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Mark Pickett and his daughter Beth in Nepal

Cover Picture – *Buddhist prayer flags with printed mantras or prayers to Buddhist deities can be seen fluttering from most houses in the Himalayan region. See on Nepal in News. Photo credit to Hae Kwang Cheong.*

Editorial

Power for the powerless

Soon after my conversion I found myself in my first-ever prayer meeting. About twenty believers were present sitting in a semi-circle. The pastor said that we must pray round in order beginning from his left. I was about midway in the semi-circle. I was not only powerless, but paralysed with fear! As it came to my turn I delivered hefty prods into the chest of the brother next to me indicating that he must pray next, not me! It took time before I was ready to offer a one sentence prayer in the prayer meeting. The spiritual powerlessness of a novice is easy to understand. Mature Christians often suffer spiritual inertia. They sometimes feel very weak. Paul gives us an example of how he prayed for power to be given to the members of God's family (Eph 3:14 to 21).

'I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.' He goes on to define a specific aspect of spiritual power which is the ability to grasp the immensity of the love that Christ has for us. Spiritual power is basic to growth in understanding and experiencing spiritual realities.

The power pleaded for in Paul's prayer is the inward spiritual energy to live for Christ in every respect and for this we need to be empowered by the Spirit (*krataioō* to empower). This inward strengthening by the Spirit comes through exercise or training. It involves a disciplined prayer life and is analogous to training in a gymnasium (1 Tim 4:7). This power motivates action and energises the will to live a godly life.

This power is mediated to us by the Holy Spirit. It is Trinitarian. It is by the Spirit that Christ lives in us. As Christ lives in us so we relate to our heavenly Father. Having been reconciled to him by the blood of Jesus' cross our aim is to please him.

From Paul's prayer we learn how to pray for each other. We are to see that our God is omnipotent. Nothing is too hard for him (Jer 32:17). We bear this in mind as we pray specifically for fellow believers to be strengthened with all power by the Spirit in their inner beings.

This power is inward. The adverb *esō* 'inner' occurs nine times in the New Testament. Six times it is used architecturally as inside a palace, an assembly

hall or a courtyard, and three times to the inside of a person; in Ephesians 3:16, in Romans 7:22 and in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 where Paul describes the physical body as wasting away but 'the inner man' is renewed day by day. It is mostly the case that believers grow spiritually stronger and more mature over the years. They are of course the subjects of comprehensive transformation which we call progressive sanctification. When physical and intellectual decline sets in the battle to maintain spiritual disciplines becomes more difficult. In spite of that empowerment is imparted. The elderly saint is often way above average in spirituality. But physical decline can affect the mind adversely and reduce ability to maintain spiritual disciplines. Whatever the situation we are comforted in the knowledge that 'he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion' (Phil 1:6).

Through the centuries believers have been spiritually empowered to achieve wonderful exploits, learn new languages, endure persecution, persevere through hard times, and sometimes face torture and death (Heb 11:32-40). The power most of us need is to live out each day for God's glory. This applies particularly to work. Don Whitney comments, 'All kinds of work, paid and unpaid, are necessary in the world. People must grow food, care for children, make clothes, tend the sick, construct buildings and roads, transport goods, govern the cities, and so forth. Obviously, therefore, God intends for most people to devote themselves to what is often called "secular" employment. Only a small percentage should be vocational pastors, church-planting missionaries, and the like (even though more are needed). Otherwise, who will work the fields, deliver the mail, build ships and cars, develop water systems, and make medicines? Because God has ordained it, all work has a spiritual dimension. The Bible repeatedly commends useful, honest labour (Eph 4:28; 1 Thess 4:11; 2 Thess 3:10), which shows God's intense interest in it.'

Isaiah 40:30-31 is similar to Ephesians 3:16, 'Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait on the LORD shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint' (Isa 40:30-31 KJV). The word 'wait' conveys the idea of hope and expectation. We persevere in prayer (Luke 18:1-8). In doing so we actively rely on the LORD and pray to be strengthened with power through the Spirit in our inner being.

Recommended reading: Don A Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation, Priorities from Paul and his prayers*, Baker Book House, 230 page paperback, 1992. Carson opens up 1 Thessalonians 1:1-12; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; Colossians 1:9-14; Philippians 1:9-11; Ephesians 1:15-23 and 3:14-21 and Romans 15:14-33.

Donald S. Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life* (Colorado Springs, NavPress, 2003).

The Priceless Truth of Justification

Baruch Maoz

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long, for day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found. Surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him (Ps 32:1-6).

How wonderful it is to have such an assurance of forgiveness, such a confidence that, in spite of our many and awful sins, we have sanctified, have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:11).

This is the glory of the Christian faith. It is also one of its special and endearing distinctives. There are really only two religions in the world: the religion of God's grace in Christ, and all the rest. In spite of their protestations to the contrary, all other religions teach that man must find acceptance with God by his own efforts, on the strength of his own merits, through the virtue of his achievements. But the gospel says,

*I would not work my soul to save,
For that my Lord has done;
But I would work like any slave
For love of his dear Son! (C T Studd)*

There is hardly a truth Satan hates more than the truth of God's grace. It makes men grateful. It drives them to love God and serve him with all they have. No

longer dependent on their achievements, they are driven to higher and still higher achievements for him who loved them and gave himself for them. No longer in need of hanging onto God by their own efforts, they invest more effort in serving him than they ever did when they thought that they must somehow earn favour with God and thereby be their own justifiers.

This is true of the religion of my people. Of course, there are as many Judaisms as there are purported versions of the Christian faith. But all versions of Judaism agree on this point, as the New Testament clearly shows: 'I am not like other people.... *I fast* twice a week, *I pay* tithes of all I get' 'Good teacher, what shall *I do* to inherit eternal life?' (Luke 18:11-18).

For many long, dark years, the glorious truth of justification by faith was lost in the morass of traditionalism, ritualism and popish clericalism. Then the light shone once again. Luther tells us:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my efforts to satisfy him. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners ... At last, by the mercy of God ... I gave heed to the context of the words,... 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live".'

I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith ... I had been altogether born again and entered paradise itself through open gates!

A totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me! ... I also found ... that ... what God does in us (is) the power of God with which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God, and I extolled my sweetest words with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the words 'righteousness of God'. ... That place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise.

We live in an age when this heart-rejoicing truth is once again denied. Theological Liberalism has raised its head to insist that man can be good enough for God. Similar mistaken claims have been made recently in a somewhat different form by those who promote what is known as the New Perspective on Paul. According to N T Wright (one of the New Perspective's

best known propagators), neither Luther nor Calvin understood the teaching of Paul on justification. Justification is not to be perceived in the terms which became the clarion call of the Reformation, but as God's declaration that someone is in the covenant. According to N T Wright in his book *What Saint Paul Really Said* Paul taught that man 'gets in by grace but stays in by works'. That is to say, by grace he is justified in potential and made a member of the covenant people, but he remains in covenant and ultimately obtains justification only as the fruit of his faithfulness to the terms of that covenant.

Seeking support for these views the New Perspective insists that we have not only misunderstood the apostles, but that our view of Judaism is also mistaken - Judaism does not teach salvation by works. Rather, it is a religion of grace. The works Judaism requires are the natural response to grace. They are and should be. But Judaism does not teach that. Judaism teaches that works are in order to grace, not the other way around.

Others tell us that we 'get in' by grace and 'stay in' by works, just as Israel was called out of Egypt and brought into covenant by grace, and then was called upon to work. Disobedience to the covenant led to excommunication from that covenant. This is to conflate individual and national fates into one. It is to ignore the difference between the Testaments, to ignore the process of revelation and to treat the Old Testament as if it were a New Testament revelation. Hebrews 1:1 describes the revelation God has given in his Son in terms of a climax, not as merely the last stage in an extended process.

Paul teaches that we stay in by the same grace that brings us in - Romans 5:1-2 having been justified (past tense, aorist - a deed accomplished in the past and not needing to be repeated), we have (present tense, ongoing) peace with God - we have obtained (past tense) introduction into this grace by which we stand (present tense, ongoing). Rather than responding to grace by seeking ultimate justification by keeping the law, Paul insists in Galatians 5:4 that any effort to be justified by the law is nothing less than to fall from grace.

'Ah' we are told with a note of triumph. 'You do not understand. The deeds that we do are not meritorious!' I reply: 'You're right, I do not understand. In my dictionary, "unmeritorious", "without merit" means "without value", "valueless". I go on to insist, 'it is precisely because the very best of our deeds are unmeritorious, as filthy rags before the awesome holiness of God, that they can never justify us. Only grace can do that. Salvation is from the Lord - from beginning to end!'

A somewhat identical mistake is made by those who are closer to home - at least to my home - by many modern adherents of the Messianic Movement. Ryken (*Galatians*, P&R, 2005 in the Reformed Expository Commentary series, page 9) got it wrong when he says of the Galatian heretics that 'they taught that a Gentile had to become a Jew *before* he could become a Christian' (my emphasis). What they actually taught was exactly what some are saying today, that a Gentile must become a Jew because he had become a Christian! They claim that a Jewish lifestyle is necessary to sanctification, thereby implying that the justification provided by Christ does not include sanctification.

