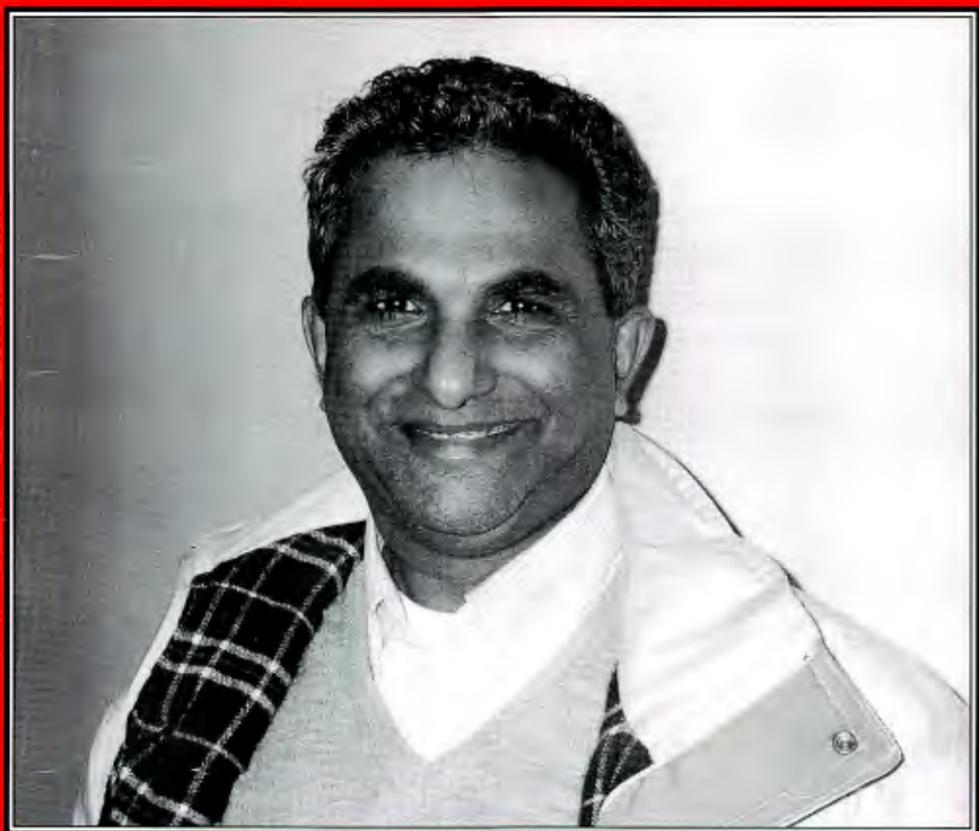


REFORMATION TODAY



JULY-AUGUST 2001

182

International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists

With this issue of *Reformation Today* readers will receive an IFRB brochure describing a fellowship which encourages unity of like minded believers across the world. In the brochure the example of John Rippon (1751-1836) is cited. (The story of his life by Sharon James was included in *RT* 179). What Rippon achieved in keeping Particular Baptist churches together nationally is now needed internationally.

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Front cover: *Vijay Chandra*. In 1992 Vijay with his wife Narsamma and two sons Andrew and Philip settled in Ba, a town of about 16,000. A work began in the Chandra's rented home. Steady increase followed. In 1999 a church was built. Pastor David Steere visited (see his report in *RT* 174). A new church plant has been initiated 35 miles from Ba. Vijay is a member of IFRB and is glad to have a sense of fellowship across the world from his lonely island in the vastness of the Pacific. The editor and his wife plan to visit family Chandra in Fiji from 10 to 15 November this year.

Editorial

Satan in a Rage!

'The higher the status of any creature, the worse he becomes through sin. This must be so because the entrance and progress of sin in the nature of a creature turns all its excellences into poison. Hence, the potential for doing evil of any created being is directly related to its inherent powers. A grown man is capable of more wickedness than a young child, whose mind and body are as yet immature. A perverted genius is capable of more evil than a person of merely average ability. A king, if he be wicked, is in a position to murder thousands and ten thousands...' ¹ Thus Hitler first murdered many upright German people in his rise to power and afterward he engineered the murder of six million Jews in the holocaust. He ruled as one possessed of the devil. Stalin was of the same ilk. Between ten and twenty million perished in labour camps. ² Other instances of demon rule such as that which erupted in Campuchea can be described. Many instances of mass murder stain the pages of human history.

Satan leads the whole world astray (Rev 12:9). 'The whole world is under the control of the evil one' (1 John 5:19). When tempting Jesus, Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'All this will I give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me' (Matt 4:8,9). We who believe have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and have been brought into the kingdom of his Son (Col 1:13). Christ gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age (Gal 1:4).

An awesome supernatural power of stupendous proportions beyond our imagination rules the mass media and the corridors of power and influence of this world.

A multitude of evil, fallen angels are directed by the devil himself who is the architect of false religions that deceive mankind. Every one of these false religions has one factor in common, the fostering of self-righteousness. But the Bible is emphatic: 'No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law' (Rom 3:20). Having been forever denied pre-eminence above the stars, Satan has determined to have pre-eminence on the earth. Since the day he was thrown out of heaven, he and his followers have worked tirelessly to establish their dominion on earth. 'The Prince of this world' has provinces or principalities over which he exercises dominion. He is called 'the god of this world' (2 Cor 4:4).

Luke 11:21, 'When a strong man guards his own house his possessions are safe', vividly portrays the power exercised by Satan and his fallen angels. One of the most difficult of all scriptures to interpret correctly is Revelation 20:2. 'He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years — to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended.' The nations as a whole have not been converted. There are many nations that are wholly Islamic but none that are wholly evangelical. Revelation in its high symbolism may be referring to all those who are liberated as Jesus said, 'But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself,' and, '... now the prince of this world will be driven out' (John 12:31,32). Every convert without exception is 'turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God' (Acts 26:18).

What does Satan do? His main work is to blind the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor 4:4). He opposes and hinders the gospel at every point. Ceaselessly he perverts the truth as Paul said to Elymas, 'You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?' On a universal scale, Satan uses every means at his disposal to impede the gospel. And if gospel seeds fall into minds, Satan will if possible come and snatch them away (Matt 13:19).

Spiritual warfare is incessant. It is taking place universally on a vast scale. It is taking place in the contest for every human soul. We cannot afford to be weak in our understanding of Satan in a rage.

The whole purpose of Christ's coming into this world was to remove sin and to undo the works of the devil. 'The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work' (1 John 3:8). The apostle John says that we have overcome them (the false prophets) because the one who is in us (the Holy Spirit of truth) is greater than the one who is in the world, that is the devil. We must take heart because the righteousness that is imputed to us, referred to by Paul as the breastplate of righteousness, confounds Satan. The righteousness that is imputed to us who believe consists of the perfect life and perfect passive obedience of Christ in his atoning work on our behalf. Satan is proud. He would not humble himself. But our Lord has humbled himself even to the death of the cross. He has done that for us. That is our victory over Satan.

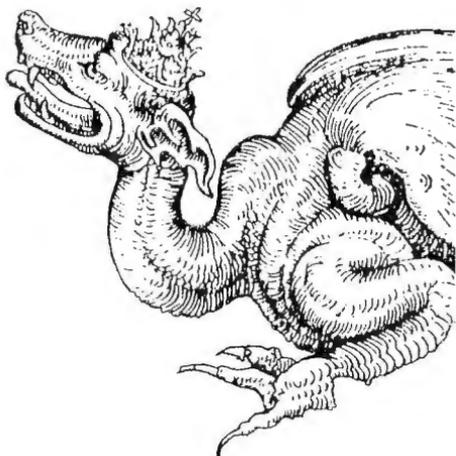
Endnotes

- 1 Maurice Roberts in editorial, *Banner of Truth*, issue 368, May 1994.
- 2 Paul Johnson, *A History of the Modern World, from 1917 to the 1980s*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983. Chapter eight titled 'The Devils' describes the murderous careers of Hitler and Stalin.

