

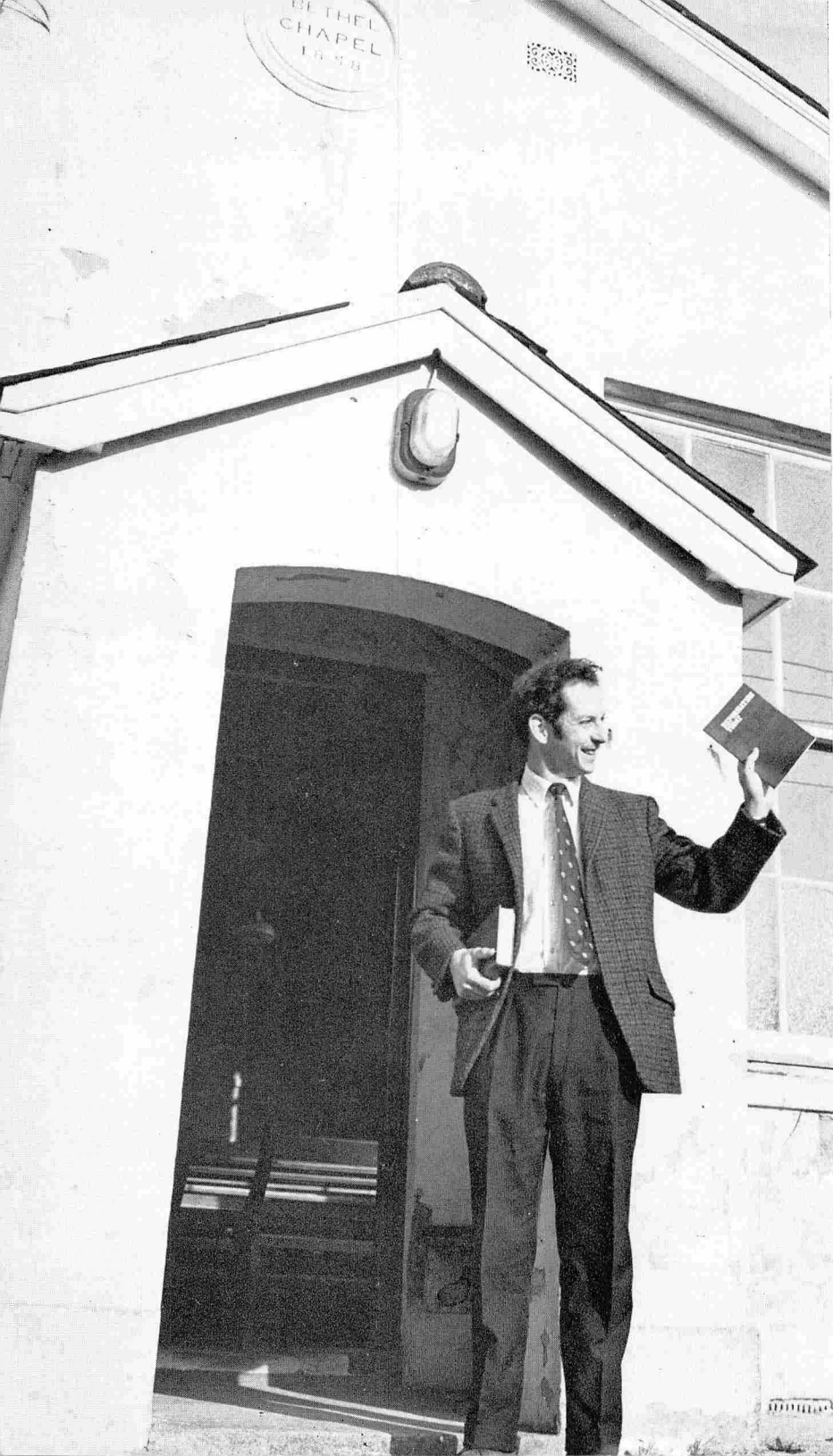
# REFORMATION TODAY



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# Editorial

AS TWO YEARS PUBLICATION OF "REFORMATION TODAY" IS COMPLETED we press forward with thankfulness. Both the church and those within it, responsible for the administration of the magazine, have been enriched through fellowship with Christians in many parts of the world who share the burden for reformation, who support this publication, and from whom we are sometimes favoured with letters.

## *New York*

The sketch on the cover reminds us of one of the largest population centres in the world. Readers will be interested to know of an enterprising Reformed centre situated at Geneva House, led by Paul McCoy.<sup>1</sup>

## *Articles present and future*

The substance of David Kingdon's article was presented at Port Elizabeth this year. It comprehends the major questions being debated today.

Wayne Mack, pastor of the Baptist Church at Media, Pennsylvania, is welcomed to these pages. Further edifying material from his pen is ready for future issues.

Recently the *Daily Express* ran a series giving the script for the stage play *Jesus Christ—Superstar*. The record album for this Pop-opera has had phenomenal success. We do well to be acquainted with some of the details provided by Jim van Zyl.

Mr. S. M. Houghton reminds us of our duty to pray for Christians in Russia by providing a balanced assessment of the situation there.

We have not forgotten the article *Reformation for Wives* promised by the Editor. It is not lack of courage but lack of time (caused largely through the move to a new address) which has hindered the perfecting of the item for press.

Although it may not appear to be so, the most controversial article in this issue is the one on William Gadsby. His admirers may well feel that inadequate justice has been done to the great work which he accomplished. Others might frown on Gadsby altogether because of his doctrine. We would remind readers that one of the aims of this publication is to make people think. Some folk get angry if they are disturbed, or if things they took for granted are challenged. One dearly beloved sister confesses to have hurled her copy of *Reformation Today* across the room! We are still in happy Christian fellowship!

Your support by way of prayer and subscription is appreciated as we continue to seek reformation and revival in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup> The address: Geneva House, 1435, 36th Street, Brooklyn, N.Y., 11218, U.S.A.

# God's Church and Scriptural Evangelism

*David Kingdon*

IN THE EVANGELICAL WORLD AT THE PRESENT TIME THERE IS A WIDESPREAD rethinking of the subject of evangelism. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that evangelism, as traditionally understood, is in the melting-pot.

Various factors have combined to bring about this situation. In the first place, there is increasing disappointment with the results of mass evangelistic campaigns. The paucity of lasting results has contrasted with their soaring costs. The claims of some evangelists that their campaigns indicated the beginning of revival have proved unfounded. Many evangelicals are now beginning to ask whether the time has not come for a critical scrutiny of mass evangelism in the light of Scripture.

In the second place, the increasing tendency towards what can be termed "ecumenical evangelism" has raised the question in some minds as to the biblical justification for co-operating with all shades of theological opinion in united evangelism. Those evangelical churches which are opposed to the Ecumenical movement on what they believe to be biblical grounds are coming to see that it is thoroughly inconsistent to become involved in ecumenical evangelism. If one unites with modernists one week in evangelism how can one refuse to discuss church unity with them the next? Certainly one cannot with any consistency do the former and refuse to do the latter.

Thirdly, the way in which entertainment has invaded evangelism is causing serious-minded Christians increasing concern. When they read the New Testament they are struck by the contrast between Paul's refusal to preach with enticing words of man's wisdom and the blatant parading of personalities and the encouragement of personal followings which is so marked a feature of modern evangelism.

Fourthly, in the United Kingdom—and one sees evidence of it beginning to happen elsewhere—there has been a rediscovery of Puritan theology and, with it, a re-awakening of interest in a kind of evangelism which stands in stark contrast with the evangelism of the past few generations. It has come to be appreciated that men like Joseph Alleine, John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, the two Wesleys, Murray McCheyne and C. H. Spurgeon were powerful preachers of the Gospel whose presuppositions, message and methods were markedly different from those which are in vogue today.

For these reasons, then, there is a widespread questioning of tradition and a willingness to examine time-worn practices in the light of Scripture.