Paul's words to the Galatians on this matter are very clear: I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20). Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort (Gal 3:2-4). The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Gal 3:23-37). Paul longed to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of his own, derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God through faith (Phil 3:9).

Jesus promised, He that hears my word and believes on him who sent me has everlasting life and will not come into condemnation but has passed from death into life (John 5:24). Our life *is hid* with Christ in God (Col 3:30). We are a new creation, born again, from above; old things *have* passed away, look - all things have become new! We *have died* and *have been raised* with Christ and are therefore, by grace, *accepted* in the Beloved. The New Testament is replete with the use of the past tense in describing the joys of salvation.

Justification by grace through faith is far more than a bare legal pronouncement. It is an act of God, a transforming deed. God works in the innermost hearts of sinful men and women, boys and girls. Justification always involves sanctification and that, too, is an act of grace; not by human effort, although not without such effort; not through self-denial and discipline although not without self-denial or discipline; not as the grounds of justification but as its natural fruit. How can we who died to sin live in it any longer? Indeed, Paul teaches in Galatians that self-discipline is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, not a means to obtaining the Spirit.



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That is why so many adherents of the Messianic Movement draw the logical conclusion of their preoccupation with the Law by converting to Judaism. They misunderstand the relationship between justification and salvation. Having accepted Judaism's premise, they have come to its inevitable conclusion. That is also why some of the finest adherents of Judaism have died without the assurance of salvation. Knowing themselves to belong to the people of God, they remain insecure at the ultimate hour because they recognize that their best efforts have been faulty.

This is well illustrated by the famous story of one of Judaism's most influential rabbis, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. Ben Zakkai is reported to have wept bitterly as he died. When asked by his adoring disciples why he wept, he responded,

If they would be taking me before a mortal judge, here today and gone tomorrow, whose anger toward me would be only for a short time; if he tortures or kills me it is not permanent suffering; I would nevertheless cry (in trepidation). Certainly now that they are taking me before the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed Be He who Lives forever, whose anger is an eternal anger and if he tortures me it will be eternal torture, and if he kills me it will be eternal death - should I not cry? (Berachot 28B)

Oh, what a terrible religion! How can it be compared with the faith which taught Robert Murray McCheyne to say on his deathbed, coughing and spitting blood as he died of tuberculosis: *You have put gladness in my heart more than in the time when their corn and their wine increased* (Ps 4:7).

Do not buy into a romantic view of Judaism. Do not buy into Judaism's conviction that man, even elected man (for that is how a Jewish person sees himself) can somehow please God or achieve spiritual heights by his own efforts. There are 'Christian' versions of this error. Beware of them too, Any form of legalism is mistaken, unbiblical and spiritually, morally emotionally corruptive, even if it goes by the respectable name of Judaism. It offers no hope. It represents a major departure from the joyous, confident faith of David, whose testimony we read as we began our meditation. It is far removed from the relief Isaiah knew when a seraph flew to him with a live coal from the altar, touched his lips and said, *See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for* (Isa 6:6).

In Psalm 32 David presents true, biblical Judaism. It is to the shame of all who would deny justification by faith that they could do so in light of the fuller revelation of God's saving grace in Christ to be found in the New Testament. It is all the more to their shame when we note that David, who knew so much less, had so triumphant a confidence in his justification, such as is expressed in this Psalm. His words were penned for our edification. His testimony in Psalm 32 was written so that, learning from him, we might have a similar confidence.

Note with me that David's testimony includes the words, *Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found. Surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him* (Ps 32:6). Pray about what? Of which *mighty waters* is David speaking? He explains: *When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long, for day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer* (3-4). The mighty waters that threatened to engulf David were the gracious, insistent proddings of God's Holy Spirit, convincing him of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. Like Yochanan ben Zakkai, David had a troubled conscience. Like him he did not know what to do with that conscience. So long as David remained silent, refusing to confess his sins he had no relief and cried, *Your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer* (4).

We are told by those who profess to know these things that a sense of guilt is one of modern man's most persistent inner difficulties. In that sense, David was a very modern man. Like most today he denied his conscience, sought to suppress it, ignored its pricks and sought to silence his spirit by various other means. But all of this was to no avail. God the Spirit gave him no release. God's hand was heavy upon him. His emotional strength was sapped dry just as the Israeli landscape is sapped annually as soon as the rains end and the summer heat beats upon the thirsting fields. Somehow, deep in his heart, he knew God was pursuing him, but he resisted. He believed he could resolve the problem some other way.

Finally, David tells us, he succumbed. *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"* (5). When David came to his senses, he made no effort. He offered no compensation. He merely confessed and in this way put himself at the mercy of God. What a good place to be - at the mercy of God! Our God delights in mercy. Anger is a strange work to him. He is merciful to a thousand generations! Evidence? Well, what was God's response to David's confession? *You forgave the guilt of my sin!* What more could David have hoped for? Unlike ben Zakkai, like Luther, David had found the gate to paradise, and it had been thrown wide open before him. Relief! Peace! Freedom from a troubled conscience was at hand at last. Little wonder that David penned this wonderful Psalm; his heart overflowed with joy and gratitude!

Strange as it may seem to many today, it is not by denial that we find relief. The nagging, persistent thorns of memory will not let go. However many mattresses of good works and of determined suppression we may seek to pile on the pea of our troubled mind, like the princess in the story, it will permit us no rest.

This is not a coincidence. It is a loving work of God, geared to our salvation. It is through grace we are saved and through the work of Christ on the cross that we may be justified, not through any efforts of our own.

There is another important lesson, relevant to the discussion on justification now raging in theological circles, and which is to be found in David's words. When did David confess his sin? When did he receive forgiveness? Is David speaking here of his conversion? I think not. This, I believe, was one of David's prayers *when the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed*

adultery with Bathsheba (Psalm 51 - subtitle). I believe this is clear from what David says in verse 6 of Psalm 32: *Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found. Surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.* Why should the godly pray as David has described? Why should they fear the rising of what David calls the mighty waters? Because David is speaking as a man who has known God for some time and yet failed, as one who is, to use his own term, *godly*, although he has not always acted in a godly manner.

In other words, David was not only initially justified by the gospel; he lived by the gospel. He 'got in' by grace and he 'stayed in' by that same grace. David had, at the very least, an intuitive understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification. He understood what Paul meant when the apostle rebuked the Galatians for having begun in the Spirit yet seeking completion through the flesh. He understood that salvation is of the Lord - all of it, from beginning to end! *Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.* Not he who has no transgressions, who is responsible for no sins, but he whose transgressions God has chosen to forgive, whose sins he has mercifully covered. Christianity is for sinners, not for the righteous. The Christian life is for sinners. Justification is the rendering just of those who do not deserve such kindness. Under no circumstances may it be perceived as the product of human endeavour.

Rabbinical Judaism has no such knowledge. Liberalism cannot offer it. Messianic Judaism knows increasingly less of it. The New Perspective has lost sight of it. Yet it is here, enshrined in God's Word for our comfort, exhortation and active faith. Justification is by grace, and by grace alone.

I cannot leave the matter here. How about us Reformed Christians? Do we know grace? Do we *truly* know grace? Do we *live* by the grace through which we have been justified?

Some of us are inclined to live as if we too thought that we get in by grace but stay in by works. Some of us behave as if justification is by grace but sanctification is the fruit of our self-denial, self-discipline, theological rightness and determined sacrifice. We then become harsh, doctrinaire, judgmental, almost fundamentalist toward all who cannot dot our I's and cross

our T's, each and every one of them. Does grace characterise the way we relate to others, even when we differ from them?

No less important: do we live by the grace that justified us, or do we drive ourselves remorselessly, as if everything depended on us? Can we accept failure in a truly Christian manner, trusting in grace and finding in grace all we need for forgiveness, restoration and renewed vigor?

On the other hand, how much does a recognition of God's grace drive us to live for him? Paul said that Christ died *that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again* (2 Cor 5:15). He understood the doctrine of justification to teach him to trust in grace throughout his life and to give himself without reserve to the God of grace: *through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God* (Gal 2:19). That is what he meant when he said, *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (Gal 2:20). Paul was thoroughly Christian in his everyday life as well as in his theological convictions – are we? He was a man driven by an awareness of the amazing grace of God, so that everything else was equal in his eyes to dung. Are we so driven by the grace we have received? Are we perceived by those who know us to be devoted to God, his gospel, his glory and his will? What is the primary motive behind all our Christian action, the education we give our children, the way we conduct our business, relate to our spouses and handle our possessions? Are we, like Paul, thoroughly Christian?