The Rage of Satan

Erroll Hulse

Illustrations in the old Bibles were uninhibited. This one of the dragon comes from a 16th-century German Bible



THE BOOK of Revelation is a wonderful conclusion to the Bible. This book which is also called the Apocalypse (unveiling) provides a broad sweep of history. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, describes the creation we see around us. Revelation, the last book of the Bible, describes the coming new creation and how I as a Christian fit into that. It is of inestimable value to have a deep sense of purpose. The world is so big. There are so many millions of souls, thousands of people groups. History is long. It is a history of violence and tragedy. How do I make sense of this and of my own life?

Revelation provides an explanation of the overall spiritual battle being fought. It explains the reason for persecution. June 2001 edition of *Evangelicals Now* describes persecution of Bible-believers in 15 different countries. The one thing that draws persecution is to be a Christian. We regularly hear from Israel of how Orthodox Jews persecute our brothers and sisters there. Buddhists persecute converts to Christ as do Hindus and Muslims. The one thing that will draw persecution is belief in the Bible and obedience to its teaching.

As the Church grows she is attacked and persecuted. How do we explain this persecution? Through the 20th century the expansion of the Church escalated internationally. As never before all nations, tribes and languages are being reached with the gospel. This has taken place in the face of intense persecution and suffering. There were more martyrs in the 20th century than in any

previous century, in fact probably more than in all the centuries since the death of Christ.¹

I will give two examples:

First, the Soviet Union. The Communist revolution took place in 1917. In 1929 Stalin introduced anti-Christian legislation. The 1930s were years of terror and labour camps for believers. For 60 years from 1929 to 1989 Christian churches were persecuted. Yet out of this suffering the Church in Russia has not only survived but grown. At this time in what is now the CIS (Confederacy of Independent States) of 15 nations, there are huge regions where new churches are being planted for the first time.

Second, China. In 1900 a violent persecution broke out against Christians. Hundreds of missionaries and converts were martyred. Many declared that this was the end of the Christian Church in China.² They were wrong – the churches continued to multiply. When the Communist regime assumed total power in about 1950 all foreign missionaries were expelled. The Communist leaders believed that Christianity is a Western religion and being cut off from the West, the Chinese Christian Church would surely die. But from 1950 to 2000 the Church increased a hundred times.³ The Holy Spirit indwells the Church. He does not depend on the West!

The power behind this persecution is what is unveiled in Revelation chapter 12. As we enter this chapter care must be taken to interpret the symbols correctly.⁴ These are breathtakingly bold. It is like an IMAX (3D) cinema where the viewers are surrounded, front, sides and above by a massive screen. Have you been in one? I remember one in which we were ‘transported’ to Alaska. We saw bears face to face. It is scary to be right under the paws and jaws of a huge bear! The Revelation is God’s IMAX which makes the audience feel literally IN the place of action. The visions and vivid symbolic language of Revelation describe the realities and great spiritual contests of the Christian life. There is dramatic movement and tension. At one moment a great fiery red dragon suddenly fills the screen – we can sense the pounding of massive feet. The battle of the ages is depicted, the history of the world. We are given a panoramic view of conflict from the first to the second coming of Christ summed up by chapter 17 verse 14, *They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.*

Chapter twelve marks the beginning of the second main section of the book. It is the introduction to the rest of the book which describes the spiritual war

between the Satan on the one side, and the followers of the Lamb on the other. Chapter twelve gives a complete picture of this conflict.

Immediately we are introduced to two signs, the first of which is described as great and wondrous, the second simply as another sign. These two signs dominate the chapter. Verses 10 to 12 form an interlude in the form of a proclamation made to all the heavens and earth.

The first sign – The woman clothed with the sun

To John is revealed a woman set in the heavens and stunningly beautiful. She is a symbol of the Church. She is 'as radiant as the sun' – literally 'she has been clothed with the sun as with a robe'.⁵ Referring to the end of the world Jesus said, 'Then the righteous will shine like the sun' (Matt 13:43). The magnificent moon is good enough only for her footstool! The 'crown of twelve stars on her head' indicates her royal status. She is the same woman as is described in chapter 21. The Holy Spirit has made her pure and beautiful. She radiates and reflects the beauty of the character of God. This cosmic picture is a reminder that all who are in Christ live and reign with him.

On earth the Church seems very ordinary. At the time of Jesus' birth the believing community was small and weak. Joseph and Mary were insignificant and poor. Simeon and Anna who welcomed the babe Jesus at the temple court were humble elderly people. There were no mighty ones to greet him. Viewed from earth's perspective, the Church is weak and plain. But viewed from the perspective of heaven, she is glorious.

This beautiful woman is sometimes called Zion, standing for the believing people of God (Is 54:1). She is pregnant and cries out in pain, being about to give birth. Her pain characterises the suffering of God's people prior to the coming of the Messiah.

The moment the woman gives birth to a male child who will rule the nations with an iron sceptre, she is confronted by a huge red dragon determined to devour the child. When Jesus was born, King Herod claimed that he wished to worship him but in fact he intended to kill the child whom he saw as a threat to his kingship. Realising that his enquiries about the child's whereabouts were ignored he was furious and ordered the killing of all male infants in the area of Bethlehem (Matt 2:16).

Like an artist, John places on his canvas only those images relevant to his purpose. He passes by the life and death of Jesus and goes direct to his

ascension. The male child is snatched up to heaven. He escapes the jaws of the dragon. Frustrated and enraged the dragon turns his attention to the woman, bent on her destruction. Now what? Even a champion woman athlete could not escape a dragon! But escape this woman does, to a desert described as a place prepared for her by God.

In this refuge she is protected. The time there is specified as 1,260 days. Most of the symbols in Revelation are interpreted by comparing them with similar symbols used in the OT. Here the key is both from the prophet Daniel (9:23-27; 11:25-28), and from the history of Israel. A Syrian ruler by name Antiochus IV Epiphanes was active from 175 to 164. He violently opposed the religion of the Jews. To own any part of Scripture was a capital offence. To practise circumcision incurred the death penalty. He defiled the worship at the Temple in Jerusalem and tried to annihilate Judaism. Had he succeeded, God's promises would have come to a dead stop. The gate to the promised Messiah would be closed.

The name Maccabee was given to the five sons of an elderly priest named Mattathias. Under the leadership of the Maccabees the Jews began to fight back. The Maccabees were the first to employ the tactics now known as guerrilla warfare. Their revolt is described in the Apocrypha in the first and second book of Maccabees. Eventually the Jews succeeded in driving out the Syrians. This was a time of extraordinary heroism. Judaism was saved from extinction. There was a particularly bitter and dangerous period which lasted 1260 days (42 months), sometimes expressed as a time, times and half a time, or three and a half years. This symbol is repeated several times in Revelation and expresses extreme persecution and suffering.

The woman survives in the desert. Satan does not give up. In his fury he transforms into an enormous serpent and again pursues the woman. To enable her escape she is given wings like a great eagle's enabling her to fly to a place prepared for her in the desert. This is yet another exquisite symbol! It would be wonderful to soar like an eagle! We can't. But by waiting on our Father in prayer, we can soar to the heavens. 'They will soar on wings like eagles (Isa 40:30,31). So the woman is taken care of. She is safe and out of the serpent's reach. The serpent is enraged. He spews out a torrential flood to sweep her away! But the earth opens to swallow the flood – again the woman survives.

This saga warns us that we can expect every kind of attack. We need always to watch and pray.

The second sign – The enormous red dragon

The apostle Paul tells us that our fight is not with flesh and blood (Eph 6:12). Our flesh is the reason for temptation, pain and trouble. We mortify the flesh (Rom 8:13). But the flesh is not the main arena of struggle. Believers are locked in a spiritual battle. Life is a spiritual war. It is a contest for our immortal souls. The contest is about whether we will spend eternity with God in his new world of righteousness or a lost eternity with the Devil in hell. Woe betide any Christian who does not understand the nature of spiritual warfare. Satan would dearly like us to believe he does not exist!