## I

Biblical evangelism is rooted in the biblical doctrine of God because it is here that evangelism finds its source and motive power. But exactly how, you may ask, does the biblical doctrine of God bear upon the subject of evangelism? Here are just three vital aspects:—

### (i) God is creator and judge

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The world and all that is within it owes its existence to the God who spoke His creative words and brought the universe into being. All men owe to God as Creator the homage and loyalty of their hearts. All men are called upon to acknowledge their dependence and to express their thanksgiving in praise and devotion to the living God.

Moreover since God is “the judge of all the earth” they are accountable to Him for what they are and what they do. In His righteous judgment He will “render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:6). Since He is omnipresent no one can hide from Him (Psa. 139), and so His judgments are always based upon a perfect knowledge of the accused.

It is only as the character of God as creator and judge is held forth in preaching that the enormity of man’s sinful rebellion and the folly of his impiety are exposed. This the apostle Paul does in Romans 1, for example. Man in sin refuses to glorify God his Creator (v. 21) and thankfully to acknowledge his dependence upon God for every good gift. Rather he turns to creation and lavishes love upon the creature which is due only to God. To plead ignorance will not do since the clear revelation in the created order of the eternal power and deity of God leaves him absolutely without excuse (v. 20). Man in sin is thus condemned before ever he hears the Gospel. He is condemned because he has “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the *Creator*, who is blessed for ever” (v. 25).

Therefore, only as the doctrine of God the creator and judge is expounded can the wickedness of man’s apostate heart be brought home to him. Our evangelism must not begin with man’s *need* but with his *sin*, and his sin can only be seen for what it is—rebellion, impiety and ingratitude—as the doctrine of the sovereign creator and eternal judge is brought to his attention.

### (ii) God is holy and righteous

The holiness and righteousness of God cannot be left out of evangelistic preaching since the result will be an impoverished view of salvation. The grace of God in salvation can only be appreciated and captivate the heart

of the sinner if he first is made aware of the holiness of God, for slight views of God inevitably issue in slight views of sin, and slight views of sin issue in slight views of Christ's death on the Cross.

The holiness of God finds expression in His majesty and in His awful purity. In His majesty He is "high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1), enthroned above the earth, reigning in utter sovereignty. This God of majesty cannot be manipulated by man; He is not at man's beck and call. He is sovereign majesty, and thus He saves whom He will (Rom. 9:15-16). God is not the subject of man; rather man is subject to the sovereign will of God. The God of the Bible is not forced to save any man. Only in the sovereignty of grace is the sinner chosen, called, regenerated, justified, adopted, sanctified and glorified.

God's holiness is not only manifested in the separateness of His majesty, but also in the absolute moral purity of His Being. "He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." He dwells in unapproachable light, and reacts with indescribable wrath against sin. To realise this is to be brought face to face with one's own defilement, against which the door of heaven will remain for ever shut (Rev. 21:27).

The righteousness of God is closely related to His holiness, but there is a significant difference of meaning which it is important to notice. The basic idea conveyed by the Hebrew word *tsedeq* is that of conformity to a norm. Thus "righteous balances" are balances which conform to the norm, whereas "unrighteous" balances are such because they deviate from the norm. Therefore, to say that God is righteous is to say that God is the norm for all conduct. Now the righteousness of God is the measure by which man is judged. "He shall judge the world with righteousness" (Psa. 96:13; cf. 98:9) is the witness of the Old Testament, which is taken up and reiterated in the New Testament proclamation. Thus Paul assured the scoffing Athenians that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

God in judgment will never act unrighteously, nor can He act unrighteously to save sinners. He saves sinners not in spite of His righteousness, as some preachers suggest when they oppose His mercy to His righteousness, but because He *is* righteous. In the Gospel, mercy is not warring against righteousness precisely because in the Gospel "is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17).

Unless the righteousness of God is proclaimed in the kerygma, neither the sinner's terrible deviation from the norm, God Himself, nor the necessity of propitiation can be appreciated. Whilst many evangelicals uphold substitutionary atonement, few seem to appreciate the importance of the atonement as *propitiation*—the rendering of a righteous God propitious towards the sinner because His righteousness is upheld and His wrath

assuaged. Not that we should view the atonement as constraining the love of God toward elect sinners, because the atonement is itself constrained by the love of God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). Nonetheless, the atoning death of Christ at once reconciled the Father to the elect and provided the ground on which they can be reconciled to Him (II Cor. 5:19).

(iii) The character of God is expressed in His law

The holiness and righteousness of God are not left undefined and vague in Scripture. Rather they focus in, and are expressed by, His Law. Sin is in consequence particularised as "the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4; cf. Rom. 4:15). Though sin has psychological consequences, for example a sense of anxiety and disharmony, it is not defined in Scripture so much in psychological terms as in terms of transgression against the revealed commandments of the God who demands, "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:16). Sin therefore has an objective character as transgression resulting from disobedience (Eph. 2:2). And transgression renders the sinner guilty before God.

This emphasis of Scripture upon the moral law runs clean counter to much contemporary evangelicalism. Today the Gospel is often given a psychological orientation—it is presented in terms of man's need for freedom from anxiety and from inward disharmony. Now while the Gospel of Christ has within it the power to make man whole, the subjective benefits of reconciliation (so far as man's *experience* of them is concerned) must not be allowed to obscure the fact that man is a transgressor before God. His transgression of God's law must be brought home to him, and this can only be brought about as the law is preached and applied in the power of the Holy Spirit. To preach the Gospel in terms of man's *psychological* needs is in fact to preach a man-centred Gospel. God's redemptive purposes are limited by, and made subordinate to, the needs of man as He sees them.

The preaching of the character of God as expressed in His law-demands serves to emphasise to the sinner the perfections of God ("the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good . . . the law is spiritual—Rom. 7:12, 14) and the hatred of, and unbelief in, God which are resident in His apostate heart. Since the commandments were not given that man might win the love of God, but as the means whereby he might prove his love to God (cf. Exod. 20:6, "that *love* me and keep my commandments"; I John 5:3; John 14:15), man's transgression of the commandments demonstrates his enmity against God. Thus, the preaching of the law is indispensable in the creation of a conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Furthermore, without the preaching of the law human inability will not be appreciated. The law-demands of God demonstrate the inability of

the sinner to please God, and thus point to the necessity of the satisfaction of Christ as redeemer. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3).

Any evangelism which does not set forth the law will inevitably produce slight views of the redeeming work of Christ. To be told, for example, that to give our lives to Christ is the noblest thing we can do, is failing to appreciate that, as sinners, we can do nothing noble—we cannot please God. On the other hand, when our heart's corruption and our utter inability are brought home to us by the preaching of the law we cry "God be merciful to me, *the sinner*" (Luke 18:13).

James Denney insisted that every evangelist must be a theologian. If this is so, what is most urgently needed today is a recovery of the biblical doctrine of God, without which the Gospel of grace is cheapened.

## II

If the biblical doctrine of God is essential to biblical evangelism, no less is the biblical doctrine of man in sin.

Three views of man in his present condition suggest discussion. It is possible to maintain that man is *healthy*. This is in essence the view of humanism in its various forms. That man is healthy is the basic premise of most modern educational theory and of political philosophies, such as Communism, which believe in the perfectibility of man. What problems man faces are not due to himself but to his environment. In this view of man, therefore, all talk of sin, guilt, pollution and inability are out of place since *within himself* man has the resources to solve all his problems.

Secondly, it can be argued that man is *sick*. To get better he needs, therefore, to go to a doctor and, after his diagnosis, faithfully to take the prescribed medicine. This view of man may be described as the semi-Pelagian. It is characteristic of both Roman Catholic theology and much contemporary evangelicalism. In the Roman Catholic form of Pelagianism man is pictured as needing the help of sacramental grace; in the Protestant, as needing the help of the Holy Spirit. In either case "grace" is seen in terms of God's *help* towards recovery.

The third view of man is, I believe, that which is taught in Scripture. According to this, man is neither healthy nor sick; he is "*dead* in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). In this condition, he is not free for he walks "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (v. 2). His will is enslaved, his mind is darkened, his affections are misdirected. He cannot please God.

