

# REFORMATION TODAY



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*Herbert Carson, featured above, is the minister of the Baptist Church at Bangor. He lectures at the Irish Baptist College and is a popular Conference speaker. This year Mr. Carson is due to preach in the U.S.A. at the Pinebrook Conference just organised by Reformed Baptists, and which was reported in the Autumn 1970 issue of Reformation Today, and also at The Pensacola Theological Institute in Pennsylvania this year. Readers in Sussex will be interested to know that Mr. Carson is due to speak at the Baptist Tabernacle, Montpelier Place, Brighton, 4.00 p.m. and 6.45 p.m. — 17th April. The first edition of Mr. Carson's book Farewell to Anglicanism (Henry E. Walter Ltd) is depleted and a second edition is under way. Near depletion is his booklet with the title Riots and Religion (Henry E. Walter Ltd), price 24p, including postage, available either from Reformation Today or local bookstores.*

*The photograph shown below reminds us of the troubles which continue to vex some parts of Belfast. In parts of the City one would hardly think there was unrest, whereas in other sections troops are constantly on the watch. Mr. Carson's booklet helps us to understand the situation and his application could well apply to other areas of the world.*



# Editorial

AS WE WEND OUR WAY INTO THE SEVENTIES WE DO WELL TO KEEP OUR aims clearly in view. Both the Cuckfield Church and the group of workers within it, who devote themselves to the production of this magazine, pray regularly for small churches in different parts of the world where fervent efforts are being made to build spiritual edifices based on the Reformed faith. We feel it a privilege that this magazine has been used to encourage some of these causes as well as to keep in touch with the growing family of Baptists who see the value and importance of the teaching of the Reformers. It is not possible to go through this world without being called names—Puritans, Lutherans, Methodists, and so on. We are called Reformed Baptists and are grateful that the description is accurate! We espouse the truths of grace proclaimed by our illustrious forefathers, who follow closest to the apostles. We hold to every word of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which follows the Westminster Confession in about 97 parts out of 100. This was Spurgeon's creed and we are not ashamed to devote ourselves to the propagation of those same truths, endeavouring to do so in a way relevant to our modern age. Every page of *Reformation Today* so far has been written by living authors. We love the old writers and seek to have as many Puritan volumes as we can lay our hands on. The like of Flavel, Owen, and Manton help us most in the exposition of Scripture. At the same time we see the ever-increasing need for a new era of Puritanism and the most energetic application of the old Gospel to our contemporary age. The God-centred, scriptural character of Reformed teaching when anointed by the Holy Spirit is the power of God to transform the world, not only saving sinners but building them up in every area of life. The truth of baptism reminds us of the nature of a Christian, and of the gathered church, a matter made more important in our ecumenical age, in which the vast majority ignore the commands of Christ and assume themselves to be Christians.

## Generous support

We thank God and our Saviour for the launching of the magazine during 1970 and for the generous support received from many subscribers. It has not been possible to write to all those who have contributed more than the subscription price when sending their postal order or cheque. We warmly thank you all for your support. Because of contributions received it has not been necessary to raise the price of the magazine, although it would seem that this will be inevitable at the beginning of next year due to inflation.

The cover sketch of Port Elizabeth viewed from the highway approach from the north will remind us to pray for the South African ministers who gather for the first Reformed and Evangelical Studies Conference from 5th-7th April.

## The Carey Conference

Details of the second Carey conference, which is to take place at Nottingham from 5th to 7th July, will be sent on request. The inclusive charge is £7.

In our search for material on children, we have been sent a paper given in 1952 by Edgar Wood, an architect pastor, dealing with the subject of child conversion. He made reference to "decisions": it is not difficult to get a child to make a decision for Christ but this can have harmful results. Repentance and faith should be the aim. This is one of the problems which is likely to be discussed at the Carey Conference, in which four papers are being devoted to the subject of children.

Booking fees (£1) are coming in and besides meeting new friends we look forward to a lively conference.

## Articles in this Issue

As promised, articles by Peter James, and Geoffrey Thomas are included in this issue. The interview style, as used for the article on Anglicanism, has the advantage of getting to the main points in a straightforward way. The deterioration of Anglicanism is no cause for complacency. Incipient declension (though of a different kind) has been going on among the Southern Baptists. Since the article was written the unhappy news has come from America that Dr. Criswell does not appear to be providing the unflinching leadership that is required. Our information is gleaned from *The Sword and the Trowel*,<sup>1</sup> October 1970 issue.

In the article by Geoff Thomas there is an extended quotation from the writings of Clark H. Pinnock who, it seems, has been raised up to be one of our most able defenders of the faith. Writing for the aforementioned *Sword and the Trowel* in its very first article he declared:

At this moment the Christian Church is facing the greatest crisis in all her history. It does not have to do with the international or domestic scene. It is a crisis of faith. Whereas, in times past, attacks have been made on this doctrine or that, now an assault has been launched on the foundation of doctrine as such. It is not this or that aspect of revelation which is being questioned, but revelation as such. Not the Virgin Birth or the Creation, but the very existence of divine truth.

The importance of these issues for us all should be obvious, as there is no reason to think that the battle for the authority of Scripture is diminishing. If we lose this battle, as Dr. Pinnock points out, we lose everything.

## Evangelistic Tracts

We have reproduced a tract on drug addiction by Gary North, who is a versatile young Presbyterian minister who trained at Westminster Seminary

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<sup>1</sup> This began to be published in America in January 1969 by Gerald C. Primm, on the occasion of the termination of Spurgeon's original magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*. In about eight pages published every month, Pastor Primm provides up-to-date information on the battle being waged among the Southern Baptists.

and who lectures in the history department of the University of California. In our view this tract is arresting, and a good example of what tracts ought to be like. We need to spread evangelical literature in every size, shape, and form as much as possible, but the effort will be in vain unless the material used is gripping. Tracts and booklets are often unsuitable either because they are wooden and too heavy or else because they are shallow.

### **The State of the Nation**

Without being too optimistic it would seem that there is a very slight turning in the tide as far as the moral state of Britain is concerned. There is a growing realization that we are too much influenced by the mass media, which lives on sensational reports. A small section of anarchist students receives a vastly disproportionate area of space.

The influence of the Beatles, who have been the rage for so long, is now on the wane as their partnership disintegrates. More and more it will be seen that to have honoured them with the M.B.E. was scandalous. They have had a perverse influence upon the life of the nation.

Industrial unrest continues unabated. Eleven million days lost in disputes made 1970 the worst year since the black period of the 1920's. One most disconcerting feature continues to be the lack of moral leadership. Long ago we despaired of ever finding this in the Established Church, in which any leader becomes so compromised on his way up the ecclesiastical ladder that the likelihood of forthright Gospel preaching diminishes to zero point. But there is also lack of leadership in the secular realm. Ronald Chamberlain, an ex member of Parliament who has worked in the Labour Party for 50 years, in a letter to *The Times*, January 16th, 1971, declared:

When I joined the party after the First World War there was real want and privation and social injustice in the land. The work of the Labour Party and the trade unions played a major part in eradicating these evils, so that the situation to-day is almost unbelievably different.

Yet the unions, backed by the Labour Party, which they largely finance, still see as their major justification and function the continual forcing up of wage rates, regardless of their less fortunate brothers and sisters and equally regardless of the public interest. Eloquent evidence of this is seen in the recent power workers' go-slow, when their union spokesman strongly objected to the inclusion of "the public interest" in the terms of reference of the inquiry; in the fact that industrial action against the Industrial Relations Bill has been encouraged or at the least condoned by many unions and by some Labour M.P.s; and in the tactics of powerful unions which are prepared to hold up the life of the community in order to force wage decisions in their favour.

In all these things the Labour leadership has been completely dumb and indeed has been so in all the great moral issues of recent years. And this at a time when real leadership has been desperately needed, by all sections of the community.

It would seem that there is a gradual increase in the churches of intercession for the nation and for moral leadership irrespective of the party

[Continued on p. 30.]

*In this article by Herbert Carson much ground is covered in a helpful and enlightening way.*

# Women in the Church

IN SPITE OF DOGGED MALE RESISTANCE THE SUFFRAGETTES IN ENGLAND WON their campaign to gain for women the right to vote. The agitation for the principle of "equal pay for equal work" has not had quite such a decisive victory but in many fields it is now accepted. The professions have opened their doors, and women are now prominent in professional, business and political life. To some it seems that the churches remain the last stronghold of male privilege, and the pulpit especially the final bastion of their old ascendancy. Hence the vigorous campaign waged admittedly by a small, but none the less very vocal minority, that women should be accorded in church life an equal status with men and that the ordained ministry should no longer be confined to one sex. Those who advocate this radical new departure would insist that they are not merely arguing from the situation in the world at large. It is not simply that they want to follow the prevailing pattern with its readiness to accept women for roles formerly filled by men. They claim rather to have biblical grounds for their contention, and in fact they would say that the present position tends to relegate women to a position of second class citizens in the kingdom of God, and is therefore essentially unbiblical. It is thus necessary that we should assess the whole position in the light of Scriptural principle.

It is, of course, quite clear that in the matter of salvation there is no difference at all between men and women. "There is neither male nor female" writes the Apostle "for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 28). Both begin on the same level as guilty sinners. They are alike justified by grace through faith in Christ. They are kept by the one Spirit, they share a like hope of glory in heaven where the fact of sex ceases altogether, for "they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven" (Mk. 12: 25). As far as redemption is concerned the difference between the sexes is irrelevant.

## **The Spiritual Role of Women**

It is also quite obvious in the New Testament that women play an important part and have an honoured place in the life of the church. At the threshold we meet Elizabeth and Mary both of them specially chosen by God for a vital task in the plan of salvation. In the Lord's earthly ministry there is on the one hand the group of women who ministered to

Him and were with Him right up to Calvary, and on the other there was the ready hospitality of Martha and Mary which clearly must have meant much to Him. On the day of Pentecost the women are united with the men in prayer and in the subsequent enjoyment of the visitation of the Spirit. Women are specifically mentioned in Samaria (Acts 8: 12) as having been baptized, and since baptism is the recognized mode of admission to the Lord's Table (Acts 2: 41-42) they clearly shared this privilege as well. Paul proved the value of the hospitality he received from Lydia, and from Priscilla who with her husband welcomed him into their home. He commends Phebe "a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea" (Rom. 16: 1) and Mary "who bestowed much labour on us" (Rom. 16: 6). He speaks with appreciation of "those women which laboured with me in the gospel" (Phil. 4: 3). He recalls the vital part played by Eunice and Lois (2 Tim. 1: 5) in the spiritual upbringing of Timothy. And yet in spite of all this, and more in the same vein, there are serious reservations which the church neglects at her peril.

Paul particularly has been misrepresented here as if he was only concerned to be negative, and to erect barriers against women participating fully in the life of the church. But nothing could be further from the truth. Paul, taught in this as in other matters by the Holy Spirit, is concerned that the life of the church should in every detail reflect the mind of God. Thus his instructions as to how worship should be conducted or elders appointed are intended to lead to an orderly church life which is not merely satisfying to the members, but more important, is acceptable to God. Thus when he deals with woman's place and function in church life he is simply applying in this particular realm the pattern which appears throughout Scripture and which we have already seen in the biblical teaching on woman's place in creation. That pattern was basically in terms of a family in which the man is the divinely appointed head of the home, and in which the woman responds to his love and care with ready submission. This order of things is written by God into our very constitution so that instinctively the average man—or woman for that matter—has little time for the woman who "wears the trousers" or for the weak "hen pecked" husband; the very expressions used suggest the reaction in their minds.