This second sign opens to our view the dragon with seven heads and seven crowns. Seven is the number of perfection. Satan is proud. He wants to be God. He is imperious. If Satan could, he would usurp God and be the sovereign ruler.⁶ The dragon has ten horns. Ten stands for fullness. Satan wills to rule all. In his original rebellion, Satan gained the support of a third of the angels. There was literal war in the heavens, not with swords or artillery, but a spiritual battle about truth and righteousness. Michael the leading archangel, works as a guardian of the Lord's people (Jude 9) and wars with Satan and his angels (12:7-9).

Jesus commented that he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18), an event witnessed by him before his incarnation.

The dragon's names describe his character. 'That ancient serpent' refers to him being the deceiver. He deceived our first parents. The word 'Satan' means hater, adversary or opposer. 'Devil' means slanderer, one who accuses the brothers before God day and night (verse 10).

Satan is in a rage. He is determined to do as much damage as possible. He knows that his time is short (verse 12). He rages against the woman. Although he is doomed he will not give up. Remember the Second World War when the allies amassed a mighty army with which to invade the continent and defeat Hitler. Did Hitler give up? Not at all! He raged, he cursed and he fought right up to the last.

When Satan sees that the woman has escaped to the wilderness he spews out a flood designed to sweep her away. This is a flood of hatred and violence (Ps 124). But the earth opens up and swallows the flood. Again the woman is preserved.

Yet the dragon continues in his hatred and goes out to make war against the woman and her offspring. The Church is persecuted relentlessly. This

opposition comes in many different forms. Behind the persecution is the malice of Satan.

A proclamation from heaven

Central to Revelation chapter 12 is a proclamation made from heaven (verses 10-12). The populations of heaven and earth are addressed with good news. The NIV correctly follows the Greek text by laying out verses 10 to 12 in the form of a song or poem.

Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers – has been hurled down.

The verbs ‘have come’ and ‘have been hurled down’ are aorist and emphasise a decisive historical event. The most glorious fact in the whole universe is that Christ in his cross has decisively defeated Satan. The proclamation is exultant. Christ’s victory is the joy of heaven. But with this joy there is a stern warning.

But woe to the earth and sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows his time is short.

The power and kingdom of our God have come. Now Christ is endued with all power and authority. In his words of commission Jesus declared, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’ (Matt 28:18). Lenski queries those who look to a future millennium for the time when Christ will assume this power. ‘They let his iron rod remain idle.’ This proclamation affirms that the power of Christ’s kingdom has come. In these last days he is building his Church and the gates of hell will not overcome it (Matt 16:18).

Satan’s opposition is relentless. The battle is incessant and intense. How do believers overcome?

There are three factors. They are based on the proclamation of Christ’s victory. They overcome:

1. By the blood of the Lamb
2. By the word of their testimony
3. By not loving their lives so much as to shrink from death

1. By the blood of the Lamb

The foundation of our coming to Christ is well expressed by Charlotte Elliot in the verse:

*Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.*

That dependence on his shed blood continues always (I John 1:7). The apostle reminds us that we are redeemed not with silver or gold but 'with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect' (I Peter 1:19). This is God's way of justification. The Father presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice so as to be 'just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus' (Rom 3:25,26).

We give glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (Rev 1:5).

The foremost tactic of the Devil is to tempt us to sin. If we sin then he accuses us. His aim is to destroy our faith. If possible he will undermine our assurance. The foundation upon which we stand is God's justification of everyone who believes in the atoning work of Christ.

2. By the word of their testimony

We cannot overcome Satan with our own reasoning. When Jesus was tempted by the Devil he referred only to Scripture. He quoted the Word of God to Satan, saying, 'It is written, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"' (Matt 4:4).

The way of salvation is described in this way by Paul: 'It is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved' (Rom 10:10).

3. By not loving their lives so much as to shrink from death

There are much worse things than death. Eternal hell where Satan will be, is worse than death. To fall into sin and disgrace Christ, is worse than death.

Jesus taught that we should not fear those who kill the body but rather fear God who will judge all men and has the power to throw both body and soul into hell. When men kill our bodies there is nothing further that they can do. They cannot destroy our souls.

Jesus said, 'The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life' (John 12:25). This is a form of speech called hyperbole. It does not mean that we sustain an attitude of misery. It means that we hate anything and everything that is hostile to saving faith and is opposed to the holiness of God. This hatred is hostility toward values which may be lawful and good in themselves, but which can become idols and so threaten our faith.

Christians are engaged in a warfare with Satan who is powerful in capacity, intelligence, energy and experience. These descriptions in Revelation assure us of victory. We must not fear. If ever a leader had cause to fear it was Martin Luther. A verse he composed sums up the attitude we must foster:

*And though they take our life,
Goods, honour, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small
These things shall vanish all,
THE CITY OF GOD REMAINETH.*

Endnotes

- 1 cf *By Their Blood, Christian Martyrs of the 20th Century*, a continuation of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, James and Marti Hefley, Baker, 628 pp, 1979.
- 2 When the news of the Boxer rebellion reached the Occident, many declared that the Protestant enterprise in China was ended. Yet the disaster served only to spur it on. The suppression of the Boxers was followed by greater opportunities than ever and many new recruits came to fill the gaps left by the martyrs. K S Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, volume 6, The Great Century North Africa and Asia, 1800-1914.
- 3 See *China – Growth through Suffering* by Jonathan Chao. *Reformation Today* 178.
- 4 Principles of interpretation are vital. The key is to study how Revelation relates to similar symbolic language in the OT, especially to Daniel chapters 7-12 and to Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. This kind of apocalyptic or symbolic language is used by our Lord in the Olivet discourse (Luke 21, Mark 13, Matt 24). Symbolic books in the style of Revelation characterised the period from about 200 BC to about 150 AD. It is not a style in common use today, certainly not in the English-speaking world.
- 5 *Peribleblēmenē*, having been clothed, perfect passive participle with its usual accusative as in 11:3. For a parallel see 21:2 where two perfect passive verbs are used to describe the women as having been prepared and having been made beautiful. We are allowed to see the end result of a progressive work.
- 6 See Ezekiel 28:11-17 for a parallel likeness between the spirit of Tyre and Satan.

Evangelicalism Divided

A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000.

Iain H Murray, Banner of Truth, 342 pages, 2000

An assessment of the American role

Tom Wells

Whether we consider it progress or not, Christianity in the western world during the last fifty years has joined the rest of our culture in undergoing an unprecedented amount of change. The era that brought us computers, space travel, the microwave oven, and the Internet has brought something called 'evangelicalism' out of obscurity and into the consciousness of religious and political leaders alike. Recent presidents of the United States, for example, have claimed to be born again in an effort (hopefully sincere) to identify themselves as evangelical Christians. At the same time, the older 'mainline' denominations, at least in America, have been in decline. These facts stare us in the face. Iain Murray has written his book to help us make sense of these things and to alert us to the gains and losses. His fear is that the losses prevail.

I have read *Evangelicalism Divided* against the background of a personal sense of disappointment with evangelicalism in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. Spurgeon had warned against a 'downgrade' in the late 1800s and subsequent events in England seemed to bear him out. The United States experienced a parallel movement. In both cases the focal point was the issue of the infallibility or inerrancy of Scripture.¹ Few called for a Christianity devoid of scriptural teaching, but many sat loose to full inspiration. Critical scholars saw the infallibility of Scripture as an outgrown doctrine. In the first half of the 20th century there seemed to be few competent scholars who could or would meet the critics head on. In America it was the heyday of modernism in the seminaries, the view that the mind of man was the sufficient judge of things human and divine.

Shortly after the second world war, things began to change. Till the 1950s fundamentalism was the most visible form of evangelicalism in the United States.² Murray lists its faults as E J Carnell saw them:

The confusion of courtesy with compromise; the idea that believing the gospel makes a person omniscient, with a monopoly on truth; treating all beliefs as of equal importance as though the time of the rapture is as crucial to faith as the substitutionary atonement; . . . using the Bible as an instrument of self-security but not for self-criticism; . . . and the propensity to turn minor issues into major battles (33).

Having been part of the fundamentalist movement myself, I do not see Carnell's judgment as a caricature. As with all generalisations, it had many exceptions, but in city after city and village after village in America his criticisms hit the mark.

