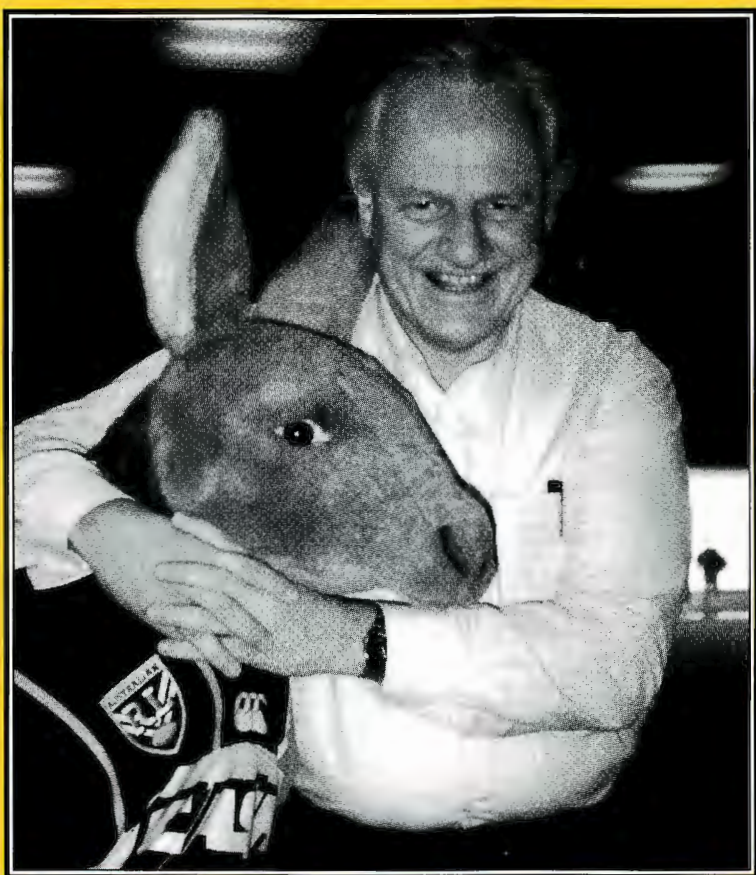


REFORMATION TODAY



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149

Contributors in this issue

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Sharon James read history at Cambridge and theology at Toronto Baptist Seminary.

Bob Sheehan, who contributes regularly to the pages of Reformation Today, is pastor of the Welwyn Evangelical Church and teaches in the European Missionary Fellowship School at Welwyn.

Dr Stephen Tong (see news) is an evangelist, pastor and seminary teacher in Jakarta.

Conferences:

The annual Banner of Truth Conference for Ministers at Leicester (visiting speaker, Martin Holdt of South Africa) is due from March 25th-28th.

The Carey/Grace Conference (principal speaker Albert Mohler, president of Southern Seminary, Louisville, KY, USA) is due from 8th to 10th May at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

The Carey Family Conference is scheduled for August 3rd to 10th at Cloverley Hall Conference Centre, Shropshire. For details write to David Jarrett, Penglais, 6a Soar Close, Croesyceiliog, Cwmbran, Gwent NP44 2PD.

Front Cover: *Pastor John Campbell, Australian to the core, is due to take up the pastorate of the Brisbane Baptist Tabernacle in February 1996 (see news).*

Editorial



Meeting in Jakarta with Stephen Tong (see news)

The apostle John writes, ‘We know that we are the children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one’ (1 Jn 5:19). How is that control exercised? It is by deception. Through erroneous religions the world is kept in darkness. In the West the old foundations have been abandoned. We have entered the post-Christian culture. This is now referred to as post-modernism.¹ This is the new age of evolutionary humanism and crass secularism in which there are no longer absolute moral standards. The abandonment of absolute moral standards results in lawlessness and the increase of violence. We have to contend with the vanishing conscience, which is the title of John MacArthur’s book reviewed by Sharon James in this issue.

In such times faith in the immutability of the Trinity so well expounded by Bob Sheehan is our comfort and strength. In a society that is falling apart we need to be doubly sure that we are cultivating holiness. That is an imperative for all Christians. The basic practical issues are set before us in the clearest possible fashion by Dr Joel Beeke who is pastor of the large Heritage Netherlands Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

Is the Toronto Blessing still Relevant?

During December 1995 Rodney Howard-Browne conducted his slaying in the

Spirit type meetings at Olympia arena in London, England. He also conducted a meeting at the famous Westminster Chapel in London where RT Kendall is the minister. Far from passing away the Toronto style slaying in the Spirit is likely to be with us for some time. If this is part of the third wave we wonder what is in store for us in the fourth wave? We are told that this subject is highly relevant all over the world. I discovered this to be true of Australia and Indonesia. Australian TV had taken up the TB and made a documentary of it. Likewise in Indonesia films had been made. If you live in a remote village the TB may seem irrelevant but that is not the case where there is a student community or where there is interaction with other churches.

The TB continues to be the foremost issue among charismatics and Pentecostals which form about 20 percent of the evangelical constituency in Britain. Just published is a book *Blessing the Church?* This 234 page small size paperback is written by four leading charismatics in England: Clifford Hill, Peter Fenwick, David Forbes and David Noakes. Published by Eagle, Guildford, Surrey, £4.99.

In the introduction Clifford Hill editor of *Prophecy Today* underlines the fact that the 1990s have proved a critical period for the charismatic movement. Deep concern is expressed by these authors about the following issues:

1. *Division.* The TB has resulted in the most widespread and deep-rooted division to hit the churches for many years. Charismatic churches especially are split and thousands are leaving to find a home elsewhere although tragically many disillusioned ones drift into no-man's land where it is so easy to fall away completely.

2. *False prophets.* Paul Cain, one of the Kansas City prophets, predicted that revival would come to Britain in 1990. Paul Cain was welcomed under the umbrella of Westminster Chapel (RT Kendall). His prophecies failed completely yet no disciplinary action has been taken.

3. *Fanaticism.* The leading prophet in the Kansas City Fellowship was Bob Jones. According to Jones himself, and a fellow prophet Mike Bickle, 'Bob normally gets five to ten visions a night, maybe sees angels ten to fifteen times a week.'

4. *The neglect of Scripture.* The Bible has been sidetracked. (A charismatic friend here in Leeds who attended a TB meeting recently said that he and a friend who accompanied him were the only ones with open Bibles and in the whole auditorium he could see only two other Bibles, both just lying about). It is clear the Bible is not the ruling factor in the TB.

5. *Bad behaviour.* Neglect to maintain biblical standards of behaviour has led to obscene conduct. Sometimes this behaviour is referred to as spiritual drunkenness. In the book referred to above this conduct is firmly denounced.

6. *Latter Day fantasies*. It was a feature with the Anabaptist fanatics like Thomas Müntzer (who unhappily tarnished all anabaptism for generations to come) that they believed themselves to be ushering in the kingdom of God on earth. This led to the calamity of Muhlhausen when 6,000 peasants were massacred.² Similarly the Fifth Monarchy sect of the mid-seventeenth century believed themselves to be the ones who would usher in the kingdom of God on earth.³ This kind of misconception is repudiated at the beginning of Stephen Tong's statement. Latter reign fantasies are not to be confused with Puritan post-millennialism as expressed by Iain Murray in his book *The Puritan Hope* or with Jonathan Edwards' views expressed in his book *The History of Redemption*. The Puritan view is one in which the gospel eventually permeates the whole earth by dint of gospel preaching and Bible teaching. That does not mean that conflict or opposition will diminish or that Satan will kindly back off. Evil might reach gargantuan proportions but this will not be able to prevent the gospel as it irresistibly advances until the earth is filled with it as is expressed in Psalms 67 or 72. That was the view that inspired the great pioneer missionaries such as William Carey and Adoniram Judson. But that is very different from the pseudo post-mill notions taken up by false prophets, who arrogantly associate gospel promises as attached to themselves, as though they are the king pins of the end time. This false optimism has resurfaced in the background of the TB movement as it has in the Pentecostal Restorationist movement.

Connected to the fantasy of the coming of the new super-Church is a typically TB physical manifestation. This is seen in bodily contortions which simulate a woman in labour pains. The idea is that this signifies 'the birthing of the man child'. The biblical reference for this is Revelation 12:1; 'And she bore a male child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.' The TB interpretation is that this 'birthing' is the coming into being of a new super-Church of the last days which will assume dominion over others in preparation for Christ's return.

The most offensive and embarrassing aspects of the TB are exhibited by the mass media and this is especially the case when secular television channels film the meetings. This brings incalculable disrepute to Christianity. With humility and sorrow let us pray that injury will be limited and plead that God will send true revival.