### **Veils and hats!**

These are the principles surely which lie behind the much discussed and often misunderstood, wearing of the veil in the church at Corinth. In Corinthian society the veil represented the natural and decent order by which the family life was ordered. A woman of the streets might discard her veil but a married woman careful for the decencies of life would not do so. The life of the church must not sink to a lower level than the life of the world. Were women in church to act in the brazen fashion of the women of loose morals outside who flaunted their charms with an easy unconcern? Paul repudiates the idea and anyone who values the biblical



understanding of woman's high place would surely likewise reject it. Paul indeed lifts it to a higher level with his mention of the angels. The suggestion may be that the unseen onlookers are present in worship. They are the ones who in Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3: 10 learn more of God's manifold wisdom as they view the life of the church. Are they then to see an assembly where the gospel apparently leads to a lower standard, or will they see in a gospel church the pattern of creation being enhanced rather than debased by reason of the modesty of the women members?

In applying the principle of I Cor. 11 to the situation to-day clearly we may have to modify the detail. For one thing a hat and a veil are not synonymous—in fact the modern microscopic fragments of feathers and net which sometimes pass for hats are as far removed as possible from the Corinthian veil! But even more important, the hat is no longer, as the veil was at Corinth, a mark of subjection; nor is the bare head a mark of insubordination or of doubtful morals! Wearing slacks in church might be a fairer analogy if we are applying the principle in our own situation!

### **What kind of silence in church?**

What then about the more serious question—is a woman to take part audibly in worship? The prohibition of Paul seems quite definite—"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (I Cor. 14: 34). Some have suggested that Paul is simply saying that women must not gossip during the service, nor must they interrupt to ask questions if they do not understand. In the Corinthian situation many of them with an illiterate background might well have needed to ask many questions! But this explanation, while it is partly true, does not seem to do justice to the reason Paul gives, that "they are commanded to be under obedience". Surely he is dealing with the same principle as before, namely the orderly pattern for the sexes laid down in creation. The woman is not to take such a prominent and vocal part in the worship that she usurps the position which God has given to the man namely that of authority.

Clearly however this prohibition must be qualified. The silence of the women does not preclude their taking part in the praise which is an essential part of corporate worship. Nor is their vocal contribution to be limited to singing for it seems clear that a woman may take part audibly in prayer. This may be seen from a consideration of two biblical references. In I Cor. 11 Paul is dealing with the wearing of the veil. Now obviously this wearing was only a point at issue in a mixed assembly. It would be absurd to imagine that Paul is saying that a woman at prayer in her own room must veil herself. Now what is condemned in this mixed assembly is praying or prophesying without a veil so that clearly praying was quite permissible, and Paul is simply controlling the attitude in which this prayer is offered—the brazen and self assertive women whom



he was censuring would in any case have been in no fit state to engage in prayer. Then again, and even more significantly in I Tim. 2:9 where Paul forbids the woman to teach he speaks of her praying. The phrase "in like manner" links verse 9 with the preceding verse which speaks of men at prayer. Again it is not private prayer which is envisaged but public for he is concerned with her manner of dress which is to be modest and appropriate for such an activity—she is not to aim to make an impression because she is wearing the latest fashion but is rather to be concerned with the beauty of holiness.

### **Women preachers?**

When we turn to the vexed question of women preaching the word in a mixed assembly of men and women the key passage is I Tim. 2:11-15 though in fact this simply amplifies and makes more explicit the command of I Cor. 14:34 that the women are to keep silence. Again the thought is of the divinely constituted order. The woman is not to take over the authority and headship which God has given to the man, and Paul maintains that preaching is essentially an exercise of authority. Obviously a woman can exercise a widespread teaching ministry among women and children—and they after all constitute the majority of the population so that there is abundant scope! The point here however is the ministering of the word to men and this Paul forbids.

We cannot minimise his prohibition by saying that it is some passing situation that is in view. We cannot even quote the analogy of the discussion on the veil with the conclusion that times have changed. On the contrary Paul roots his objection in facts which are the same in every generation. On the one side there is the fact of creation and on the other that of the fall. Adam was created first and then Eve—here is again the constant emphasis on the divine order in creation. An unwarranted intrusion into the teaching ministry rejects that order and so flouts God's ordinance. But in the fall that very thing was done. Eve instead of being the follower became the leader, with disastrous consequences for both.

Someone will object that we must not take I Tim. 2 out of the general context of Scripture but must consider other passages which seem to speak in different tones. We would reply that far from taking it out of context the interpretation which takes it at its face value does justice to the widest possible context of biblical teaching. But the objector may press the case further and quote the fact that women both in the old and new Testaments exercised a prophetic ministry. Are we to ignore Deborah and Huldah, or the daughters of Philip, or indeed the women in Corinth whom Paul was anxious to see veiled when they were engaged in such prophetic activity, and whose exercise of the prophetic gift is therefore validated by him?

By way of reply it is important to emphasise the special character of

prophecy. The prophet in the Bible is one who comes with a direct word from God. His message has been directly revealed to him so that he is the oracle or mouthpiece of the Lord. There is a clear distinction between such immediate inspiration and the teaching ministry of one who, while called by God and authorised by the church, has the task of explaining and expounding and applying the Scriptures which have already been given. We talk about prophetic preaching but of course we are using the term fairly loosely just as we are when we speak of apostolic preaching. For just as the preacher is not really an apostle so he is not of necessity a prophet. Prophecy is thus the unusual and extraordinary gift, and it is quite understandable that in the days of the Acts of the Apostles and the Corinthian epistles, when the canon of the New Testament was not yet a fact, that prophetic inspiration should be prominent as God revealed himself in this immediate manner in contrast with the mediate way of preaching. In this unusual ministry women undoubtedly played a part but we must not make what is extraordinary the norm for regular use. Calvin's comment on I Tim. 2: 11-13 is appropriate here. "If anyone challenges this ruling by citing the case of Deborah and other women of whom we are told that God at one time appointed them to govern the people, the obvious answer is that God's extraordinary acts do not annul the ordinary rules by which He wishes us to be bound".

### **Women on the mission field**

Some will argue pragmatically—and it is not always women who are guilty of this—and will point for example to the situation overseas. In many places with the scarcity of men, women missionaries are forced into positions where they are virtually pastors. But, we are asked, are we to belittle what these women are doing, and even worse are we to leave men and women unshepherded because of the failure of men at home?

In the first place it is important to remember that the New Testament epistles were addressed to a missionary situation. The little churches were like scattered points of light in the surrounding darkness. Multitudes were perishing without the knowledge of the gospel. Surely if the pragmatic test was the only one Paul would have been much more elastic in his requirements. It is all the more significant that against such a background he still writes so firmly on the subject.

Do we then belittle the work being done? Far from it! We cannot but admire the courage and devotion of many women missionaries who face loneliness and hardship for Christ's sake. But this still leaves the question before us—is it right for us to put them in such a position if it is not a biblical one? There are various considerations which are relevant here. Hudson Taylor's great dictum about money has a wider application "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply". If money is short you do not devise some new method for raising it but humble yourself before God and seek His supply. Now men

candidates for the mission field are in short supply yet "God's way" clearly envisages men as the leaders in the new churches as well as in the old. Are we to say then that we must adjust ourselves to the present situation and use women? If we do, we simply perpetuate the present condition of things and men in the home churches will continue, with no sense of shame, to let women do the jobs men should be doing. Is it not time rather to challenge the churches with the present unbiblical practice and to call them to humble themselves before God that He might supply what is now lacking. Far from trying to justify what is scripturally unjustifiable we should be calling churches, and particularly the men in the churches, to repentance. The very readiness of these women to go and to suffer should not be a matter for complacency but for shame and reproach that men are so indifferent to the spread of the gospel.

### **Physical Attraction**

There is one further factor in this matter of women ministering to men which a false delicacy may ignore, but which biblical realism compels us to face, and that is the physical attraction which a woman exercises. When Paul calls for a right attitude to the younger women members of the church he adds the phrase "with all purity" (I Tim. 5: 2). So too the Lord speaks of the lustful look as a too frequent reality rather than an unlikely hypothesis. For a similar reason modesty in clothing is a New Testament requirement. Put bluntly the issue is simply this. If a man stands in a pulpit the average woman is not unduly affected by his appearance. But if a woman stands there men, being men, will often find that their thoughts are less on the word spoken than on the speaker. Someone will reply indignantly that "to the pure all things are pure". But we are forced to admit that not all men are pure, and in fact for the majority of men the battle with impure thoughts is a lot more severe than the average woman realises. The pulpit which is to be a help towards holiness should not provide an additional snare—which of course it will not do if its normal occupant is a man.

### **Hospitality, Mixed Marriages and Labours Unseen**

It is a great pity that so much time has to be taken up in this matter over negative issues—Paul must have surely felt this—when there is so much to be said about the ministry which women can and do exercise. Paul very rightly puts alongside his prohibition, the true role of a woman in child bearing. This kind of ministry is one that can be discharged though in a more restricted way, by the childless wife or even by the single woman, for the maternal instinct which finds its fulfilment in giving birth to a child can also be exercised widely in concern for other children. Timothy is only one of a very long list of men whose usefulness to the church stems, humanly speaking, from the training received from a mother; and many another boy has reason to thank God for some woman who though not related to him has yet shown a mother's sympathy and understanding

when perhaps at home those very things were lacking. Hospitality is another field where a Christian woman's influence can be a potent force. True hospitality is not simply in terms of providing food, for a guest house can do that. It means rather the indefinable quality of a home where the stranger is made so naturally welcome that he feels at ease. In this the woman plays a primary part and when she and her husband are at one spiritually the home can be one of the finest evangelistic media outside the public preaching of the gospel. One has only to think of Apollos whom Priscilla and Aquila received into their home and whom they instructed in the faith. Clearly Priscilla was closely associated both in the welcome and the instruction. This was not a breach of the Pauline prohibition for in this informal home testimony she was simply adding her word to that of her husband so that it was a joint testimony of two who were one in Christ.

There remains the painful question of the woman who is married to an unconverted partner. The situation in view is not that of the Christian who in disobedience has married an unbeliever for such a one simply has to face the consequences of such deliberate flouting of God's command. It is rather the case of the woman converted subsequently to her marriage. What is to be her attitude? The general principle of the order of creation is still applicable. She is to be a faithful and loving wife. She is to reverence her husband and it may be that by the grace of God she may succeed in winning him for the gospel. Paul in I Cor. 7 deals with the issue of the actual marriage relationship. The faith of either partner sanctifies it. There is nothing unclean about it "else were your children unclean but now are they holy" (I Cor. 7: 14). Peter makes the other point that she may win her husband "Likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives".