At this time in the United States, however, two related movements appeared. One was the beginning of mass evangelism under the leadership of Billy Graham. The other was the search for intellectual respectability among evangelicals. *Evangelicals Divided* gives this history and Iain Murray's judgments on it.

The critical points in Graham's ministry were two. First, the enormous apparent success of his crusades; second, his gradual acceptance of an increasingly wide definition of what a Christian is. The first of these gave Graham extensive influence. The second point brought that influence to bear in precisely the wrong way. Not only evangelicals but liberals came to listen to Graham. Those liberals saw Graham, a professed evangelical, treat them as his brothers. At first he did so with the hope of winning them to Christ. There he was trying to implement the courtesy that Carnell spoke of. But eventually he adopted a theology which took away their need for conversion. It is possible to overstate the case against Graham. He surely has been one of the most naïve men ever to play a major role on the American scene. His endorsement of various religious and political figures arises in part from that fact. But Murray shows that less innocent forces were at work as well. The result of Graham's influence is well captured in the title of Murray's second chapter: Billy Graham: Catalyst for Change.

Murray documents the connection between Graham and the search for intellectual respectability among evangelicals. As Billy's influence grew he was able to attract conservatives of influence and money. As a man of integrity, he wanted to use this influence and money for the cause of Christ. One way this was done was to help to found the magazine *Christianity Today*. Another was to encourage the fledgling Fuller Theological Seminary in California, where an earnest effort for academic excellence had been going on since 1947. Two

graduates of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, Harold Ockenga and Edward J Carnell, were part of the early leadership. Ockenga served as president and six years later Carnell followed him. Both men were firm believers in the full inspiration and authority of the Bible. The Seminary had been committed to this stance from day one, and Ockenga and Carnell were vigorous defenders of it by unshakeable conviction. But Murray shows how through such men as David Hubbard that conviction and commitment eroded. By 1982 only about 15 per cent of the student body held to inerrancy.

The book suggests that efforts to be 'intellectually respectable' on both sides of the Atlantic contained the seeds of their own destruction from day one. Yet Murray is far from despising learning. This is clear from the following:

It is not commitment to scholarship as such which has brought this reversal [But] the quest for respectability went fundamentally wrong in not giving its true weight to the biblical revelation on human depravity.

To suppose that because of their culture and their learning the universities are somehow neutral when it comes to the Bible is to deny that this fallen world is in a state of hostility to God (210-211).

To adequately apply this to the American scene we must add that what is said of universities here is doubly applicable to accrediting societies. It is one thing to work toward superior scholarship, but it is another thing to invite the world to tell you when you have reached the goal.

How serious is all this? There is a strong temptation to answer by writing off everyone as an unbeliever who does not defend inerrancy. But Murray does not fall into that trap. He writes:

A person who believes the gospel and yet is uncertain about the whole Bible will get to heaven in spite of the inconsistency of thought. But we cannot stop there. That same inconsistency, if condoned, has the potential to undermine all saving Christianity. Belief in the trustworthiness of all Scripture is essential for the preservation of the Christian faith as a whole (312).

In this observation Murray lays down a principle that applies to both Graham and those he has affected. Billy Graham is a Christian. We will meet him in heaven. And we will thank God for that forever. But that is not the whole story,

and Graham clearly illustrates what else must be said. Some years ago I was talking to English friends who berated Graham for two things, his commendation of the Pope and his encouraging the great growth of the invitation system in Britain. On both scores they were on target. I urged them not to write him off, however. I asked them to look at him as I do on this side of the Atlantic. In a time when large numbers of 'Christian' TV personalities have fallen prey to money and sexual scandals, Graham has remained as firm as a rock in his personal life. I might have added, as well, that if even one in a hundred of his 'converts' proves to be genuine, he has won more people to Christ in person than anyone else in Church history. More than that, with all his lack of understanding of what many of us believe to be important emphases in Scripture, Graham has maintained Scripture's infallibility throughout his ministry. The tragedy of Graham's life is the tragedy of our own, played out on an immensely larger stage. *Influence is power*, however little or much of it we have. That means that our virtues will tell for the glory of God and our vices will tell in the opposite direction. By the grace of God we are redeemed men and women. But God has not done with us yet, and the unfinished portions of our lives are fearful to contemplate.

Evangelicalism Divided is important reading for professed evangelicals who want to understand its recent history. It is not, of course, a history of evangelicalism but a record of its divisions. It goes without saying that it is not a perfect book, though I have found very little with which to disagree. On page 198 I do think that Murray missed James Dunn's point in writing negatively of 'only one orthodoxy'. In the quotation Dunn is not describing biblical doctrine. In fact he uses the phrase, not in its all-encompassing sense but as a synonym for 'ecclesiastical obedience' in discussing the way the Church after the first century organised itself. In the same context Dunn recognises the Reformation as 'a really effective protest' against what he takes to be a 'grievously over-structured' Catholicism.

It struck me as I read *Evangelicalism Divided* that it does not hold out much hope for the future. It is clear, however, that Murray did not see that as part of the task he set for himself. It is good to be able to add that things are not as bad with evangelicalism, at least in America, as they may seem here. Evangelicals of all kinds and conditions make up about one-fifth (or more) of the adult American population. Whatever discount one takes from that figure, it still is likely to leave an impressive number of men and women who, by the grace of God, have been brought to Christ. When we add in the rest of the western world the number becomes much larger. And when we think of the rest of the world even conservative estimates run into the hundreds of millions. One

American observer (who happens to be Jewish) has estimated that more than two hundred million people are suffering for the name of Christ in our world. Many of these will be evangelicals. If the figure is tragic, the witness it bears to the importance of Christ in this world is hopeful indeed.

We must never forget the main lessons that came home to me again in reading Murray's history. Though Christianity is true with or without an inerrant Scripture to support it, two facts remain. First, without a truthful record of the work of Christ and the early Church we would have no access to Christianity and to Christ. The truth of Christianity would be irrelevant to us. But that is not all. In the second place, Scripture expresses its own character in a way that demands nothing less than verbal inspiration. Many have tried to describe inspiration without reference to its words. But they have failed. A hostile witness, James Barr, whom Murray often mentions, will make this point better than I can make it myself. Speaking of the words of Scripture he has written:

Its linguistic form, far from being something antithetical to its 'real meaning' is the means by which the meaning is conveyed The basic principle of interpretation is: why was it said in this way, and not in some other way? The linguistic form of the text is not a jumble of dead symbols from which by some process of decipherment meaning has to be extracted; it is the expression of meaning. . . . What we know about the authors, the ideas, the inner theology and so on is known from the verbal form of the Bible. . . . If the verbal form of the Bible were different, then its meaning would be different.⁴

The Bible demands that we deal with its inspiration and, as James Barr shows, we have nothing but its words to deal with in understanding its inspired meaning.

Endnotes

1. The word inerrancy has replaced infallibility to some degree in recent years. The words are, roughly speaking, synonyms. But ignoring usage for root meanings for the moment, infallibility ought to be the stronger word, asserting that the Scripture cannot err. Inerrancy, on the other hand, seems to make the slightly weaker point that Scripture has not erred.
2. The words fundamentalism and evangelicalism need more definition than I can give them here. As I use them evangelicalism is the broader term, taking in all of those among Protestants who take a high view of Scripture. Fundamentalism here in America usually refers to one portion of evangelicalism that shares a high esteem for Scripture but often seems to major on secondary tests of fellowship.
3. Murray's discussion is found on page 198. To read Dunn in context, consult *Unity and Diversity*, pages 365-366.
4. James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (NYC: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 178.

News

*In keeping with the article *The Rage of Satan* this news section is devoted to some of the many places of persecution round the world. This abridged report appears here with the goodwill of *The Barnabas Fund* which supplies regular updates.*

TURKEY

Eight people have been arrested and charged with illegally opening a Christian training institute. The eight were arrested while in a Bible study, held regularly in their premises that are officially registered as a place of worship. They insist that they had met for worship, not training, and had followed the proper procedures.

Pray for the release of the eight, and for an end to the frequent harassment of Christians in Turkey.