References

1. Modernism in the realm of intellectual thought refers roughly to that period between René Descartes (1596-1650) and about 1970. That period of time in which a system of thought was taken for granted. We have now moved beyond the modern to the post-modern in which the former framework of thought has gone.
2. *Thomas Müntzer, Apocalyptic Mystic and Revolutionary* by Hans Jurgen Goertz, T&T Clark, p 173ff.
3. *The Dissenters from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, Michael Watts, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp 135ff.

The God we Worship: His Being

This is the first of a two-part article.

Bob Sheehan

In the general revelation which God has given of himself to all men in creation and in the human constitution, he has revealed that he is eternal, powerful, moral and worthy to be worshipped. In a special revelation which he gave over many centuries and which is recorded for us in the Scriptures, he has provided a far more extensive revelation of his being and character.

God reveals himself in a special revelation in different ways. There are statements made by him, or about him, which reveal his character. These statements are confirmed by actions and illustrated by names of God which define him for us.

1. God is the Only True and Living God

Judaism, Islam and Christianity are sometimes classed together as the great monotheistic faiths. Each asserts the existence of but one God. That the God of the Bible is the only God who has real existence is constantly affirmed throughout the Scriptures.

In the Law it is stated that the LORD is one, and this affirmation is so central to the Old Testament that it is the first declaration of the Jewish Creed, the Shema. God himself is represented as declaring that he alone is God and that there is no other god besides him.¹

The prophets continue the theme with tirades against idols and idolatry. No god was formed before the LORD, nor shall any be after him. Apart from the LORD there is no god. He alone is God and Saviour.²

The New Testament reiterates the truth. Many gods, so-called gods, are worshipped, but for the Christians there is only one God. Converts to Christ are not to bring their gods with them and rename them after the Christian God, but to turn from vain idols to a living and true God.³

The commitment of the Old and New Testaments to monotheism cannot be doubted. God is not one deity among many, but entirely on his own, unique and unrivalled.

2. This One God is Complex in His Being

In the very same Scriptures where the rights of the one God are jealously defended over the claims of counterfeit rivals, there is nevertheless a recognition that God's being is not simple but complex. Testimony is borne to this complexity in many ways.

i. There are allusions to plurality within God in the Old Testament

A significant change occurs in the order of Genesis 1 when the commanding voice of God is replaced with God saying, 'Let *us* make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness' (v26). Not only does this mark man off from all the rest of creation but it is a new starting point in God's creative strategy.

To whom is God talking? In whose image and likeness is man made? Some have rushed to supply the answer by directing us to the angels who would explicitly deny that God had any fellow-labourers. He created without counsellors and consultation as an act of solitary self-sufficiency.⁴

Others have found here a literary form reminiscent of European monarchs who talk in the plural about their singular persons. But, then, God is not a European monarch and is not affected by the niceties of court language!

The consistent testimony of Scripture is that man is made in the image of God, not the image of God and some other(s). The Genesis narrative itself asserts that it was God who made man in his own image (1:27). As God speaks and God makes, it seems that we must recognise here the unfolding of a great mystery: that God, although one, is in himself complex, that he speaks within himself. How is not explained.

It is sometimes objected that we may not read into the Scriptures anything more than the writers themselves would have understood. That is, however, palpably false. Daniel prophesied about things which he was told he would not be able to understand because they were for later days. Other prophets who wanted answers to their mysterious prophecies were told they were not serving themselves but generations to come. We do not interpret the Scriptures within the limitations of their human writers but within the light and the full revelation given by their divine Author.⁵

A second 'us' passage is found in Genesis 3:22. The LORD God is speaking. He laments that the man has become like one of us. The expedient of introducing angels again seems weak. Satan had promised them that they would become like *God* by eating (3:5), not like God and his angels. 'Us' points again to this mysterious complexity.

The third example is found in Genesis 11:6-8 where, in his opposition to Babel, the LORD says, 'Let us go down and confuse their language'. Why

should angels be introduced when the text explicitly says, ‘So the LORD scattered them’ (v8)?

We may have a further example of the same interesting phenomenon in Isaiah 6:8 where the LORD asks, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’ There is little reason to see the ‘I’ and the ‘us’ as anything other than co-extensive.

A different type of allusion to plurality is found in some other Old Testament passages. The construction of the sentences is unusual and there are suggestions of plurality within the LORD. In Genesis the LORD rains down brimstone – from the LORD (19:24). The second mention of the LORD seems redundant unless some distinction is to be drawn between the LORD and the LORD.

In Hosea the LORD promises to save Judah and says, ‘I will save them – by the LORD.’ Again the second LORD seems redundant if no plurality is implied.

A third type of allusion may be found in the fact that the priestly blessing pronounced over Israel was a three-fold blessing in the name of the LORD, and that the seraphim in the presence of God ascribe a three-fold holiness to him.⁶ A plurality which is three-fold is a veiled allusion to the more vigorous Trinitarianism of the New Testament.

ii. The Old Testament view of the Messiah

Beyond the allusions of language it is necessary when considering the Being of God to ask questions about those who are considered most closely related to him. Israel was God’s son, but by adoption. Angels can be described as God’s sons, because, although created, they reflect his character.⁷ What may be said of the Messiah?

The Messiah is also presented in various places as God’s Son.⁸ In one of these, in Isaiah, various other titles are also given to him (9:6). Among them, is ‘Mighty God’. All sorts of attempts are made to undermine the significance of this Messianic title: eg. It is constructed in a form suitable to Greek mythology so that the Messiah is described as a ‘mighty hero’. It is interpreted as if it were to be read ‘mighty god’ giving some sort of connection with divinity to Messiah but not the deity represented by a capitalised ‘G’ for God. All such attempts at the avoidance of the implications of the title come to grief when in the very next chapter Isaiah uses the title ‘Mighty God’ to describe the LORD, the Holy One of Israel (10:20-21).

The Old Testament itself, therefore, asserts that Messiah is Mighty God and that Mighty God is the LORD. As Messiah cannot be another God to the

LORD, for he is the only God, he must be one God with the LORD, yet in some respect be able to be distinguished from him.

Psalm 45 also refers to the Messiah. In v6 he is addressed as 'God'. Many commentators want immediately to dismiss this translation and find an alternative, not because the translation is itself wrong but because for dogmatic reasons they reject the possibility of any reference to a divine Messiah in the Old Testament. As Leupold so eloquently expresses it, 'Commentators first determine that a confession of the deity of the Messiah is *per se* impossible or never occurs (in spite of Isaiah 9:6). Then the simple and obvious translation, upheld by all the prominent versions down to the ARV, which offers a marginal alternative, is rejected and an argument in support of a far less natural translation is sought.'⁹

In Psalm 45 Messiah, although addressed as God, is also referred to as having a God (v7). If Messiah is God he must be the LORD, yet it is evident that in an unexplained sense he can be distinguished from him.

The prophet Zechariah records the words of the LORD of Hosts who calls for the sword to smite the shepherd who is described as God's kin (13:7). The word used is only ever used in the Scriptures of close kin. It is never used of a person who shares a similar office but of a close neighbour. Therefore, 'it must refer to a human nature that beyond this humanity has a nature in nearest possible relation to Jehovah, which of course must be a divine nature'.¹⁰ Messiah is God's kin.

The names which are given to Messiah in the Old Testament also indicate his divinity. He is to be called Emmanuel, God with us, and the LORD our righteousness.¹¹ As names define a person in Scripture, such a close identification of Messiah with the LORD needs to be noticed.

The complexity within God's oneness has to be great enough to incorporate a suggested plurality within itself, a threeness and a divine Messiah. This is complexity indeed! Yet to it must also be added the presence in the Old Testament of the Spirit of God.

iii. The Old Testament doctrine of the Spirit of God

The widespread use in the Old Testament of the word 'ruach' meaning wind, breath and spirit requires us to distinguish between the various uses according to the different contexts in which it appears.

In the creation account the 'ruach elohim' or Spirit of God is mentioned (Gen 1:2). It has been argued that it would be more scientific and less mythological to translate the phrase 'a mighty wind'. However, there are two main objections to this:

Firstly, there is a perfectly good Hebrew phrase used elsewhere in Scripture to denote a mighty wind without the unusual expedient of turning the word 'God' into an adjective to mean 'mighty'.¹²

Secondly, the verb associated with the Spirit of God in Genesis 1:2 neither suits the translation 'wind' nor that of 'breath'. Its parallel use in Deuteronomy 32:11 pictures an eagle hovering above her nest in protection of her young. It is difficult to imagine breath or wind hovering but not to see in the imagery the superintendence of the Holy Spirit over the early creation.

Some have thought, however, that the Spirit of God in the Old Testament is little more than an extension of himself, a way of denoting his power or influence, the personification of a divine attribute.