A dead man needs more than medicine—he needs resurrection. Thus, Paul consistently speaks of the work of God in elect sinners in the



following ways: making alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13 *sunzōōpoeio*); begetting, *gennaō*—that is, implanting life (John 1:13; 3:3-8; I Pet. 1:23; I John 2:29), and creating (Eph. 2:10; 4:24, *ktizo*).

The biblical view of man has certain important implications for evangelism. In the first place, it casts the preacher of the Gospel in total dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit. Unless he works with and by the Word there can be no conversions. Thus the preacher is shut up to prayer, that the anointing of the Spirit may rest upon the proclamation of the Gospel. Since he cannot create one anxious thought, he must rely entirely upon the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11).

Secondly, preaching can never be an end in itself; it must be a means to an end—the conversion of sinners. The end of Paul's preaching was never to attract attention to himself, but it was the means used by God to draw sinners to the crucified Christ. "My speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Paul could say this, because it was his determined aim "not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2, 4). It is impossible to square Paul's attitude with the personality cults and publicity organisations of mass evangelism.

Thirdly, once a preacher is persuaded of the biblical view of man certain consequences will follow both for his presentation of the Gospel and the application of it to his hearers.

The presentation of the Gospel will be governed by the biblical doctrine of God. It will be instilled with a sense of reverence and awesome wonder that such a God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son. In *His* name the preacher holds forth the Word of life to perishing sinners. Having also the scriptural view of the plight of man the preacher will show that "only Jesus can do *helpless* sinners good". In short, he will preach as a dying man to dying men, with solemnity and earnestness.

As to method, on the one hand the preacher must apply the Gospel to his hearers and, on the other, he will foreswear all devices and stratagems which would suggest that men can save themselves. Realising that the heart of man is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", he will seek to root the sinner out of all the refuges into which he creeps to hide from the living God and His Word. The Gospel must be applied to sinners in a particular and detailed way or the citadel of man's soul will not be taken. As is hand to hand fighting by the infantry to an artillery bombardment, so is the detailed application of the Gospel related to its general exposition. A city is not taken until the enemy is flushed out of its cellars.

On the other hand, all methods which leave the sinner with the impression that he can save himself will be foresworn. When some young people who had already "been out to the front" asked, when present when

another appeal was made, "Pastor do we have to go out again? We have *done* it once", is there not something radically wrong with the whole appeal system? Does it not suggest that the appeal must be responded to in order to be saved? Is there not a disastrous confusion between going forward and going to Christ by faith alone? The fact that Leighton Ford argues the case for the appeal system largely on psychological grounds should give us food for thought, for this suggests that it is man's psychological make-up which in the last analysis is to determine how the Gospel is to be applied to him.

Some reading this may be prepared to defend the appeal system on the pragmatic ground that it works. Aside from the fact that the Church did nicely without the system for eighteen-and-a-half centuries, there is the incipient and ubiquitous danger of pragmatism. That danger is this—that the *more* something works the better. Thus William Sargant in "Battle for the Mind", after expounding Pavlov's theory of conditioned reflexes, and comparing the Communist brain-washing techniques which are built thereon with *certain* evangelistic techniques, argues that the Church would make more converts if she used the same methods! The moral is too obvious to need pointing.

Some may be prepared to argue that it is possible to draw a distinction between the message and the methods. However, methods express pre-suppositions; there is no such thing as a *neutral* method, for every method in evangelism expresses both a certain view of God and a certain view of man. However time-worn methods are they must all be thoroughly subjected to the scrutiny of Scripture, to discover whether they are glorifying to God and in the best interests of man.

### III

How about the function of the Church in evangelism? It is here that we are most obviously weak as evangelicals. There is a reason for this. When, in the 19th century, hitherto evangelical denominations largely departed from the truth of the Gospel, those evangelicals who remained within began to develop extra-church organisations, in which they could co-operate in evangelism with like-minded believers in other communions. The co-operation was not on a church basis, but on an individual or group basis. The result has been that evangelicals have got on with evangelism, whilst leaving others to concentrate on the doctrine of the church.

When one compares present-day evangelism with the evangelism described in the New Testament, certain differences emerge quite sharply.

For a start, the evangelism of the New Testament was *church* evangelism. It was church based and the whole church was involved.

Evangelism, as described in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, is through the church to the world. Never does evangelism find expres-

sion in extra-church organisations. The local church is God's unit, indeed God's organism, for the evangelisation of a district or region. Thus from the church of the Thessalonians the Word of the Lord sounded out to Macedonia and Achaia (I Thess. 1:8). It is into the local church, the body of Christ in its local manifestation, that new converts were brought by baptism. It is in the local church that they found nurture, received instruction and came under discipline. Evangelism was not the work of the enthusiastic few but of the mobilised many. We get a glimpse of this communal evangelism in Acts 8:4, where we are told that after the persecution consequent upon the death of Stephen believers were scattered from Jerusalem and they "went every where preaching the Word".

The reason for all this is not hard to find. According to the teaching of the New Testament the purposes of God centre in the *Church*—its calling by grace, its worship, mission, edification, sanctification and justification. For the *Church* Christ gave Himself "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27). Thus we who make much of the evangel, which proclaims the glorious redemption wrought in Christ, fail to be faithful to the whole counsel of God if we do not realise that Gospel and Church belong inseparably together.

Because God's purposes centre in the Church, it is not possible to take an individualistic view of salvation which would allow a slight view of the church to be taken. Implicit in the idea of our faith-union with Christ, is the thought that in Him we are a new humanity. There are but two basic solidarities in human existence; the solidarity of mankind in Adam, and the solidarity of regenerate believers in Christ, the last Adam, who is the quickener of the dead. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). If Adam is the federal head of the old humanity, so Christ is the head of the new humanity. As in virtue of their union with Adam, his sin was imputed to all men (Rom. 5:12-14) so in virtue of our union with Christ by faith, His righteousness is imputed to us (Rom. 5:18-19). While it is true that we are *individually* granted faith to believe in Christ, and thus are justified, it is also true that our union with Christ does not permit us to take an *individualistic* view of salvation. We are not saved to be isolated units, we are saved in Christ, and thus are incorporated into a new humanity, *one* new man (Eph. 2:15).

Undoubtedly, one of the great weaknesses of contemporary evangelism lies in the failure of so many evangelicals to appreciate that conversion is not an end in itself, but the means whereby the believer is incorporated into the new humanity which is in Christ. So much present-day evangelism seems to proceed on the assumption that a complete silence about

the Church—its purpose, nature, and destiny—is the mark of faithfulness to the Gospel proclaimed by the Apostles.

Until we recover the apostles' doctrine of the church we shall not recover the apostles' practice of evangelism. However, apostolic evangelism was not building-centred. A study of Paul's "methods", if such be the right word, demonstrates this. Often he preaches in the open air, in the market-place and by the riverside at Philippi, on Mars Hill at Athens. He got into synagogues where he could and preached Sabbath by Sabbath as long as he was allowed to do so. At Corinth he even opened up next door to the synagogue after his message was rejected in it.

Paul's evangelism, then, though it was church-centred, was not building-centred, as so much of our evangelism is. Indeed it is true to say that very little evangelism was carried on when the church met together. The church met together for worship and instruction rather than for an evangelistic service. The very incidental nature of the reference to the coming of an unbeliever into a service of worship demonstrates this (I Cor. 14:24 ff.).

Going into all the world is hardly carried out by preaching the Gospel at a stated time on Sunday evenings. Evangelism must be through the whole church to the whole world. The trouble is that as someone has said, too many people are singing "Standing on the Promises" while sitting on the premises!

Lastly, we must say a few words about the church's task of maintaining an uncompromised testimony in evangelism. Paul did not hold joint evangelistic services with the Synagogue, precisely because he believed that to the church had been committed the truth. The tendency today is to be pragmatic—to join with anyone who is prepared to co-operate in evangelism regardless of whether he preaches the Gospel or not. The apostle who wrote the epistle to the Galatians would never have done so. With anyone who preached works as being the ground of our salvation Paul would not co-operate. Rather he said, "let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). Yet it is now fashionable for some evangelicals to co-operate with sacramentalists on the one hand and outright modernists on the other. It has been forgotten that the Scriptures *do* say that the church is "the pillar and ground of truth" (I Tim. 3:15).