None but Christ can satisfy the perfect justice of God, and he has achieved that satisfaction by his death on the cross for all who put their trust in him. None but Christ can satisfy the spiritually enlightened human conscience, but, it is important to note, Jesus can indeed satisfy that conscience when it is enlightened by the Spirit and guided by the Word of God. We need not add anything to Christ for we are complete in him. Salvation – from beginning to end - is to be found in none but Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. How thankful we should be for him; and for those who followed him before us and showed us the way to him!

Faith in him provides us with a holy yet humble and confident joy, with comfort and with a hope that will never disappoint. It also motivates us to

declare its wonderful news from the rooftops of our cities: Jesus saves! Such a faith is what Jewish people need as much as anyone else.

Are you saved? Have you been justified? Are your sins forgiven? If not, turn to God. Knock and he will answer. Call and he will respond. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Are you saved? Have you been justified? Are your sins forgiven? Live it out. Live like one who knows the sweet, overpowering tang of grace. Relate by the same grace to others, and give God thanks. Let the heavens fall tonight - I am at peace: I am forgiven! I am justified by the blood of God's Son and raised by the power of his resurrection! Because he lives, I too shall live!

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8: 31-39).

Hallelujah!

*This was the substance of an address given at the 2006 General Assembly of the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches in America held in Atlanta, Georgia, 2006, by Baruch Maoz, Grace and Truth Christian Congregation, POBox 75 Rishon LeTzion 75100 ISRAEL,
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Assurance of Salvation

Bob Davey

Definition

Assurance of salvation is a God-given awareness that he has accepted you, justified you, forgiven all your sins and given you the gift of eternal life through the merits of Christ's atoning death (Rom 5:11; 6:23).

Assurance of salvation is the grace of the Holy Spirit, giving to believers the certain knowledge that they are the beloved children of God in Jesus Christ (Rom 8:16,17; Gal 2:20; 4:4-7; 1 John 3:1).

Assurance is not mere hope; it is confidence, certainty. It is a living faith. (Heb11: 1, 6. NASB).

Assurance is knowing you will go to heaven.

The basis for assurance of salvation

On what basis can a believer in Christ have a well-grounded assurance of salvation? Assurance of salvation is the biblical result of justification by faith. A repentant sinner rests alone on Christ the mediator of the New Covenant for salvation. The believer, by the Spirit's grace and power, sees he is accepted in the Beloved One, Jesus the Son of God, alone, and knows it inwardly. It is the Holy Spirit of God who seals the truth of his status before God to his mind, heart and experience. The logical ground, or foundation, for an assurance of salvation is the atonement, the finished work of Christ.

A true assurance in the believer glorifies God the Father, who has planned it, and who delights to see the fruit of the holy work of his well-beloved Son. It glorifies God the Son, who has great joy in the salvation of this unworthy sinner, whom he has redeemed at such great personal cost. It glorifies God the Holy Spirit, who delights to apply the fruits of the salvation purchased by the well-beloved Son. Thus all three Persons of the Holy Trinity are involved. They delight, among themselves, in their divine purpose together, and also they delight in the forgiven sinner who is the object of their divine love. They communicate that delight to the believer.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the New Testament speaks much of the joy and peace of the believer. 'You will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy' (John 16:22). 'We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom 5:11). 'And you are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy' (1 Peter 1:8, 9; see also 1 Thess 1:5,6; 1 John 1:3, 4).

There are many 'assurance laden' references describing the peace of the believer. One of the most striking is Philippians 4:7, 'And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' Paul writing to the Romans prays, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Rom 15:13; see also Luke 7:50; John 14: 1-3, 27; Acts 10: 36,43-44; Eph 1:2; Col 3:15; 2 Thess 3:16; 1 Peter 1:2 and 2 Peter 1:1,2).

The certain knowledge of salvation produces the joy and peace. Logically this is exactly what we would expect. How can there be an assurance of salvation without the sense of joy and peace at so great a deliverance from eternal damnation?

Assurance of Salvation is fully Scriptural

'It is difficult to find one biblical instance of a believer doubting his own salvation. We see the saints of both the Old Testament and New Testament frequently in all kinds of emotional trouble. They knew what it was to be cast down and to be in the depths and feed on sorrow's bread. They mourned over indwelling sin; they were troubled by adversity; their hearts were broken by the unfaithfulness of the church, but we do not find them tormented by lack of assurance of salvation.'¹

King David, after his great sin, was not tormented by a loss of assurance of salvation. Loss of peace, yes; sense of God's displeasure, yes; deep darkness of soul, yes: loss of his salvation, no!

Many passages teach unambiguously personal assurance of salvation. Take for instance Galatians 4:4-7, 'Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.' Romans 8:14-17 teaches the same truth with this emphasis, 'The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.' The truth of assurance could hardly be clearer than that!

The language of the saints is the language of assurance. Even though desperately afflicted, Job is certain of the resurrection and that 'in (his) flesh and with (his) own eyes he will see God' (Job 19:25-27). David declares that he will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps 23:6). Asaph wrote, 'You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory' (Ps 73:24). In 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 Paul expresses in detail the assurance of a glorious resurrection for all believers. Mary rejoices in God her Saviour (Luke 1:47). In his second letter Peter outlines disciplines in the Christian life which confirm and consolidate assurance. He concludes, 'For if you do these things, you will never fall' (2 Peter 1:10). John plainly declares that his purpose in writing his letter is that believers may know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). And he writes his Gospel to that same end, 'But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' (John 20:21).

In Romans 5: 1-11 Paul teaches that justification through faith results in the blessing of assurance, peace with God, access to the throne of grace in prayer, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and joy even in sufferings, because of God's love shed abroad in the heart.

In addition to the above references the New Testament speaks of 'full assurance of faith' (Heb 10:22).

The lack of assurance is not humility nor spirituality

The Council of Trent (RC) taught that the believer's assurance of the pardon of his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence.² In general it can be said that to the Roman Catholic and Liberal Christian the biblical teaching on assurance is not only heresy, it offends and annoys. They cannot bear others to feel certainty because they cannot feel so for themselves. The idea of a claim to certain knowledge of salvation smacks of presumption and a decided lack of the grace of humility.

However 'to lack assurance is not humility or spirituality. It is a violation of the scriptural pattern of Christian experience. It is therefore something which the believer should not cultivate and which Christian preaching should not foster.'³

Assurance of salvation is not pride. Rather it is devotion. A full-grown faith is God-honouring. To possess it is not presumption because it is the product of God's grace. Assurance, as I have shown from Scripture, is God's purpose and

God's work. By the Holy Spirit's blessing, assurance in the believer strengthens faith and produces fullness of worship, thankfulness, humility and holiness of life.

The Puritan Thomas Brooks in his classic work on assurance with the title 'Heaven on Earth', describes ten advantages of a biblically based assurance. 1. It produces heaven on earth. 2. It sweetens life's changes. 3. It keeps the heart from desiring the world. 4. It assists communion with God. 5. It preserves from backsliding. 6. It produces holy boldness. 7. It prepares a man for death. 8. It makes mercies taste like mercies. 9. It gives vigour in Christian service. 10. It leads to the soul's enjoyment of Christ.⁴

It cannot be stressed enough that full assurance of salvation and adoption into the family of God is the spiritual birthright of every Christian. It is theologically based in Scripture, clearly revealed as the will of God, and the norm for Christians in New Testament times. We are not dealing here with temporary gifts for the Church but something fundamental for which Christ died. It is his revealed will that all who are in union with him by faith possess the full assurance of faith and hope, with the attendant fullness of joy. The means of grace are sufficient for us to attain to this portion of Christ's inheritance both corporately and personally.

How assurance of salvation is primarily to be gained

Assurance of salvation is included in the gospel invitation of Christ: 'Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest' (Matt 11:28-30). This is a person to person transaction. We must never forget it is the Lord Jesus who primarily assures of salvation. He is the one who died for sinners, invites sinners and assures sinners who repent and turn to him. To him we must go. Christ, by the Holy Spirit, seals salvation to the soul. The promise of assurance, because it is included in the gospel invitation is part of the gospel to be preached. Perhaps one reason why some have a struggle with assurance is because it was not clearly presented to them when the gospel was preached to them. They did not seek it as part of a free salvation.

¹ Donald MacLeod, *Banner of Truth Magazine*, Number 123, p.17

² Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962, p.267

³ Donald MacLeod. *ibid.* pp. 17,18

⁴ Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth. A Treatise on Christian Assurance*, Banner of Truth paperback edition, 1961, p. 5

John Doggett 1917 – 2006



During the first half of the twentieth century almost the only identifiable group of churches in England professing and preaching the doctrines of grace were the Strict Baptists. Sadly most of these had succumbed to Hyper-Calvinism and were inward looking and in such serious decline that they would have been unrecognisable by the Calvinistic Baptist pioneers of the seventeenth century and indeed by many of those who kept the faith in later generations. Under God a number of factors began to bring about a change. John Doggett who entered the eternal glory on 7 May 2006 at the age of 89 was one whose life and witness played

an important part in this recovery. John was a man of many talents whose Christian service touched the lives of a wide circle. He helped to bring about a new Reformed Baptist constituency which would provide many readers of *Reformation Today*.

