revival one minute and then about campaign evangelism as though it were the same thing is very evident throughout in Edwin Orr's book *The Flaming Tongue* which documents the way in which revivals spread round the world in the period of 1900 to 1910. Inadequate distinction is made between the advertised results of evangelistic campaigns and visitations of the Holy Spirit. Of course the Holy Spirit can work powerfully in an evangelistic campaign but the difference between enquirers and converts can be very great. Billy Graham has been known to be confused about the difference, slipping easily from referring to enquirers, to converts. He spoke on one occasion of 100,000 new converts in England needing to be nurtured.²⁰ If 5,000, that is one in twenty, of the 100,000 enquirers persevered to prove that their faith was genuine that would be a grand number. When my wife and I counselled 26 enquirers in a Billy Graham campaign we noted that not one continued in the faith. Speaking of the altar call Ernest Reisinger declares, 'This unbiblical system has produced the greatest record of false statistics ever compiled by church or business.'²¹ It certainly does not glorify God when we deceive ourselves and when we exaggerate results.

In his early ministry Charles G Finney preached during a period of spiritual awakening. The harvest reaped in those times has to be evaluated in the light of those circumstances. Finney appears to have been the first to refine the invitation system. How this came about in 1831 is described by J F Thornbury in his book *God Sent Revival* being the story of Asahel Nettleton and the Second

Great Awakening.²² Similarly during the period 1900-1910 lasting results were substantial when Gipsy Smith preached in South Africa. There was evidence of repentance and deep conviction and weeping which are notably absent in campaigns today. But here we should be careful to observe the essential difference between campaign evangelism and revival. The lines can so easily be blurred. Was Gipsy Smith experiencing revival? It is difficult at this distance even with eye-witness accounts to give an unequivocal answer. I would say he enjoyed times of unusual power but inevitably the method used brought mixed results. Compared with a very small percentage result in campaigns today it is probable that Gipsy Smith enjoyed a more enduring result because the times were more fruitful in spiritual terms. Outwardly there were 15,000 enquirers out of the approximate 300,000 that attended the meetings.

The real nature of revival is much more clearly seen in the same year 1904 when a powerful visitation came to the Dutch Reformed Church at Villiersdorp, South Africa. This was an outpouring of the Spirit in immense power bringing conviction of sin and repentance and multiplied conversions including those of the most reckless and notorious sinners. The descriptions are of a different order and similar to revival accounts during the times of Whitefield and Edwards.

The dilemma should be obvious. Today evangelicals think in terms of campaign evangelism. They do not think in terms of a spiritual revival. Yet spiritual lethargy prevails. Increasingly entertainment methods are used to fill the vacuum. The Church resorts to its own devices rather than laying hold of God himself that he might come down and do what only he can do. The poor state of church prayer meetings and the low level of family worship testify to the need of revival. While being in accord with the practice of prayer meetings few seem to have any sense of unction in prayer and many believers seem to have a feeling of futility about the exercise.

To sum up, we are perplexed by the fact that the present day evangelical church is ridden with an Arminian mentality and enslaved by an Arminian method of evangelism which by its nature is antithetical to revival. Arminianism displaces the sovereign grace of God and makes salvation the work of man. When the Lord is dethroned in so central a place as redemption it is not long before he is dethroned in other places as well. Wherever Arminianism takes over it is not long before the Church is taken over by unbelief and its seminaries possessed by liberals, which is the way in which the pulpits also come to be filled with liberals.

We must not imagine that if the Church is purged of Arminianism, times of revival will automatically return. We can assume nothing. The God of revival is to be sought in the way the Scriptures urge, but more of that presently.

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is a 20th century development. Pentecostal denominations have increased in size just as the Methodists increased during the second and third great awakenings. Speaking in tongues, prophecies and healings were not features of revivals prior to the 20th century. Edward Irving during the last century sought supernatural gifts but that did not lead to revival and the movement he inspired has gone out of existence. Today a substantial proportion of evangelicals are enamoured with the notion that a recovery of supernatural gifts is the way to revival in this last decade of the 20th century. A concerted attempt has been made to bring about the wedding of the non-charismatic evangelicals with charismatic evangelicals, a wedding which would spell the end of the distinctive non-charismatic stance of the evangelical church in Britain. An example of a concerted effort to bring the whole evangelical body round to the charismatic position is recorded in the *Renewal* magazine for January 1991. It is an account of how charismatic prophets have wrapped Clive Calver and his daughter in prophecies clearly aimed to impress him and woo him over completely, his present stance being ambivalent. Clive Calver is the general director of the Evangelical Alliance which purportedly represents a million Christians in the UK.