Much of a woman's ministry is unseen but it is none the less vital. The man in the pulpit for example may be very much in the public eye and his ministry may appear to men to be a notable one, but he alone knows how essential a part of that ministry is the sympathy and support of his wife, who in a phrase applied in the past to the throne, is often the power behind the pulpit. Charles Haddon Spurgeon exercised a ministry which affected the lives of thousands but it was not just his great gifts which played their part but the unflagging support of his wife. John Wesley stands high in the annals of the Church of God but it was his mother Susannah's influence in his early years which, in the providence of God, proved such a powerful factor in the development of the great evangelist. Men may see only the finished products and apportion credit or honour in a very imperfect way, but the wife or mother or teacher who has had her part in the moulding of another's life will be content to leave the verdict upon her work to the God who made her, and entrusted her with such tremendous power for good or ill.

*A report has been circulated in different parts of Britain that certain American scientists have proved by feeding astronomy data into a computing machine that Joshua's long day can be verified. We ought always to be cautious about such reports, as the following quotation from The Standard Bearer shows.*

## Joshua's Long Day

Our readers will recall that some time ago we discussed in these columns a paper which was widely distributed by a certain Mr. Harold Hill in which he told of some space scientists who were checking the position of the sun, moon and planets to determine their relative positions in the future. He told of how, in tracing backwards, a missing day was discovered and how the mystery was solved by references to the day in which Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still and the backward movement of the sun dial in the days of Hezekiah. This was all presented as proof for the veracity of Scripture.

At the time we wrote about this, we pointed out that it was just possible that the whole story might prove a hoax; and that, in any event, believers must not base their faith in the veracity of the Scriptures on any scientific proof.

Although the original article by Mr. Hill was widely circulated and although many Christians hailed it as a vindication of the Scriptures, it now appears that our doubts about the article were well-founded. Some investigation has been done by people who wrote directly to Mr. Hill and by others who contacted the space scientists who were supposed to have made the original discovery. The results of this investigation are as follows:

(1) The space scientists in Baltimore, Maryland, who were supposed to have been involved have no knowledge of the whole thing and are not acquainted with anyone by the name of Mr. Hill.

(2) The story itself is not new. An almost identical story appeared as early as 1936 and was told in a book by Harry Rimmer entitled *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*. Bernard Ramm, in a book he wrote entitled *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, repeats this same story, but specifically repudiates it.

(3) Correspondence addressed to Mr. Hill, and his answers, some of which I have seen, produced no results. Mr. Hill simply spoke of a newspaper article which concerned another matter, documentation which he had mislaid and a personal testimony of his "own experience in meeting God personally a few years ago."

All of this leads to the conclusion that Mr. Hill simply repeated a story he had heard and which had no basis in fact. It ought to serve as a warning not to make the truth of God's Word dependent upon such scientific evidence. The Word of God stands in its own right. Its authority is rooted in its own divine origin. It needs no human props to substantiate its truth. The simple fact remains that the unbeliever will never accept the Scriptures no matter what "proof" is offered in support of it. Unbelief is not a matter of ignorance, is not rooted in lack of sufficient proof, is not to be explained in any other way than a deeply rooted hatred of God. The fault is a spiritual fault. What Abraham told the rich man in hell remains true for all time: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16: 29, 31).

As for the people of God, they bow in humble submission before the Scriptures, receiving them as God's Word. This is sufficient for them.

*Do we have members in our church who show little, if any, spiritual interest? When last did the elders examine the church membership roll? Have drifters been followed up? What basic standards should be insisted on for the maintenance of church membership? In the following article four basic requisites for members of a local church are examined in an exposition of Acts 2: 41, 42.*

# Reformation in Church Membership

EVERY CHURCH SEEMS TO HAVE SOME "SLEEPING" MEMBERS—PEOPLE WHO are on the church roll but who are seldom, if ever, seen. There was a time when they did run well, but now are lukewarm, cold, or perhaps in a deep freeze. They rarely attend a prayer meeting, and have little or no relish for spiritual fellowship. They are indifferent about the Lord's Table and have no enthusiasm about worship on Sunday. The day when they testified before the church and rejoiced in glowing terms about their salvation has been forgotten. Should such people be subject to admonition and ultimately discipline by elders of the church? If the example set by the apostolic church is to be followed then, undoubtedly, the answer must be in the affirmative.

As we look back to the beginning of the New Testament Church we find that 3,000 souls were added to the disciples, of whom there were about 120, after Peter's sermon at Pentecost. There were probably quite a few more disciples in Jerusalem who for various legitimate reasons were not with the 120 in the house on the day of Pentecost, but even so the church was multiplied in size by about twenty times—an event as unique as Pentecost itself.

The question arises as to whether it was right that so large a number should be baptized immediately and by baptism be added to the church. After all, in our modern day we often wait several months to test the genuine character of a convert. In answer to this we say that the Holy Spirit was working in an extraordinary way as the supernatural manifestations of wind, fire, and other languages, shows. The converts were the subjects of a deep and genuine work, being born again of the Holy Spirit. (John 3: 3, I Peter, 1: 23.) The majority already seemed well acquainted with Scripture. Peter was able to quote freely from the prophets. The converts proved the genuine nature of their repentance and

faith by steadfast continuation in four basic areas of the Christian life—the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2: 42).

These features might be regarded as the ordinary activities by which church membership is sustained, in contrast to the exceptional or extraordinary activities at that time. (We are not overlooking the baptism of believers which is a once and for all ordinance symbolising union with Christ by faith in his death, burial, and resurrection.) Wonders, signs, and miracles were performed by the apostles and later by some of the deacons, such as Stephen and Philip. Moreover, they had all things in common, and although it was not a thing commanded or essential, many of them chose to sell their lands and lay the money as a gift at the apostles' feet (Acts 4: 37). Furthermore, it would appear that the disciples met daily for fellowship and the breaking of bread. This may rightly be attributed to extraordinary zeal, but we ought also to remember that exceptional circumstances prevailed in Jerusalem at that time. Many different people, both Jews and proselytes from all over the world, sought to be present in Jerusalem at Pentecost, which was regarded as the most important religious festival of the year. Certainly it was the best attended. In terms of time, effort, and expense, the sacrifice to get to Jerusalem was considerable and indicated deep religious convictions. We ought to remember that God was preparing many people before that notable sermon by Peter at Pentecost. It would seem from Peter's words (Acts 2: 36) that not a few of those guilty of the rejection of Jesus Christ were converted at that time—people who had approved of his crucifixion. But the indications seem obvious that the great majority of converts were made up from those from many nations who were making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This was a religious holiday and the people were able to meet daily as indicated. The unusual circumstances, therefore, should be taken into consideration, but, steadfast continuation in right doctrine, spiritual fellowship, attending the Lord's table, and in prayer meetings should be regarded as normal and binding upon every church member. That this is so is not only supported by the example of the early Christians but by the exhortations of the apostles (Heb. 10: 24, 25) and the general tenor of the New Testament (Acts 20: 16-32; Rev. 2 and 3, Eph. 4: 1-16.)

### **The Importance of Church Membership**

There are some who question the validity of church membership. How can we convince such that this concept is important and scriptural? We can, for instance, turn to Matt. 16: 19. What did our Lord mean by "the keys of the kingdom"? Surely He was conferring authority upon his apostles, indicating that discipline in the church would have to be maintained. Keys are used to shut out and close in. The Matthew passage and the authority referred to have been abused, particularly by the Papacy. But this does not mean that we shut our eyes to the necessity of discipline.



The apostles and their evangelists such as Timothy and Titus used God-given authority to appoint overseers or elders in the churches. Instructions as to the qualifications of elders are provided and we are left in no doubt as to the authority of such elders (I Tim. 3, Titus 2). Believers are exhorted to “obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13: 17). Now it is obvious that we cannot obey elders unless they are specified, and nor can elders rule unless there are specific people for whom they are responsible. When it says in Acts 2: 47 that people were *added* to the church it is obvious that they were identifiable individuals. The elders are responsible for those who are clearly joined to the church, and this matter is not to be left to conjecture. Moreover they are responsible for the examination and introduction of new members. Besides this all the members of a church are involved in the appointment of elders and deacons. The existing elders recognise the gifts of those who are actually contributing to the life of the church, shepherding in the spiritual realm (elders) or administering in the practical realm (deacons). The church is then consulted, unanimity being the aim, since the whole body is intimately affected by so important a matter as leadership. So when Paul writes to “all the saints in Christ Jesus which are in Philippi,” he is addressing a body of people who have been baptized into Christ—a membership with a definite leadership, as he goes on immediately to add “with the bishops (overseers) and deacons.”

Of course there are other arguments for the scriptural nature of church membership, such as that drawn from the most popular analogy of the church used in the New Testament, namely that of the physical body. So intimate is the spiritual relationship of believers in a church that they are compared to the organs of a human body. Every member is vital, just as the eyes, ears, hands, and feet are vital to a human body. The spiritual development of a believer can hardly be considered without reference to the body of Christians of which he forms a part. As the body grows in knowledge, edification, and love, so are individual members affected (Eph. 4: 16). It is not surprising to find that individual believers who cut themselves off from genuine involvement and fellowship “with the body” are often spiritually sick or stunted and fail to progress in grace and knowledge as they should. It is within the sphere of the local church that the individual members develop in understanding, exercise their gifts, give, receive, and share spiritual life.

As already intimated, this life is expressed in a tangible way as follows:

#### **Steadfast Continuation in the Apostles’ Doctrine**

The Ecumenical movement has tended to destroy the order stated in Acts 2: 42 in that fellowship is placed before doctrine. Doctrine is meant to test faith. You cannot be a Christian unless you believe the truth.

But the Ecumenical movement seeks to unite a large assortment of people many of whom deny fundamental doctrines and most of whom reject the supreme authority of holy scripture. A vain attempt is being made to unite true Christians with nominal Christians. This ends up with the lowest common denominator of truth. In other words by the time all the points which might cause disagreement have been cancelled only a few scraps remain—and sloppy, sentimental scraps at that, the Gospel being emasculated. Essential doctrines such as the wrath and justice of God and the substitutionary blood atonement of Christ are omitted.

We may well ask what would be included in the apostles' doctrine? Several truths stand out in the preaching of the apostles during the early days of the church. They fearlessly exposed the terrible consequences of sin. They preached about the wrath of God and urged the necessity of repentance. They stressed the resurrection, and boldly declared the divinity of Christ's person, and proclaimed Him as Saviour and Lord to save all who turn to Him in faith. In those first sermons we find many quotations from the Old Testament. There was obviously no question in the minds of the apostles concerning the authority of the Old Testament. For instance, Peter in his sermon at Pentecost quoted extensively from Joel and Psalms. From the example of the apostles and the teaching of the New Testament two principles can be deduced: firstly, *all* truth is important, and secondly, some truths are particularly important and appropriate in certain situations.

It was needful that Peter should stress the resurrection of Christ and the sovereignty of God in overruling all the details of the sufferings of Christ. It was no accident that Christ should die the death of a criminal. This does not mean that other truths not mentioned by Peter are unimportant. Throughout the centuries various parts of the body of truth represented in scripture have been attacked. If one part of the Bible is regarded as unreliable it follows that the whole is open to destruction. But the Word of Christ stands fast and abides forever (Luke 21 : 33).