Early Life and Conversion

John was born in March 1917 into a Christian home that honoured the Calvinism fast disappearing in early twentieth-century England. In his early childhood the family was attending Grove Chapel, Camberwell, but they soon moved to Tamworth Road Chapel, Croydon, where a growing congregation was being drawn to the ministry of George Rose who was to have a profound impact upon John. He preached the experimental Calvinism beloved by the *Gospel Standard* churches amongst whom he ministered, but resisted a growing exclusiveness in that group. George Rose, previously a Black Country foundry worker, had been influenced by two Anglican Calvinists, James Ormiston of Old Hill, Staffordshire and later by Thomas Davis, vicar of St John's, Harborne.

John's conversion was a gradual experience in his teenage years, and George Rose's ministry played a part. John recalled with gratitude his sermons from John's Gospel with warm exhortations to his hearers to make their calling and election sure. He was a good pastor and John as a seeker was helped by walks with him across the common. He declared, 'George Rose was particularly good at dealing with the doubts one had.' During his adolescent years John made a point of reading *Pilgrim's Progress* every year and to the end of his days remained a lover of Bunyan.

On leaving school John Doggett, drawn to the legal profession, read for the Bar as a member of the Middle Temple, one of the historic Inns of Court in the City of London. As he passed his final examinations in the summer of 1939 war was threatening. Like so many of his peers, some of whom never returned from the conflict, John was enlisted in the army and in 1941 was called to the Bar while away on duty.

Before his army service and while working in the Estate Duty Office of the Inland Revenue, John met Margaret Bond, also a member of the legal profession and the daughter of a Congregational minister. They married in 1942 and were to be blessed with some sixty years of married life with two sons and two daughters, all of whom were to become believers. In the early years of marriage they attended an Evangelical Congregational chapel in Essex not far from the house in which he ended his days.

In 1943 John, now commissioned in the Signals, was sent to Italy. In a tough campaign with considerable loss of life John was mentioned in despatches, but came through without injury. By the end of the War he was a major legal adviser to the Commander in Chief in Austria. Even more significant were his Christian contacts. Major Arthur Holcombe from Uckfield and John started a Christian newsletter which was distributed through army channels throughout the Italian and Central Mediterranean theatres. John had taken his Greek New Testament with him and the letters were used for biblical exposition as well as for news. A few of these letters were published in England in the *Christians' Pathway* magazine before his return. Friendships between Christians on active service reached across denominational divisions. Before demobilisation a number of these men met and John as a senior officer addressed them: 'We've been together here, and now we are going home. I shall be serving the Lord in my Strict Baptist regiment. I know some of you belong to other regiments, but the vital thing is that you don't lose sight of the unity of the Spirit the Lord has been pleased to give us here.' John ended his war service with the conviction that his life had been spared to serve the Lord, not necessarily as a preacher but wherever the providence of God summoned.

Christian Writing

As he settled back into civilian life John was an obvious recruit for various Christian societies. These included the Aged Pilgrims, Friend Society of which his father had been a committee member in the 1920s. John was to serve on that committee from 1947 until 2002. In these years the family was living in St Albans and attending Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel where in 1950 John was baptised by Pastor Stanley Delves of Crowborough, whose ministry he greatly esteemed. Shortly after this the St Albans church recognised John's preaching gifts and he began to serve the churches.

In 1951 he was invited to join the committee of the Strict Baptist Society, a charity often called to help churches in trustee matters. This society published a quarterly newsletter, the *Free Grace Record*. There was suddenly a need for a new editor and John who had edited the Christian soldiers' newsletter in Italy was clearly the man for the task. He began to edit the magazine in January 1955 continuing until June 1970, transforming it into a Baptist Quarterly of some spiritual standing. In the 1950s the churches amongst which John ministered were struggling to come to terms with the challenges of their times. John valued the experimental Calvinism in which he had grown up, but with his growing sense of history and increased understanding of the doctrines of grace he was coming to see that there were differences between the doctrine

and ethos of the mid-twentieth century churches and that of the Calvinistic Baptist pioneers. Without losing what was of value in the teaching of his earlier years he was growing in his appreciation of the older Calvinism. His own theological development was taking place against a background of the recovery of Reformed theology in Britain.

At Westminster Chapel in London Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones was rebuilding a congregation after the trauma of the Second World War. The Doctor drew attention to the riches of an older theology: he forcefully reminded English Evangelicals that Evangelicalism had a history which was older than the Moody and Sankey campaigns of the 1880s. Through the influence of Dr Lloyd-Jones Calvin's *Institutes* were republished by James Clarke and Company. They also reprinted Martin Luther on the *Galatians* and Ryle's *Holiness*. These were all books that appeared on John Doggett's bookshelves. He also inherited a rare set of Ivimey's *History of the English Baptists* which enlarged his understanding of the riches of the old Particular Baptist tradition. On a preaching visit to Oxford he met Iain Murray some months before the appearance of the first *Banner of Truth* magazine. When the *Banner* appeared John gave it a warm welcome as he did the later book publishing programme.

Already John was challenging the thinking of the readers of his own magazine with pleas for proper support of pastors and higher standards of ministry. He introduced new writers. A highly controversial but very important article entitled 'Keswick and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification' by James Packer had appeared in the *Evangelical Quarterly*. That issue of the *Evangelical Quarterly* was soon out of print, but John obtained permission to reprint it in the *Free Grace Record*. As this became known the back numbers of the relevant issues of the *Free Grace Record* soon sold out. Lewis Lupton's scintillating work on the Geneva Bible first appeared in the *Free Grace Record*. Herbert Carson contributed a series on I Peter. Paul Helm was an early contributor as well as other writers not so well known. John was prepared to take risks and at times there was controversy, but thoughtful letters were welcomed and published.

A lengthy correspondence in the magazine led to a quotation from the *1689 Confession of Faith* by the editor. It became apparent that very few were aware of this Confession and requests for its republication were received. It had been reissued by C H Spurgeon in 1855 and John had inherited a copy which had once belonged to Charles Hemington of Devizes. With the support of Leslie Mills of Haslemere and Tom Haddow, John undertook its republication as a private venture in 1959. John himself did the editing and wrote the

foreword, stating that he and his colleagues were ‘convinced that it has a message for this generation and that its republication was long overdue’. His words were truer than perhaps he perceived. It was to have an international significance. For instance it led to the edition in contemporary English by S M Houghton and published by Carey Publications under the title *A Faith to Confess* distributed by Evangelical Press. This has proved to be very popular and has been through many editions and continues to be the most popular presentation of the Confession. The 1689 Confession has subsequently been translated into several other languages. In England it helped to draw Calvinistic Baptists into the wider and deeper recovery of Calvinism that was taking place at that time.

By 1970 it was clear that some of the Strict Baptist magazines were struggling. *The Gospel Herald* which had begun life in 1833 as a vigorous theological journal albeit Hyper-Calvinist had now become largely a devotional magazine with a falling circulation. Another magazine, *The Christians Pathway*, dating from the late nineteenth century was also having problems. On the other hand *The Free Grace Record* had increased its circulation and was being read outside traditional Strict Baptist circles. *The Gospel Herald* and the *Free Grace Record* were both the property of charitable trusts, whereas the *Christians’ Pathway* was privately owned. Discussions took place between the persons responsible and it was agreed that the *Free Grace Record* and the *Gospel Herald* should merge under the title *Grace*, while the *Christians’ Pathway* would cease publication, but would be succeeded by a new journal, *Reformation Today*, under the editorship of Erroll Hulse. Whereas the *Free Grace Record* had been a trail blazer for historic confessional Christianity, *Grace* was more of a house magazine for the churches that had established it and were represented on its board. John Doggett would however never allow it to become inward looking. *Reformation Today* took up the role of promoting the Reformed Baptist cause internationally. John maintained high standards of editorship leading a team of capable men. Other influences were abroad in the 1980s and by 1983 John was convinced that it was time to relinquish the editorship. By that time he had served as an editor for almost thirty years and new men were needed for the work.

John judged himself very rigorously and recently in conversation described his efforts as very limited, contrasting the production of earlier days with the more recent standards of presentation. There can however be no doubt that his leadership had been of the highest quality and the impact on many younger men had been lasting and is remembered with gratitude. Some of his editorials are worthy of consideration today.

Other Activities

John Doggett's literary activity was maintained amidst a very demanding secular calling in the Government Legal Service, for which his work was recognised by the award of the C.B.E. in 1977. He continued to serve in this area until retirement in 1981.

The needs of the wider cause of Christ were always with him. From 1977 until 1991 he was chairman of the committee of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society, which was renamed Pilgrim Homes. This required wise and active leadership at a time of great change in provision of care for the elderly. John and his colleagues had to face these demands and at the same time promote an expansion of the work to meet growing needs.