The charismatic movement creates a perplexity because revival is in no way dependent upon the recovery of a new order of supernaturalism. The genius of revival is its nondependence upon any system whatsoever. Revival can and often does result in phenomenal acts, but these are secondary to the great primary work in which the Holy Spirit gives repentance and saving faith through his superlative work of regeneration.

Preoccupation with prophecies, with healings and with tongues is a distraction. The charismatic movement has not heralded revival but has contributed a great deal toward making evangelicalism frivolous and shallow. The charismatic movement has sidetracked many pastors and leaders from the central task of toil in prayer and the Scriptures. The Charismatic movement has led to evangelical renewal in some liberal churches and in some Roman Catholic circles. With regard to the latter the renewal has not led to a break with the traditional Roman Catholic doctrines which are antithetical to the Bible.

The glory of Jesus as the God-man is at the heart of every true revival, not wonders which may or may not attend times of power. Such manifestations would constitute the wrapping paper not the gift. The charismatic movement by its extravagant claims, divides the evangelical cause. Ecumenism and the charismatic movement constitute the two most divisive issues confronting evangelicals today. How can we identify ourselves with that which we believe is spurious and so far removed from the phenomenon of the New Testament wonders and miracles? The charismatic movement has seriously retarded the cause of genuine revival because those who espouse it have already set the agenda. You cannot set the agenda for the Lord. This is a perplexity to be noted as we pray for revival.

4. Six reasons why we should seek revival

As I have sought to show, the first decade of this century was a period of revival. Will revival come soon? Will revival return perhaps in this last decade of the 20th century? I suggest that there are strong reasons to encourage prayer and work toward a worldwide revival. While revival is the absolute prerogative of a sovereign God, he nevertheless has appointed means of grace whereby we can work for and intercede for revival. We work for a revival when we do all we can to reform the churches, promote evangelism and support missionary endeavour. The Reformers and Puritans are a pattern in that way. Their labours, as Jim Packer points out in his new book, led to revival. Psalm 126 points to the principle involved. If we sow abundantly we will also reap abundantly. In no way does this mean that we can obligate God to pour out his Spirit in revival. It is rather a general principle. In *Give Him No Rest*.²³ I suggest six reasons why we should encourage intercession for revival. Since these are expanded in the book I will not enlarge on them here but rather recommend them to the serious attention of my readers:

1. The biblical doctrine of repentance demands that we should pray for revival
2. The history of the Church dictates it
3. The example of our predecessors encourages it (invariably prevailing prayer preceded previous revivals)
4. Our present decline compels it
5. The promises of Scripture urge it (Isaiah 62:7,8 is an example. We are told to pray until Jerusalem becomes a praise in the earth. If we take that to be God's kingdom on earth, we still have a long way to go)
6. Present day revivals inspire it

We are living in the global age. Information about what goes on in our world is detailed and easy to obtain. Knowledge enables us to pray intelligently. Let us intercede personally and in groups that the Lord will send revival of unprecedented power so that this globe may be filled with a knowledge of his glory as the waters cover the sea.²⁴ There are promises of scripture which constrain the most urgent intercession.

*Why dost thou from the conquest stay?
Why do thy chariot wheels delay;
Lift up thyself, hell's kingdom shake;
Arm of the Lord, awake, awake!*

References

¹ Prof Paul Ramsay in introducing Gabriel Vahanian's treatise upon the absurd 'Death of God' debate, cited in Edwin Orr's *The Flaming Tongue*, Moody Press, 1973, p. 186

² Edwin Orr, *The Flaming Tongue*, Moody

Press, 1973. p. 6 Orr writes: 'The logic of words suggests revival for the revitalising of a body of Christian believers, and awakening the stirring of interest in the Christian faith in the unbelieving community.'

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Write to Carey '91, c/o Crag House Farm, Smithy Lane, Cookridge, LEEDS LS16 7NH.