If we co-operate with everybody, we sow confusion as to the nature of the Gospel and the exclusiveness of salvation as it is in Christ Jesus. Furthermore, we put ourselves under the obligation of forwarding proposed converts to churches which deny the very Gospel we preach. You would hardly expect a Marxist to send one of his converts to the Monday Club.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A club in England patronised by devout right-wing Conservatives.

*(Continued at foot of page 21)*

*Jesus Christ—Superstar, the new religious rock opera, has hit Broadway with such acclaim that those who enthuse about it as the "in thing", say it will outstrip any other show on record in New York. The music has been recorded and sales in some countries have indicated popularity on a par with the Beatles when they were the rage. Jim van Zyl has made an in-depth study of this new rock-opera giving particular attention to the words and music.*

*Superstar has not made much impression in Britain and stage critics writing in "The Times" and "The Telegraph" have been cool in reporting the staging of the dramatised version in New York. The following is a considerably abridged version of Jim van Zyl's review.<sup>1</sup>*

## Jesus Christ—Superstar

TOWARDS THE END OF 1970, A NEW COMMERCIAL COMET IN THE FORM OF a Rock Opera appeared, bearing the title "Jesus Christ—Superstar". Written by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, it is an attempt to cast the Passion of Christ into a modern idiom; to make it understandable to the plastic culture and generation of the 20th century.

The immediate and pressing question is: how are we to judge this venture? We propose to compare it with the evidence, both historical and theological, that is found in the New Testament. We will look at the characters of Judas, the Lord Jesus Christ, and Mary Magdalene.

### Judas

Judas is pictured as the "cool guy", strong and clear-headed who sees that Jesus is being overwhelmed by a rush of popularity and tries to rescue the situation. In the process he emerges as the anti-hero. The moral guilt which the New Testament places squarely on his shoulders is subtly whisked away, and instead of the solemn picture of the man who cold-bloodedly sold Jesus, we find a new Judas, altruistic and compassionate. The whole emphasis is on "Poor old Judas", as the choir on Side Four remind us. In Superstar Judas is exonerated and cleared of all his guilt. This is a radical alteration of the historical facts.

### Mary

Mary Magdalene is portrayed as an immoral woman, and to say that her lengthy song on Side Two is suggestive and implies a dishonourable

<sup>1</sup> The twelve-page booklet has been published in South Africa as a supplementary to the latest edition of the magazine *Either—Or*, the students' publication of The Students' Christian Association of Southern Africa (S.C.A.). Due to lack of space it has not been possible to quote lengthy excerpts from the lyrics as is done in the booklet. This abridged version is reprinted with the kind permission of *Either—Or*. Readers in South Africa who wish to purchase the complete booklet may do so for 15c post free, or R1.25 per twelve copies post free from: "Superstar", c/o Mr. A. Townsend, P.O. Box 2263, Port Elizabeth. Readers in the U.K. may send their orders to Mr. Guthrie or the Editor.

relationship with Christ is to say the very least. This is frankly too awful for comment. The evidence is almost stronger in Judas's words under Bethany, Friday Night. "It's not that I object to her profession . . . it doesn't help us if you're inconsistent." The appalling nature of it is only equalled by the number of Christians who can stand by with seeming equanimity while the peerless and majestically pure character of Christ is blatantly sabotaged. This is not updating Christ, this is downright sacrilege.

## **Christ**

If we say that Scott of the Antarctic (and many other ordinary men of sterling character) faced death with infinitely more certainty, self-control and poise than the Jesus of Superstar, then we have virtually said everything. The Jesus of Superstar is nothing but a panic-stricken, irritable, frustrated and petulant weakling. The only resemblance to the Christ of the New Testament is that they have the same name.

On Side Two the crowd call out to Jesus to heal and mend them. Jesus' reaction could hardly be more unlike the Christ of the Gospels. He says: "There's too many of you—don't push me . . . There's too little of me—don't crowd me . . . Heal yourselves". In a pathetic outburst of self-confession Superstar makes Jesus testify to His own inadequacy. Listen, in contrast, to the majestic New Testament Christ: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"—"I am the Resurrection and the Life". Not only that, but His astonishing patience with the noisy, clamouring crowds are in stark contradiction to the snarling irascibility displayed in Superstar.

The Last Supper account on Side Three points to an increasingly panic-stricken Christ venting His petulance on the disciples: "I must be mad thinking I'll be remembered . . .". Compare this petty attitude to the calm and self-possession shown in the authentic narrative in John 14-17. The horrifying climax of Superstar is reached in Gethsemane where Jesus is depicted as paralytic with fear and uncertainty: "I'm not so sure as when we started . . . If I die what will be my reward? . . .". Furthermore He attacks God with an insolence and petulance that befits a cornered criminal: "All right, I'll die! Just watch me die! . . . nail me to your cross and break me . . . bleed me, beat me, kill me . . .". How far removed from the Gospels where Christ's relationship to the Father is always one of love and trust.

Perhaps we may say that the whole message of Superstar is summed up in the dialogue between Christ and Pilate. To the question whether He was a King, Jesus answers: "It's you that says I am . . . I look for truth and find that I get damned". Thus Jesus is not the truth, but is searching for it. Pilate replies: "Is truth unchanging law? We both have truths—are mine the same as yours?" By framing the question in this way

Superstar is saying that there is no such thing as Absolute Truth—certainly not in Christ.

Not surprisingly, Superstar ends just before the Crucifixion, an indication that the writers do not hold the Atonement to be essential to our understanding of Christ. It also concludes with a quotation from John 19 which simply describes the tomb where Jesus was laid. With His death it was all finished! Rice and Webber apparently do not accept that Christ actually, literally rose again. Thus with an anti-hero replacing the morally guilty Judas; with the deity of Christ erased and His humanity defaced; with the Atonement ignored and the Resurrection disbelieved, Superstar ends.

### **Implications**

Evangelical Christians should take Superstar seriously—for a number of reasons.

#### **1. No absolutes.**

It is a horrifying revelation of the questioning mood of present day young people. The very extremes of words and music show the depth of their anxiety. In reaction to the dehumanisation of our mechanised age they desperately invade the most sacred precincts for an answer to life's questions. Even in the blasphemy, the naked, questing young people emerge as pathetic creatures torn away from the absolute truths of God in nature, culture and science.

#### **2. No authority.**

It is indirectly a stinging rebuke for the theological liberals. They have torn these absolutes away and left no shelter on the bleak plains of humanism and rationalism. They have removed a Personal and Holy Creator and said we must put our trust in the "ground of our being"—whatever that may mean; they have removed the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Bible, saying it is useful merely as a handbook of religious experience; they have emptied Christ of His deity, atoning death and literal resurrection, leaving nothing but a visionary prophet. In other words they have chopped down God's signposts and replaced them with false ones, creating a world which drifts daily into greater anarchy.

#### **3. The plastic culture.**

On the other hand the extreme of Superstar (and a good deal else in our plastic culture, such as the hippie movement) may be an unparalleled opportunity to present the Gospel. For so desperate are many of these young people becoming, and so heavily is God's judgment upon our culture, that they may be more ready to listen to the Gospel than they were a decade ago.

#### **4. Our devotion to Christ.**

A Christian who listens to Superstar and remains neutral should re-examine his or her sense of spiritual beauty, goodness and moral excellence, as well as asking how deeply he is committed to the truth of God, the Person and Work of Christ and the Bible as God's infallible Word. He should consider seriously whether the psychotic Christ of Superstar (and here I am referring particularly to the uncontrolled screaming in the music) bears any resemblance to the Christ he trusts.

#### **5. Evangelism.**

Can one ever hope to use Superstar as a means of evangelism? We *must* undoubtedly make the Gospel relevant to our age and use modern media, language and idiom. But the first question to ask is: Am I presenting an accurate and reliable picture of the Christ of the Gospels and New Testament. Truth must always precede expedience and pragmatism. I John 4:1 ff. gives the guideline. There is only one answer to the question. It is both logically and theologically impossible to communicate the truth (as epitomised in Jesus Christ) by means of non-truth (untruth?).