It should be the aim in every church that all members are well instructed in the whole counsel of God. Some of the important truths are the doctrine of scripture, of God, and the Trinity, the person and work of Christ; the moral law; the depravity of human nature; the necessity of the atonement; justification by faith and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. To this should be added instruction about the nature and government of the church, the ordinances, corporate worship, the Judgment, Heaven, Hell, and the life to come.

These truths must live. More than a dead-letter knowledge is required. Truth should be drawn from the Bible as a whole and the teaching elders should encourage knowledge of all parts of scripture, especially those

sections most relevant to the fight of faith being waged today. The imputation of Adam's sin, the sovereignty of God in creation and election, the depravity of man's will and the inerrancy of the original autographs of scripture—these are some of the nerve centres being assaulted in the 1970s, areas in which the Christian needs to be very well informed. It should be apparent from the comprehensive amount that believers need to know that regular times of instruction are imperative. That all members of the church should be encouraged to attend such sessions (particularly on the Lord's day) should be obvious.

### **Steadfast Continuation in Fellowship**

It would be in order to translate the words “continuing steadfastly in fellowship” as “continuing steadfastly in *sharing*.” The Greek word *Koinonia*, means *communion*, having things in common or sharing. Man is essentially gregarious. Latin peoples are more so than Saxons but even in our Western society with its small family units and the destructive influence of television—which centres attention upon a screen (requiring passivity) instead of living people (requiring participation)—there are clubs and cliques of every description. Those who are familiar with rugby or soccer will know that it is customary in many places to have a party after the match of the week in which alcoholic beverages are freely indulged. Aided by this “warmth” the players share their stories. Marvellous exploits of past matches are recalled, and a great time is had by all.

Christians have fellowship of an entirely different kind. They seek to share spiritual life in all its aspects. They have a joy which is imparted by the Holy Spirit. They have their worship, their songs, and their activities. Their faith is strengthened as they share their experiences, plans, problems, and hopes. If their enthusiasm is not deeper and greater than that of the rugby players, something is wrong. Christian fellowship does not have to be as noisy, but there should be genuine affection, warmth, and vitality.

This raises the question of hospitality. Where is this fellowship to take place? In the early church when there were no ecclesiastical buildings the believers gathered in each others' homes. It would seem in some places that the church buildings form the only venue where Christians meet. On the other hand in most Communist countries this has been halted because of persecution or infiltration of agents or spies into the formal churches. Believers have been obliged under these circumstances to gather in each others' homes.

When a person becomes a Christian it is because his heart has been opened (Acts 16: 14). He has come to experience the great gift of free pardon and new life. All things become new. The believer's home opens at the

same time as his heart—as with Lydia—other believers are welcomed to his fireside, and to his table, in order to share this great life-changing Gospel.

The Christian soon realizes that God's grace in salvation knows no bounds. People of all nations are being converted. Social barriers are broken down in a new spiritual unity. Nationality and class-distinctions shrink before union in the same grand redemption of Christ. As brothers and sisters we are all one in Christ Jesus, whether we be Jew or Gentile, whether we be slaves or free men, whether we be dustmen or company directors. Barriers are crossed. Instead of fraternising only with those who share their own kind of background, members of the church ought at all times to be encouraged to stretch across frontiers to meet with and have fellowship with those who contrast most with them in character. This fellowship should not be confined to the church premises but also be encouraged in homes. In this way many who might be neglected will be remembered, and the whole fellowship be more closely knit together in the bond of peace (Eph. 4: 3).

Francis Schaeffer suggests in his book *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*<sup>1</sup> that Christians should open their homes to the community and he makes it clear that he includes drug addicts and those who may have venereal disease. Having done this himself and now being the leader of a growing centre in Switzerland (*L'Abri*) in which open house is practised on a large scale, he is well able to chide Christians for the "closed" attitude. We would make the observation that if Christian homes are shut to their own spiritual family, their brothers and sisters in Christ, we can well imagine how secure the locks will be against "strangers". Yet the scriptures declare that we should not neglect to entertain strangers (Heb. 13: 2). There is a diversity of spiritual gifts and few Christians could begin to match the gift of the Schaeffers in their magnificent ministry. Many are restricted in circumstances, having hardly one room to live in let alone a home in which to welcome others. Nevertheless, all Christians should endeavour at least to have the right attitude. If they cannot entertain others at their table they should think in terms of contributing practical support, either monetary or in kind, to those who are heavily committed to giving hospitality. Those to whom the Lord does not give the facilities for hospitality might well have an invaluable ministry in going out to visit the fatherless and the widows, the lonely, and the sick.

Tremendous evangelistic opportunity is to be found through the right use of the home. It is expensive. Sacrifice can be considerable. Disappointments by way of ingratitude there will be. But the Lord will undoubtedly honour those who show love in a practical way. And let us be confident

<sup>1</sup> Norfolk Press. 190 pp. £1.60.

about this: if we have a dynamic community life in which it can be seen that Christians have a genuine love for each other, then we will be close to the fulfilment of our Lord's prayer "that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17: 21). In countless cases, Christians who have opened their homes have been instrumental in the enlargement of the local church.

### **Steadfast Continuation in the Breaking of Bread**

The presence of all the members of the church is desired at the Lord's Supper, which should be celebrated at intervals suitable to the needs of the membership. In the Lord's Supper the fellowship of believers takes place in a visible act of communion and union together. Why should Christ command his disciples to celebrate this simple ordinance of breaking bread and drinking wine? Probably the simplest answer is given by Paul: "To show forth the Lord's death" (I Cor. 11: 26). Every time the Communion Supper is held the disciples are reminded of the centrality of the atonement. They remember that their salvation is derived from the Lord's vicarious sufferings. By one offering the Lord has perfected forever them that are sanctified. Both the character of our Lord's death and the complete satisfaction it rendered to the justice of God is portrayed in the emblems. Wilful absence from the Lord's Table by any member of the church indicates a breach of fellowship. Absence from so important an ordinance is something which should be followed up by the undershepherds. After all, there is no other ordinance that we are required to keep apart from baptism. Baptism takes place once, but the Lord's Supper is celebrated regularly.

Authority for the maintenance of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper belongs to the sphere of the local church alone. It is not to be undertaken by any other body or fellowship. There can be no adequate substitute for a local church. This ought to be remembered, particularly by students and nurses, or by those who work in institutions where there is a Christian fellowship. While it is commendable that there should be such groups for the strengthening of believers, these fellowships should never take the place or usurp the ministry of the church. The local church is unique in representing the body of Christ upon earth. It is the duty of every Christian without exception to do all that is humanly possible to contribute to the well being of a local church.

Reformation in regard to the Lord's Table is desirable in many churches. When we look back to the apostolic era we find that the Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper in each others' homes (I Cor. 11). Thus a more intimate atmosphere of fellowship together was maintained. This intimacy is often lacking in our formal places of worship. In Acts 2: 46 we see that the Christians at Jerusalem gathered daily for teaching and the breaking of bread from house to house. We have already seen that

most of the converts were in Jerusalem for the time of Pentecost and were, so to speak, on holiday. It would be well to consider whether we celebrate Communion frequently enough and also what might be done to remedy the situation if the ordinance has become too formal or stiff or wooden. Reverence is essential, but there is need to recapture the spiritual intimacy and warmth which seemed to characterise the service of the early Christians.

Preparation should be made for coming to the Communion Table. We should examine ourselves as to whether we are receiving the full benefit that we ought to derive from this ordinance. Those partaking should arrive in good time. They should make sure that any resentment or quarrel with others has been removed (Matt. 18: 15-18). They are celebrating the forgiveness that has come to them through the Lord's broken body and shed blood. Therefore it is inconsistent if they do not themselves forgive. All sin should be confessed. If a believer is harbouring sin in his heart then he is not fit to partake of the communion. It was for abuse of the Lord's Table that some of the Corinthian believers were judged (I Cor. 11: 30).

### **Steadfast Continuation in Prayers**

The prayer meeting is a vital part of church life. Prayer meetings should be frequently convened at times convenient to suit the members. Every member of the church should attend at least one prayer meeting a week. It may be wondered why steadfast continuation in prayers together is so important. The answer is that by prayer we express our entire dependence upon the Lord to sustain the church and to prosper her. Indeed, one cannot even begin the spiritual warfare without participation in prayer. Thus, the Apostle Paul in that famous passage about the Christian warfare in Eph. 6, concludes with a comprehensive statement about "praying always with all prayers and supplications for all saints." Prayer meetings sometimes lack direction because no clear lead is given at the beginning. The law of Christ is that we should love one another and bear one another's burdens (John 13: 34, Gal. 6: 2). It is helpful to be reminded of those in any need whatsoever. The missionary cause and the sufferings of fellow-believers in lands where there is persecution form an important part of intercession. Exhortation to remember this and also to pray for the nation is helpful. (Is. 62: 6, Heb. 13: 3, I Tim. 2: 1-3.)

From the New Testament it would seem that the most natural environment for the prayer meeting is the home (Acts 12: 13). The church building, of course, may be more convenient, but care should be taken that a formal atmosphere does not restrict the spirit of intercession. Both men and women should participate. In some large churches the Christians form smaller groups so that there may be more participation. It is important that all the church's activities and outreach should be laid before the

Lord in prayer. Blessing cannot be expected if there is no faith, for without faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11 : 6).

By prayer we express our faith in God and it may well be said of those who neglect public prayer that, "they have not because they ask not." In the light of this teaching the elders should require that every person who is involved in the work of the church whether it be teaching children in Sunday School, or literature or radio work, or any other activity in which the church is represented, that such members attend the prayer meeting every week. If they are not able to do this it is questionable whether they should have the role that they do. If we are too busy to pray together, then a reassessment is required of our activities. Activity without spirituality is useless. Jesus said, "The flesh profiteth nothing. It is the spirit that quickeneth." (John 6: 63).

### **Allowance for Exceptions**

Naturally there are those who cannot fulfil steadfast continuance in the teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Some Christians have divided homes and find it impossible to attend regular meetings, particularly during the week. Others are handicapped because of ill-health or age. Yet others, such as those in the medical profession, or those involved in travel or business away from home experience difficulty in fulfilling the pattern described. This does not mean, however, that they are exempt from the spirit of steadfast continuation in the activities described. It is suggested that the elders should take particular note of believers in exceptional circumstances and that allowance be made for such to make up for the lack of fellowship in other ways. Certainly those who are handicapped should be particularly remembered by the church in prayer.

Small groups of active church members should be formed to attend at the homes of those who are unable to get to the formal prayer meetings so that prayer fellowship is not lost and the more intimate needs of the church and its members are made known in the atmosphere of an informal prayer meeting. Similarly where baptised believers are unable to attend Chapel Communion services the elders should arrange for Communion in the home under proper supervision.