³ Brian Edwards, *Revival! — A people saturated with God*, EP, 1990, pp. 271ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Edwin Orr, p. 4.

⁵ G K Kryuchkov, *Twenty Years along the path of Revival*, published by Friedensstimme, P O Box 11, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 1EG

⁶ Charles Hodge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the USA*. Vol. 1, p. 15ff. Two volumes are bound into one. (Anyone wishing to get hold of this recently published work will have to hunt it down through book dealers as no adequate address is supplied in the prelims.) The first volume covers the period 1705-1741, and the second the period of the great revival from 1741-1788. In volume 1 (214 pages) a survey of church government is provided for that period. In part 2 (420 pages) Hodge engages in an analysis of the excesses which characterised the revival and the damage done as a consequence. Jonathan Edwards was aware of the excesses. His book *The Religious Affections* has never been bettered in the handling of the problems. *The Log College* by Archibald Alexander, Banner of Truth edition 1968, provides a memoir of Gilbert Tennent and enters into the issues arising out of the revival.

⁷ J I Packer, *Among God's Giants, The Puritan Vision of the Puritan Life*, Kingsway, 447 pp., £9.99, 1991.

⁸ Bennett Tyler, *New England Revivals*, Joshua Bradley, *Revivals in the USA*, Martin Moore, *Revival in Boston in 1842*, all published by Richard Owen Roberts, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁹ J Edwin Orr, *The Light of the Nations*, Paternoster press, 1965, pp. 156ff.

¹⁰ J Edwin Orr, *The Flaming Tongue*, pp 189ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-152.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 140ff.

¹⁵ Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, WEC, 1986, pp. 269ff.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Edwin Orr, p. 176.

¹⁷ Omri Jenkins, *Five Minutes to Midnight*, 120 pp. EP, 1989

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Patrick Johnstone, p. 225.

¹⁹ Erroll Hulse, *The Great Invitation*, EP, £4.50, 1986.

²⁰ John Blanchard, exposition given at Carey Conference, Swanwick 1991. Documentation is carefully presented in this paper.

²¹ Ernest Reisinger, *Today's Evangelism*, Craig Press, USA, 1982.

²² J F Thornbury, *God Sent Revival*, EP, 1977, ch 33.

²³ Erroll Hulse, *Give Him No Rest*, EP, 144 pp., £4.95, March 1991.

²⁴ If you feel burdened about the need to pray for revival please write to us and we will send you details of the Concert of Prayer which involves fasting and prayer on first Tuesday of every month.

Note about Books

A number of books referred to in the references are published by EP. Included is the book, *Invitation to Live* being the contemporary presentation by John Blanchard of Richard Baxter's *A Call to the Unconverted* to be published in March, 128 pp., £2.95. EP titles are distributed in the USA by Presbyterian and Reformed. Order EP books from your local Christian bookshop. If you experience difficulty write to Evangelical Press, 12 Wooler Street, Darlington, Co Durham, DL1 1RQ

The Imperative of Love

Beloved, Let us love one another (1 John 4:7).

When last did a Christian call you beloved? In its biblical usage that expression is not sentimental. The greatest paragraph on love in the Bible begins at 1 John 4:7 with the words, Beloved, let us love one another, expressed in two Greek words which are very striking, *Agapētoi, agapōmen*, meaning literally, you who have been loved by God, love one another.

We are to love one another for three reasons:

- 1 *God himself is love*
- 2 *God's gift proves his love*
- 3 *God's love is perfected in us when we love each other*

1 God himself is love

Twice in the context at verses 8 and 16 John asserts the truth GOD IS LOVE! The way this is expressed means that the love of God is not merely an attribute among other attributes. It means that God is love in his very being through and through, intrinsically so. Holiness and love characterise the entirety of God's being (1 Jn 1:5).

The fact of the Oneness of God in Triunity is the foundation of all our faith and practice. There exists in the three Persons perfect intelligent love. The Father loves the Son perfectly and the Son the Father. Equally does the Holy Spirit love the Father and the Son. The Spirit comes to establish love in all members of the body of Christ.

In Islam there is the concept of a monad. Who does he love? How can he love? In Judaism there is the same lovelessness. But the Jews are nearer for in the Old Testament the Trinity is everywhere implicit. In the NT the Trinity is everywhere explicit. If we see fear and hate in Islam is it not because there is no source by which divine love can be emulated, imbibed, practised, reciprocated?