Yet another work close to John Doggett's heart was the Evangelical Library, the greatest treasure house of Reformed and Evangelical literature in London. He joined the committee in 1959 then under the leadership of Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Geoffrey Williams; he shared the vision of these men. He was called to chair the committee from the death of Dr Lloyd-Jones in 1981 until 1994, remaining a member to support his successors until 2002. These were not easy years for the Library, but John was able to secure able men to serve on the committee and under the blessing of God the work continued. More recent developments undoubtedly rest upon the hard work done earlier by John Doggett and those associated with him.

In retirement John and Margaret lived in rural Essex and for a number of years supported the work at Langley Baptist Church several miles away. More recently they worshipped at their local parish church where they delighted in a Reformed ministry. Last August Margaret was called home quite suddenly after over 62 years of marriage. John enjoyed good health until quite near the end which he seemed to realise was near. In a conversation some six weeks before his death he bore testimony to the glory of the doctrines of grace, adding that he wanted a religion which spoke to the heart as well as to the head. His funeral at Ugley Parish Church drew many friends, some of whom had known him for many years, people who loved him for the truth's sake and honoured his memory. We could thank God for a man whose high standards of Christian service had been an example to us all, but who knew himself to be utterly dependent upon the grace of God.

Robert Oliver

Brazil

A report from Andrew King

May 2006 recorded the worst ever violence in São Paulo. While Britain mourned the death of one police officer, São Paulo lost 23 in a night. We find the sense of shock and pain over the death of the one officer extremely moving, against the backdrop here. Everyone knows her name! Everyone feels violated! There is a sense of outrage that our protectors should be attacked. In a country where big cities can lose a policeman or two every day even at normal times, there is no such feeling.

In some ways the statistics of the worst days are not the most striking part. What got to me were two headlines after the worst was over SÃO PAULO PASSES A QUIET NIGHT. What followed described the night: only five buses burnt out, and 9 dead in shoot-outs with the police. Such is a quiet night.

Another headline reads POLICE KILL MORE IN TWO DAYS THAN NORMALLY IN TWO MONTHS.

Here it is normal for bandits to kill police and for police to kill bandits. To make headlines even in Brazil there has to be a reasonable number of each. What was so alarming was that, as the number of police deaths plummeted in this burst of violence, so the number of 'bandit' deaths soared. What we were seeing was not self-defence - it was the settling of scores. The next news may well be a wave of deaths in the prisons, as the leaders of the



Andrew and Cora King

rebellions are systematically taken out; that has certainly happened in the past.

And the worst thing is that many members of the public welcome all this. I commented on this aspect of the situation in our travel agency on Wednesday, and a number gave the reply, 'But these are lives that we are better off without.'

I happen to be in favour of capital punishment. But a policy of 'shoot to kill' - and actually, 'hunt to shoot to kill', on the part of the police is murder. This is the absolute absence of any kind of concept of 'the rule of law'. This is to perpetuate a situation in which the police are simply bandits in uniform. This is to lose sight of all human values; that is, this is to

disconnect finally from any sense of God's image in my fellow man (Ps 13:1).

Although this problem was a special one, localised (by and large) in São Paulo, the safety situation is certainly getting worse in all parts of the country.

We sometimes wonder aloud, how can there be so little impact at a social level in a country where the evangelical Church already includes 20% of the population and is still growing? There is something very seriously wrong with this church growth. There is something very seriously wrong with the Church.

A church which provides comfort but no challenge, which is all glory and no cross, which is all party and no mourning, which is all heart but carefully avoids the head and never troubles the conscience, which is man-centred and not God-centred, which plays fast and loose with the Scriptures and has no sense of awe and of 'Thus says the Lord' in the pulpit - such a church has no capacity to change society. The grizzly end point of such an 'evangelical revival' may be a Ruanda, where Evangelical Christian Hutus and Evangelical Christian Tutsis hacked each other to death in the 90s.

Israel

A report from Bob Davey

In a recent three week visit to Israel, April/May 2006 I was privileged to preach at Grace and Truth Congregations at Ashkelon and Rishon Le Tsion and my wife and I visited ten congregations and fellowships across Israel. We enjoyed in-depth fellowship and prayer with pastors and believers.

In 1963 there were somewhere between 200 and 300 Jewish Christians living in Israel. Today, there are about 150 congregations or fellowships dotted around the country and around 7000 Jewish Christians, about 40 percent of whom have a background from the former USSR. The Arab Christians are doctrinally and organisationally stronger but live under pressure from all sides. Hilary and I were privileged to fellowship with a retired Arab pastor who was converted while a young lad during a revival in his village in Galilee in 1942. About fifty were deeply convicted of sin and converted, leading to the founding of the Baptist church in the village. He experienced the same blessing under his own ministry in 1972 and longs to see another like it before he dies. That church today, having become Pentecostal, is vibrant but doctrinally weak.

The Christian scene in Israel is a microcosm of Christianity in the rest of the world, the beams of which have been focused through a lens into a small place. Amid this confusion there are grounds for encouragement. There are about ten indigenous congregations or fellowships known to me where there is room for optimism with regard to primacy of Scripture and where that prevails there is scope for reformation in church life and practical evangelism. Pastors testified that person to person witnessing is bearing fruit in conversions. Persecution is sporadic and local but fierce and implacable when met with. Many victories have been won through prayer and dependence on the grace of God. We who believe in a spiritual conversion of Jews (Romans 11) should pray fervently for the removal of judicial hardening to be removal from the land of Israel.

Christian young people of both sexes have to face three years' compulsory service in the Defence Force, thus mixing with a wide range of their contemporaries. The most encouraging sign was the testimony of experienced leaders in all parts of Israel that person to person witnessing for Christ is possible.

I got into conversation with a young Israeli man who had just completed his army training. Our mutual love and knowledge of the biblical archeological sites led on to an hour's witnessing. He was a Zionist. I guessed correctly that he would believe Christianity to be a Gentile religion. So when I mentioned I was a worshipper of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the New Testament was nearly all written by Jews, he was dumbfounded. The real question, I suggested, was whether Messiah had come or was yet to come. I then moved straight into Old Testament prophecy, and preached personal sin and the remedy of sin from Psalm 51 and Isaiah 53. I used Psalm 22 to highlight the crucifixion. He was deeply moved and gladly received a photocopy I had of 92 predictive prophecies fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah. Two days later I was able to hand him a Hebrew New Testament. He was glad to see me and very glad of the gift. Let us pray for the Lord to grant this friend salvation.

Two dozen books taken with us have been strategically placed. Every little bit helps.

Druse: an unreached people - a report from Baruch Maoz

It all began with the witness of an Arab Christian who brought his Druse friend in contact with members of the Peniel fellowship of Tiberias. A Druse man was

converted, and began to witness to those closest to him. His wife was saved, other family members were saved, and pretty soon it became evident that God was working amongst this hitherto unreached people group.

The Druse religion is autonomous in Israel. Out of the one million Druse community scattered throughout Europe, the Middle East, North and South America, approximately 106,000 live in 22 villages located predominately in Israel's northern region and on the Golan Heights. Although the Druse culture as well as the language is Arabic, the Druse stood up against the wave of Arab nationalism in 1948. Since then they have served in the Israeli army and the border police.

The new Druse believers, now numbering close to 50 adults and children in 13 households, are under the care of the Peniel congregation in Tiberias. The pastor writes that persecution has continued on and off all the time. Only four of the households are pinpointed by the Druse community. Molotov cocktails and small explosives have been thrown at property, and rejection from family and the wider Druse community has become a daily experience. Children have been bitten in school or on the way home, resulting four times with broken bones - one young boy broke his arm when he was pushed by a gang of peers who cursed him for being a Christian.

Brother P. has five children. His father in law is a burly man who once served as an officer in the security forces. He carries a gun and had promised his daughter that he will shoot her if he hears that she is involved in any way with the 'Christians'. This is not an idle threat: in the last three decades there have been dozens of

murders related to 'family honour' committed in that same village. After tiring of himself being constantly present to monitor his daughter and her family, the father sent her brother in his stead. This young man also finally came to faith. When his father learned of his son's new faith, he and the entire clan erupted in rage, becoming violent and threatening to take the woman and her children away from her husband.

On 15 February a few of the sheiks and clan leaders issued an ultimatum to the four families known to be believers: give up their new religion or face the consequences. The church spirited the families out of the village to a retreat centre. Before long, however, all four of the families chose to return to their homes in the village, believing this was God's direction to them.

Brother N. told the pastor that one night as a crowd of people approached his home, he and his family turned out all the lights and hid in a back room, praying. The crowd banged angrily on the door, but they kept praying quietly. Then the banging stopped. All was quiet. Cautiously, Brother N. peeked out of his window and saw something strange: downstairs, the crowd had stopped one metre from the front door. One man was pushing another towards the house, but no one in the front line was willing to go forward. The fear of the Lord stopped them! This kind of experience is crucial for the Druse believers at this time. In the midst of their very real danger they are experiencing God's faithfulness. They are learning that it is to him they must turn for help, not to men.