### **Maintaining a Spiritual Outlook**

At all times we must guard against a legal spirit. For instance, the Pharisees were scrupulous to keep all their rules but were hard-hearted and cold. Rules are useful as a means of discipline to remind us of our responsibilities. These duties, however, are spiritual and unless our participation in them is spiritual and sincere we will not benefit. It is all too easy to fall into a formalistic routine of keeping the rules for the sake of peace but harbouring a cold, sinful heart. The very nature of these



practices is designed to prevent this from taking place, for to absent ourselves when in a low spiritual state is to make things worse. Teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Table, and prayers are the means designed by God for the preservation and strengthening of believers. It is right that we should be reminded constantly to be faithful, and instead of resenting those who exhort us to faithfulness we should be thankful for them. Naturally some are more sluggish by nature than others and need to be stirred up. The comfort of a warm fireside in winter or a sporting activity in summer is more attractive to the flesh than the effort to go out to meet with our brethren especially after a hard day's work. In some cases "Telly" has become a snare and an idol, as destructive of spiritual life in its effects, as Baal worship was in Israel of old.

It is encouraging when regular attenders of meetings inform the others when they are prevented from coming. This confirms their genuine concern for the cause and reassures the others.

### **Maintaining Discipline**

Speaking generally five groups of people constitute the average congregation. 1. Wholehearted members of the church. 2. Members whose interests and participation is so feeble as hardly to justify membership. 3. Wholehearted supporters of the work whose zeal outstrips some who are in formal membership. They maintain the spiritual exercises which have been outlined, but some difference of doctrine or some personal reason, such as lack of assurance, holds them back from membership. 4. Children of members and supporters whose lives are bound up with the church, and who enjoy the privileges of oversight and teaching. These must show evidence of regeneration before being baptized and received into membership. 5. Unbelievers.

Many conclusions could be made, but two main points emerge. Firstly, those in the second category should be pleaded with and prayed for by the members. The elders should visit such and remonstrate with them. If they wilfully continue in an attitude of indifference, neglect their responsibilities, absent themselves from assemblies without reasonable excuse, then the church should no longer recognize them as members. Secondly, those in the third category should be encouraged to overcome their difficulties.

Finally, if we heed the words of our Lord, "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," (Luke 14: 33) we will not think His service a burden, and if we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will delight in that order ordained by our Master.

# The Drug Epidemic

Gary North

JANIS JOPLIN, MILLIONAIRE, REIGNING QUEEN OF THE DRUG-ROCK CULTURE, dead at age 27, of an overdose of drugs. The woman who had bragged that she lived her life like a "rush" . . . the single minute of ecstasy after a heroin injection . . . died as she had lived. Three years of stardom, for what? Jimmie Hendrix, millionaire, distortion king of the rock guitar, dead at age 24, of strangulation in his own vomit. His sleeping pills had worked too well. Three years of stardom, for what? The 1970's opened symbolically.

The new freak culture, as the young have named it, is eating its own creatures, like the pied piper of old, this suicidal drug culture is leading the children away, only this time the pipers are being well paid, it takes whole teams of pipers today, for they cannot resist their own destructive tunes. And parents of the 1970's seem as helpless as those in the ancient fairy tale, they don't know what to do to get their children back.

No man's home is safe. Drugs are raging in epidemic proportions in New York City, Southern California and the San Francisco area. *Time* (March 16, 1970) reports that junior high schoolers are the targets today. Heroin addiction below age 25 jumped 40 per cent. in one year, 1969-70. Dr. Barry Ramer, director of San Francisco's study for special problems, says: "In my wildest nightmares, I never dreamed what we are seeing today." Criminologist Roger Smith, also of San Francisco, warns that "The emerging junkie of the 1970's is a middle class junkie as well as a junior junkie."

Cultural crises are always religious crises. All cultures need certain standards of right and wrong, yes and no. These issues inevitably involve faith. Today we are witnessing a total collapse of traditional cultural standards . . . the collapse of a faith . . . and into this cultural vacuum, with a "rush," come the standard-bearers of a new culture. The new culture is suicidal, destructive and ultimately revolutionary. Its motto is the same as Janis Joplin's first hit album: "Cheap Thrills." What we see, and what the young do not see, is that these thrills are costly beyond calculation.

One junkie quoted in *Time* defended heroin because heroin "has all the advantages of death, without the permanence." Like the Bible said

3,000 years ago: "But he that sinneth against Me (God) wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death." (Prov. 8: 36).

Parents seem morally helpless. One fourteen-year-old female addict explained: "My mother used to lay down a few rules . . . I used to go and tell my mother, kind of hoping she'd say to me 'Stop and that's final'. But she never did." The moral crisis of the young is a mirror of the moral crisis of the adults. Even Conservative Senator Barry Goldwater admitted that his grandson stymied him with this question: "Grandpa, I've seen you drunk. Why can't I smoke marijuana?"

Children set the pattern of our culture, in America, in western Europe and increasingly even in traditional Japan. We listen to their music, see their movies, adopt their slang, copy their fashions. Television programming must be "young". Even their means of escape are becoming standard. Marijuana is going middle class.

The family that has no faith . . . no standards, no hope, no strength . . . is the most likely to be cut down by the drug epidemic. The parent who cannot say "No!" and offer a coherent answer to the ever-present "Why not?" is morally impotent. His children are left unprotected, for the greatest protection is internal. Given drugs' easy availability today, it's the only protection. The answer to one drug is not simply other drugs (fame, alcohol, money, status); that is what the kids have officially rejected. What a child needs is answers: "Who am I? Where should I be going? What is true love? How can I fill up this emptiness? Is there any meaning? What is truth? Above all, *What is truth?*"

Jesus Christ said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14: 6). He also warned: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3: 36). There is no escape from this God . . . not with money, not with drugs, not with a college degree. His love or His wrath: these are the only two options. Now. There may be no tomorrow. Janis Joplin ran out of tomorrows. The Bible is clear: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the Day of Salvation" (II Cor. 6: 2).

Janis Joplin never answered for herself Christ's crucial question: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8: 36). Neither, for that matter, have the parents of most of the children who worshipped her.

The drug epidemic, if it is to be stopped, must be stopped in the home. It must be stopped before the child is ten years old. And it must be stopped in terms of principle. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22: 6). The time is clearly **now**!

*In an interview direct questions can be asked which demand an answer. Moreover the important questions can be asked—questions which are uppermost in the minds of many readers. Peter James is here interviewed by the editor.*

## What is going on in the Anglican World?

*It is good to be with you today, Peter, and to be able to ask you questions that have been raised by several correspondents who are deeply disturbed by the book Growing Into Union. It is well-known that Dr. Packer is co-author with three others. It is also well-known that this represents a new alignment of evangelicals co-operating and, if you like, having union with Anglo-Catholics. Now it is quite apparent from the correspondents that they cannot understand how someone who has been so firm about the inerrancy of Scripture and justification by faith could go this way. We feel that you have been in the Church of England for a long time, having only seceded in 1970, so if anybody can answer our questions you can! So can you cast some light on how somebody who is so highly esteemed because of his literature can produce a book of this kind and appear at least—and I want to put it charitably—to have fellowship with and seek union with Anglo-Catholics who believe in Baptismal Regeneration?*

Let me say straight away that I have a great personal respect for Dr. Packer, and I do not want to be “knocking” anybody personally. However, it is no wonder that this book has confused many people, for we have the strange phenomenon of a much-loved Reformed thinker combining with two leading Anglo-Catholics to produce a book in which each of them is committed to every word—and I think this needs to be remembered—and seeking to point the way for the emergence of a church, a territorial church, in England which could encompass those who are at present in all denominations. But I do not think we can really understand this by merely taking it ad hoc; this is surely only the culmination of years of movement within the Church of England.

*Well, then, where did all this begin?*

In one sense it began way back at the time of the Reformation, but I think you are really asking me about recent events. All through the last quarter of a century there has been a movement away from the clear position of evangelicals standing over against others and claiming to

be the rightful heirs of the Reformation within the Church of England, and in its place there has increasingly been a move towards compromise with Anglo-Catholic and Liberal opinion on a number of matters. I think the real point of departure came in 1964 when the Canon was agreed which legalised the Mass Vestments. Now I know that there were those who tried to pretend they had no significance, but we all know that they would not otherwise be worn. The real significance of all this is that, for the first time since the Reformation, the Church of England put down on paper something which acknowledged the right of a man to act as a Romanist within that Church. In this case the issue was the wearing of the Mass Vestments at the Holy Communion Service, but there were even greater implications, as this can be seen to be the first shifting of the ground in what has now become an absolute landslide.

*Wait a moment—this word “landslide” that you have used—don’t you think that this might be an exaggeration—don’t you think that you might be over-stating the case?*

Well, let me give you a few examples of what has happened in the few years since then. In 1965 another Canon was passed which legalised stone “tables”, which is a euphemism for Altars. This was a natural progression from the previous Canon, but seems to have aroused very little opposition. Since then we have had all the “Series 2” services, including a new Communion Service from which the references to a Substitutionary Atonement have been removed, in which there is permission for prayers for the dead and in which there is, anyhow, a phrase used deliberately to be understood by the Anglo-Catholic as Prayers for the Dead, while being understood by the evangelical to be only a Remembrance of them! All these exhibit the desire to use words which can be understood in two ways and so to provide a unity of freedom rather than a unity which is based on Truth. But then when we come to weightier matters of the law we find that the new Services are absolutely clear on Baptismal Regeneration. In the Baptism, the Priest prays “Bless, we pray Thee, this water, that all who are baptised in it may be born again in Christ: . . .” and then after the baptism, he prays “We thank Thee, O Father, that by the Holy Spirit Thou hast caused these children to be born again, to become thine own by adoption and members of Thy Church”. This is followed up in the “Series 2” Confirmation Service by the first words of the Bishop’s opening prayer—“Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who by Thy Holy Spirit hast called these Thy servants, and made them Thy children in the waters of Baptism: . . .”. Before the act of confirmation he further prays “Almighty and everliving God, who in Baptism hast caused Thy servants to be born again by water and the Spirit, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins: . . .” Whatever might have been said about the words in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, there can be no doubt that in its new services the Church of England is

committed to the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration and whatever the local minister may do about Baptism Services, many Bishops insist on using the new confirmation service, already quoted, and in which there is also the change from the candidate confirming the promises made on their behalf to "confirmation" being considered to be by the Bishop, through whose action the Holy Spirit is given and the candidates are assured of God's favour towards them "by this sign". I think I have said enough to show you that almost every major doctrine has been accommodated to Anglo-Catholic practice and so to Roman Doctrine.

*From all that you've said so far a further question is raised in my mind and that is whether it is now possible for the Church of England to be Reformed?—before you answer this question, I might say that having studied the lives of the Puritans I realise that attempts have been made since the time of the Reformation to reform the Church of England, but do you feel that now we have got to a point from which we cannot return—that hope is now extinguished for the Reformation of the Church of England?*

I would say that Reformation is no longer to be hoped for because the Church of England has now departed from a position in which it accepts any clear authority. It is no longer possible for anyone to draw the attention of the Church of England as a whole, to a Scriptural standard as their approach is only regarded today as "an insight". The Scriptures are no longer regarded as authoritative in practice whatever may be said in theory. As words are used what are either no longer defined or deliberately used to satisfy those who want to accept two opposites, there must inevitably be increasing confusion. I know it can be said that the Spirit of God can accomplish Reformation through Revival, but I do not think that history encourages us to hope that there can be any preparation apart from a return to the preaching of the Word of God as solely authoritative.