Our Reformed theological heritage is unequalled. But on this subject of the love of God Triune there is a shortfall. There are exceptions such as John Owen and Thomas Manton.

2 God's gift proves his love

The second reason urged to motivate love for one another is based on the historical gift of the Father. He 'sent' his Son. To send him presupposes his divinity and pre-existence. His being sent as a gift achieved our salvation, first by providing a righteousness through his perfect life lived for us, and second by propitiation. It was an act of great humility to take manhood but by humbling himself, even to the death of the Cross, he became the atoning sacrifice for our sins; the wrath bearer, the endurer of hell in our place.

What loving Father would not sooner die himself than see his only beloved son die in humiliation? There never has been, nor could there ever be, a greater self-giving than the Father's gift of his Son to be the burnt offering to propitiate divine wrath and satisfy divine justice. No greater gift of the

Father is conceivable because no greater gift was possible. It is his 'beyond description' gift (2 Cor 9:15, see also 1 Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32). In 1 John 4:7-12 we have the pre-eminent description of the Father's love.

Noteworthy is the expression *so loved*. If God *so loved* us, we ought to love one another.

Love means forgiving the sins of the beloved and remembering them no more. This is what the Father has done for rebellious mankind; he pardons sins against himself at his own cost. We must do likewise. This is an imperative. 'But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins' (Mk 11:25).

3 God's love is perfected in us when we love each other

'If we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us' (1 Jn 4:12). This is a staggering statement since we already know that God's love is perfectly expressed in his Trinity. Yet John insists that God's love is brought to perfection within us when we love as we should. God's love is reproduced in us and among us when we love one another in truth and in practice.

God's love is perfected when we love one another in spite of disparities, aggravations, annoyances and pressures. It must be exciting for the angels to observe love prevailing in the assembly of the saints especially among those who formerly hated each other.

Who will be able to put out the fires at the oil wells of Kuwait? What raging infernos they are! A greater inferno

which is inextinguishable, is the ocean of fiery hatreds in hell; hatreds of demons and hatreds of unrepentant sinners. To have a new heart to love, and to have the fire of hatred for God and men put out, is a sublime work. To promote true love in the Church is a heavenly work.

Application

Reference has been made to Islam. We must be careful to avoid triumphalism with regard to victory in the Gulf. Has Islam been hardened toward the gospel? Islam as a monolithic religion is dominant and impregnable. When we compare it with atheistic Communism it is like a buffalo next to a ram. Doors have been opened and tangible work is going on in the largely liberated Communist world. The Muslim world however is one in which many nations are securely locked up and deceived. Even in free countries like England where there are about two million Muslims they form an entity hardly touched by the gospel. It will take clear thinking and practical love shown on a one to one basis to make an impact.

When Jesus prayed for the unity of his Church (Jn 17:20-23), he evidently meant by that a loving unity which would be used of the Holy Spirit to convert the world. The Muslims have their own hate and disunity. Recently the police had to enter a mosque in England and break up faction fighting. One man had been hit over the head with a crowbar and needed 16 stitches. Our weapons are truth and love. It is not hard to show that it is love that wins muslims.

Cults in the 20th Century

Viewed alongside the subjects of Revivals in the 20th Century and Martyrs in the 20th Century, an article considering Cults in the 20th Century may, at first sight, appear to be out of place. But that is not so.

It is right that we give much attention to the gracious work of our Sovereign God in times of revival. It is proper that history records the ongoing shedding of the blood of the martyrs. We thank God for them. It is altogether necessary that we remember that Satan is still at work.

Satan is the deceiver. He mimics the genuine and distorts the truth. Never is he more successful than when God's people are weak in doctrine and confused in their ignorance. The 'nominal Christianity' which has characterised much of Western civilisation this century, has provided fertile ground for the seeds of false teaching carefully sown by the cults.

There is surely some connection between these three subjects of Revivals, Martyrs and Cults. Revival is heaven sent. It is a revelation of the truth. It brings eternal salvation and blessing. It purifies and strengthens the Church. It glorifies God.

The cults are hellish in origin. They distort the truth and introduce fatal soul-destroying heresy. They are the instruments of suffering and lostness. They defile and weaken. They oppose and blaspheme God.