#### **6. Pop music.**

Superstar is part and parcel of the genre of pop music. It did not suddenly emerge out of a vacuum. Thus to say naively that its success indicates upsurging interest among young people in religion is not necessarily correct. The musical style alone could guarantee success. A further comment on the music is that the use of beat undoubtedly plays upon the primitive emotions and tends to dull one's intellectual appreciation and ability to judge clearly and objectively.

#### **7. A religious framework.**

The use of religious symbols acts as a useful smokescreen to the real message. People today have a vague knowledge only of the New Testament. Thus Superstar is welcomed with open arms as the genuine article—and critics are attacked as bigoted, dogmatic and square. But *Time Magazine*, which can hardly be accused of being dogmatically evangelical, commented on Superstar: "... both libretto and music are provocatively ambiguous about Christ's divinity . . . the crucifixion is seen as the result of bungling self-indulgence, and Jesus' faith in His divinity and hope of resurrection, as delusions" (*Time*. November 9, 1970).

Many centuries ago the Apostle John wrote these solemn words: "I personally warn everyone who listens to the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are described in this book, and if anyone detracts from the words of this prophetic book, God will detract his share in the tree of life and in the holy city as described in this book" (Rev. 22:18-19). What was true of the book of Revelation is true of all God's Word. We tamper and twist it at risk of drawing His holy anger down upon us.



# The Importance of Standards and Discipline in the Church

*Wayne Mack*

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THERE ARE REALLY ONLY TWO RELIGIONS IN THE world. One of these religions is Biblical Christianity which teaches that "Salvation is of the Lord". The second is all the other religions of the world which teach salvation by works. These religions may differ in external forms and ceremonies. They may even differ in doctrine and teaching, but underneath all of the superficial differences there is the root teaching of salvation by something man does. All of these religions tell us that man must do something for God if he would be saved. Biblical Christianity, on the other hand, declares what God has done and is doing to save man. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast."<sup>1</sup> The difference between Christianity and all other religions is well illustrated by a story that Jesus told in Luke chapter eighteen. Two men went up to the temple. One stood and prayed (?) with himself, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess". This man, undoubtedly felt that his salvation rested upon what he was and what he was doing. He was legalistic and moralistic with a very strict code of ethics. The other man, however, came to God with a much different attitude. He stood afar off from the altar and with bowed head smote upon his chest saying, "God be merciful to me the sinner".<sup>2</sup> This man realised that if he was ever to be saved, God would do the saving and it would be because of His mercy, not because of what he had done or would do for God. This man expressed the conviction of Biblical Christianity that men are "justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified".<sup>3</sup> Biblical Christianity renounces legalism and challenges men to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage".<sup>4</sup>

But to repudiate legalism is not the same as rejecting all codes of ethics. When the Bible says that we "have been called unto liberty" and "are not under law, but under grace,"<sup>5</sup> it does not mean that we have no standards and are free to do as we please. The Bible declares: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

And hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Whosoever (this is a big word which would seem to include everybody) committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Do we then make void (annul, abrogate) the law? God forbid: yea, we establish (strengthen, support, confirm) the law.<sup>6</sup>

The same Paul who said that any man who preached any other Gospel than the Gospel of grace which he preached was damned, also gave to the churches a code of ethics. Many ethical lists are found in the writings of Paul.<sup>7</sup> Paul believed that the "grace of God that brings salvation" teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly.<sup>8</sup> Paul personally reminded Christians of the moral implications of the Gospel, and challenged his fellow Christian leaders to do the same. In Titus chapter two, he gives moral and ethical instructions for aged men, aged women, young women, and young men. Significantly, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of this chapter, Paul admonishes Titus to speak and exhort these things with all authority.<sup>9</sup> The last words of the chapter are these: "Let no man despise (think little or look down on) you".<sup>10</sup> Paul expected Titus to make the Christians aware of their responsibilities in an authoritative, not apologetic manner. In other words, Titus was not to be ashamed to tell Christians how to live.

In our day, some have suggested that the only code or law that we should preach to people is the law of Christ or the law of the Spirit or the law of love. They say that the only law or code of ethics we need is found in the words of Jesus:

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.<sup>11</sup>

They say that this is the royal law and we are not to be bound by codes or rules of ethics. We must allow the Holy Spirit who dwells in every Christian to help us to love as we should. We are not to live in a particular way because we are commanded to live that way, but because we love God and our fellow men. Thus, they would dismiss as irrelevant the moral law of the Old Testament, and though they will not agree with this, they must, to be consistent with themselves, dismiss as unnecessary the ethical codes of the New Testament.

Now, I would suggest that the brethren who hold this view are making four mistakes:

1. They are assuming that the Old Testament saints were not under the law of love. But they were. Moses instructed the people to "love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might".<sup>12</sup> He also challenged the people to "love thy neighbour as thyself".<sup>13</sup> The commandment that our Lord gave was new in the sense that it "was not outworn or marred through age". The word *kainos*, in contrast to *neos*, "views that which is new from the aspect of form or quality".<sup>14</sup> It is new in the sense that the Lord's mercies are new every morning. His mercies are always the same, but they never become outworn or outdated. They are always fresh. So it is with this commandment that our Lord gives. It is also new in the sense that now we have a perfect pattern for our attitude and relation to each other. Jesus said, "as I have loved you, that ye also love one another". In the Old Testament, they had no such pattern.

2. They are assuming that there is something contradictory in the doing of a thing out of love and also in obedience to a specific command. Concerning this assumption, Ernest Kevan says:

To suggest that there is a contradiction between the motive by which the believer pleases God and the things which are themselves pleasing to Him is illogical, for the Spirit of God moves the heart to love and delight in that which He commands. Adam is an instance of this, for while he was yet unfallen he obeyed out of love, but also because of the command. The angels obey the commandments of God (otherwise the apostate angels could not have sinned), and yet they do all things in love. The mother of Moses provides a tender human illustration, for she nursed her son out of motherly love for him, but it was also in obedience to the commandment of Pharaoh's daughter. The supreme instance of all is Christ Himself upon whom a commandment was laid, yet He fulfilled it out of love. The inference to be drawn from this, therefore, is that to do a thing out of obedience to a command, does not necessarily imply the absence of love. The obedience of a servant need not be servile obedience.<sup>15</sup>

3. They are forgetting that the Holy Spirit gave us the Word of God. To live according to the law of the Spirit is to live according to the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit speaks and guides through the Word of God. A comparison of Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:18, 19 indicates that to be filled with the Spirit is the same as letting the word of God dwell in us richly in all wisdom. At any rate, the results in both cases are the same. I can, therefore, come to no other conclusion but this—the Spirit-filled person is the person whose life is controlled by the Scriptures. The law of the Spirit is found in the Word of God.

4. They are forgetting that the codes of ethics simply show us how to express love. They show us what love is in "working clothes". It is an easy thing to say that we love God and others, but to love in deed and truth is quite a different matter. Love is expressed in actions. My wife loves me, so she prepares meals for me, etc. She knows her responsibilities, but the fact that she knows that she has certain responsibilities does

not negate the fact that she does them out of love. No, her knowledge of her wifely and motherly duties gives her an understanding of how she can express her love. So it is with the ethical codes of the Bible. They are not legalistic. They are guidelines to help us to know how to show our love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."<sup>16</sup>

We must be careful that we do not impose upon Christians standards and rules which are not Scriptural. We dare not command people to practise anything that is either contrary to or additional to the Word of God. "God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it."<sup>17</sup> We must also be careful to guard against a legalistic spirit which makes obedience the cause of salvation rather than the result. But we must also be careful that we do not encourage people to use their liberty "for an occasion to the flesh".<sup>18</sup> The Bible does say that we are to exhort, speak to and rebuke people concerning their doctrine and conduct. After an extended section on conduct and doctrine, Paul says, "these things I will that thou affirm constantly".<sup>19</sup> I believe that we must declare to our people "This is the way". I believe our churches would be stronger if we did. We dare not be silent where the Bible clearly speaks, for "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable . . ."<sup>20</sup>

But how should this be done? Should we lay down the law and tell people that they must either shape up or they will be shipped out? Should we hold the threat of discipline over them as a club to force them to obey? No, I don't think so. This is not the way Paul did it. In Eph. chaps. four and five Paul talks about the Christian way of life. He sets the standards high. How does he encourage them to obey? Well, in the first three chapters he reminds the Christians of what God has done for them. He tells them how God has blessed them with all spiritual blessings. He describes these blessings. Then, he goes on in chapter four to beseech them to walk worthy of their high calling. He reminds them of God's purpose, namely complete maturity in Christ. Then, he says, "Wherefore," and begins to lay upon them their ethical responsibilities. In other words, he says, "Because of the privileges God has bestowed upon you and will bestow upon you; because of the purpose of God for you, you ought not to do this and you ought to do that". He seems to say, "This is the way: walk in it because of what God has done for you; because of what God's plan is for you; and because of what you are. You are God's 'dear children', 'children of the light', and 'members one of another'."