Last month one of the families visited the pastor of Peniel congregation, bringing a young couple with them. The husband

had been saved some time ago. During the visit his wife was saved also. So even in the midst of this great turmoil, God brings his children to himself.

The pastor of Peniel suggests that much wisdom is needed in drawing the fine line between loving these babes in Christ and helping them without creating undue dependence. The Druse believers are going through a baptism of fire, often before they have been baptised in water. The challenge is to show them compassion and loving care as they suffer, but to know how to correct them when they fail in the flesh.

Pray that these new believers will discern God's will for them and make wise choices. For them to leave the village would mean leaving behind their homes and familiar culture, and facing the difficulties of adapting to life in a strange and lonely place. The Druse culture is very tight and closed to outsiders. Some of the women have hardly left the village before.

On the other hand, life in the village is extremely dangerous and tense. They need to know from God if that is really what he is calling them to do. Please pray with them and for them to know God's perfect will in this situation, and for us as we offer our support in a wise manner.

Nepal

Challenges in the Himalayan Foothills

The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal is at the crossroads. When I wrote the first draft of this article hundreds of thousands of protestors had encircled the capital city of Kathmandu, defying a ban on all gatherings of more than four people. If you have been following the news you

will now know that these pro-democracy protests successfully forced the king to recall parliament.

King Gyanendra, who acceded to the throne after the bizarre regicide of his brother by the then Crown Prince in 2001, has never been a popular monarch. Then, in an attempt to put an end to the decade-long Maoist insurgency that was crippling the nation, the king took direct control of the government in February 2005. Royal tyranny has now led to the vast majority of the population pressing for an end to the monarchy, a call unthinkable even a few years ago.

If the fragmented political parties can agree on anything they must concentrate on formal talks with the Maoists and the formation of a new constituent assembly. The latter makes the king nervous as a new constitution may find no place for a monarch. A new constitution may also be secular rather than 'Hindu'. This is something the Christian community are pushing for. Personally I don't think the 'Hindu' designation of the country has made life particularly difficult for Christians so I am sceptical of the hoped-for benefits of its removal.

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, with an average per capita income of US\$260 per year. Most of the country is accessible only by foot over steep mountainous terrain. Mount Everest lies on the border with Tibet in the north.

In spite of the harsh political and economic environment, there have been great encouragements in the work of the gospel. Over the past couple of decades especially many thousands of Nepalis have put their trust in Christ. Churches have sprung up in towns and villages across the country.

There are a number of challenges confronting the Nepali churches. Some have been present from the early days while others have become significant only in recent years. A widespread lack of understanding of the basic truths of the gospel prevails. When asked how one becomes a follower of Christ a church member is likely to repeat a list of rules that need to be followed. This is understandable considering the background of these men and women who have grown up in a society that places a high value on fulfilling the customs that have been handed down over time immemorial. So many professing disciples of Christ articulate a view of salvation that is dependent on one's religious works. Clearly believers need to be taught the fundamentals of God's grace in saving sinners.

Another challenge is the need to adequately critique traditional culture. The usual approach is to denigrate everything that seems to be remotely connected with traditional religion. But this results in unnecessary offence to unbelieving relatives and neighbours and often in a separation from them. Not all those who tell stories of persecution are innocent of having provoked such a reaction by insensitive withdrawal from family gatherings. So the need for pastors and missionaries to go beyond a superficial understanding of the various traditional cultures of the country is enormous. Only with a deeper grasp of the meanings of such customs will they be able to see how the principles that emerge out of Bible study apply to thorny problems such as participation in the weddings and funerals of relatives.

Glowing reports of the number of Evangelicals in Nepal need to be treated with a great deal of caution. Sadly, some

denominations inflate the number of members and churches that are in affiliation with them. Some churches may be counted several times in surveys because a number of denominations count them as their own.

Another phenomenon that may be hidden by statistics is that gospel progress has so far by-passed a number of communities. Among the perhaps one million Muslims of Nepal, for instance, there must be fewer than a handful of Christ-followers. The Hindu Maithili community that comprises 20 million individuals (with most living over the border in India) still has a church that totals less than 0.01% of the group. Among the Newar people of the Kathmandu Valley, among whom we worked, the gospel has made an impact in some caste groups but entirely missed out others. These hidden statistics demonstrate the ongoing need for pioneering evangelism and church planting in this country. Any outside missionary influence will not take the form of traditional missionary work as political and religious sensitivities will not allow it. Men and women with a vision for the lost, a willingness to endure hardship and a commitment to make a lasting impact have to acquire visas as professionals and students, business people and teachers.

Bible translation is making steady progress. Many years of careful language learning and painstaking translation and checking have resulted in recent years in a number of new translations in the minority tongues of the nation. Hard work is also necessary to market these Bibles—a daunting task in a country that does not have much of a book-reading tradition and where access to many areas is very difficult.

Literature is a key need. There have been over a hundred English titles translated into Nepali. But the choice of book for translation has been dictated overwhelmingly by wealthy foreigner organisations that have little knowledge of the country and its needs. Consequently the books are mostly hopelessly inappropriate as well as often being doctrinally dubious.

Some Nepali pastors have managed to write and publish titles of their own, something we must rejoice in as it is usually only when locals write that such books will really connect with local life. But here again there is sometimes a problem as these foreign seminary-trained leaders tend to ape the form and content of foreign books rather than attempting a more substantial reflection on Nepal's own situation in the light of the Bible.

We have recently published the Sri Khrist Gita (Song of the Lord Christ) in two of Nepal's languages. It is a compilation of scriptures laid out in a poetic form that is immediately appealing to religious Hindus. Sadly I received an email the other day telling me that the man who I was working with on this project has had a major moral fall. It will be hard to find the right partner to continue to work on such projects

One of our publications was the magazine *Voice of Bhakti*, a Christ-focused journal that had a Nepal-wide distribution. This can be accessed on the Internet, at www.bhaktivani.com and is worth a look at if only for the photo albums we have posted there!

Mark Pickett

Public Reading of Scripture

Derek Bigg

Public Bible reading and preaching

‘You do not convey the meaning of the words *Jesus wept* if your voice makes it sound as though he did not care.’

This sentence is taken from a book entitled *Christ-centered Preaching*. It was written by Bryan Chapell, an experienced American pastor. His concern at this point in the book is to underline the importance of the public reading of God’s Word as a preparation for preaching. Here is the key statement, which expresses with profound simplicity his understanding of the relationship between the two: ‘The first exposition of the text is the reading of Scripture.’

The point he is making here is that the preacher communicates meaning through the way he reads. Style and body language - even how the reader holds his Bible - cannot be ignored because they embody a message of their own. If the message is ‘What I’m reading doesn’t really grip me,’ it will undermine the message of the text itself. Hence Bryan Chapell’s incisive exhortation: ‘Read the text with the belief that every word carries the power that comes from the mouth of God.’

Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to insist on the primacy of preaching. If we are convinced that the Word of God is like fire and a hammer, living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword (Jer 23:29, Heb 4:12), we could make an equally strong case for the primacy of public Bible reading.

The truth is, of course, that reading and exposition go hand in hand. They are mutually reinforcing aspects of one and the same task. This close connection may have been in Paul’s mind when he urged Timothy to devote himself to reading, exhortation and teaching (1 Tim 4:13) - assuming that ‘reading’ in the Greek text means the public reading of Scripture. This is certainly supported by the context and by similar usage elsewhere.

The effects of public reading

To be an evangelical Christian is, almost by definition, to be firmly committed to the centrality of preaching and teaching. But what about our commitment to the public reading of Scripture? How much importance do we attach to it? Are we ever guilty of treating it too casually or reading God's Word in a perfunctory manner? To read it as carefully, thoughtfully and compellingly as we can helps to maintain its cutting edge.

What happens if the Scripture reading is dull and lifeless? It will not challenge and inspire Christians as it should. And if non-Christians are present when the Bible is read in this fashion, they may well say to themselves, 'It's what I always thought. The Bible is boring and irrelevant.' Are we not failing if our reading gives rise to that kind of reaction?

Our lives ought to demonstrate that we take seriously the two greatest commandments: to love God with all our being and love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt 22:34-40). One way to obey these commandments is through heartfelt dedication to high standards of public Bible reading. If we love God, we will read his Word with enthusiasm. If we love our neighbour, we will endeavour to read it so sensitively and memorably that we foster in our listeners' lives its work of teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).

Some practical guidelines

No doubt opinions will vary as to what makes a good reader. But there are certain factors which, if consistently applied, will help all readers of Scripture to achieve God-honouring results. To some extent these factors are plain common sense. They may even be old hat to those with long experience. Nevertheless it is worth restating them by way of reminder and also as a fresh incentive to serve our Lord to the very best of our ability.

Posture

Stand up straight and let the congregation see your face (not the top of your head). This may mean holding the Bible in your hand rather than leaving it on the lectern. Make frequent eye contact with those who are not following the text in their own Bible. This will keep you in touch with your listeners

and signify through appropriate body language that God's Word is for them. For best voice projection, read as if you are addressing those in the back row.