The multiplication of cults in the 20th Century.

In *RT* 119 it was pointed out that 'during the 1790's alone a staggering thirty-one societies were created or reformed to serve home missions'. We must note in stark contrast the terrifying way in which cults have increased this century. It is remarkable that sixty years ago such groups as the Worldwide Church of God, the Rastafarians, the Moonies, the Family of God (previously Children of God), the Way International, Scientology, Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation, the Divine Light Mission and the Rajneesh Foundation *did not even exist*. The New Age Movement is insidiously growing in influence. Flying on Continental Airways last month I discovered that one of the channels of their in-flight entertainment was given over to 'New Age' music. Here in the British Isles, Channel 4 has been running a major 6 week series on the New Age Movement, broadcast at prime time on Sunday evenings.

The marks of the 20th Century cults

The devil has left his fingerprints on the cults. They all have the following characteristics:

1. Extra-biblical revelation
2. A false basis of salvation
3. Uncertain hope – no assurance
4. A personality cult
5. Doctrinal ambiguity
6. Defective Christology – denial of the deity of Christ

7. Enslaving organizational structures
8. Financial exploitation
9. Denunciation of others

A fine book on the cults

Eryl Davies in his book *Truth Under Attack* (see review *RT* 117, page 31) makes a distinction between churches and movements within Christendom as follows:

1. Protestant churches and modernism
2. Roman Catholicism
3. Quakers: the Religious Society of Friends
4. Seventh-Day Adventists
5. Moral Re-Armament
6. Churches of Christ: 'Campbellites'
7. Unitarian churches
8. 'Jesus only': the Apostolic Oneness Movement.

He then lists the established cults as follows:

1. Christadelphians
2. Christian Science or Church of Christ, Scientist
3. Mormons
4. Jehovah's Witnesses
5. Worldwide Church of God
6. Rastafarians

There are four socially deviant cults which he outlines:

1. The Unification Church: Moonies
2. The Family of Love (previously called the Children of God)
3. The Way International
4. Scientology

In separate sections he describes Freemasonry, the occult and spiritism, Theosophy and Eckankar. Under

near and Far Eastern movements Eryl Davies considers:

1. The New Age Movement
2. Baha'i
3. Hare Krishna: International Society for Krishna Consciousness
4. Yoga
5. Transcendental Meditation
6. Divine Light Mission
7. Rajneesh Foundation.

Two dominant Cults of the 20th Century

Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are the most active cults today. In Italy there are more JW's than evangelicals. There are about three million JW's in the world and about four million Mormons.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Who are they? Eryl Davies describes them as follows:

'It was "Judge" Rutherford who recommended the adoption of the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" at an international conference of his followers in Columbus, Ohio, in July 1931. Previously, they had used at least four different names by which to identify themselves. They were known, first of all, as "Russellites" because of their original leader, Charles Taze Russell (1870-1916). After Russell's death the group was known as Millennial Dawn but this name was quickly changed to the International Bible Students' Association and then to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Their present name, "Jehovah's Witnesses", alludes to the words of Scripture in Isaiah 43:10: "You are my witnesses, declares Jehovah."

‘Although they claim to teach the Bible, their views are not at all biblical, for they deny or alter all the major Bible doctrines, such as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the new birth, justification by faith, the sufficiency of the Saviour’s atoning sacrifice, the bodily resurrection of the Lord and his visible, glorious return. Clearly, then, they are the devil’s witnesses rather than Jehovah’s Witnesses.

‘Nathan Homer Knorr was chosen as the third president after Rutherford’s death in 1942. His administrative and intellectual gifts were quickly apparent as he remodelled the structure of the society and insisted on a more thorough training of its members. The most significant development during his leadership was the translation of the Bible completed in 1960 and known as the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. This translation is most unreliable and contains deceitful translations of original words and the insertion of words not even found in the original Greek.’

It is not generally known that there is a high drop-out rate: *The Watchtower* year-books reveal, however, that there are twice as many baptisms as there are active Witnesses, which means a high drop-out rate, and by now there are many more ex-Jehovah’s Witnesses than active ones!