A Christian in Diyarbakir has been acquitted of a false blasphemy charge. Articles have recently appeared in both newspapers and magazines that make false accusations against various Christian ministries.

Thank God for the acquittal and pray for wisdom among Turkish Christians to know how to respond in these circumstances.

SUDAN

On 10th April an Easter gathering to be held in Khartoum, at a venue commonly used for such meetings, was cancelled at short notice by the authorities who insisted on a different site. Scuffles broke out when Christians, unaware of the change, arrived to find a heavy police presence. Several were beaten or shot and over 50 were arrested and later released. On 11th April a church meeting was held to protest against the violence. After further scuffles outside, police fired tear gas into the church and used whips on innocent worshippers. Over 50 arrests were made, including church leaders. These incidents renew fears over religious freedom in northern Sudan.

Pray that Christians in Khartoum may live out their faith freely, and that future events will take place without hindrance.

On April 16th a prominent church leader narrowly escaped death when government aircraft bombed an airfield near Kauda in the Nuba Mountains. He was preparing to take off from the field after Easter pastoral visits to the region, when the aircraft was attacked. The Nuba Mountains form an isolated pocket in Sudan where both Christians and Muslims live, and the people are intensely victimised by the Khartoum government.

Pray for protection for church leaders and for the provision and protection of the people of the Nuba Mountains.

On 22nd April in eastern Equatoria, southern Sudan, government aircraft bombed the town of Narus. Bombs landed in the market place and on a church school. Two adults were slightly injured, and one child suffered horrendous physical injury and needed to be evacuated to a Kenyan hospital. The Sudanese government regularly attacks hospitals and schools with devastating effect on the southern Sudanese (most of whom are Christians).

Pray for the recovery of the injured child. Pray for the people of Narus and that the bombed facilities will be rebuilt. Ask of God that peace and relief will be brought to the suffering south Sudanese.

EGYPT

Permission to build two new church buildings in Egypt has been granted. In Bulaq Abu Al-Ela, a church that will accommodate 2,000 worshippers will be constructed, while in Al-Tur a 2,000 square metre plot has been set aside for another church.

Thank God that in a country where official permission for church building is often subject to long delays and obstacles, it has been given in these two cases.

KAZAKHSTAN

The growth of new churches in Kazakhstan, a strategic country in its region, has alarmed both civil and religious authorities. In March, a bill (supported by both Muslims and the local Orthodox Church) that would have completely outlawed Protestant activity was secretly drafted. The bill, though unconstitutional, would have been difficult to repeal once passed. Praise God that it was overruled this time.

Pray for freedom of religion in Kazakhstan. Pray also for nearby Kyrgyzstan where similar legislation is proposed.

CHINA

Chinese authorities have detained 8 church leaders and 13 followers of an underground church. One of the leaders arrested (aged 79) had been in hiding from police since 1996 but was arrested whilst visiting Beijing on April 13th. While there is a state-approved church in Communist China, many Christians risk arrest for worshipping in freer, unofficial churches and in private homes.

Pray for the safety and release of those arrested. Pray for Christians in prohibited churches and for true religious freedom.

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MOLUCCAS – INDONESIA

Over the last two years a war has been waged on Christians in the Moluccan islands. Many have been killed and thousands have fled for their lives. The watching world seems powerless to intervene and the Indonesian government lacks the will and moral fibre to protect minority groups.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide has arranged for leaders of the Christian and Muslim communities of the Moluccas to travel together to Europe for the first time to highlight the violence and atrocities which their communities are facing.

A joint appeal was issued in May which calls for international monitoring of the conflict, repatriation of the internally displaced, and investigation of all those responsible for inciting violence and hatred.

We would not begin to know what to do to alleviate the sufferings of the Christians in the Molluccas and are grateful for the practical initiative taken by *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*. PO Box 99, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3YF, UK.

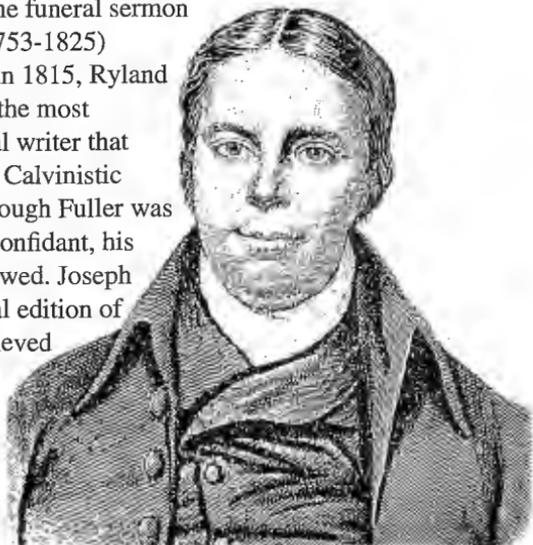
Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)

– *and the Free Offer of the Gospel*

Michael A G Haykin

This article details Fuller's important rebuttal of Hyper-Calvinism. Prof Haykin's 'The Early Life of Andrew Fuller' appeared in RT148 (Nov-Dec 1995).

NEAR the beginning of the funeral sermon that John Ryland, Jr. (1753-1825) preached for Andrew Fuller in 1815, Ryland described Fuller as 'perhaps the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to our [i.e. the Calvinistic Baptist] denomination'. Although Fuller was Ryland's closest friend and confidant, his judgment is by no means skewed. Joseph Belcher, the editor of the final edition of Fuller's collected works, believed that his works would 'go down to posterity side by side with the immortal works of the elder president Edwards [i.e. Jonathan Edwards, Sr.]',



while Charles Haddon Spurgeon once described Fuller as 'the greatest theologian' of his century. And in an allusion to his weighty theological influence, the nineteenth-century Welsh author David Phillips described the Baptist author as '*the elephant of Kettering*'. Fuller wrote on a variety of theological issues, many of them in the area of apologetics. For instance, he wrote refutations of such eighteenth-century theological aberrations as Socinianism and Deism. It is his rebuttal of Hyper-Calvinism that this article focuses on.

Lessons from his conversion in 1769

The story of Fuller's conversion is well known. He was raised in Soham, Cambridgeshire, in an atmosphere of definite Hyper-Calvinism. The preaching

of John Eve (d.1782), the pastor of the local church he attended, 'was not adapted to awaken [the] conscience', and 'had little or nothing to say to the unconverted'. Thus, although Fuller regularly attended the Baptist meeting-house, he paid next to no attention to the sermons that he heard. When he was fourteen, though, he began to be deeply affected by passages that he read from the biography of John Bunyan (1628-1688), his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, as well as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and some of the works of Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), the Scottish evangelical minister and poet who was a significant figure in the Marrow controversy. These affections were often accompanied by much weeping, but they proved to be transient, there being no radical change of heart.

By God's grace that change came in November of 1769, when he was led to realise 'God would be perfectly just in sending me to hell, and that to hell I must go, unless I were saved of mere grace.' Fuller found peace with God that month and rest for his troubled soul in the cross of Christ.

His personal experience prior to and during his conversion ultimately taught him three things in particular:

First, there was the error of maintaining that only those sinners aware of and distressed about their state have a warrant or right to come to Christ.

Second, genuine faith is Christ-centred, not a curving inwards upon oneself to see if there was any desire to know Christ and embrace his salvation.

Third, Fuller recognised that true conversion is rooted in a radical change of the affections of the heart and manifested in a lifestyle that seeks to honour God.

Soham Church, a theological 'labyrinth'

The following spring in 1770 Fuller was baptised and joined the church at Soham. That autumn, though, the church was sorely divided over the question of whether or not sinful men and women had 'the power...to do the will of God and to keep themselves from sin'. The controversy in the Soham church over this issue – which Fuller later described as the 'wormwood and the gall of my youth' – had arisen through Fuller's rebuke of a fellow member who had got drunk. When confronted by Fuller with regard to his sin, the individual replied that he was not able to prevent himself from sinning in this way and that he was

not his own keeper. Fuller told him that ‘ he could keep himself from such sins as these, and that his way of talking was merely to excuse what was inexcusable’. The man answered Fuller by telling him that he was still a young Christian and only in time would he come to know the deceitfulness of the heart. While this member was ultimately disfellowshipped, the theological implications of his answers to Fuller continued to be debated in the church for quite a few months and eventually led to Pastor Eve’s resignation from the church in October, 1771. Fuller later commented that though this controversy deeply troubled him, it was ultimately the means of leading him into ‘those views of divine truth’ that later made their appearance in his major published works.