Three Old Testament scriptures in particular, however, emphasise that the Spirit has marks of personality and is not a mere power or influence. The Spirit is the good Spirit who guides, the Spirit who can be grieved and angered and give guidance. These are the activities of a personal Spirit.

Within God's complex Being there must also be room for a personal Spirit, as well as a divine Messiah, a threeness and a plurality! God is indeed greater than we thought!

iv. The New Testament doctrine of the divine Christ

Undoubtedly the New Testament affirms the existence of a Christ who is truly human. Yet there is far more to him than humanity. Both he and his disciples claim for him attributes, activities and titles which set him above any mere man.

John the Baptist's enigmatic statement that the one who came after him was before him is clarified when the Lord Jesus is described as coming from heaven and having come from God. To this are added assertions of having shared the glory that belongs to God before the world was.¹⁴ Such breathtaking claims not only affirmed a pre-existence before Bethlehem and the womb of Mary, but before creation and the beginning of time. To claim to predate creation was to assert eternal existence, an existence which belongs to God alone. To claim to have shared God's glory and to request its return was an assertion of deity, for God will share his glory with no other.¹⁵

The Son existed before the world was created and in the beginning was not inactive. Everything that has been brought into existence has been created by the Son and for him. He is before all things. His role as the firstborn of creation does not imply that he was the first created being, for this would contradict the claim that all things were created by him. The scriptural idea of the firstborn

does not emphasise the date of birth but the position of heir which belonged to the firstborn. David, as firstborn, was not the first king the world had known but the king whom God appointed to a higher position than any other king. In the same way Christ is appointed as heir and ruler of the creation.¹⁶

The New Testament writers have no hesitancy in attributing Old Testament Scriptures which clearly refer to the LORD in the Old Testament to Jesus in the New.

The Old Testament God is contrasted with the failing passing creation. He is the owner of the gifts which men receive and give. He is the one whom Israel is to fear, the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence. He is the one whom they pierce. In the New Testament all these activities of the LORD are attributed to Christ.¹⁷ To attribute what belongs to God to a mere man would be blasphemous, but to attribute them to Christ is to acknowledge that the Messiah is indeed divine, one God with the LORD.

We are not, however, left to inferences but many explicit statements exist. Some scholars go to great lengths to undermine these statements because they come to the New Testament with a prejudice that Christ cannot possibly have been acknowledged by the disciples as 'God' nor could he have possibly claimed to have been God. They do not study evidence but fit it into their pre-conceived prejudice. However, an unprejudiced consideration of the evidence speaks for itself.

This evidence I develop examining fourteen explicit statements including Matthew 1:21-23; John 1:1; 5:18; 5:58; 10:30; 14:8-9; 20:29,29 and other principal statements in the New Testament, to follow probably in the next issue.

References

1. Deut 6:4; 32:39
2. Isa 43:10-11; 44:6; 45:21
3. Acts 14:15; 1 Thess 1:9
4. Isa 40:13-14; 44:24
5. Dan 12:9; 1 Peter 1:10-12
6. Num 6:22-26; Isa 6:3
7. Exod 4:23; Job 1:6; Ps 148
8. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7
9. Leopold H C (1977) *Psalms*, Evangelical Press, p361
10. Moore T V (1979) *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, Banner of Truth, p299
11. Isa 7:14; Jer 23:6; 33:16
12. Jonah 1:4
13. Neh 9:20; Isa 63:10; Micah 2:7
14. John 1:14-15; 3:31; 6:38,62; 13:3; 8:58; 1:1; 17:5
15. John 17:5; Isa 42:8
16. John 1:1-3; Col 1:16-17,15; Ps 89:27
17. Ps 102:25-27 with Heb 1:10-12; Ps 68:18 with Eph 4:7-8; Zech 12:10 with John 19:35; Isa 6:12-15 with 1 Peter 2:8; 3:14-15

Cultivating Holiness

Joel R Beeke

1. Phil 2:5-8 *Mortify pride*
 2. *Mortify worldliness*
 3. *Mortify time-waste*
- Positive
- ① *develop your prayer life*
 - ② *develop your study life*
 - ③ *develop*

**The
Cultivation
of Holiness**



Concretely, what must we cultivate? Three things:

1. Imitation of the character of Jehovah.

God says, 'Be ye holy; for I am holy' (1 Peter 1:16). The holiness of God himself ought to be our foremost stimulus to cultivate holy living. Seek to be like your Father in heaven in righteousness, holiness and integrity. In the Spirit, strive to think God's thoughts after him via his Word, to be of one mind with him, to live and act as God himself would have you do.¹ As Stephen Charnock concludes:

This is the prime way of honouring God. We do not so glorify God by elevated admirations, or eloquent expressions, or pompous services for him, as when we aspire to a conversing with Him with unstained spirits, and live *to* him in living *like* him.²

2. Conformity to the image of Christ.

This is a favourite Pauline theme, of which one example must suffice: 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who ... made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, ... humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Phil 2:5-8). Christ was humble, willing to give up his rights in order to obey God and serve sinners. If you would be holy, Paul is saying, be like-minded.

Do not aim for conformity to Christ as a condition of salvation, however, but as a fruit of salvation received by faith. We must look to Christ for holiness, for he is the fount and path of holiness. Seek no other path. Follow the advice of Augustine who contended that it is better to limp on the path than to run outside of it.³ Do as Calvin taught: Set Christ before you as the mirror of sanctification, and seek grace to mirror him in his image.⁴ Ask in each situation

encountered: 'What would Christ think, say, and do?' And then trust him for holiness. He will not disappoint you (James 1:2-7).

There is room for unending growth in holiness because Jesus is the bottomless well of salvation. You cannot go to him too much for holiness, for he is holiness *par excellence*. He lived holiness; he merited holiness; he sends his Spirit to apply holiness. 'Christ is all, and in all' (Col 3:11) – holiness inclusive. As Luther profoundly set forth, 'We in Christ = justification; Christ in us = sanctification'.⁵

3. *Submission to the mind of the Holy Spirit.*

In Romans 8:6 Paul divides people into two categories – those who let themselves be controlled by their sinful ~~natures~~ (i.e. the carnally minded who follow fleshly desires) and those who follow after the Spirit (i.e. those who mind 'the things of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:5).

The Holy Spirit was sent to bring the believer's mind into submission to his mind (1 Cor 2). He was given to make sinners holy; the most holy increasingly bow as willing servants under his control. Let us beg for grace to be willing servants more fully and more consistently.

How does the Spirit work this holy grace of submission to His mind, thereby making us holy. *First*, He shows us our need for holiness through conviction Of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). *Second*, He implants desire for holiness. His saving work never leads to despair but always to sanctification in Christ. *Third*, he grants Christlikeness in holiness. He works upon our whole nature, molding us after Christ's image. *Fourth*, he provides strength to live a holy life by his indwelling and influencing of our soul. If we live by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of our sinful nature (Gal 5:16). To live by the Spirit means to live in obedience to and dependence on that Spirit. *Fifth*, through humble feeding of Scripture and the exercise of prayer, the Spirit teaches us his mind and establishes an ongoing realisation that holiness remains essential as being worthy of God and his kingdom (1 Thess 2:12; Eph 4:1) and for fitness for service (1 Cor 9:24-25; Phil 3:13).

'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18). Thomas Watson writes: 'The Spirit stamps the impression of his own sanctity upon the heart, as the seal prints its likeness upon the wax. The Spirit of God in a man perfumes him with holiness, and makes his heart a map of heaven.'⁶

How to Cultivate Holiness

That believers are called to holiness is indisputably clear. But the cardinal question remains: How does the believer cultivate holiness? Here are seven directions to assist us.

1. Know and love Scripture.

This is God's primary road to holiness and to spiritual growth – the Spirit as master teacher blessing the reading and searching of God's Word. Jesus prayed, 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth' (John. 17:17). And Peter advised, 'Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby' (1 Peter 2:2).

If you would not remain spiritually ignorant and impoverished, read through the Bible at least annually. Even more importantly, memorise the Scriptures (Ps 119:11), search (John 5:39) and meditate upon them (Ps 1:2), live and love them (Ps 119; 19:10). Compare Scripture with Scripture; take time to study the Word. Proverbs 2:1-5 sets before us several principles involved in serious personal Bible study: teachability (receiving God's words), obedience (storing God's commandments), discipline (applying the heart), dependence (crying for knowledge), and perseverance (searching for hidden treasure)⁷. Do not expect growth in holiness if you spend little time alone with God and do not take his Word seriously. Plagued with a heart prone to be tempted away from holiness, let Scripture teach you how to live a holy life in an unholy world.