In Col. 3, Paul uses the same approach. In the first two chapters, he has spoken of who Christ is, what Christ has done, and what we have in Christ. In chapter two, verse twelve, he reminds the Christians that they are risen with Christ. In chapter three, he continues:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above . . .

Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth . . . Lie not to one another, seeing you have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man . . .<sup>21</sup>

The ethical demand again is not a threat, but the inevitable result of God's work for us and in us. The challenge is to walk worthy of the high calling in Christ Jesus. This is the Biblical pattern for encouraging Christians to greater godliness.

But, a word of caution must be interjected at this point. This does not mean that the church should not discipline erring members. Calvin wrote:

If no society, nay no house with even a moderate family, can be kept in a right state without discipline, much more necessary is it in the church, whose state ought to be the best ordered possible.

All who either wish that discipline were abolished, or who impede the restoration of it, whether they do this of design or through thoughtlessness, certainly aim at the complete devastation of the church. For what will be the result if everyone is allowed to do as he pleases?<sup>22</sup>

Edward Hiscox has written in the same vein:

Every organisation which proposes to work smoothly, and yet efficiently, must have certain rules and regulations to be followed; certain laws for the individual members to obey. When these regulations fall into disuse, and the good order of the body is neglected, it becomes weak and inefficient, neither commanding the confidence of its own members, nor the respect of the world.<sup>23</sup>

A study of the Scriptures discloses the following facts about church discipline:

1. The church is responsible to discipline its people. The Bible says: If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject.

Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear.

Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person.<sup>24</sup>

2. There are different ways of disciplining people in the church. One form of discipline is the public ministry of the Word. Every time the Word is preached it reproves, corrects, and instructs. Pastors are to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" by preaching the Word.<sup>25</sup> Another form of discipline is private admonition. Paul taught "publicly, and from house to house". Jesus said that if our brother has a fault, we should "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone". Paul was probably referring to this kind of discipline when he spoke of the "first and second admonition".<sup>26</sup> Still another form of discipline is "open rebuke" before the church.<sup>27</sup> The final, and most

severe kind is excommunication from the church.<sup>28</sup> These last two forms of discipline should be exercised only when the other kinds of discipline have failed. Then too, they should be used only for cases of flagrant iniquity or apostasy as described in the Scripture passages where they are mentioned. Mere delinquencies or secret faults would not come under this classification.

3. The reasons for church discipline are three: One is for the Lord's sake. "Seeing that the church is the body of Christ, she cannot be defiled . . . without bringing some disgrace upon her head."<sup>29</sup> It is Christ who commanded us to exercise church discipline, and we cannot honour Him by disobedience to His command. If a person flagrantly disobeys Christ, and there is no evidence of repentance, great dishonour is brought to the name of God (Rom. 2:23). This dishonour is compounded when the church fails to obey the Lord's command to admonish, exhort, rebuke, and if necessary excommunicate the offending person. A second reason for discipline is that others may not be led astray by bad example. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear."<sup>30</sup> A third reason for discipline is that the sinner may be convicted of sin and caused to repent. The purpose of discipline is not primarily punitive, but reformatory, protective, corrective and restorative (2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Cor. 5:5; Matt. 18:15; 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Gal. 6:1).

G. I. Williamson has said that church discipline is:

An act of love and concern like unto that of the good shepherd who seeks wandering sheep. Church discipline is loving concern in action, the blessed result of which will often be: "thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18: 15). Lack of church discipline is to be seen for what it really is—not a loving concern as is hypocritically claimed, but an indifference to the honour of Christ and the welfare of the flock.<sup>31</sup>

John Owen wrote in similar fashion:

"There is an efficacy assigned to excommunication, in binding the consciences of men, in retaining their sins, in the destruction and mortification of the flesh, in the healing and recovery of sinners, as nothing but the authority of a divine institution can give unto it."<sup>32</sup>

There can be no question that the Bible teaches church discipline, and yet we live in a time when such discipline is almost non-existent. Hiscox, who lived in the 19th century, said, "To some the word discipline has an unpleasant sound."<sup>33</sup> How much more could that be said of our 20th century! People resent anything that smacks of authoritarianism. They seem to feel that "liberty of conscience" means liberty even from the commands of the Word of God. They argue that people will be offended—the erring party, others in the congregation, and the non-churched people of the world. They suggest that all of us are sinners and therefore unqualified to sit in judgment on others.

Now, on the surface, these arguments appear to be very pious and plausible. But in reality, they are the opposite, for how can it be an act of piety to disobey the clear teaching of the Word of God? The truth is that Christ commanded sinners to exercise church discipline, and to refuse to do so is rebellion against the Son of God. It is to say that we are wiser, more loving and concerned than He. The error of this kind of thinking is clearly seen when we consider the way that people are admitted to our churches. Most evangelical churches require a "credible profession of faith" for membership. They "sit in judgment" on those who will be admitted, but refuse to do the same for those who are already members. To be consistent, if they reject the right to do the latter, they must reject the right to do the former. If certain things are grounds for refusing church membership, they are grounds for exclusion from church membership.

True it is that church discipline has been and still may be abused, but true it is also that "the prevailing tendency among our churches is in another direction".<sup>34</sup> And this failure to discipline has serious consequences, for:

"although the church . . . can exist and has existed, without observing the Scriptural form of church government, it can never continue in a spiritually prosperous state without it. When Scripturally governed, the church is then truly visibly militant . . . But when you loose the ranks, and rout the company, by disorderly administrations, it is the overthrow of the army, and so of the church."<sup>35</sup>

Church discipline is not an option for the church. It is a necessity if we would see our people growing in piety, the Gospel succeeding, and the name of Christ being glorified.

*References:* 1. Eph. 2:8, 9. 2. Luke 18:10-13. 3. Gal. 2:16. 4. Gal. 5:1. 5. Gal. 5:13; Rom. 6:14. 6. Rom. 6:1, 2; 3:28, 31; John 14:21; I John 2:3, 4; 3:4. 7. Eph. 4:25 to 6:8; Col. 3:5 to 4:6; I Thess. 4:1-10; Tit. 2:1 to 3:3; II Tim. 3:22 to 4:5. 8. Tit. 2:11, 12. 9. Tit. 2:1, 6, 15. 10. Tit. 3:15. 11. John 13:34, 35. 12. Deut. 6:5. 13. Lev. 19:18. 14. Hendriksen, *John*, p. 253. 15. Kevan, *The Moral Law*, pp. 6, 7. 16. Rom. 13:10. 17. G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, p. 149. 18. Gal. 5:13. 19. Tit. 2:15; 3:8. 20. II Tim. 3:16. 21. Col. 3:1, 5, 9, 10. 22. Calvin, *Institutes*, Volume Two, p. 453. 23. Edward Hiscox, *The New Directory For Baptist Churches*, pp. 161, 162. 24. II Thess. 3:6; Tit. 3:10; I Tim. 5:20; I Cor. 5:13; Rom. 16:17. 25. II Tim. 4:2. 26. Acts 20:20; Matt. 18:15; Tit. 3:10. 27. I Tim. 5:20; Matt. 18:17. 28. I Cor. 5:13; Matt. 18:17; Rom. 16:17. 29. Calvin, *op. cit.*, p. 454. 30. I Cor. 5:6, 11; I Tim. 5:20. 31. Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 237. 32. John Owen, *The True Nature of A Gospel Church*, p. 110. 33. Hiscox, *op. cit.*, p. 161. 34. *Ibid.*, p. 163. 35. Thomas Hooker, *Banner of Truth*, August, 1958, p. 26.