In January of 1774 he was asked by the church to regularly fill the pulpit. Sixteen months later, Fuller was ordained as the second pastor of the Soham church. The work consisted of forty-seven members and met for worship in a rented barn. It was not until 1783, a year after Fuller had been called to Kettering Baptist Church, that the church had the finances to erect a more permanent dwelling.

During this first year of ministry, Fuller’s time was largely taken up with reading and study. He continued to reflect upon the principles at stake in the controversy that had wracked the Soham church a few years earlier. The controversy caused him to realise that God’s will regarding the unregenerate entailed more than ‘mere outward actions, but extended to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart’. Yet, due to the fact that Eve’s preaching was the only homiletical model he had ever had, he preached like Eve and refused to urge the unconverted to come to Christ. But he was increasingly dissatisfied with Hyper-Calvinist reasoning. He began to sense that his ‘preaching was anti-scriptural and defective in many respects’. But he saw no easy solution to his problem. He felt he was having to feel his way slowly ‘out of a labyrinth’.

One of the ministers who took part in his ordination in May, 1775 was Robert Hall, Sr. (1728-1791), pastor of the Calvinistic Baptist cause in Arnsby, Leicestershire. At the ordination, Fuller was asked why Eve had had to leave the church in 1771. After Hall had heard Fuller recount the details of the controversy that had led to Eve’s resignation, he recommended that Fuller study the classic work by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) on divine sovereignty and human responsibility, his *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of the Will* (1754). The Arnsby

pastor was rightly convinced that this work would help clarify some of Fuller's thinking about the power of sinful men and women to obey God.

In this treatise Edwards had sought to show that it was scriptural to uphold the responsibility of men and women for their remaining in sin as well as to maintain that human beings are utterly unable in their own strength to turn from their sin and turn to God. A person's possession of natural faculties such as reason and will render him or her accountable to God for the proper use of them. However, due to the perverse disposition of the human will, men and women in their natural state are unable to use their natural faculties aright. Humanity's consistent failure to live in such a way as to please God stems, then, not from physical inability, but from moral inability. As we shall see, this distinction between physical and moral inability would also be central to the attack Fuller made on the canons of High Calvinism. But it was not until 1777, nearly two years later, that Fuller actually read this work.

In the meanwhile Fuller was immersing himself in the doctrinal treatise entitled *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity* by John Gill, which was all but required reading for English Baptist pastors in the eighteenth century. One could be assured that Baptist pastors owned at least two works: John Gill's *A Body of Divinity* as well as Gill's expository commentary on the entirety of the Old and New Testaments. Fuller was also reading the works of the Baptist author from the previous century, John Bunyan.

He read most of Gill's systematic work, found much that was helpful in it, but was deeply troubled by the evident differences between Gill and Bunyan. Both were ardent Calvinists, but whereas Bunyan recommended 'the free offer of salvation to sinners without distinction', Gill did not. Fuller wrongly concluded that though Bunyan was 'a great and good man', he was not as clear as Gill regarding the gospel. Yet, as Fuller perused the writings of other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors, in particular those of the Puritan theologian John Owen (1616-1683), he noted that they too 'dealt...in free invitations to sinners to come to Christ and be saved'. In other words, Fuller had discerned that with regard to the preaching of the gospel there was a definite difference not only between Bunyan and Gill, but more broadly between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Calvinism and that of the early eighteenth century.

Although Fuller would eventually find strong theological allies in the elder Hall, John Ryland Jr. and John Sutcliff (1752-1814), pastor of the Baptist work at Olney, Buckinghamshire, these men lived sixty to seventy miles away.

Fuller's inquiry after the truth was in many ways therefore a solitary one. As Ryland wrote in his memoirs of Fuller: 'He had fewer means of assistance from men and books than he might have had elsewhere; but he was obliged to think, and pray, and study the Scriptures, and thus to make his ground good.' A personal covenant written by Fuller in 1780 speaks of his 'determination to take up no principles at second-hand, but to search for every thing at the pure fountain of [God's] word'.

This then was the crucible in which *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* was written.

The refutation of Hyper-Calvinism: *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*

A preliminary draft of the work was written by 1778. In what was roughly its final form it was completed by 1781. Two editions of the work were published in Fuller's lifetime. The first edition, published in Northampton in 1785, was subtitled *The Obligations of Men Fully to Credit, and Cordially to Approve, Whatever God Makes Known, Wherein is Considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of Those where the Gospel Comes in that Matter*. The second edition, which appeared in 1801, was more simply subtitled *The Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ*, a subtitle which well expressed the overall theme of the book. There were substantial differences between the two editions, which Fuller freely admitted and which primarily related to the doctrine of particular redemption, but the major theme remained unaltered: 'faith in Christ is the duty of all men who hear, or have opportunity to hear, the gospel'. Or as he put it in his preface to the first edition: 'God requires the heart, the whole heart, and nothing but the heart;...all the precepts of the Bible are only the different modes in which we are required to express our love to him.'

In the first section of the work, Fuller states the theme of the book and spends some time discussing the nature of saving faith. He especially takes to task the popular High Calvinist view of faith as something primarily subjective.

The Scriptures always represent faith as terminating on something without us; namely, on Christ, and the truths concerning him: but if it consist in a persuasion of our being in a state of salvation, it must terminate principally on something within us: namely, the work of grace in our hearts; for to believe myself interested in Christ is the same thing as to believe myself a subject of special grace.

As Fuller goes on to point out, genuine faith is fixed on ‘the glory of Christ, and not the happy condition we are in’. These are two very different things. The former entails ‘a persuasion of Christ being both able and willing to save all them that come unto God by him’, while the latter is ‘a persuasion that we are the children of God’. The Hyper-Calvinist schema thus ultimately turns faith into a preoccupation with one’s spiritual state and security and Christ a means to the latter.

In Part II of the work Fuller adduces six arguments in defence of his position. Let us look at one of these arguments, the first, in which Fuller seeks to show from various biblical passages that ‘unconverted sinners are commanded, exhorted, and invited to believe in Christ for salvation’.

John 12:36, for instance, contains an exhortation of the Lord Jesus to a crowd of men and women to ‘believe in the light’ that they might be the children of light. Working from the context, Fuller argues that Jesus was urging his hearers to put their faith in him. He is the ‘light’ in whom faith is to be placed, that faith which issues in salvation (John 12:46). Those whom Christ commanded to exercise such faith, however, were rank unbelievers, of whom it is said earlier ‘they believed not on him’ (John 12:37).

Or consider John 6:29 where Jesus declares to sinners that ‘this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent’. Fuller first points out that this statement is made to men who in the context are described as following Christ simply because he gave them food to eat (verse 26). They are unbelievers (verse 36). Christ rebukes them for their mercenary motives and urges them to ‘labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life’ (verse 27). Their response as recorded in John 6:28 is to ask Christ, ‘What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?’ His answer is to urge them to put their faith in him (verse 29). Or, as Fuller puts it, faith in Christ is ‘the first and greatest of all duties, and without it no other duty can be acceptable’.

Again, in John 5:23 we read that all men and women are to ‘honour the Son, even as they honour the Father’. Giving honour to the Son entails, Fuller rightly reasons, ‘holy, hearty love to him’ and adoration of every aspect of his person. It ‘necessarily supposes faith in him’. Christ has shown himself to be an infallible teacher, a holy advocate who pleads the case of his erring people, a physician who offers health to the spiritually sick, and a supreme monarch. Honouring him in these various aspects of his

ministry requires faith and trust. 'To honour an infallible teacher is to place an implicit and unbounded confidence in all he says; to honour an advocate is to commit our cause to him; to honour a physician is to trust our lives in his hands; and to honour a king is to bow to his sceptre, and cheerfully obey his laws.'