Develop a scriptural formula for holy living. Here is one possibility drawn from 1 Corinthians. When hesitant over a course of action, ask yourself:

- Does this glorify God? (1 Cor 10:31)
- Is this consistent with the lordship of Christ? (1 Cor 7:23)
- Is this consistent with biblical examples? (1 Cor 11:1)
- Is this lawful and beneficial for me – spiritually, mentally, physically? (1 Cor 6:9-12)
- Does this help others positively and not hurt others unnecessarily? (1 Cor 10:33; 8:13)
- Does this bring me under any enslaving power? (1 Cor 6:12)

Let Scripture be your compass to guide you in cultivating holiness, in making life's decisions, and in encountering the high waves of personal affliction.

2. Use the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper diligently as a means of grace to strengthen your faith in Christ.

God's sacraments complement his Word. They point us away from ourselves. Each sign – the water, the bread, the wine – directs us to believe in Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. The sacraments are visible means through which he invisibly communes with us and we with him. They are spurs to Christlikeness and therefore to holiness.

Grace received through the sacraments is not different from that received through the Word. Both convey the same Christ. But as Robert Bruce put it,

‘While we do not get a better Christ in the sacraments than we do in the Word, there are times when we get Christ better.’⁸

Flee often to Christ by Word and sacrament. Faith in Christ is a powerful motivator for holiness, for faith and the love of sin cannot mix. Be careful, however, not to seek your holiness in your experiences of Christ, but in Christ *himself*. As William Gurnall admonishes:

When thou trustest in Christ *within* thee, instead of Christ *without* thee, thou settest Christ against Christ. The bride does well to esteem her husband’s picture, but it were ridiculous if she should love it better than himself, much more if she should go to it *rather than to him to supply her wants*. Yet thou actest thus when thou art more fond of Christ’s image in thy soul than of him who painted it there.⁹

3. *Regard yourself as dead to the dominion of sin and as alive to God in Christ* (Rom 6:11).

‘To realise this,’ writes Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, ‘takes away from us that old sense of hopelessness which we have all known and felt because of the terrible power of sin... I can say to myself that not only am I no longer under the dominion of sin, but I am under the dominion of another power that nothing can frustrate.’¹⁰ That is not to imply that because sin no longer reigns over us as believers, we have license to forego our duty to fight against sin. Bridges rightly admonishes us, ‘To confuse the *potential* for resisting sin (which God provided) with the *responsibility* for resisting (which is ours) is to court disaster in our pursuit of holiness.’¹¹ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* balances God’s gift and our responsibility when stating, ‘Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness’ (Question 35).

Seek to cultivate a growing hatred of sin *as sin*, for that is the kind of hatred against sin which God possesses. Recognise that God is worthy of obedience not only as the Judge, but especially as a loving Father. Say with Joseph in temptation, ‘How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ (Gen 39:9).

Believe that Christ is mighty to preserve you alive by his Spirit. You live through union with Christ. Live unto his righteousness. His righteousness is greater than our unrighteousness; his Saviourhood is greater than your sinfulness. His Spirit is within you: ‘Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world’ (1 John 4:4). Do not despair: you are strong in him, alive in him, victorious in him. Satan may win many skirmishes, but the war is yours, the victory is yours (1 Cor 15:57; Rom 8:37). In Christ, the optimism of divine grace reigns over the pessimism of human nature.

4. *Pray and work in dependence upon God for holiness.*

No one is sufficient to bring a clean thing out of an unclean but God (Job 14:4). Hence, pray with David, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God' (Ps 51:10). And as you pray, work. John Owen wrote, 'God works in us and with us, not against us or without us; so that his assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work, and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself.'¹²

The Heidelberg Catechism (Question 116) points out that prayer and work belong together. They are like two oars, which when both utilized, will keep a row-boat moving forward. If you use only one oar – if you pray without working or you work without praying – you will row in circles.

Holiness and prayer have much in common. Both are central to the Christian life and faith; they are obligatory, not optional. Both originate with God and centre upon him. Both are activated, often mutually, by the Spirit of God. Neither can survive without the other. Both are learned by experience and through spiritual battles.¹³ Neither is perfected in this life, but must be cultivated lifelong. Both are easier to talk and write about than to exercise. The most prayerful often feel themselves to be prayerless; the most holy often regard themselves as unholy.

Holiness and work are also closely related, especially the work of nurturing and persevering in *personal discipline*. Discipline takes time and effort. Paul exhorted Timothy: 'Exercise thyself rather unto godliness' (1 Tim 4:7). Holiness is not achieved sloppily or instantaneously.¹⁴ Holiness is a call to a disciplined life; it cannot live out of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called *cheap grace* – that is, grace which forgives without demanding repentance and obedience. Holiness is costly grace – grace that cost God the blood of his Son, cost the Son his own life, and costs the believer daily mortification in exercising holiness, such that with Paul he dies daily (1 Cor 15:31).¹⁵ Gracious holiness calls for continual commitment, continual diligence, continual practice and continual repentance.¹⁶ If you 'sometimes through weakness fall into sin, you must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since... We have an eternal covenant of grace with God' (*Baptism Form*). Resolve with Jonathan Edwards: 'Never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.'¹⁷

These two things, *fighting against sin* and *lack of success*, appear contradictory but are not. Failing and becoming a failure are two different matters. The believer recognises he will often fail. Luther said that the righteous man more often feels himself to be 'a loser than a victor' in the trial of and struggle against sin, 'for the Lord lets him be tested and assailed to his utmost limits as gold is tested in a furnace'.¹⁸ This too is an important component of discipleship. Nevertheless, the godly man will persevere even through his failures. Failure does not make him quit; it makes him repent the more earnestly and

press on in the Spirit's strength. 'For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief' (Prov 24:16).

Let us never forget that the God we love, loves holiness. Hence the intensity of his fatherly, chastising discipline (Hebrews 12:5-6,10)! Perhaps William Gurnall says it best: 'God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well he had rather see a hole than a spot in his child's garments.'¹⁹

5. *Flee worldliness.*

We must strike out against the first appearance of the pride of life, the lusts of the flesh and eye, and all forms of sinful worldliness as they knock on the door of our hearts and minds. If we open the door and allow them to roam about in our minds and take foothold in our lives, we are already their prey. 'Daniel purposed *in his heart* that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: *therefore* he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself' (Dan 1:8, emphasis added). The material we read, the recreation and entertainment we engage in, the music we listen to, and the conversations we have, all affect our minds and ought to be judged in the context of Philippians 4:8. Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, 'think on these things'. We must live above the world and not be of the world while yet in the world (Rom 12:1-2).

6. *Seek fellowship in the church; associate with mentors in holiness* (Eph 4:12-13; 1 Cor 11:1).²⁰

The church ought to be a fellowship of mutual care and a community of prayer (1 Cor 12:7; Acts 2:42). Converse and pray with fellow believers whose godly walk you admire (Col 3:16). 'He that walketh with the wise shall be wise' (Prov 13:20). Association promotes assimilation. A Christian life lived in isolation from other believers will be defective; usually such a believer will remain spiritually immature.

Such fellowship, however, ought not to exclude the reading of godly treatises of former ages which promote holiness. Luther said that some of his best friends were dead ones. For example, he questioned if anyone could possess spiritual life who did not feel kinship with David pouring out his heart in the Psalms. Read classics that speak out vehemently against sin. Let Thomas Watson be your mentor in *The Mischief of Sin*; John Owen in *Temptation and Sin*; Jeremiah Burroughs in *The Evil of Evils*; Ralph Venning in *The Plague of Plagues*.²¹ But also read J C Ryle's *Holiness*, Octavius Winslow's *Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul*, and John Flavel's *Keeping the Heart*.²² Let these divines of former ages be your spiritual mentors and friends.

7. Live 'present-tense', total commitment to God.

Don't fall prey to the 'one-more-time' syndrome. Postponed obedience is disobedience. Tomorrow's holiness is impurity now. Tomorrow's faith is unbelief now. Aim not to sin at all (1 John 2:1), asking for divine strength to bring every thought into captivity to Christ (2 Cor 10:5), for Scripture indicates that our 'thought-lives' ultimately determine our character: 'For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he' (Prov 23:7a). An old proverb says it this way:

Sow a thought, reap an act;
Sow an act, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a character.

This study appears in the April 1995 issue of *The Outlook* (2201 Oak Industrial Dr. N E, Grand Rapids, MI 49315, USA), with whom we have a reciprocal agreement. In the March issue Dr Beeke treats the biblical command, 'Be holy, for I am holy'. Here he addresses the subject of the cultivation of holiness. The complete series is printed in 'Reformation and Revival' (Box 88216, Carol Stream, ILL 60188, USA), vol 4.2, Spring 1995.