Pace

Read at a moderate pace so that people can absorb what they are hearing. This basic maxim does not rule out changes of pace where the nature of the text itself changes. It is usually helpful to slow down when a passage reaches a climax or introduces thoughts requiring reflection. Pause now and again, especially after a weighty statement, command or question.

Phrasing

Allow the reading to flow naturally by observing punctuation and sentence structure, and by making breaks in the right places. The flow will be disturbed if the reader takes a breath in the middle of a phrase or sentence instead of at the end. Extra care needs to be taken with long sentences so that the message being conveyed comes across as a coherent unit of thought and not a series of disjointed phrases.

Intonation

Give the passage light and shade by varying the pitch of the voice and, where appropriate, speaking more loudly or more softly. The reader should normally drop the voice at the end of a statement and lift it at the end of a question.

Emphasis

Look out for phrases and individual words that ought to be emphasised in order to bring the passage to life and communicate the true sense. Emphasis is needed most frequently with adjectives, adverbs and personal pronouns, and also with phrases describing a contrast or something unexpected.

Atmosphere

Try to convey the mood of the passage by expressing feelings of joy, sorrow, wonder, anger, relief, incredulity, triumph, despair, hope,

depression or whatever suits the words you are reading. Over-dramatisation will draw attention to the reader rather than to the text. But if the right atmosphere is generated, it will enable people to enter into the situation being portrayed as if they were there themselves.

Choosing the right people

Choosing people for public Bible reading can all too easily become a random and haphazard affair. But this aspect of church life needs as much thought and planning as any other. If the reading of God's Word is to be purposeful and effective, we must surely find and use the best people available. Here is one useful tip from Bryan Chapell's book: 'If you can read Scripture naturally and expressively enough to hold the interest of a child, you are well prepared to read meaningfully to a congregation.'

Many years' observation seems to suggest that most ministers of the gospel are able to read well in public - albeit not always as well as they could. It is also frequently true that other members of the congregation possess the same ability, possibly in greater measure than the minister. So who should be asked to undertake the public reading of Scripture? Does the Bible itself provide the answer to this question?

Using spiritual gifts

There are two passages which point us in the right direction - Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. They are both concerned with spiritual gifts. One other passage containing a somewhat different treatment of this theme (1 Cor 12:4-11) can be left aside since the specific gifts listed by Paul in verses 8-10 are shown through diligent study of the letter as a whole to be peculiar to that particular church.

By contrast, the apostle draws attention in Romans 12:3-8 to several gifts which we can expect to find in any church, though not necessarily all of them in every congregation. Paul's list here is most naturally taken as illustrative rather than exhaustive. He simply runs through some of the commonest gifts representing the two basic categories, described by Peter as 'speaking' gifts and 'serving' gifts (1 Peter 4:11).

If Paul in Romans 12 can treat as spiritual gifts such practical matters as serving, encouraging, generous giving, leadership and showing mercy, it is not fanciful to think of Scripture reading in the same way. Peter lends weight to this conclusion when he writes that each person should use 'whatever gift he has received to serve others' (1 Peter 4:10), thereby opening the door to a wide range of applications.

Working with the grain

If such an approach is correct, it leads to a couple of further questions. First, does the emphasis on spiritual gifts mean that training is irrelevant? Two answers can be given. On the one hand, people endowed with the necessary gift will almost invariably benefit from instruction designed to enhance and polish their skills because we will be working with the grain. On the other hand, we will be working against the grain if we endeavour to train those without the gift. Any progress will be limited and short-lived, resulting in disappointment and frustration. The reason for this inevitable outcome is that, as human beings, we all have an irresistible tendency to revert to type. More importantly, God has made each one of us with certain traits and aptitudes. If we work against these features of our humanity, we are in effect working against our Creator.

In working with the grain we acknowledge that most spiritual gifts, like those in Romans 12, are in reality natural capabilities assigned by God's grace (Rom 12:6, 1 Peter 4:10) and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We need to concentrate on those individuals who have received from the Lord the talents required for public Bible reading. This brings us to the second question.

Discerning the gift

How do we discern the valuable but neglected gift of public Bible reading? We have almost certainly found the right candidates for this task if we see in them the following personal qualities and characteristics:

- Passion for God's Word and the capacity to communicate that passion through the reading of the biblical text.
- Willingness to spend adequate time preparing the reading.

- Ability to follow the practical guidelines set out above.
- Competence in reading smoothly without stumbling over the words.
- Absence of speech defects and distracting idiosyncrasies.
- Clear articulation and voice production, resulting in an ‘open’ sound which is easy on the ear.

Serving the whole congregation

This last characteristic is particularly important for those with any kind of hearing problem. A reader who, for whatever reason, suffers from poor voice production will not help such people. It is wise to choose readers who can be heard and understood easily by the least able in the congregation. Everybody will then benefit.

In similar vein, it is also extremely important to allow time for the slowest person to find the place in the Bible before the reading commences, so that nobody is still searching for the right page while trying to listen. Again, the aim is to ensure as far as possible that all derive maximum benefit from the reading.

It is our Christian duty to serve the whole congregation through public Bible reading. With this in mind, should church leaders, especially those in larger churches, form a team of readers who meet the criteria listed above? If so, let us not forget that some of our best readers are women. In many cases their experience with children has enabled them to develop a style which is well suited to congregational reading.

Is our chief desire in the public reading of Scripture to glorify God? Then perhaps we should from time to time review our performance in this light. When we have evidence that our reading of God’s Word is making an impact on our listeners, we will know that we have fulfilled our responsibility.

This article is available as a four-page leaflet (three copies for £1 or eight copies for £2, post free) from Derek Bigg, 41 Barnmead, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1UY.

Twining

Frederick Hodgson

Christians in the New Testament era were greatly comforted, encouraged and refreshed by those who crossed international borders. Indeed there was an expectation that mutual blessing would be received by inter-church interaction and unity. An outstanding example of this is seen from the first chapter of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. The Lord's message rang out from Thessalonika so boldly in spite of persecution that the church at Thessalonika became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The foremost example of practical unity described in the book of Acts was the collection made among Gentile churches to assist predominantly Jewish churches in Judah suffering from famine.

Today the Church is global on a scale vastly more extensive than was the case in New Testament times. The constraint for unity is the same now as it was then. Our Lord prayed for the complete unity of his Church (John 17:20-23). This unity is defined in Ephesians 4:4-6. It forms a doctrinal basis on which churches can express practical co-operation and mutual assistance to churches across the world even though separated by thousands of miles.

In the secular realm most town councils in England have twinned their town with towns in other countries. A variety of benefits result. The word 'twining' has limitations but nevertheless is useful to convey the idea of sharing. Twining of churches seems to be on the increase. Evangelical churches in Western Europe show slow numerical growth and sometimes decline which is discouraging whereas in the developing world accounts are given of extraordinary numerical growth. In Western Europe there are huge evangelical and reformed literature resources flowing steadily from the publishing houses. The array of expository materials faithful to Scripture is greater than it has ever been. The developing world lacks these resources. The lack is acute. It is tragic that there are inadequate teaching resources available to build up the converts and strengthen new churches. Resources are lacking in terms of training pastors for the ministry. In addition many churches in the developing world are hampered by lack of buildings and office equipment. Another often glaring need is that of medical resources which we take for granted in the West.

Twining churches is one practical way to redress these disparities. There

are examples of teams of skilled workers from Western churches going out to developing churches for short-term service. This has proved highly beneficial.

Ian Lewis provides an example when he writes, 'Here at St. Bartholomew's, Bath, we have been developing close links with the Delhi Bible Institute and especially the family of its Director, Isaac Shaw. I've been out to the DBI on about 8 occasions through Project Timothy (with Rupert Bentley-Taylor). As a church we support the DBI financially each year with a percentage of our missionary giving, we fund the schooling of one of Isaac's children, and make personal gifts to the family as well. (We purchased a harp for one of the Shaw children and took it out to Delhi). We've had Isaac speak at our church weekend away and on a number of occasions in Bath, and have sent two teams to visit Delhi - a total of 20 people from St. Bart's have now visited the DBI. We've seen these as very much mutual support - we've learnt more about India and DBI to help us pray, and we know the folk there have been encouraged by our presence. At the suggestion of my church leaders, I'm visiting Delhi next week on a purely "pastoral visit" to the Shaw family. We are, obviously, committed to regular prayer for the work at DBI. We've found the link has broadened the sense of world vision within our

fellowship - we now have people who have been to Delhi having previously not been further than France, and who are now planning to visit other missionaries in Paraguay.'

The obvious lesson here is that many members of the congregation have been fired with an interest in international mission as a result of the close tie with Delhi Bible Institute. (Incidentally, multiple twinning is a possibility and has the potential of encouraging closer relations with churches in the same country as they engage in a common cause. The King's Church in Chessington has provided a Tape Library resource for the Delhi Bible Institute and stocked it with many tapes from the Proclamation Trust resource, where students and pastors can spend time at 'booths' listening to tapes and making notes etc.