Fuller can also point to the incident with Simon Magus in Acts 8, where the magician is urged by Peter to 'repent' and 'pray' for forgiveness of his sinful thinking (Acts 8:22). Forgiveness, though, can be found only in Christ. So, Fuller reasons, 'he was, in effect, directed to believe in Jesus'.

Another argument that Fuller brings forward is the fact that lack of faith in Christ is considered a 'heinous sin' in the Scriptures. Fuller reasoned that trust in Christ is required of all that sit under the preaching of the Word. Men and women are never reprov'd for their not being among the elect, for election is solely God's work. But 'sinners are reprov'd for not believing', as in John 5:40, where Jesus rebukes his hearers for being unwilling to come to him to receive eternal life.

One very important question that Fuller had to wrestle with had to do with human inability and the Spirit's help. Hyper-Calvinists argued that sinners are unable to do anything spiritually good, and thus are under no obligation to exercise faith in Christ. They supported their argument by reference to such texts as John 6:44 ('No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him') and 1 Corinthians 2:14 ('The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned'). The inability of which these passages speak, Fuller contended in response, is a moral inability, which is rooted in the sinful disposition of the heart. Men and women refuse to come to Christ because of their aversion to him. They fail to understand the gospel and the things of the Spirit because they lack the means by which such matters are understood, namely, the presence of the indwelling Spirit. And they lack the Spirit because their hearts are closed to God. These verses are not speaking of a physical inability-such as insanity or mental deficiency-which excuses its subject of blame. In making this distinction between physical and moral inability, which Fuller derived from Jonathan Edwards, Fuller was seeking to affirm a scriptural paradox: sinful men and women are utterly powerless to turn to God except through the regenerative work of God's Holy Spirit, yet this powerlessness is the result of their own sinful hearts.

This led Fuller to address the role of the Spirit's work in conversion. Hyper-Calvinists argued that if repentance and faith are ascribed by the Scriptures to the work of the Spirit, then 'they cannot be duties required of sinners'. As Fuller points out, though, the force of this objection is dependent upon the supposition that 'we do not stand in need of the Holy Spirit to enable us to comply with our duty'. What is amazing about this supposition is that Arminianism assumes the same. For the Arminian, because faith is commanded of sinners by God, then they must be able to believe without the irresistible drawing of the Spirit. Similarly, the Hyper-Calvinist reasons that since faith is wrought by the Spirit it cannot be an act of obedience. The truth of the matter, however, is that 'we need the influence of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do our duty' and that 'repentance and faith, therefore, may be duties, notwithstanding their being the gifts of God'.

There were two main practical conclusions to Fuller's arguments:

First, sinners have every encouragement to trust in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of their souls. They do not need to spend time dallying to see if they are among God's elect or if God is at work in their hearts by his Spirit. Moreover, they can no longer sit at ease under the sound of the gospel and excuse their unbelief by asserting that faith is the gift of God.

Second, ministers of the Word must earnestly exhort their hearers to commit themselves to Christ and that without delay. In so doing they will be faithful imitators of Christ and his Apostles, who 'warned, admonished, and entreated' sinners to repent, to believe, and to be reconciled to God. Many Hyper-Calvinist ministers of Fuller's day, though, were too much like John Eve and had next to nothing to say to the unconverted in their congregations, because they believed that these men and women were 'poor, impotent...creatures'. Faith was beyond such men and women, and could not be pressed upon them as an immediate, present duty. Fuller was convinced that this way of conducting a pulpit ministry was unbiblical and simply helped the unconverted to remain in their sin. Fuller put his position well in an article of the statement of faith he made at his induction into the Kettering pastorate in 1783: 'I believe it is the duty of every minister of Christ plainly and faithfully to preach the gospel to all who will hear it; ...and that it is their [i.e. the hearers'] duty to love the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in him for salvation... I therefore believe free and solemn addresses, invitations, calls, and warnings to them to be not only *consistent*, but directly *adapted*, as means, in the hand of the Spirit of God, to bring them to Christ. I consider it as a part of my duty which I could not omit without being guilty of the blood of souls.'

The New Covenant and Baptism

A close look at Hebrews 8:8-13

Erroll Hulse

Jeremiah's statement is central because it highlights the relationship between the old covenant and the new. Jeremiah's words (Jer 31:31-34) are quoted in full in Hebrews 8:8-12, and in part in Hebrews 10:16-17. His words are also referred to by our Lord in John 6:45 where he says, 'They will all be taught by God.'

The following salient facts emerge:

1 *The new covenant is an unbreakable covenant.* The very reason why God established this new covenant with his people is because they broke the old one (v 32). The covenant as administered to Abraham and to Moses was breakable. 'Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant' (Gen 17:14). 'They broke my covenant' (Jer 31:32). Deuteronomy chapter 28 describes the curses threatened on Israel if she broke the covenant. But the new covenant cannot be broken by the covenantees because they are all in union with Christ. One in union with Christ might backslide and sin but he will be recovered and persevere. 'He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion' (Phil 1:6).

2 *The new covenant is made with believers only.* This of course is the reason why the new covenant is unbreakable, for only believers will persevere to the end without breaking God's covenant. Note the blessings of this new covenant:

i *God's law is written on my heart* – 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts' (v 33).

ii *I have a personal knowledge of God* – 'No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest' (v 34a).

iii *I have forgiveness of my sins* – 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more' (v 34b).

Of course these blessings were experienced by elect old covenant believers but sometimes they formed a small *minority* of the covenant community. Now *all* who are covenant members experience these peculiar blessings. Ezekiel chapter 16 outlines the history of the old covenant nation and stresses the unfaithfulness of that covenant community, ‘You have despised my oath by breaking my covenant’ (Ezek 16:59). It is this failure that motivates the Lord to establish a new, an everlasting covenant that will not be broken. It will not be broken ‘because they will *all* know me, from the least of them to the greatest’ (Heb 8:11).

3. *The new covenant is made only with the elect, with those who have experienced these blessings.* It is not made with those who have *not* experienced these blessings. There is no warrant for giving the sign and seal of the new covenant to those who do not evidence its blessings. When those who baptise babies speak of these babies when they grow up as covenant breakers the observation should be made that we are all born as sinners and need to be born again. Why give baptism to babies when they are sinners and lack the signs of new birth? It cannot be right to reason along these lines: ‘I must behave well because I am in the covenant.’ Rather as a child grows up under believing parents or one believing parent he must make repentance and faith his primary concern. Repentance and faith form the gateway for all without exception.

Hebrews 8:7-13 is pivotal. There are a number of ways in which the plain meaning is evaded:

1. It can be said that Jeremiah’s phrase, ‘They shall all know me,’ applies only to those covenant members who happen to be *elect*, but not to *all* covenant members whomsoever. But this is to avoid what we could term the punch line of the passage. The whole point is that this covenant will not be broken precisely because they will *ALL* know me. In the old covenant they did *not* *ALL* know me. In the new there are no covenant members who do not know the Lord.

2. It can be said that Jeremiah’s phrase, ‘They shall all know me,’ applies to *all types of people* in the new covenant. In other words whereas under the old covenant only one type of person really knew the Lord (the Jews), now under the new covenant *all kinds* of people will know him, from the greatest of them to the least.

It is true that the new covenant is characterised by the inclusion of believers from all nations, tribes and languages as we see on the day of Pentecost. But that very day of Pentecost reminds us that already under the old covenant administration all kinds of people were being included. Diversity is

not the thrust of Hebrews 8:7-13. The writer is not saying that whereas in the old covenant God says 'I only dealt with one kind of people but now I am going to include all kinds of people.' His contrast and thrust all the way through is that whereas *they did not know him* then now in this new covenant *they will all know him*.

'No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest point.' The writer is not saying that the problem in the old covenant was diversity of race. The problem was not diversity of race but the fact that *they did not know the Lord*.