Footnotes

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6. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (1856, repr. Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1970), p173.
7. Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Holiness* (Navpress, Colorado Springs, 1978), p52.
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11. Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, p.60.
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15. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R H Fuller (SCM Press, London, 1959).
16. Bridges, *The Practice of Holiness*, pp 41-56.
17. For Edwards' seventy resolutions to promote holiness made at nineteen years of age, see *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (1834, repr. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1974), 1:xx-xxii.
18. Luther: Lectures on Romans, trans. and ed. William Pauck (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1961) p189.
19. Quoted in IDE Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1975) p140.
20. See *Belgic Confession of Faith*, Article 28.
21. Thomas Watson, *The Mischief of Sin* (1671; Soli Deo Gloria, Morgan PA, 1994); John Owen 'Temptation and Sin' in *The Works of John Owen*, vol 6 (1851, repr. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1967); Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Evil of Evils; or The Exceeding Sinfulness of Sin* (1654, repr. Soli Deo Gloria, Morgan PA, 1992); Ralph Venning, *The Plague of Plagues* (1669, repr. The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1965).
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The Holy Spirit and the 'Toronto Blessing'

Summary of seminar led by Rev Dr Stephen Tong at Graha Purna Yudha Auditorium, Jakarta, Indonesia, Nov 7th 1995.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 – 'And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will overcome with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.'

An appraisal by Stephen Tong

Introduction

Lately a belief has arisen among a number of Christians that at the end of the age everyone will become Christian. This eschatological view has stirred up a feverish activity in the Church and has brought about apparent unusual advance.

But this view is very contradictory to the Bible's teaching. The Bible emphasises that at the end increasingly few people will become Christian and close to the end it will be difficult to find true Christians with true moral standards.



Stephen Tong and the editor.

This difference in eschatological viewpoint has resulted in 'quantity' becoming a new 'god' in church growth and in determining the success of a minister. When Jesus performed a miracle to satisfy thousands of people, very many came to him, but he rebuked them (John 6:25-26). They did not come to hear the Word of God, but to seek perishable food. So at that time many of them left Jesus. When Jesus challenged his disciples, Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God' (John 6:68-69). This is the first Christological confession of faith, that is, the reason why a person follows Christ.

The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ

The church which begins to depart from its Christology will begin to become heretical. The church which does not want to receive the Word sells its birthright to the power which God gives to it. A true understanding concerning

Christ can only be received by the leading of the Holy Spirit. That is why Jesus said: 'When He comes, that is, the Spirit of Truth, he will lead you into all truth... He will glorify me, because he will speak what he has received from me' (John 16:13-15).

In order to evaluate a true movement of the Holy Spirit, we need one key, that is, whether or not the movement glorifies the Lord Christ crucified. If a movement truly focuses its teaching and activities on Christ, his cross, his resurrection and his gospel, then we can consider that movement being of the Holy Spirit. This kind of movement will certainly result in people knowing Christ, forsaking sin, and desiring to live holy lives, take up the cross and follow Christ.

A genuine movement must be led by the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit leads, he will glorify Christ. Christ must be glorified, because while on earth, he was put to shame and crucified in order to atone for sin. When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit he will surely glorify Christ because that is the purpose of Christ's gift.

The Holy Spirit leads to the Truth

The Holy Spirit leads people into all the truth (John 16:13). Even if a church is led by a powerful preacher, if it is not led by the Word, that church fails no matter how many members it has. The Holy Spirit comes to convict people of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). This awareness will cause repentance, a return to the Word and a seeking of help from the Lord. The Holy Spirit does not kill rationality but brings reason under the Word. He works on 5 levels:

- i. He reveals all truth.
- ii. He illuminates the truth in our minds.
- iii. He reminds us constantly to return to the truth.
- iv. He brings the truth into our hearts.
- v. He brings us into all the truth.

These 5 things will keep the Church from drifting from the truth. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. Those who do not love and obey the truth will be deceived and destroyed.

Movements like the 'Toronto Blessing' do not emphasise truth but rather, feelings and personal experience, because at heart they despise the Word. Even though their followers are energetic and diligent in reading the Bible, what is preached is not truth from the Bible, the desire being for something 'more' than the Bible, that is, amazing 'supernatural' experiences. But in fact there is no true experience which exceeds the Word. The truth must judge and direct experience and must establish its value so that every experience not according to the Word of God must be rejected.

Christ's Teaching: The Rich Man and Lazarus

The account found in Luke 16:19-31 cannot be viewed as a parable, because the Lord Jesus did not speak of it as a parable. This is a dialogue between heaven and hell. The rich man, who had been used to giving orders, tells Abraham to tell Lazarus to do something for him. Abraham refused because it was not possible to bridge the

gulf between. The rich man still wanted to arrange things so that Lazarus could be raised to proclaim the gospel to his unrepentant brothers – this is hell’s command. This is the desire and method of hell.

People in hell believe that Almighty God can perform miracles and raise the dead... but it must be done according to their desires and demands. However it is the mentality of hell; it is also the mentality of people like Rodney Howard-Browne, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Hagin and others. It appears that these people have great faith, believe that the Lord is able to do everything and perform miracles, but they press God to work according to their desires – this is often not discerned. Many ‘big names’ in the ministry are guilty of pressing God to become their servant. According to them, the best way to evangelise is through miracles. In this they believe in their own opinions rather than in God. This can be called ‘faith in faith’, not *faith in God*. But Abraham halted all the debate and concepts from hell with one principle: ‘They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them... If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead’ (Luke 16:19, 31).

That which causes a person to repent is the Word; that which causes faith to grow is also the Word. Even if a person experiences many miracles, he will not repent except by the Word. Determining the method of evangelism through signs and wonders, unwittingly ‘limits’ the work of the Holy Spirit to that way as though he, the Holy Spirit,

cannot use another way to bring people to Christ.

We now give attention to the main instigators of the ‘Toronto Blessing’.

Toronto Blessing Personalities

Rodney Howard-Browne was born in South Africa on 21 June, 1961. At ages 5 and 8 he surrendered himself to be filled with the Holy Spirit. At age 16 he cried out to God, ‘Lord, now I ask you to come down and touch me, or if not, I will go up there and touch you.’ This insistence resulted in him being struck as if with lightning, then with continuous laughing. After this he vowed, ‘Because I have been touched by the Holy Spirit, now I want to go throughout the world to touch others.’ In 1981 Howard moved to America and in 1989 preached in Albany. There laughing occurred again.

He did not use biblical principles but forced his will on God to dictate what he wanted. He thought he received an answer from the Holy Spirit but notice that after his experience he did not go to preach the gospel but to touch other people so that they would laugh like he did. Such principles stand in utter contradiction to the Bible and to God’s servants who have truly been touched with the Holy Spirit. Such go everywhere to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and his cross – and take up their cross as a result of that gospel. The TB movement does not encourage this but results in people spending thousands of dollars to go to Toronto to watch people go into convulsions and laugh. They want to be touched so that they can also fall down there. How different this is from the teaching of the

Bible. The happenings of the TB movement are similar to those of the New Age movement which has now spread throughout the world. Mankind sees itself as god, so that whatever it wants it must have.

Howard-Browne is influenced by Oral Roberts, a minister who has brought great shame on Christians with his love of money so that many despise the Christian faith. This is the way that Satan damages Christianity.

John Arnott is another leader of the Vineyard Church in Toronto (Canada), where the TB was first publicised widely throughout the world. He has been influenced by Katherine Kuhlman and Benny Hinn. Kuhlman was actually the originator of 'holy laughter' – she had such power that even those close to her were infected. At her death there was an exposure of things that were not right in her life which brought shame on the name of the Lord.

Toronto Blessing tendencies

People who have fallen down and laughed report that they felt wonderful and began to enjoy Bible reading and church attendance – assuming that these are the 'fruits'. This is a further, deeper stage in the deception. What happens throughout their lives until the end proves their 'fruit'?

People influenced by faith healers and unbiblical, uncontrolled spirits tend to have one common characteristic: *they are all the same*. They sing: 'In Christ we are all brothers' (*but you must be under them*). They view all churches as the same (*as long as they are the leaders*), but if other people or churches lead they don't give them support.

Anyone who criticises them is viewed as a splitter of churches. On the other hand, if they lead many church members astray and cause divisions, they do not view this as splitting churches.

They see growth in terms of quantity and change spiritual riches into material riches. When they supposedly receive the Holy Spirit they become unconscious, laugh and roll about uncontrollably. Young girls roll under the seats shamefully and immodestly. Is this the work of the Holy Spirit? They justify this by quoting Psalm 23:2 – 'He makes me lie down in green pastures...' They are very bold to adulterate the Bible and force verses to conform to their irresponsible experience.