Mormons

Eryl Davies writes, ‘In terms of membership and organization, Mormonism is the strongest cult in the Western world. Employing more than 1200 young men as missionaries in more than fifty-one countries, it is

strongly missionary-orientated and spares no effort or expense in recruiting new members. Approximately 180,000 converts per year, it is claimed, are won by the work of its missionaries alone, who are clean and neatly dressed, polite in their approach and usually exemplary in morals. Compared with figures for 1950, the membership of the movement rose by 30% in 1960 to 1,650,000 and now the world-wide membership is estimated at over four million.

‘The work of missionaries is supported by extensive and attractive literature. In key areas expensive and elaborate temples are built as centres of recreation, culture and religion. The Mormon church takes tithing seriously, provides for its poorer members, thus rendering unemployment or social security payments by the government unnecessary, and encourages a responsible involvement in education, family and community life.’

The teaching of the Mormons is crude. They believe God is Adam. God was once a mortal like ourselves but progressed to become an exalted being. There are many gods and the Trinity for them comprises three separate individuals who are physically distinct from each other.

They believe that the Book of Mormon and the Bible have equal authority as the Word of God. They misuse Ezekiel 37:15-17, suggesting that the ‘two sticks’ referred to here are the Bible and the Book of Mormon. According to the Mormons, these become one stick, that is, God’s Word. But verses 18-22 explain clearly that the sticks represent the tribes of

Israel and Judah who together form one people.

Revelation for them is continuous and 'modern', for private revelations were given to Joseph Smith. In practice they neglect the Bible in preference for Smith's writings.

Mormons claim that Christ was a god like humans and a pre-existent spirit; in addition he was the brother of the devil and the son of Adam. He was not unique therefore in his nature or life, nor was his birth supernatural. They regard Christ as a polygamist who married both Mary and Martha at Cana of Galilee. Unmarried people and couples whose marriages are not 'sealed' in a Mormon temple can only become angels after death.

The cult of CLCOC

Evangelical churches can be invaded and divided by cultish spirits. An example of this is a fast growing cult in London, England, called the Central London Church of Christ. This cult holds to orthodox doctrine but teaches that baptism is the moment of conversion, and has to be understood and practised correctly for it to be effective. It must be adult baptism, and by full immersion, Acts 2:38, Galatians 3:27, 1 Peter 3:21.

The driving force is a leader in his early thirties, Kip McKean. A Church of England curate Steve Wookey has written a fifteen page booklet describing this evangelical cult. (*As Angels of Light?* Published by The Narrowgate Press, PO Box 43, Twickenham, TW2 7EG, £1.10 including postage). In it he points out that the CLCOC which strictly speaking is an evan-

gelical cult operates on the basis of powerful personality leadership. Writes Wookey, 'It need hardly be said that any group that sets its leaders on such a pedestal is open to great dangers. Leaders cannot be questioned since that reveals a "bad attitude," and their word is final. The right of personal judgement is lost and in its place comes a slavish obedience to the teaching of a few powerful leaders.

'As with many authoritarian groups, the hierarchy is very tightly structured. A "discipler" is given responsibility for each individual, and monitors their "spiritual growth." The discipler keeps in constant touch with the person, passing on instructions about all kinds of matters and making all sorts of decisions for them. The discipler is also answerable to someone further up the hierarchy. In such a system an enormous hold is developed over people's lives, and independent thought becomes difficult, if not impossible.'

Conclusions

Weak Christians are vulnerable to cults like the JW's. Strong Christians are vulnerable to a cultish spirit which looks as though everything is right down to the last detail. It is not enough to be knowledgeable. We need to cultivate maturity and spirituality (see review of Jim Packer's book on the Puritans). We need to remember that some are won for Christ from the JW's and Mormons. We need to recognise too that there is no such thing as a perfect church here on earth.

Andrew Spreadbury

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Nº 120

Mar - Apr

CONTENTS

- 1 Editorial**
- 3 Martyrs of the 20th Century** Sharon James
- 8 News**
- 11 Carey Ministers' Conference** Andrew Spreadbury
- 14 Why do we need the Puritans? Has Rome Changed?**
reviews
- 16 Reforming Infant Baptism?** David Kingdon
A review
- 17 Revivals of the 20th Century** Editor
- 27 The Imperative of Love** Editor
- 29 Cults in the 20th Century** Andrew Spreadbury

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