I recall an experience when a good friend who wished to convert me to paedobaptism gave me a cassette with an exposition of Hebrews 8:8-13 by a professor of theology whom I esteem highly. I trembled because I faced a two hour journey back to Leeds. What if I arrived home and had to announce to my wife that I had been converted to paedobaptism?! She is a strong believer who knows this subject well. I also needed to concentrate on driving along a busy motorway. I listened to the cassette and to my amazement the professor expounded the passage as though its main thrust was the diversity of nations that characterises the new covenant, along the lines that I have just explained. He chose to ignore the principal thrust of Hebrews 8:8-13, namely the radical discontinuity of the old to the new emphasised in the fact that *every* member of the new covenant knows the Lord.

3. It can be argued that infant baptism is based on the Abrahamic covenant whereas this passage is referring to the Mosaic covenant. In answer to that I say that the Abrahamic covenant was preparatory to the Mosaic covenant. The principle that every one born in the clan must be circumcised is identical to that of the Mosaic covenant. The basis of inclusion for Abraham, namely natural birth, provides covenant status. That is identical with the Mosaic covenant.

4. A case can be reasoned that knowing of the Lord is an *external knowledge* about the things of God revealed in Scripture. This, it can be suggested, is the knowledge shared by all who grow up in believers' homes. But this does not fit. As shown above the knowledge is not external. It is spiritual. It is that knowledge which saves and which brings forgiveness of sin. It is a knowledge of the Lord which is the same as union with Christ. That is, it is new covenant knowledge.

I have been detailed on Hebrews 8:8-13 because this passage is crucial in its emphasis on the radical discontinuity of the old and new covenants. Paedobap-

tists rightly affirm the fundamental and underlying *unity* of the covenant of grace in all ages. But they suppress the radical change that has taken place. They suppress the *not*: (Heb 8:9), 'It will *not* be like the covenant I made with their forefathers.' We must not read the Old Testament as though it were the New and we must not read the New Testament as though it were the Old. The coming of Christ, his life, death, resurrection and ascension have brought a complete fulfilment of the Old. Subsequently there was introduced a radically different covenant administration. This new covenant administration began on the day of Pentecost. We are now the Church. We are not the nation of Israel. The fundamental error of paedobaptists is in the very subject where many of them pride themselves as being strong, namely, in biblical theology, that is progressive redemptive history.

The baptism of believers is the antithesis of infant baptism. Our Lord designed baptism of believers as a powerful testimony. That must not be nullified. Infant baptism and believers' baptism proceed on different grounds. According to paedobaptists, infant baptism is only for babies of believers and proceeds on the basis of descent and covenant status. According to baptists, believers' baptism is for all men and women of every race under the sun and proceeds on the basis of repentance and faith.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion I observe that believers' baptism marks the greatest change that exists for a sinner. He is brought from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God by new birth. He is justified, he is set apart, a work of progressive sanctification is begun in his heart and he is adopted into the family of God. Believers' baptism is the ordinance designed to mark this transformation. He has been baptised by the Holy Spirit into Christ and into the body of Christ (Gal 3:26; Rom 6:1-7; 1 Cor 12:13). All this refers to something that has taken place. With our infants, we fervently pray and express our hopes that one day all this will happen but we have absolutely no right to attest these things before they are confirmed in reality. Believers' baptism not only declares the wondrous grace of God in conversion, it tells the one who now walks in newness of life that all his resources lie in the Triune God with whom he is now united. He does not look to secret formulas or gimmicks in his struggles and temptations. His baptism tells him that he is in Christ for time and for eternity and that in that union he must and will persevere to the end.

Endpoint

I am indebted to Greg Welty's exposition which I commend and which can be found on www.founders.org

Book Reviews

Can we Pray for Revival?

Brian H Edwards, 206 pp, paperback, Evangelical Press, UK, 2001

Brian Edwards defines revival by showing that it is not evangelism nor phenomena, not excitement nor the restoration of spiritual gifts, not reformation, renewal nor church growth. In the light of his cautions Edwards describes revival as a sovereign work of God's Holy Spirit which he then elaborates. He devotes several chapters to revival in the Old Testament. Highly commended is the author's fourth chapter titled, 'The expectation of revival in the Old Testament'. Here he grapples with understanding prophecy and then provides short histories of pre-, a- and post-millennialism. His preference is decidedly a-mill but he is fair and does not caricature the other positions as is so often the case. As one who favours the post-mill position, my comment would be that much more detailed exposition is needed of the promises in the Psalms and Isaiah as to the extent in which the Messiah is promised victory. A chapter is devoted to the New Testament expectation of revival in which special attention is given to Paul's prayers for revival. Best of all is the concluding chapter which is very practical in dealing with the subject of why we should pray for revival and what it is to persevere in such prayer.

Total Forgiveness,

Achieving God's greatest challenge

R T Kendall, 178 pp, paperback, Hodder and Stoughton, UK, £6.99, 2001

Unwillingness to forgive is a disease

widespread in humanity and endemic among professing Christians. For this reason this is a highly relevant book and R T Kendall is thorough in his treatment. He confesses that he found himself full of unforgiveness due to a situation which we would guess is common in churches. When he shared his feelings with his friend Josif Tson of Romania he was shocked by the exhortation he received with regard to complete forgiveness.

While some of the book is anecdotal the main substance is expository. The gospel is the good news of total forgiveness. With that comes the condition that we too must forgive totally. This does not mean approval of wrong doing. It does not mean excusing wrong doing. It does not mean that there will automatically be reconciliation. The headings used in a positive explanation of forgiveness are:

1. Being aware of what someone has done and still forgiving them
2. It is a choice to keep no records of wrong
3. Refusing to punish
4. Not telling what they did
5. Being merciful
6. Graciousness
7. It is an inner condition
8. It is the absence of bitterness
9. Forgiving God
10. Forgiving ourselves

There is a searching chapter, 'How do we know that we have totally forgiven someone?' This book will minister to you if you are struggling with the problem of forgiveness.

China's Christian Millions –

The Costly Revival

Tony Lambert, Monarch Books,
248 pp, paperback, 1999

What is taking place in China may well prove to be the most extensive spiritual awakening in the history of the Christian Church. This is amazing when we consider that humanly speaking the Chinese Church should have been obliterated by the Cultural Revolution. We do well therefore to be informed about the situation in China and be alert as to how we can pray for and contribute toward the needs of the churches in China. There is great need there for reliable expository materials.

Nothing in this fallen world is ideal and no revival is pure. Tony Lambert is aware of the dangers that imperil the churches in China, especially the threat of heterodoxy and cults. He describes church growth province by province. There are chapters on the house church movement, the Three-Self churches (the denomination that is permitted by the government), signs and wonders, Communist party members coming to Christ, the great difficulty of teaching children, and the conversion of intellectuals.

Firestorm of the Lord

Stuart Piggin. 250pp paperback,
Paternoster Press, 2000

This book on revival is a difficult book to review because while the author professes to follow Jonathan Edwards and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his definition of revival, he includes in this orbit decisionist crusade evangelism, Toronto blessing and many other instances as revival which in reality stand in need of verification and evaluation. We wish to avoid the

attitude of total scepticism. At the same time we need to avoid naïvety. A wide variety of events are described briefly. Some of them begin like the story of catching a fish but with the telling the fish becomes the size of a whale! Some of the accounts seem to have an authentic ring about them but the author makes no attempt to indicate why he classifies the event as a revival.

For instance the author describes the revolution in the Philippines which is 65 percent Roman Catholic. He quotes Charles Colson, 'When the election was rigged and the revolution broke out, Cardinal Sin announced over the radio that he wanted all Christians to go into the streets to pray and protect the soldiers. Within thirty minutes, three million people had poured out onto the streets. Every tank was stopped dead in its tracks before millions of people down on their knees praying to God. Not a single drop of blood was shed. The Church in the Philippines became the instrument of holding that government to moral account, the instrument of righteousness in that culture. That's what happens when the Church is truly the Church.'

We rejoice to be reminded that a government in our day can actually be called to account and to know that no blood was shed when this happened. But all this does not address the nature of Roman Catholicism in the Philippines, a religion which is saturated with idolatry and shows very little evidence of evangelical faith.

In spite of the naïvety and lack of analysis there is much in this book which is heart-warming, informative and practical in stirring us up in our responsibility to pray for revival.

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