*Now it's obvious that you are quite different in your opinion from Jim Packer about this, because his book, Growing Into Union, shows a definite attempt to have Reformation, albeit a very peculiar kind of Reformation, within the Church of England, but while you were speaking a point came to my mind which has troubled me very much and that is that this book, Growing Into Union, is far above the heads of ordinary people, and I am talking now about those who are quite prepared to enjoy good exposition an hour at a time and who know the doctrines very well. The kind of language that is used in Growing Into Union seems to my mind to come from the ivory tower—it is too far from reality; it is highbrow, technical language which is extremely boring, and it would be hard to give to any lay people. It reminds me, in fact, of books that are written to try and overthrow the inspiration of Scripture—tremendously complicated and technical. Now, have you any thoughts on this particular matter?*

Well, in the first instance, this book is *not* an attempt to bring Reformation in the Church of England. It is, in its very nature, an acknowledgment that Reformation within the Church of England is no longer possible. It is an attempt to find a new Church to replace all existing churches which are, presumably, all assumed to be beyond Reformation—otherwise any individual one that could be Reformed would supply the answer to all! That is the first thing. The second thing I would say is surely that this ivory tower language—to use your own phrase—is the typical language of ecumenism and of people divorced from daily life. Now, if you were to use this sort of language in your church you wouldn't last very long, and if we are to have any preaching, teaching or propositions which really will lead to Reformation they will surely mean the same thing to ordinary people as they mean to the theologian. Was it not one of the marks of our great forefathers that their fellow scholars understood them in the same way that ordinary people did? Is not this divorce between the theologian and the man in the pew, if we may call him such, all part of the terrible drift of today?

*It would be very interesting to know how many evangelicals in the Church of England would concur with Dr. Packer in his book, Growing into Union.*

Well, of course, the four authors of this book make it quite clear that they commit nobody but themselves—we must recognise this—but, before it was published, the Islington Conference was advised to take this book very seriously and there have been quite a number of meetings at which leading evangelicals have commended it for serious thought. Frankly, though, I do not think that the real problem is how far the book speaks for evangelicals, but the much deeper one of what has happened when a leading evangelical can be party to this and get away with it! The book is fundamentally Catholic in its approach, allowing Tradition a place alongside, not subservient to, Scripture and so inevitably Catholic in its approach to such matters as the need for an Episcopate. As I see it, Dr. Packer has entered a door which he and others began to open at the Keele Congress in 1967.

*Peter, you must remember that many readers of this magazine know little or nothing about Keele. I tried to follow it myself at the time, but have always found Anglican affairs rather abstruse and difficult so perhaps you might like to put us in the picture a little more about this Congress at Keele.*

The background of this, which is correctly called the National Evangelical Anglican Congress, was the desire to draw together clergy and laity of the Church of England in large numbers so that there could be some sort of statement of principles and objectives, so that the Christian world might know where Evangelical Anglicans stood. In the outcome of this the Congress accepted Ecumenical involvement virtually without question and the rest of their findings are a natural reflection of this. Episcopacy,



for instance, was accepted as seeming to be "the only pattern for re-union". In considering re-union schemes with the Methodists no objection was raised to the complete watering down of the approach to Scripture in that scheme, and its authority was not proclaimed in this context anyhow. Rome was described as a church which holds many fundamental doctrines in common with ourselves, and the subjective definition of a Christian stated by the World Council of Churches was accepted as a basis for all dialogue. This statement speaks of those "who confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

It will be seen that this is a purely subjective statement without reference to the inward working of the Holy Spirit or of the need for repentance and is naturally that which could be accepted by all the churches in the World Council.

*In the light that all you have said, particularly in outlining what we might call the Anglican downgrade, how is it possible for a true evangelical (let alone Reformed) to stay within the Anglican church and be faithful to his conscience? In any case it is very hard for evangelicals outside the Church of England to see how ministers in that church can continue week in, and week out, to administer communion and baptism in an indiscriminate way. These are questions which really perplex us. I'm not raising them just to be controversial. It deeply troubles us because we wish to have fellowship with these brethren, but how can they continue in this present state of affairs?*

Well, of course, you've raised two questions here. The second one concerning communion and baptism is a very big one which I think we would need more than this interview to cope with and, of course, you have the background situation in which men like J. C. Ryle accepted the Charitable Assumption of the prayer book, "Who am I to stand in judgment as to where another man is with God?" This is a very big question in itself, I personally refused to administer infant baptism—in my latter days in the Church of England, taking a stand on this matter some while before I actually left.

As to communion, of course, there is just nothing that anybody can do. This is one of the things which is a constant, or ought to be a constant, thorn in the side of every Anglican as it comes from the far more basic problem of the very membership of the church—you only have to be on the Electoral Roll to be regarded as a member. To be on this roll you either have to worship in the Church for six months, or you have to live in the parish—there is no other qualification! Thus you can see that basically there is no spiritual qualification for membership of the Church of England and so you cannot apply a spiritual qualification to attendance at communion other than Confirmation. If a person is confirmed then they are entitled to come: it is their parish church. Every resident in a

parish of the Church of England is entitled *by law* to be baptised, to be married and to be buried in that parish church!

Now to turn to what I believe to be your other much deeper question: how can an evangelical stay in? Well, my own testimony is that there comes the point when you can't! That's why I felt it necessary to secede. Of course this matter goes right back into history. The whole question of relating Scripture to the life of the church is involved, and much Anglican thinking of our day is on two completely separate bases. On the one hand there is the Scriptural basis for doctrines which concern personal faith and the way of salvation and on the other there seems to be a different source for church doctrines. There are men who preach the way of salvation in all its fullness, without any question, but the same principle of Scripture is not applied when it comes to this matter of church discipline and to relationships with other churches. It is because I am convinced that the Scripture is sufficient for practice as well as for doctrine that I felt impelled to secede. I believe it is lack of conviction on this matter which enables many men to stay in.

*While you were giving this last answer, another question came into my mind, and that is through fellowship with Evangelical Anglicans the matter has often been raised about where they should go if they leave the Church of England, and sometimes I feel, with all due respect to them, that they forget that some of us Non-Conformists have also been in this situation. Some of us have left lucrative careers for the sake of spiritual work, and we feel that a great deal more is involved in these matters than just theology. Practice comes into it and there is an area of great sacrifice to be made for one's convictions. Now, Peter, in your own case, I have visited you in your previous situation at Little Leighs in Essex and a more glorious spot would be hard to find in these islands—you were very comfortable, with a beautiful rectory, many opportunities and I must say, as an observer, that you have sacrificed a very great deal of this world's goods because of your convictions. Now don't you feel that this is the area which we have tended to neglect in all our discussions about theology?*

Yes. This is not just an academic discussion. It is obviously something which involves you and your family at a very, very deep level. You don't make these decisions purely on an academic basis, though obviously you have to be able to give an answer on that basis. In my own case I think I can say that it was the inevitable outcome of becoming Reformed in my thinking. It began at the very practical level of dissatisfaction with traditional evangelical teachings on holiness and finding that I did not have within my heart the answer to the deep heart-needs of those to whom I was expected to preach. I began to see that a Christian has to deal with sin in his daily life, not to look for some experience to be rid of its presence. Thus I began to see the plague of my own heart in a way that I had never seen it before—I began to appreciate the daily application of the atonement in an entirely new way walking with the Lord and in the light of His Word.

Then I began to realise that the whole realm of what is normally called Reformed Theology was all about this, and it was real, it applied to the lives of people who have got to face sin day by day in themselves. This gave me a new confidence in the Word of God in proclaiming the truth, and bit by bit I realised that I could call myself Reformed. And then came the next stage when I saw that this approach to theology, with its warmth and its love of Scripture, not merely its orthodoxy, also points us to the continuing Reformation of the church, and I began to be dissatisfied with applying Reformed principles only to the realm of salvation and the daily walk of the Christian. I began to realise that this must be applied to the fellowship of the church and to all the relationships which spring from it, which meant inevitably that one had to question the whole basis of the Church of England not only in its recent manifestations, but in its basis.

It was this understanding of the Reformed position which also led me to become a Baptist because it seemed to me that I could no longer sidestep the clear teaching of Scripture that Baptism is pursuant upon a saving faith. I think I have always felt deep down that this was right because none of my own children were "christened" as infants. Inevitably the time came to act and this action meant that my wife and I were baptised. Action had already taken me into opposition at Keele and in almost every gathering of evangelical Anglicans, and the application of the truth of Scripture inevitably led me into secession. It is my deep conviction that it is impossible to call oneself Reformed and remain within a community—a church so-called—without applying those principles to the activities of that church and to all its relationships, and so secession came as an act of obedience to the Lord and it is my testimony that in these months in the wilderness the Lord has wonderfully and graciously confirmed His own leading and has met all my needs in a very wonderful way—to Him be the glory.

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*Continued from p. 3.*

in which it appears. This will surely be effectual. If the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, how much more will God hear the petitions of those churches who are earnestly seeking to put their affairs in order and be faithful to Scripture. Our greatest encouragement lies in the fact that the number of Reformed churches is steadily growing and the standard of the ministry improving in several counties. The improvement referred to is confined to some sectors and does not contradict statements made in the article on sex-education. Movements for good and ill take place simultaneously within a country. The section in which improvement can be detected might be very small in comparison with the whole, but then our Lord likened his people to salt—a small but essential element of life.

*The Southern Baptists represent the largest evangelical denomination in the world, claiming a membership of almost ten million baptised believers. Although they have been far from the Confessional Standards of our fathers, or of the 1689 Confession of Faith, they have, by and large, clung tenaciously to fundamentals such as the inspiration and authority of Scripture. What happens to the Southern Baptists affects the Baptist family in other areas of the world. Their missionaries are numerous and their influence as extensive as their resources rich. Not all that they sponsor is healthy. Rüsclikon Baptist Theological Seminary, in Switzerland, for instance, is a citadel of Modernism.*

*But when did Liberalism arise among the Southern Baptists? And how far has the disease spread? Some predict that a mighty explosion is imminent when the huge denomination will split asunder. The beginning of unbelief and the spread of it can be likened to the movement of a serpent—subtle, secret, silent. To trace out these things requires skill and discernment. Geoffrey Thomas, Baptist minister of Alfred Place, Aberystwyth, Wales, graduated from Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia. He is well acquainted with the American scene. We are grateful to him for this article which outlines important events leading up to what must be one of the major religious crises of our day.*

## **The Scriptures and the Southern Baptists**

IT WAS IN 1879 THAT THE ISSUE OF BIBLICAL INFALLIBILITY WAS FIRST raised among the Southern Baptists in the case of Crawford Howell Toy who was an Old Testament professor at Southern Baptist Seminary and had been a student in Germany. There he had imbibed the rational theories of Higher Criticism, and upon returning to teach in Southern Baptist Seminary soon acknowledged his “divergence from the prevailing views in the denomination”, presenting to the Seminary trustees a paper outlining his position. He also offered to resign if they found his theology unacceptable, and with only two dissenting votes the board accepted his resignation. The issue centred upon the trustworthiness of the Bible because Toy distinguished between the spiritual message of the Bible, and historical, factual and scientific statements. In these latter categories Biblical writers were men of their time partaking in their own culture’s primitive concepts and prejudices: “The prophets uttered everlasting truths which are embodied and fulfilled in Jesus Christ and with which the geographical and political details have no essential connection,” he wrote,

and added with regard to the New Testament, "I will not see lightly a historical or any other inaccuracy in the Gospels or the Acts, but if I find such, they do not for me affect the divine teaching of these books. The centre of the New Testament is Christ Himself, salvation is in Him, and a historical error cannot affect the fact of His existence and His teachings".<sup>1</sup>

### **What happened in 1925 and 1962**

In 1925, at a time when other denominations were being split by the rise of modernism and where supporters of orthodox Christianity were being put out of their churches—the Southern Baptists met at Memphis where they accepted a confession of faith. Its article on the Scriptures stated: "We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction, that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

When the Southern Baptist Convention met in 1962, messengers adopted a significant motion reaffirming their faith "in the entire Bible as the authoritative, authentic, infallible Word of God." A separate motion registered their objection to "the dissemination of theological views in any of our seminaries which would undermine such faith in the historical accuracy and doctrinal integrity of the Bible." Again the matter came to the fore in 1963 after the appearance of a commentary on Genesis, *Message of Genesis*, written by Professor Ralph Elliot of the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Many men considered that the theology of the commentary was not true to the historical position of the Southern Baptists relative to the Scriptures. So in Kansas City in 1963 the convention again established its conviction that the Bible is the Word of God and has "truth without any mixture of error for its matter". Professor Elliot was subsequently removed from his chair.