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(Continued from page 10)

Of course, where churches in a particular area are in substantial agreement there may well be co-operation. What I am so opposed to is quite different—evangelism which is not based upon such biblical authority.

In conclusion, we must face some hard facts. We have failed to evangelise as we should. We have been guilty of silence, apathy and lack of compassion. We must repent before God, and open our hearts afresh to His love for lost sinners, and with burning zeal go into all the world preaching Christ crucified, risen and exalted, the only hope of sinners.

# Occult, Kurt Koch and the Charismatic Movement

*Comments on books—the Editor*

AS FAR AS WE KNOW, DOCTOR KURT KOCH HAS NO RIVAL IN THE FIELD OF writing upon the subject of occult practices as they occur in the contemporary world. The best work in regard to its systematic and comprehensive character by Doctor Koch, is probably *Christian Counselling and Occultism*.<sup>1</sup> Some material in the latter is repeated in other works which are at present available, such as *Between Christ and Satan*,<sup>2</sup> *Occult Bondage and Deliverance*<sup>3</sup> and *The Devil's Alphabet*.<sup>4</sup> The latter three works are worthwhile, readable paperbacks. They contain many documented instances or descriptions of actual events. It is impossible to vouch for absolute accuracy in every case, but Doctor Koch shows careful investigation into phenomena. In controversial matters, he shows a gracious spirit and this is evident as he deals, for instance, with William Branham and Oral Roberts (page 43, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance*). In the latter there is a valuable section dealing with the distinction between disease and the demonic and advice as to how to counsel those who may have been the victims of demonic influence or possession. In the volume, *The Devil's Alphabet* the author covers most areas in which evil spirits exercise their powers. The list includes Firewalking, Freemasonry, Christian Science, Modern Theology, Palmistry, Rod and Pendulum, Telepathy, Tongues Movements, Witchcraft and Yoga. The question of tongue-speaking is enlarged in a separate booklet, *The Strife of Tongues*.<sup>5</sup> As with the aforementioned titles, the reader's interest is gripped to the end, and no less than 28 examples are described to illustrate the harm, division and destruction that has taken place through tongue-speaking. The author declares his observation that those who are mediumistically inclined, respond more quickly to speaking in tongues than others. About eight to ten per cent. of people in the Western world are said to be potentially mediumistic. In the Eastern world the percentage is more likely to be 90 per cent. or higher. He then goes on to say, "Bearing in mind all these questions, it becomes more and more clear that maybe over 95 per cent. of the whole tongues movement is mediumistic in character". Dr. Koch examines the Scriptures in regard to the claims that are made for tongue-speaking, and shows that the movement today ignores most of the biblical principles.

It sometimes happens that a man who is outstanding in one field is not necessarily so in another. In the case of Doctor Koch's book, *The Revival in Indonesia*,<sup>6</sup> there is a failure to provide adequate background



information as to the overall situation of evangelicalism in Indonesia. Furthermore, it becomes evident that Doctor Koch's view of revival is similar with that of many who regard large numbers of decisions as evidence of a revival. It should also be noted, that in reporting results of evangelistic activity, great caution is needed. Time is required to test the enduring nature of any claims for large numbers of conversions. This can be illustrated by an experience narrated by Doctor Martyn Lloyd-Jones in a recently published booklet, *The Supernatural in Medicine*.<sup>7</sup> He describes how, in 1928, he visited a place where a Pentecostal Pastor had conducted a ten-day mission. Sixty-six converts were reported, and one of the main reasons for the conversions, it was claimed, was that some people had been healed. The Doctor was asked to return to this place and conduct a Conference on the question of "Faith Healing". When he returned, nine months later, he discovered that interest in that subject had waned. When he enquired about the reason, the answer came, "Not one of the people stated to have been healed remained healed, and not one of the 66 converts stood; so we are no longer interested in faith healing" (page 2). A racey little paperback by Doctor Koch, *Day X*,<sup>8</sup> illustrates the point made above that strength in one field of research does not automatically guarantee quality in another since *Day X* contains very little by way of exposition or theological content. For instance statements on the question of the Secret Rapture (page 117) are not supported by biblical exposition.

J. Stafford Wright has also written on the subject of Occult, *Christianity and Occult*.<sup>9</sup> This is a useful contribution, but does not contain the same breadth and depth in the field as is provided by Doctor Koch.

An example from another field, to illustrate strength and weaknesses, is that of Doctor H. R. Rookmaaker, in his book, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*.<sup>10</sup> For the area it covers this is an unrivalled and exciting book; it is relevant, helpful, informative and fascinating. Yet, when this master in his field touches on the subject of the Puritans none of these adjectives apply! He quotes Morgan Llwyd as a typical example of one who held radical Puritan views! Llwyd was certainly a radical but he is the last one to hold up as an example of Puritanism. I have spoken personally to Doctor Rookmaaker about his attitude toward the Puritans, and feel that he tends to dismiss their tremendous contribution simply because they did not devote time to the Fine Arts.

Coming back to the subject of Occult, mention should be made of the connection which Doctor Koch suggests this has with tongue-speaking. Professor Anthony A. Hoekema's book, *What about Tongues Speaking*,<sup>11</sup> provides a valuable history of the Tongue-Speaking Movement, together with a biblical and theological evaluation. A much fuller work by Frederick B. Bruner, entitled *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, has just been made available.<sup>12</sup> This is a scholarly and thorough thesis of much value. The author argues cogently that the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the

Acts of the Apostles was at once for all demonstration of the sending forth of the Holy Ghost. With great care he expounds each relevant passage in Acts. He then devotes considerable attention to, "the way of the Holy Spirit according to the New Testament". This, too, is a valuable study. Material provided in this book is worthy of careful and thoughtful reading. Those who are confused about the subject of the Holy Spirit and the Baptism of the Spirit in regard to modern claims of the Charismatic movement, will find much food for thought in this volume. Bruner's scholarly ability is evident from the outset. He is at present a Presbyterian missionary in the Philippines. There is every evidence of extended first-hand knowledge of the present day Pentecostal Movement. Application in this respect is made throughout. This is in contrast to the latest volume by G. C. Berkouwer which has the title, *Sin*.<sup>13</sup> Professor Berkouwer's examination of the origin of sin is extremely valuable, as is much of the content of the book. There is, however, a minimum of application to the present day situation, the book being of a purely theological—one might say—learned character, the kind of book which should be read early in the morning rather than late at night! Is it Scriptural to maintain a purely academic approach? Does this not lead to pride of intellect? Is this not why bastions of orthodoxy, such as Princeton and the Free University of Amsterdam, have fallen into Modernism?

To end this discussion about books, there is a new book, ideal to take with one's chocolate drink to bed at night—*Preaching and Preachers*,<sup>14</sup> by Martyn Lloyd-Jones. If you are puzzled about whether preachers should call for decisions, read the chapter devoted to this theme. This will keep you awake, so you can read another chapter before falling asleep!

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NOTE: The price is only given in cases where the books are known to be available at this time.