The Bible states that at the end of the age increasing numbers of people will harden their hearts and there will be few who have faith. The Bible emphasises that at the end God will pour out his wrath on mankind, judge and punish sinners. The Bible also emphasises that they who would live godly in Christ Jesus will certainly suffer persecution. The true Church which is unseen consists of people who believe and have become the true possession of the Lord. They are sanctified by the Lord through his Word. The Church which makes a cult of man, which has human and worldly ambitions and which exalts things which oppose the Bible will be given over to error by the Lord. God gives them over to erroneous teachings and finally they are destroyed. Our God is a consuming fire. If you do not want to pay attention to and understand the Word of God and sincerely meditate on it, you will be caught in various false currents.

Bringing our Best in Worship

Peter Brumby

Bringing our Best in Worship

A W Tozer has written of worship that it is, '*the missing jewel of the evangelical churches*'. Imagine the keepers of the British Crown Jewels at the Tower of London, discovering that a principal jewel is missing! What a search would be set in motion! John chapter 4 informs us of a heavenly search – '*The Father is seeking such to worship him*' (John 4.23).

The search for true worship makes it a priority subject for us; not so much with reference to forms of worship, but the nature of worship. In the Reformed tradition, a strong emphasis on the nature of worship controls the ordering of the form of worship.

Although the biblical vocabulary is diverse it can be summarised for simplicity under two headings.

- i. The *prostration* word group. Both Hebrew and Greek verbs indicate that worship involves a lowering on the part of the worshipper before the infinite majesty of an infinitely superior God.
- ii. The *service* word group. The original verbs in this case specify the service brought by an inferior slave (servant) to a superior master. In Romans 12:1 the apostle Paul calls for a response to the mercies of God, which is 'your reasonable service'. 'The service here in view is worshipful service.' (Prof John Murray).

The thrust of this vocabulary can be further summarised by affirming that the service theme is broader, and refers to a life of consecrated and comprehensive service to God; while the prostration theme is narrower, and refers to specific acts of worship. Such specific acts of worship are our primary service. Its character is spiritual and sacrificial as believers individually and collectively engage all their faculties in this their highest duty and privilege (cf Heb 13:15; 1 Pet 2:5).

The Doctrine of Worship

A number of fundamental propositions can be employed to survey the biblical doctrine.

1. Failure to worship is fundamental to our fallenness.

Paul's evaluation of a fallen human race in the Romans letter specifies this. '...Who exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator...' (Rom 1:25). It amounts to a vast sin of omission.

2. Restoration to worship is fundamental to our salvation.

When all is said about what salvation in Christ saves us *from*, what are we saved *to*? ‘The hour is coming and now is’, says Jesus, ‘when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.’ The Saviour’s coming inaugurated the era of salvation, which is also the era of spiritual and true worship. To this worship we are saved.

3. True worship is fundamental to the true identity of God’s covenant people.

Who are truly the Lord’s? What marks distinguish them? These are questions, it seems, which circulated at Philippi. Paul addressed the issue memorably - ‘For we are the circumcision (ie. the covenant people), who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh’ (Phil 3:3).

4. Congregational worship is fundamental to the life of the Church.

Peter’s emphasis is on the congregation when he writes, ‘But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his own marvellous light’ (I Pet 2:9). Of all the legitimate parts of congregational life and activity, worship is the first. This, and the communion with God which lies at its heart, creates the continuity between the church militant and the Church triumphant. Evangelism will cease, but worship will endure.

5. Perfected worship is fundamental to what Scripture reveals about heaven.

Secular people frequently give expression to their vain imaginations of what heaven will be like, and they reveal the grossest ignorance. The book of Revelation, by contrast, has this five-fold refrain – ‘All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God.’ The true worshippers of the present, although imperfect, are moving forward, learning all the time, and anticipating that perfect state where all is worship.

When the church meets for worship it meets with biblical standards and directives before it, and is bound to ask of the worship it brings – is it regulated by Scripture? – is it spiritual in its nature? – is it preparing us for heaven? As a response to the saving grace of God, and the redemption which is in Christ, the church must endeavour to bring its best.

Practical Directives for Worship

The following directives are suggested as a corrective to known, identifiable and common weaknesses in evangelical churches today.

1. Get your faculties to work.

To love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength involves the activation and employment of the inward spiritual faculties of the soul. When the

Psalms call upon 'all that is within me' he is seeking to activate his faculties. This is a very particular exercise in the believer's approach to worship. The power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration has already given life to the soul. Its faculties can now be employed. *The Westminster Confession* addresses this when it contemplates the proper use of the Sabbath. It envisages a large amount of the time being taken up with, 'public and private exercises of his (God's) worship'. For those employed in this way, the Confession, recommends 'a due preparing of their hearts....beforehand' (Ch 21.8). Every occasion of worship is a 'royal occasion' involving a 'royal audience', in which the worshipper will want to bring the best that can be brought to the throne room of God. But many worshippers are hindered in this by being unprepared. They have not learned to avoid things known to untune the faculties. Many a Lord's Day is ruined by the activities of a Saturday evening.

2. Understand the service

The traditional Reformed service of worship is commonly thought of rather negatively; as undeserving of profound respect and careful reflection. The reverse of this should be our practice. The Lord's Day service has profound meaning, order and progression in its arrangement (or should have!). From the moment of our arrival at its location, it should engage our understanding. This basic requirement can be focused by a pertinent question – How are you employed from the time of your arrival at the worship service until the moment when the minister begins to preach? This may often be a period of thirty or forty minutes. For lack of understanding they are often squandered. But something better is possible when it is understood that communion with God is our privilege. Communion involves communication. Communication between two parties is two-way in the form of a dialogue. He speaks, we respond; he speaks again, we further respond. This is the meaning and progression of the worship service through Scripture reading, prayer, praise and preaching; with a rich diversity to be explored in every part, and, by the inspiration of the Spirit, providing the people of God with views of his glory and grace. Thus the worship unfolds to its climax in the preaching of the Word and the renewed consecration to which it leads.

3. Set yourself against distractions

In all spiritual activity we have an adversary. Satan is opposed to God's worship as he is opposed to God. He is active to spoil by dividing the attention, and can make great gain by those things which distract the eye, ear, or mind. To maintain concentration when we are at worship is, not surprisingly, sometimes quite a battle. We can not only be distracted personally, but can also be responsible for distracting others. Distracting thoughts can be like garden weeds. They can take over, but do not need to. We must set ourselves against them, root them out, and dispose of them.

4. Be well disposed toward others

Hardness of heart, bitterness of spirit, grievances against others may prevent worship. Relationships between worshippers at the point of worship are important.

'If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift' (Matt 5:23ff). Worship has moral implications for relationships with others, particularly in the case of someone who has something against us, presumably because of what we have done to them. The more general point is that reconciliation to God, which is the pre-requisite of worship, creates a duty of reconciliation between brothers. To be right with God means we want to be right with all men, and will act to that end by all possible means. To have peace with God makes us peace-makers. Relationships within the worshipping congregation are special and sacred. Therefore we must be well disposed toward others in order truly to unite with them.

5. Be ready to help the minister

The task of leading a congregation in worship is very great. The man appointed to this task is a man of many infirmities, with many battles to fight. Sometimes he has been so encouraged in his own soul that he longs to take up the task. Sometimes (perhaps often) his own feelings are the opposite of this. He would rather be anywhere than standing before the assembled congregation at the hour of worship. So he often comes to the pulpit looking for sympathetic friends to help him, needing their grace, as well as God's. He depends very much on a generous spirit in the congregation. The Westminster divines went to some trouble to point this out in their *Directory of Public Worship* – 'The public worship being begun, the people are to wholly attend upon it, forbearing to read anything... and abstaining much more from all private whisperings... as also from gazing, sleeping, and other indecent behaviour which may disturb the minister...'

6. Be watchful of all details

Jeremiah Burroughs, in his book *Gospel Worship* deduces from the details of Old Testament Levitical ceremonial, the principle – 'In matters of worship God stands upon little things.' His point is that God is particular of detail. Who can doubt this when we consider both natural (in creation) and special revelation (in Scripture). It follows that sincere worshippers should think about details like appropriate dress (at the very least with a view to modesty), punctuality, posture, conversation and participation. Reference to posture may seem surprising. But experience has taught us that a slovenly, casual posture in singing God's praise or listening to his Word is not conducive to bringing the best in worship whereas an erect posture, and a clear, attentive, forward look are conducive to purpose, engagement of faculties, and energetic commitment in worship.

These practical suggestions are commended as relevant and useful in the spiritual quest for excellence in worship. None of them is an end in itself, but as a means to an end may help the Lord's worshipping people to bring their best, in response to the supreme gift of the Son of his love. 'My utmost for his highest', is a goal, which, if pursued, could transform worship and recover the missing jewel.



Students of the Setia Theological School at the volley ball pitch in Jakarta

The editor reports below on his recent visits to Australia and Indonesia.