### **Dr. Clark Pinnock enters the arena**

On May 23, 1966, at the Detroit convention Dr. Clark H. Pinnock of the New Testament department of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary addressed the Pastors' Conference. Two months later he was to give the "Tyndale Lecture in Biblical Theology for 1966" at Cambridge, England on *A Defence of Biblical Infallibility*<sup>2</sup>. This also was his theme at Detroit, and he pointed out to the ministers that belief in the inspiration and authority of Scripture lies at the heart of Southern Baptists' historic witness and is crucial to the very nature of Christianity.

"Far from diminishing in intensity, the problem of authority continues to grow in the theological arena toward the closing decades of the twentieth

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Christianity Today*, April 24, 1970, "Whither Southern Baptists?", by the editor, Harold Lindsell.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently published by Craig Press, Nutley, N.J., \$.75.

century. Excursions into radical and speculative theology become daily more frequent. Exponents of unbiblical religious systems operate from beneath the umbrellas of the great Protestant denominations with increasing boldness. The chaotic state of American theology today can be traced directly back to an underlying uncertainty about revelation and authority. Our decision to uphold the divine integrity of Scripture must not be left to rest in the minutes and archives; it is a decision to stand resolutely, amid winds of theological change, for an uncompromised and undiluted Gospel, contained only in holy Scripture. The question of biblical inspiration cannot become the plaything of the theological specialist; it is the eminently practical basis of the very Gospel we preach. We do not appeal to the human intellect for the saving knowledge on which our soul's salvation depends. Man's mind is the source of endless confusion about the questions that matter most. Nor can we set aside God's truth to make room for churchy tradition. The Gospel that saved lost men in the first century will suffice to save them in the twentieth. The provision of an inspired Bible was the gracious gift of divine love, the very capstone of the program of redemption, which culminated in Jesus Christ. We have the tremendous privilege of consulting and assimilating this precious transcript of the voice of the living God . . .

"A great amount of learned discussion continues to take place about the nature of biblical inspiration and authority, and much confusion still surrounds the subject. The basic solution, however, lies within the grasp of all; it is to ask what view of divine Scripture the Bible itself presents. It is not from Sigmund Freud that a person discovers God's estimate of human nature and its condition; nor is it from the current consensus of critical scholarship that one determines the nature of inspiration. Every Christian doctrine is established by the same enquiry: What did Christ and the apostles teach about it? Their attitude towards the biblical record is the only one their disciples can hold. Inspiration is a biblical concept, treated in the documents themselves. Christianity worthy of the name holds to the position taught by our Lord and his apostles . . .

"We have one source of authority, the Bible, 'the authoritative authentic, infallible Word of God.' It is our perennial task and privilege to make unequivocal our stand on its integrity and reliability. To do so will lead us to swim against the stream today. But in the last analysis to do it will be to place history in our debt."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Pinnock remained at New Orleans Seminary, amongst the most conservative of the Southern Baptist theological colleges, until some disquieting events became public in early 1969. Robert Soileau, a theology teacher there, resigned under protest, later complaining to the

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity Today*, May 27, 1966, "Southern Baptists and the Bible", pp. 890-891.

regional and seminary accrediting agencies. He grumbled at the seminary having taken a conservative turn and he blamed this on his colleague Clark Pinnock. One month later Pinnock himself resigned from New Orleans Seminary accepting a post at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago.

### **The Gathering Storm**

Now more influential forces entered the fray: many Southern Baptist scholars in the more eastern part of the country, where liberal influences are much stronger in the theological colleges, are members of an Association of Baptist Professors of Religion. In response to the events at New Orleans this organisation adopted the following resolution: "Once again, in recent weeks, events in a Southern Baptist seminary raise, for all concerned persons, a spectre of harassment, biblicism, and witch hunting".

The assessment of the situation in the Southern Baptist Convention which Dr. Pinnock himself makes is very interesting when seen in the light of this resolution. He writes, "Many of the historic evangelical denominations have been subverted by neo-Protestant theology. In each case a self-styled intellectual elite has quietly taken over the power structure, and proceeded to indoctrinate the people in their sub-biblical views. There are in operation now in the Southern Baptist Convention forces which wish to transform the denomination from being a theological-spiritual union of Bible-believing congregations, into a merely financial corporation of indifferent assemblies believing what they please".

### **Dr. Criswell defends infallibility**

However, the sixty-four members of the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion were even more disconcerted by the appearance of a book entitled *Why I Preach that the Bible is Literally True*<sup>1</sup>, written by a celebrated southern preacher, Dr. W. A. Criswell, then president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of the 13,000 member First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. Dr. Criswell's book was undoubtedly a response and a challenge to those in the convention who do not believe that the Bible is infallible. He described it as a personal testimony, an urgent appeal "from the top of my head and from the bottom of my heart . . . with the earnest and prayerful hope that it might encourage other ministers to preach the Bible as the literal, inspired, God-breathed truth of heaven." The book consists of twenty-one chapters in defence of Biblical infallibility making appeal to the spiritual efficacy, historical accuracy and self-attestation of Scripture, firmly rejecting the charge that errors of any kind, factual, moral or theological can be found there. He nowhere denies the legitimate use of scholarly techniques for better understanding the text of Scripture: he has himself earned a doctorate from the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville.

<sup>1</sup> Broadman, 1969, 160 pp. \$3.50.

### Dr. Criswell's book deplored

The Association of Baptist Professors of Religion announced that they deplored "the nature of the promotion and publicity given to the book". No doubt many of them deplored the book itself, but perhaps an awareness of the influence and popularity of Dr. Criswell directed their criticism to the quasi-official status which the Southern Baptist's own Broadman Press gave to the book. But, of course, Dr. Criswell's views are those of the official confession of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Dr. Criswell himself had not ceased writing on this issue; he published another book under the auspices of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, and again there was a liberal back-lash. Robert Alley, professor of religion at the University of Richmond, called the book "both sad and pathetic", and Reuben Alley, editor of the Virginian Baptist weekly *Religious Herald*, wrote that the Sunday School board "made a grievous mistake by allowing itself to become an instrument for stirring already troubled waters and for widening the breach between groups within the Convention."

Other men took their stand alongside Dr. Criswell: in the *Rocky Mountain Baptist* Glen E. Braswell wrote, "I would be heartsick if I thought all Baptist professors believed that a literal interpretation of the Bible undermined their work and alienated students from both the denomination and the Bible itself. If it is so, I would much rather Baptist young people attend state-supported institutions and be subjected to religious sceptics than attend Baptist schools and listen to professors hack away at the authority of the Scriptures".

The Association of Baptist Professors of Religion and their supporters were also accelerating the confrontation of these two exclusive and contrary attitudes. The Association announced that in 1971 it would deal with the question of the authority of the Bible. Meanwhile at its annual meeting at Atlanta, Georgia in early 1970, Professor T. C. Smith called for a new look at the canon, message, and authority of the Bible. The *Capitol Baptist* quoted Smith as saying that "modern Christians should have as much liberty in determining their canon as the church fathers had in their time . . . modern scholarship has more valid criteria for selection of the canon than did religious leaders sixteen centuries ago".<sup>1</sup> Some of the members of the Association are included amongst the fifteen contributors to a Southern Baptist publication *Is the Bible a Human Book?* edited by Wayne E. Ward and Joseph F. Green.<sup>2</sup> Its sentiments are frequently in striking contrast with those expressed in *Why I preach that the Bible is Literally True*. Brooks Hays, once a Congressman and former

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Christianity Today*, April 24, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Broadman, 1970, 159 pp., \$3.50.



President of the Southern Baptist Convention frankly states, "I do not accept all of the Bible as literally true". And whereas Dr. Criswell writes in his book, "It is inane talk that the Bible contains the Word of God but is not the Word of God", James Flamming comments in his essay in this symposium, "Whether the Bible *is* the Word of God or *contains* the Word of God seems to me just so much theological shadow boxing". The book not only emphasises the human element involved in the production of the Scriptures, but tends to conclude that errors are present in the Scripture and that the issue of verbal inerrancy is dead. Brooks Hays can dismiss the historic view of Biblical infallibility as an "irrational and unhistoric position of a few literalists". The first two chapters of the book are totally foreign to concepts held by the average Southern Baptist. Subtly liberal statements are made as though the writers assume that all well-read and intelligent Christians already accept them. One wonders if one of the authors would apply this statement to our Lord Himself, "If God is as obsessed with perfection as we are, God could hardly trust man to write the Bible, for nothing man touches ever comes close to perfection".

### Barthianism

The influence of Barthianism can clearly be seen in various of the essays. John M. Lewis, for example, can write, "The Bible contains world-knowledge and God-knowledge . . . This earthen vessel—the language of the writer and the limitations of his world knowledge—is not to be confused with the divine message of revelation itself." So by this neo-orthodox reduction principle, another writer, John R. Claypool, can speak of the "mistakes and errors and conflicting opinions of the biblical record" and yet at the same time of its "authenticity"! He continues, "The ultimate authority in a living religion can never be something as static as a book . . . It must be none other than God Himself, authenticating his truth in his own freedom and in the most personal of ways. This is why it borders on the heretical to speak of the Bible as the final authority in all matters religious . . . The biblical name for such a practice is *the sin of idolatry*" (p. 28, italics his). Commenting on this quotation in a review of the book in *Christianity Today* a lecturer at the New Orleans Baptist Seminary, Jerry Perrill, wrote, "Such a position borders on the absurd. What employee would get away with ignoring a letter of instruction from his boss by saying that he did not take orders from any printed letter, but from the boss only? In the quotation above, Claypool rejects the authority of Scripture in favour of some mystical personal experience, but then cites Scripture in support of his position."<sup>1</sup>

It is significant again that in the third chapter of *Is the Bible a Human Book?* the accuracy of the Bible and Mosaic authorship for the Pentateuch is assumed, but the editors have interrupted the essay with brackets to

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity Today*, May 8, 1970, pp. 729-730.

note the liberal view of chapter one. A conservative reader will suspect bias. He has already read the liberal view and begins to wonder why the editorial note of reference was not made in the first chapter. This book then is evidently intended as a partial rebuttal of Criswell's book in its giving a corner to those with liberal views.