Multiple twinning is a consideration for much smaller churches than Chessington. Groups of churches can act together with churches in other countries. Clive Anderson reports, 'Our church here in Alton has joined with the church at Horsell to support the church in Myanmar [Burma]; we have just raised a substantial amount to enable an orphanage to be constructed.'

Pastor Dereck Stone of Howick Community Church, Howick, South Africa, visited a group of pastors in Myanmar with the intention of giving

them teaching and encouragement. He wrote, 'Our church covered accommodation and other related expenses.' He and the pastors were greatly blessed. Dereck reported, 'It is impossible to put on paper the incredible way in which he blessed literally every moment of our time together! I have seldom experienced being carried along by the Spirit as I did in this mission. It is so clear that the Lord greatly blessed, built up, encouraged and equipped the pastors. It is important to stress that this visit was a church venture. Dereck said, 'I am so grateful to Robin and Mary Stephenson for setting up the 48 hour prayer time, plus all in our church who prayed all through that week - the Lord answered your prayers in the most amazing ways!' The point to note here is that the whole church was involved.

The way in which twinning can embrace many members of the churches involved is well illustrated by the experience of Robin Pearce of Sunrise Church, located in Rialto, California. He describes how a relationship with a church in Kazakhstan developed over a period of years:

Summer 2002: A team of 6 went to Saransk, Russia. This is in the state of Mordovia. We teamed up with summer interns from the Christian University from St. Petersburg. Two of the four interns were friends from Kustanay, Kazakhstan. They were

Dima Lebedev and Misha Ponomorenko. I was teamed up with Dima Lebedev. The first summer we did door to door ministry, a children's program, youth sports and crafts, Bible studies and outdoor concerts.

Summer 2003: I returned to Saransk to work with Dima and Misha. We continued the same type of ministry. I also began to support the young men and their ministry.

Summer 2004: I returned with my sons to work again with Dima and Misha in Saransk at a very poor village /district called Tetzva. The pastors had also made a Christian CD of contemporary Christian songs - they both are great musicians. Dima had finished at the university and the plan was to return to Kazakhstan and plant a contemporary Baptist church. When I returned home every summer, I reported back to the church. Also my support for the trips was from the church and the mission board has always generously helped financially with the trips by paying 1/3 of the costs. The church also began to support the pastors on a monthly basis when they returned to Kazakhstan. A great friendship and working relationship has developed with the pastors, myself and our church over the past 3 years. I was also weekly emailing the pastors. Pastor Jay (senior pastor of Sunrise) also gave me permission to email his sermons - they were also added to our weekly prayer meeting. The pastors

invited me and Sunrise to go to Kazakhstan the following summer and help with the church plant.

Spring 2005: I made the first trip to Kazakhstan in the spring to meet the people, plan the summer outreach and figure out the logistics.

Summer 2005: The Pearce family of 3, and two college age kids from Sunrise came as a team to Kazakhstan. One of the team members was our associate pastor's son. We not only did the same type of ministry. We also added a youth camp, a trip to the government-run kids' club. There is also a project of reconstructing a building purchased for youth club which meets after school in a small village about 70 kilometres away. The church plant had just begun - it was the beginnings of our new work. Again, I returned to Sunrise and they continued to support the pastors and the new KGB church plant. I also began to raise funds for the downpayment of a building for the church plant. Sunrise helped me by wiring the moneys to the church plant.

Spring 2006: I returned again. I had secured a loan and brought the money for the church plant building. Now, there were many new believers, the church had been registered with the local government and the pastors had got the blessings of the Baptist President of Kazakhstan

This summer the Missionary Board Leader, Jim Coyle, will travel with us to Kustanay, along with 4 others. We will continue the same type of work as last summer, but will mostly run the youth camp (American style). If a positive relationship continues, Sunrise may choose to take on the church plant as an official adoption. We are sending our official blessing this summer for the new church plant.

We communicate weekly. I share with them all the information from our church including new believers, and news of various church groups.

Robin, his own church and the church in Kazakhstan found this experience to be meaningful international Christian experience. The growth in commitment is noteworthy.

Reformation Today and the IFRB can assist by way of networking and encouraging sharing information so that links might be made and visits of pastors to countries abroad. *Reformation Today* has subscribers in over 40 different countries of the world. From time to time we receive requests for books from churches and Bible colleges that are starved of funds. We welcome enquiries for books and although our budget cannot support direct giving, we are very willing to do all we can to promote cooperation between churches having similar convictions to ourselves.

Book Reviews

Scripture Alone - The Evangelical Doctrine

R C Sproul

P and R Publishing 2005, 210 pp hardback

ISBN 13 978-1-59638-010-3

In 1973 R C Sproul, a foremost evangelical leader in America, invited a number of prominent evangelical scholars to present a series of papers on the subject of biblical inerrancy. This took place in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Subsequently a brief statement of faith on the subject of inerrancy was published. The need to strengthen this foundation led to further effort and in 1977 the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy was formed. An outcome of that was the publication in 1978 of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. Every issue germane to inerrancy is addressed in this fifteen page statement. Contained within it are nineteen articles of Affirmation and Denial. This vital document appears at the end of the volume.

The book is presented in two parts. Part one consists of four essays 1. *Sola Scriptura: Crucial to Evangelicalism*, 2. *The Establishment of Scripture*, 3. *The case for Inerrancy: A Methodological Analysis*, and 4. *The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit*.

In part one there are telling quotations from the Reformation creeds. The claim of Rome that the Scriptures and the Church are both infallible is refuted. J. I. Packer is helpfully cited 'What Luther thus voiced at Worms shows the essential motivation and concern, theological and

religious, of the entire Reformation movement: namely that the Word of God alone must rule, and no Christian man dare do other than allow it to enthrone itself in his conscience and heart' (p. 27).

The heretical teaching of Rudolf Bultmann is explained. G C Berkouwer is brought into the frame. He had his defects (he shrank from the notion of verbal inspiration - p. 64.). The position of Karl Barth is discussed (pp 83-84). Calvin's considerable contribution to the subject of the internal witness of Scripture (the *Testimonium*) is opened up. Neo-orthodox views of the *Testimonium* (Emil Brunner and Thomas F Torrance) are analysed (pp. 110-114). The New Testament basis for the *Testimonium* is discussed (p. 115).

Part two consists of R C Sproul's exposition of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy in which he comments on and explains each of the nineteen articles of affirmation and denial. An example is ARTICLE X: *The Autographs*.

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translation of Scriptures are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the

original. **We deny** that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant

This work, while it stretches the mind, is not just for scholars and pastors but for all Christians. The faith of every Christian rests on Scripture. If inerrancy is rejected 'grave consequences, both to the individual and to the church' ensue (p. 186).

I testify that at the commencement of my Christian life in the mid 1950s I read B B Warfield's *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. (442 pages, published by P and R, 1948 edition). I found Warfield's exposition of 'all Scripture is God-breathed' (2 Tim 3:16) compelling. For me the question of inerrancy was settled once and for all and has strengthened my faith ever since. This work by Sproul is a welcome addition. It not only covers all the principal issues but it is also a mini historical theology which portrays the battle lines from the time of Warfield to the present day.

Since Warfield, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner educated an entire generation of scholars. Evangelical seminaries have deviated from inerrancy. For instance in the early 1960s the well-known Fuller Theological Seminary abandoned commitment to inerrancy. But the Lord raises up leaders to defend the truth. R C Sproul is foremost among these.

Apart from battles that rage within Christianity we are reminded of the relevance of this subject by the challenge of Islam. Muslims believe that the Koran was dictated to Mohammed and is the unmediated word of God. Muslims put

their trust in that one man's experience and in the book given through him. Christians follow revelation given progressively over a period of about 1,400 years. This book, *Scripture Alone - The Evangelical Doctrine*, is about that revelation. Clearly written, well presented, with indices and references. I commend it highly.

The theme of Sproul's book is analogous to engineers checking the walls of a city and making sure that there is no flaw or weakness, no possibility of a breach being made. The theme of a similar book, *Nothing but the Truth - The inspiration, authority and history of the Bible explained*, by Brian Edwards, Evangelical Press, 512 pages, 2006, is analogous to an architectural overview of the city together with the walls which surround it. Edwards' book describes the forming of the Bible progressively. There is a chapter devoted to the history of the Bible's critics and one on how to deal with supposed contradictions. Principles of interpretation form a valuable section of this work. The chapter 'The Story of our English Bible' is superb. The author is helpful in explaining simply the issues involved in using different families of texts for translation. This new edition represents a major updating of previous editions. It carries this remarkable commendation by John Blanchard, 'If I could pass a law compelling every Christian to buy a copy I would do so immediately!' This reviewer concurs with that. If the reader is new to this foundational subject or is lacking in knowledge of it, then it would make sense to read Brian Edwards book first, in which 85 pages are devoted to Inspiration, Inerrancy and Sufficiency, set within the overall context of the Bible, and then follow up with the book by R C Sproul.

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