Indonesia

Indonesia (see report in *RT* 142), with 13,000 inhabited islands, has the fourth largest population in the world. On a seven week tour of Australia and Indonesia, the highlight for me was to hear the preaching of Stephen Tong in Jakarta. He preaches to two congregations every Lord's Day, one Indonesian and one Mandarin. I attended the Indonesian service having the sermon translated by a friend, not easy as Dr Tong is so gripping. He preached for 90 minutes (it seemed like 20!) to a packed auditorium on Romans 12:1 in systematic expository style with much application and evangelistic appeal. The spiritual power sensed was strong confirmation to me that the Lord blesses preaching as the paramount means of grace.

Dr Tong is a Presbyterian who, with some justification, has viewed Baptists as Arminians and weak in theology. He is getting used to the idea that Reformed Baptists are on the map.

Stephen Tong conducts evangelistic meetings in large arenas or stadiums mostly

in the major cities of the Far East, about 120 meetings a year, gatherings which vary in size from 4,000 to 50,000. The main feature is preaching, not entertainment. Dr Tong is very much aware of the threat of liberalism and is involved in two seminaries, one in Jakarta and the other in Bandung.

It was a privilege to be asked to share the platform with Stephen Tong in a seminar in which the subject was 'True revival versus the Toronto Blessing', attended by 1,600. The substance of Dr Tong's address on that occasion is included in this issue.

I visited and ministered in seminaries with student bodies of over 200. Very impressive was the missionary zeal evident in the students and the vision to plant churches among the unreached people groups of which there are many in Indonesia. The spiritual desire for the truth was a marvellous tonic. In the work of speaking at meetings of different kinds which would represent a cross section of evangelical life I was impressed by the zeal and vitality of believers. The feeling, and it is a subjective feeling, is that there is the surge of the Holy Spirit here which we are lacking in many Western countries where there is lethargy and lack of commitment.



From left to right Eric Michael, Alan Morris, Charles Cole and Blane Mays. Charles Cole is holding the photocopy edition of the 1689 Confession in Indonesian, a publication which needs funding for proper publication.

It would seem that the centre of vital Christian witness is moving away from the West toward nations like Korea and Indonesia. Jakarta is very much part of this transition.

However we in the West must not think that we have nothing to contribute. We have a stupendous Puritan legacy by which the Christian Church throughout the world can be enriched. In a seminary I presented a survey of the history of the Christian Church focusing especially upon the 16th century Reformation as the most crucial of all events. I described the way in which the Reformation fell into three parts; Lutheran, Swiss and Anglican. Of the three the Anglican was the weakest and seemed the least likely to develop. The Anglican reformation was never completed. But the efforts to reform that body resulted in the Puritan movement, and it was the Puritans that have bequeathed to the Church the finest repository of expository literature. It is this goldmine that is being mined by *The Banner of Truth* and *Soli Deo Gloria* as well as other 'refineries' like *Grace Publications*. The latter, without weakening the doctrine, abridge and reproduce the Puritan classics and turn them into more readable form. It is from the Puritans that we have our Confessions of Faith, *The Westminster* and *The Baptist Confession of 1689*. Doctrinal

foundations are essential for the future well-being of the Church.

It is encouraging to note the continued interest shown in the value of the 1689 Confession of faith in Indonesian which is still being reproduced by photo-copying. An edition is urgently needed and we are looking for the funding for this.

Australia

John Campbell has accepted a call to become pastor of the Brisbane Baptist Tabernacle which he is due to take up in February, 1996. He has served the Melville Baptist Church, Perth, for several years, and at the same time taught in the Perth Baptist College.

John organised a four week trip for me and in reporting this I have, for the sake of brevity, to be selective. The purpose of my tour was to further the cause of reformation and revival and wherever possible promote unity among those who appreciate these priorities. Some have majored on experience to the point where the Bible is no longer consulted. Others have majored on church growth methods in which reference to Scripture is secondary. While seeking reformation, we acknowledge our powerlessness without the breath of the Holy Spirit. His work in our hearts is paramount



Pastor Rob Watson. In the background is Sydney and Missionary Bible College.



David Cook principal of the Sydney and Missionary Bible College.

and more than ever we need to see him at work to convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

Perth

Unity is enjoyed in the ministers' fraternal meeting out in the country of West Australia at a town called Wagan. Having spoken at that fraternal last year it was a joy for me to visit again this time to speak on the subject of revival.

Melbourne

Here I was cared for by pastor Peter Rutledge who is pastor of the Bentleigh Baptist Church. He organised several meetings including preaching at Mentone Baptist Church where Leigh Diprose is pastor. The last time I was with Leigh was in the 1970s when about six of us (including Graeme Goldsworthy and Peter Law) visited an off shore island near Brisbane and ran races up and down the sand dunes.

It was my privilege to preach at Knox Presbyterian Church and meet the minister Rowland Ward who is well known in Australia for his writings.

The growth of Melbourne (now three and a half million) is impressive. I enjoyed the architecture of some of the newly built skyscrapers.

Included in Melbourne was the annual rally

of the Bible Union when I chose to preach on Acts 4:12.

Sydney

Rob Watson pastor of Crest Community Baptist Church organised seven meetings in as many days in a variety of locations beginning with Newcastle which is now reached by a spectacular new motorway which reminded me of Isaiah 40:4; *Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill be made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.*

I enjoyed a memorable meeting at Smithfield Particular Baptist Church which has a long track record of fidelity to the doctrines of grace. A fine new building has been erected and better still there is a substantial congregation led by Bruce Bootes and Alan McKerrell.

For a group of pastors and their wives meeting in the home of Rob and Margaret Watson I chose the subject 'Lessons from the life of Francis Schaeffer'. A conference on the subject *The Believer's Experience* took place on Saturday and on Lord's Day morning it was heartening to preach to a large congregation at Castle Hill Baptist Church (pastor Tony Presto). The Sunday evening service was at Lakemba Baptist Church (Pastor Bob Burcher) which is situated in a multi-racial area and in a road



Brisbane Baptist Tabernacle.



Pastor Peter Rutledge on the left with a friend Robert Beer.

nick-named the Gaza strip.

The ministers' fraternal at the home of Kel Willis was attended by 33. Subject – revival.

Principal David Cook of the Sydney and Missionary Bible College is a Banner of Truth enthusiast. It was a highlight for me to be invited by him to preach to the student body and to relish the enthusiasm of the students for truth.

Brisbane

Malcolm Bouchard a member of the Salisbury Baptist Church took a week away from work just to attend to my needs. A men's prayer breakfast at Rosalie Baptist Church (pastor Jeff Gibbs) was attended by 46.

On Sunday 22nd October we commemorated the vital nature of the 16th century Reformation at a rally at the Brisbane Baptist Tabernacle. Peter Broomfield minister of the Presbyterian church acted as chairman and recalled some of the significant events leading up to the Reformation. I then described the decisive nature of the Reformation from 1517 to 1521 and stressed the importance of the recovery of justification by faith. 200 attended the rally, a modest number compared with what is happening in Indonesia but still enough to show that we are holding to our heritage and not losing it.

My time in Australia came to a conclusion with a trip North to a place called Coolum. The assembly there is led by pastor Charles Byrne. In expounding on the subject of local church evangelism I was asked to describe the work of *Caring for Life* here in Leeds.

Myanmar

After a few days of ministry in Sarawak, Dr Kenneth Brownell who is pastor of the East London Tabernacle went on to Myanmar (Burma) for eleven days.

The following quotations from his diary tell their own story.

Sunday 17th Sept.

I am taken to Lai Baptist Church where Dennis Shu Maung is senior pastor. This church ministers to the needs of Chin Christians. This is their church anniversary and they are meeting in the chapel of the Karen Baptist Seminary. There must be 500 plus in the congregation. The service is long with many special musical items. I am very hot and pouring with sweat. I preach on Habakkuk 3:16-19. I do not feel that I have preached well at all. But later I am told how the message spoke to them and had asked the elders for more preaching like this. I am taken to my hotel by Henry That Thio, a



Dr Kenneth Brownell, minister of the East London Tabernacle, England.



Church at Oung-pen-la the place where Adoniram Judson was imprisoned.

mature student who has written asking for books. I give him and a friend some of the books that I have brought with me. They are very thankful as theological books here are like gold.

Thursday 21st Sept.