### **The growing cancer**

What then we are seeing amongst the Southern Baptists at the present time is an attempt by members and supporters of the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion to change the official basis of the Convention which was confirmed both in 1925 and as recently as 1963. If the Convention will not change, these men expect to be allowed to continue in the Convention with the right of freely declaring their opposing views and teaching others to do so. Harold Lindsell pertinently asks, "Are not these persons placed in an ambiguous position in being related to a fellowship parts of whose confessions they cannot accept? Are they not opening themselves to the charge of dissidency and subversion so long as they remain within a group whose statements place them outside its pale?"<sup>1</sup>

This brief history of the background to the situation which has developed amongst the Southern Baptists has been outlined here not simply because readers in countries outside America will be largely ignorant of these tensions, but also because the appearance of the Broadman Bible Commentary in Britain has intensified the issue and brought it nearer home<sup>2</sup>.

In conclusion we may well wonder whether discipline will be brought to bear upon those who are seeking to subvert the standards of the Convention? A great deal depends upon the leaders as so much is at stake, not only for the Southern Baptists, but for the Baptist world at large.

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*The trends described in the following article are fairly typical of the country as a whole. Parents in most areas are affected. For this reason and because of the general direction in which attitudes are going the subject, although distasteful, deserves thoughtful consideration.*

## **Sex-Education**

RECENTLY AT A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN HAYWARDS HEATH THE B.B.C. Merry-go-round sex films for eight and nine year olds were shown to several hundred parents, the majority of whom approved the showing of the three films to their children. Opposition came almost exclusively

<sup>1</sup>"Whither the Southern Baptists?", C.T., April 24, 1970, pp. 667-669.

<sup>2</sup>The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1. General Articles, Genesis-Exodus, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1970, 407 pp.

from Christians, eight families of Reformed conviction being represented in the school. Speaking on behalf of some of the latter the Baptist minister pleaded at the meeting that the films represented an integral part of the overall moral decline in the nation away from the absolute standards of Christianity.

The films are basically evolutionary in concept, little difference being drawn between man and the animals. No reference is made to morality or to the dignity of man, made in the image of God. A few scenes with Mum and Dad are included to satisfy those who allege that there is no reference to marriage (which there is not). The children are left to assume that the two shown are married. The depiction of sexual organs in third film is pornographic. A few parents other than the Christians mentioned criticised this.

The headmaster drew attention to the subject by encouraging the children to prepare a topic (which extended over several weeks) on what they had seen. The implications, therefore, are thrust upon all the children. The headmaster anxious to make a success of the experiment genuinely believes that timely instruction is the answer to lewd talk that invariably takes place among children. It has been pointed out however, that while effort may be made now to set the subject in a natural perspective there is no guarantee that watchfulness will be maintained in the future. It is fatal, in our view, to hand over this intimate area of instruction to strangers or to the State. It does not take much to imagine the inadequacy of some teachers for this task which belongs essentially to the home. The only recourse is to remove the children to private schools, which has involved some parents in hardship and suffering. Complaints have been made of eight and nine year old children having distorted ideas for the simple reason that these films are utterly premature. For instance, a close-up is shown of a mother having a baby, a scene which many grown-ups and many fathers prefer not to witness.

During the discussion the Baptist minister pointed out that there is now absolutely no limit as to what can be shown to our children. This statement seems to be vindicated by a report in *The Times*, 13th January, 1971, to the effect that a new educational film has been prepared for schools in which the sex act is shown in which the couple are identifiable.

Most people do not realise that headmasters are legally allowed to show whatever they like. Parents have no protection apart from legal proceedings which can be taken if any harm is done to the children either directly or indirectly by sex-education. Serious lasting damage has been done to children in some schools<sup>1</sup>.

American ministers have suggested that Christians in this country are too slow in their initiative to promote their own schools which is the pattern

<sup>1</sup> Documented in an article in *Learning and Living*. Copies available from the editor at 5p post free.

in the U.S.A. In that country they have already been through the cycle of sex-education. President Nixon's personal nominee on the current Commission on Pornography and Obscenity declared recently concerning American state schools, "When God went out pornography came in."<sup>1</sup>

Apart from anything else we seem to have lost sight of the fact that to handle sex in a merely biological way is to brutalise it, and to placade it around is to crush its soul to death. The wrong use of this subject has been detrimental in the extreme in that the finer values of romance, beauty, and tenderness have been mangled. We may well ask whether the B.B.C. films which are supposed to present the facts in an attractive way are not conditioning the minds of the children (and the parents for that matter) to accept as normal the presentation of anything sexual whether normal or abnormal.

The sex-education of eight to nine year olds is part, as has been said, of an overall trend. The latest development in the country is the establishment of sex supermarkets. One has just been opened in Bristol and it is reported that children stare through the windows at the wares displayed. Again there seems to be no limit and no restraint as to what is shown. The sex-supermarket highlights the fact that the sex craze is increasing and that the rising generation tends to be sex-sodden and sex-mad. We have the subject thrust at us in a distorted way, on our bookstalls, on our hoardings, through radio, in our novels, stage plays, and on television.

These events accentuate the lostness of our generation. The rejection of the God of Scripture has led to the rejection of the ten commandments. We therefore have no standard by which to judge a thing to be right or wrong. There are only two alternatives. Either we receive the whole Gospel or else we cast adrift upon the sea of relative values, every man doing that which is right in his own eyes.

The sex-education controversy is not a battle that can at present be won, for the simple reason that the majority do not accept absolute standards of right and wrong that Christians accept. Moreover, it is unlikely that people who reject the main tenets of the moral law such as the first four commandments will be able to discern the finer points about Biblical teaching on the need of modesty in the matter of sex. The idea that man is corrupt and that his desires can easily be corrupted is not popular. The Bible is very frank in its depiction of the misuse of sex and parents who read the Bible with their children have opportunity to explain these matters in a realistic setting. Sex is not just another subject like biology since it involves a person's passions, and it is fallacious to think that inevitable problems can be circumvented by giving children an overdose of knowledge before their passions develop.

The imposition of restraint is frowned upon and caricatured as Victorian or Puritanical, whereas the humanistic idea prevails that so long as people are given the right instruction all will be well. This can be illustrated in

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

the matter of smoking. It is a notorious fact that doctors know more about lung cancer than others and yet continue to smoke for the simple reason that they enjoy it. Illicit sex will prevail so long as people like it and so long as they are not restrained by definite moral principles. The removal of these principles leads inevitably to transgression. As a doctor said in one of the meetings for parents in the local school, his surgery was already adversely affected by current permissive trends and that the mothers who now scoffed at him on opposing premature sex-education would be among those affected in the future, their daughters also ending up in his consulting rooms.

It is imperative for Christians to bear in mind that the sex-education controversy is only a part of the overall battle. The decline of absolutes has led to this particular controversy which could hardly have been imagined in former generations, when absolute moral standards were generally accepted.

On the other hand we should not think that our generation is unique. What is described in Romans 1 is being re-enacted before our eyes, and in conclusion we might comment on the sequence of events outlined by the apostle:

*Ungodliness:* God is the only source of absolutes and the absolute moral law. When He is rejected we no longer have a basis of morality.

*Unrighteousness:* When the foundations are removed, immoralities or works of unrighteousness multiply.

*Reprobation:* When men do not like to retain a knowledge of God, He gives them up to uncleanness. In other words, He removes His restraints and all forms of perversity and sodomy arise. In our day we see this in the showing of the sex-act on television and in the stage play "Oh Calcutta". Reprobation includes darkness of the mind in respect of true religion. The mind of man is never a religious vacuum; if there is the absence of the true, there is always the presence of the perverse.

*The casting off of restraints:* When people have a reprobate mind they indulge in things which are not convenient. Society becomes violent and people take the law into their own hands. The casting off of restraints applies particularly in the area of sex which is made an end in itself.

*Judgment:* When a society becomes debased and when even the children from the youngest age learn to blaspheme and accept every form of perversion as natural, then it is nearing destruction, as in the case of Sodom. The generation which despises the teaching about Hell constitutes the one which is the nearest to it.

The tragedy in Britain today is that reprobate elements have wormed their way to the nerve centres of influence such as the mass-media. Unless these elements are removed through the courageous action of leaders the rot will spread more and more. Never were we in greater need of an evangelical reformation and revival.

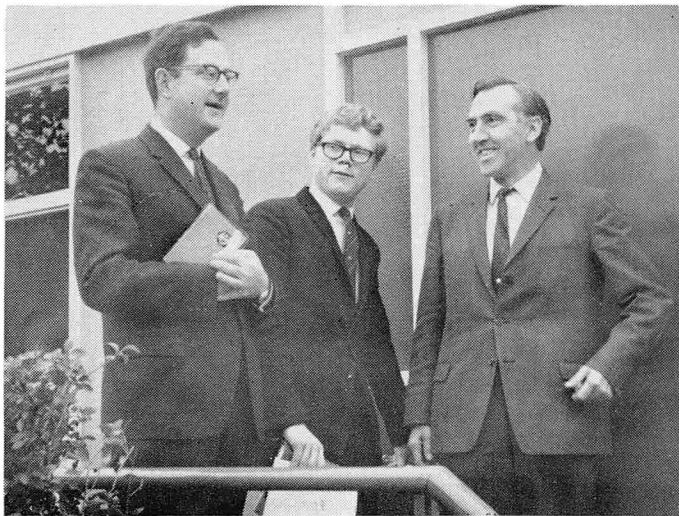


*David Kingdon, Principal of the Irish Baptist College since 1963, is shown above (on the left of a group of students) and below with Herbert Carson (on the right) and one of the students at the College. There are 31 students from different countries at the College which offers a three-year Theological course available at two levels, and also a two-year and one-year Missionary course—the latter available only for those with a basic professional qualification.*

*The photograph below was taken with the background of a new lecture hall. It was the editor's privilege to be the first to lecture in this hall—the subject "Evangelism."*

*Principal Kingdon, who trained at Spurgeon's College, is due to visit South Africa from 16 March to 12 April this year. He is one of the main speakers at The Evangelical and Reformed Conference at Port Elizabeth. The other speakers are A. S. Gilfillan, former Principal of the Baptist College in Johannesburg and now minister of Trinity Baptist Church in Port Elizabeth; Jannie du Preez of the Dutch Reformed Theological College for Zhosha students at Umtata; Jim van Zyl, and the editor. This Conference is to take place at the University at Port Elizabeth from the 5th to the 7th April. Brochures can be obtained from Jim van Zyl.*

*Those interested in the Irish Baptist College should write to 67 Sandown Road, Belfast. Recently Mr. Kingdon gave a lecture on "Training for the Ministry" at the annual lecture of the Evangelical Library. This is published as a booklet and is available from the Library or from Reformation Today. Price: 37p, including postage.*



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