Arrive in Mandalay after 15 hours overnight train journey. The last few hours . . . allowed me to see the countryside of upper Burma. I am met at the station by pastor Ngun Tlung of Mandalay Baptist Church. He studied in the Philippines. He returned to Burma about five years ago and turned down the pastorate of a large church in Haka. Instead he planted a new church in Mandalay. Beginning with 25 people it now has about 500. The assembly meets in the hall of the main Anglican church on Sundays, as well as in several other locations. Last Christmas (1994) he baptised 17 Buddhists. I warmed to this man of God. His church is not affiliated to the Myanmar Baptist Convention because of its toleration of liberalism. The pastor spoke of how hard it is for an independent church in Myanmar. I stay in an hotel in central Mandalay. In the afternoon I view several monasteries, temples and the amazing Mandalay Hill. This is a high hill full of temples. 50 years ago the British fought a fierce battle to retake it from the Japanese.

Friday 22nd Sept.

Ngun Tlung and a friend, William, take me on a tour of the sights associated with Adoniram Judson, the great pioneer American missionary.

First we visit Oung-pen-la on the outskirts of Mandalay. Here Judson was imprisoned in 1825 after being moved from Ava. Today a Baptist church stands on the site. Then we visited Amapura, a former capital where there is a beautiful pagoda. Mandalay and environs is the heart of Burmese Buddhism. What superstition there is in this place. We take a ferry crossing to Ava which is a beautiful place though not much remains of the old city except a great stone monastery. Nearby is the place where Judson was initially imprisoned but the government has destroyed the monument. We stop and pray that the God of Judson would extend the kingdom of His Son in modern day Burma.

Sunday 24th Sept.

A very busy day. I start preaching at Oung-pen-la Baptist church at 8.00. At 10.00 I preach at Mandalay Baptist Church and at 12.00, at Kachin Baptist Church (the Kachin people come from the north of the country) I used the Habakkuk message several times and it really seems to encourage people here.

The Vanishing Conscience

A review by Sharon James

The Vanishing Conscience: Drawing the line in a no-fault, guilt-free world, John F MacArthur, Jr, Word Books, 1994, 352pp. USA: \$17.99, UK: £4.99 (pbk).

Secular analysts point to the fact that increasingly we have created a 'victim' culture, where personal responsibility is replaced by the tendency to 'blame the system' (or any other convenient scapegoat). There is widespread popular unease with the lenient sentences passed down to criminals, due to the tendency to regard everyone as intrinsically good, and in need of another chance. But this book by MacArthur demonstrates that the evangelical church itself has been infiltrated through and through with these 'no fault' assumptions. He shows that we cannot simply point the finger at the world, when we ourselves do not have a serious enough view of sin. He argues that sin itself is increasingly an unpopular subject, even within the Church, and that it is no longer central to the way that the gospel is presented. This is of course all symptomatic of a man-centred approach to Christianity.

This book makes for compelling reading. The examples are drawn from American society, but are very apt illustrations of life in the modern secular state. The scenario painted is gloomy. A whole generation has been raised without reference to moral absolutes, and is thus ill-equipped to take responsibility for moral decisions. God-given consciences have been seared and rendered virtually inoperative. Evil is presented by the media as good, and the only real virtue is seen to be complete tolerance of any form of perverted behaviour. MacArthur holds out no hope for efforts to reform or 'reconstruct' society, and implies that for Christians to spend time and resources on such efforts is misguided. The only hope is for individuals to be converted, and then to live as salt and light within a corrupt society; the only way that there will be radical reform within society is for the Holy Spirit to convert large numbers in revival. 'Only as the church becomes holy can it begin to have a true, powerful effect on the outside world...' (p14). 'We are not called on to expend our energies for moral reform... what we can do, and must do is keep our own consciences pure...' (p92). This is a fair warning against being so taken up with single issue campaigns that the work of the gospel suffers. But if MacArthur's individualistic approach is taken to the extreme, then there is no place for campaigns against pornography, lowering the age of consent, abortion or other moral evils. We look back with gratitude to those evangelicals in the nineteenth century who did campaign against slavery, child labour, widespread prostitution and so on.

The first part of the book portrays the decadence of our society. In the main, society treats sin as some sort of disease that needs a cure. Guilt on the other hand is viewed as a neurosis that also needs a cure. Self esteem is everything. The ‘universal counsel of our generation [is] “IT’S NOT YOUR FAULT”’ (p23). Criminals become victims. Bernard McCummings mugged an old man in a New York subway, and was shot while fleeing the scene. He won \$4.8 million dollars in compensation from New York transit authority. The real victim, the man he mugged, is still paying medical bills (p25). An FBI agent was fired after embezzling \$2,000 and then gambling it away. He sued, claiming that gambling addiction was a disability, so dismissal was discrimination. He won, and therapy for the addiction had to be paid for under his employer’s health care insurance! (p27).

Criminal behaviour, various perverse passions, and every imaginable addiction have all been made excusable by the crusade to label them medical afflictions. Even commonplace problems, such as emotional weakness, depression and anxiety are also almost universally defined as quasi-medical, rather than spiritual, afflictions... The therapy industry is clearly not solving the problem of what Scripture calls sin. Instead it merely convinces multitudes that they are desperately sick and therefore not really responsible for their wrong behaviour. It gives them permission to think of themselves as patients, not malefactors. And it encourages them to undergo extensive – and expensive – treatment that lasts for years, or better yet, for a life time. The sin-as-disease model has proved to be a boon to the multi-billion-dollar counselling industry... (pp 27, 29).

The victim culture encourages everyone to sue when life produces a hiccup of any sort. A parent hit the headlines recently in Britain for successfully suing the education authority when his child got sunburned at school. A recent *Times* editorial rightly lavished praise on the doctors who performed a lifesaving ‘do it yourself’ operation in midflight using a coathanger and sellotape, but commented, ‘American doctors might well have been frightened off their duty in such conditions for fear of the huge damages if anything went wrong.’ Society unravels when mutual fear of being sued means that no risks of any sort are taken. Community life does not exist when the whole mentality is to take and never to give. ‘Those who define themselves as victims claim entitlements and shun responsibility’ (p33).

The Church has adopted the victim culture, particularly in the area of counselling. ‘There is no help for those who deny responsibility for their own behaviour... most of the counselling being dispensed today takes precisely the opposite tack...’ (p39). MacArthur goes on to deal with the conscience, ‘the soul’s automatic warning system’. This is God-given, the innate ability to sense right and wrong (pp44-5). Multitudes suppress the conscience, and it can become so defiled that it ceases to distinguish right from wrong. But, ‘When

we stand in judgment, every person's conscience will side with God, the righteous judge' (pp.46,47). There are sections on the cleansing of the conscience, overcoming a weak conscience, and keeping the conscience pure. A chapter analyses how sin silences the conscience, showing that just like the pagans depicted in Romans 1, our own society has a seared moral sensitivity. Examples are given to show the utter moral perversion accepted today. In America, homosexual paedophiles have an advocacy group, which operates openly under constitutional protection, distributes a newsletter published by a school teacher, and whose slogan is: 'Sex by eight, before it's too late!' (p85).

Part two deals with sin, the doctrine of total depravity, the problem of where sin and evil came from, and God's cure for sin. The dangers of perfectionist doctrines are examined, and the biblical doctrine of sanctification is explained together with its relation to justification.

Part three is a most helpful manual on tackling sin. Mortification of sin is too little spoken of and preached on, and this section on the day to day realities of spiritual warfare is excellent. There would be helpful material here for Bible studies or sermons. There is a brief but helpful chapter on handling temptation, and a superb section on keeping a pure mind, with suggestions for guarding against sins of thought.

MacArthur concludes with a critique of modern evangelicalism's rush towards the preoccupation with 'the feel good factor' and its corresponding loss of a fear of sin and offending a holy God. The appendices provide up-to-date versions of two classic sermons, by Richard Sibbes and Jonathan Edwards. He comments:

These two sermons are included for two reasons. First they offer helpful advice to Christians who want to deal seriously with sin and sharpen their consciences. Second they reveal in a graphic way how differently the church once regarded sin – and thus how far contemporary Christianity has sunk. The Church desperately needs to recover some of our ancestors' holy dread of sin – or we will enter the twenty-first century severely crippled (p15).

This book may well be used to arouse some of us to a new sense of the sinfulness of sin, and we hope that it may help, by the grace of God, to do something towards stemming the tide of man-centred and shallow evangelicalism.

It may be regretted that MacArthur can say that Romans 6:3-5 'has nothing to do with water baptism', a comment which undermines the way in which water baptism symbolises the spiritual realities there portrayed. On a practical level it is also to be regretted that the British edition of the book is so meanly sized and spaced. These quibbles apart, this book is strongly recommended.

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CONTENTS

- 1 Editorial**
- 4 The God We Worship: His Being** Bob Sheehan
- 10 Cultivating Holiness** Joel Beeke
- 17 The Holy Spirit and the
Toronto Blessing** Stephen Tong
- 21 Bringing our Best in Worship** Peter Brumby
- 25 News**
- 30 The Vanishing Conscience** Sharon James
- a review article