- 1 *Christian Counselling and Occultism*. K. Koch. Kregels Pub. U.S.A. 298 pp. (boards).
- 2 *Between Christ and Satan*. K. Koch. Evang. Pub., Germany (Hughes and Coleman, agents in U.K.) 192 pp. 85p.
- 3 *Occult Bondage and Deliverance*. K. Koch. Evang. Pub. 198 pp. 85p.
- 4 *The Devil's Alphabet*. K. Koch. Evang. Pub. 158 pp. 85p.
- 5 *The Strife of Tongues*. K. Koch. Evang. Pub. (Ams. for Christ Inter., agents in U.K.) 48 pp.
- 6 *The Revival in Indonesia*. K. Koch. Kregel. 310 pp.
- 7 *The Supernatural in Medicine*. D. M. Lloyd-Jones. C.M.F. 24 pp. 10p.
- 8 *Day X*. K. Koch. Evang. Pub. 127 pp.
- 9 *Christianity and the Occult*. J. Stafford Wright. S.U. 130 pp. 40p.
- 10 *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*. H. R. Rookmaaker. I.V.P. 256 pp. 75p.
- 11 *What about Tongues Speaking*. A. A. Hoekema. Paternoster. 160 pp. 30p.
- 12 *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. F. B. Bruner. Hodders. 390 pp. (boards). £2.75.
- 13 *Sin*. G. C. Berkouwer. Eerdmans. 599 pp. (boards). \$9.95.
- 14 *Preaching and Preachers*. D. M. Lloyd-Jones. Hodders. 325 pp. (boards). £2.50.

*Christians ought to pray for fellow-believers who are "in bonds, as bound with them" (Heb. 13:3). Information as to the genuine situation in countries such as Russia and China is not easy to obtain. We are grateful to Mr. S. M. Houghton for this up to date examination of the question.<sup>1</sup>*

## The Christian Faith in Russia Today

DURING THE LAST TWO DECADES IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT, IF NOT impossible, to reach safe and firm conclusions in regard to the whole question of Christian faith and practice in Soviet territory. It has been well known that: (1) the Soviet government to a man has been defiantly atheistical, godless in the extreme, and determined to strike, and to strike hard, at all forms of religious profession; (2) the once powerful Orthodox church (comparable in many respects to the Roman Catholic church) has been dealt an extremely severe blow, has suffered very great losses, but has achieved a *modus vivendi* with the State, including certain privileges, for example "extensive representation abroad" (as at the Vatican and in the World Council of Churches), the right to send its emissaries to international religious conferences, and a very limited right of publication; (3) there exists a considerable number of evangelical believers, particularly men and women of Baptist persuasion, who in part have experienced and still experience persecution and distress, imprisonment and oppression, and who, where they exist as corporate local unities, do so with the utmost difficulty.

It is with these evangelicals that this article is now concerned. For a long time the writer has been perplexed, not about the hostility to all religion on the part of the Soviet government, for this has been all too clear, but about conflicting reports concerning evangelical believers. Some travelers into Soviet territory from the West have reported favourably, and have received and given the impression that, even if Soviet religious policy falls short of the liberty so greatly valued in Western states, yet it permits services of worship to continue as long as certain regulations are observed. In conflict with such a verdict is undeniable evidence of the severe repression of those who, in Britain, would be termed dissenters or non-conformists.

<sup>1</sup> This article first appeared in the *Bible League Quarterly*, Oct.-Dec., 1971, which is edited by Mr. Houghton.

Of late further light has been cast upon this problem. In December, 1970, there was published Report Number One by the Minority Rights Group, a specialised research and information unit registered in Britain as an educational Trust under the 1960 Charities Act. Its Chairman is the Rt. Hon. Jo Grimond, M.P. The subject of the Report is Religious Minorities in the Soviet Union, 1960-70. The group is concerned to supply information to the public at large about the rights and wrongs of the treatment of minorities in the world today. It has no religious slant. Again, there are the writings of the Rev. Michael Bourdeaux who has specialised in studies of the religious situation in the Soviet Union since his student days in Moscow ten years ago. He is a Research Fellow of the London School of Economics and Political Science and writes from the standpoint of one who on religious grounds has the closest sympathy with afflicted saints. His fourth and latest work (paperback), entitled *Faith on Trial in Russia* (1971), is published by Hodder and Stoughton.

### **The remoter background**

A brief look at the remoter background of affairs will doubtless interest our readers. During the early centuries of the Christian era the Greek Orthodox church, stemming from Constantinople (ancient Byzantium) became established in Russia. It broke with the Western church but during the Middle Ages developed on similar lines. When the Reformation came to the West in the 16th century the Orthodox church remained untouched. "Nonconformity" entered Russia in the late 16th and 17th centuries. Groups of persecuted Lutherans were received, as also were followers of Simon Menno of Holland. The Empress Catherine II, herself a humanist and rationalist, in the late 18th century encouraged Mennonite settlements in the black earth region of the Ukraine. By the 19th century there were many "pockets" of such settlers, devout, mainly Baptist, not welcomed by the Orthodox church, but for the most part free to worship.

The Czar Alexander I, famous in history as the friend and later the enemy of Napoleon I, experienced some kind of conversion about the year 1814, as a result of which he encouraged Bible reading in his wide dominions. He certainly seems to have become a believer in the Christian faith, and not from motives of state policy only. An interesting incident is that in which the Czar and the Rev. Legh Richmond (of evangelical fame) came into brief contact. The Czar was visiting Britain and arrived at Portsmouth at a moment when Legh Richmond happened to be surveying the scene from a high tower in the dock-yard of that port. Lending his telescope to the Emperor he directed his attention to the most noteworthy sights, at the same time thanking him for his interest in Bible circulation in Russia. The Czar thanked Richmond and his friends, saying, "Had it not been for your example we should have had no Bible Society in Russia". Some time later Richmond sent the Czar a copy of his *Annals of the Poor*, upon which he received from the Czar's secretary

a ring to betoken his master's "true esteem of you and high appreciation of your work", also a letter of thanks for the "valuable and interesting" *Annals*, the Czar adding that he "desired nothing so much as to see the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Saviour more and more universal in his dominions and in the whole world". Upon his fellow-rulers in Central and Western Europe Alexander urged a "Holy Alliance" based upon a belief in the Trinity, but it never prospered, for western politicians contemned the idea, obviously regarding Christian principles as impossible of application in international diplomacy. The Empress Charlotte Louise, the wife of Nicholas I, Alexander's successor, sent a gift in Russian roubles to promote Bible reading in British Sunday schools.

In the later 19th century Russian dissenters were usually called Stundists, a name meaning those who forsook the Orthodox church for "the meeting". Baptist principles spread even more widely under the influence of Johann G. Oncken, of Hamburg, a worker who had contacts with C. H. Spurgeon. Englishmen of influence included Lord Radstock who held Bible readings in St. Petersburg and other cities, sometimes in the homes of the nobility; Frederick William Baedeker (a record of his "apostolic work in Russia" written by R. S. Latimer, 1907, carries an Introductory Note by Princess Nathalie Lieven of St. Petersburg); and George Müller of orphanage fame. One notable convert was Colonel Paschkov, a wealthy landowner who opened his palace for Christian meetings and who himself preached widely and distributed Bibles and Christian literature. His reward from the Holy Synod of the Orthodox church was banishment and the confiscation of much of his property.

In 1861 the Czar Alexander II granted the famous decree of Serf Emancipation. On the political front, however, this led some ten years later to the growth of Nihilism. A set of anarchists whose weapon was the bomb determined to destroy both government and the very foundations of society. In 1881 Czar Alexander was "blown to pieces" by a bomb as he drove through the streets of his capital. All minority groups felt the repercussion. The Orthodox church determined to suppress "nonconformity" and instituted vigorous persecution. It appointed Pobiedonostsef, Procurator of the Holy Synod, to carry out a policy savage in the extreme.

In the early 20th century Czarist Russia was bitterly humiliated, and its absolutist government correspondingly weakened, in a war with Japan. The two powers had come into conflict in respect of territory in the Far East. This encouraged the critics and opponents of Russian absolutism. In the outcome, in 1905, Nicholas II agreed to the election of a Duma (Parliament), different indeed from western parliaments, but a first instalment of freer government. Simultaneously an edict conceded greater liberty of faith and conscience, and the freedom of meeting. But real

freedom was a plant of very slow growth. In 1914 came World War I. and the ultimate downfall of Czardom. The year 1917 saw the triumph of the Bolsheviks (the word means the party of the majority) who shortly established a Soviet republic (Soviet=council) headed by Lenin. A new era had dawned.

### **The religious policy of Communism**

The inauguration of the Communist regime had temporary good effects for evangelical believers, for the new Constitution gave promise of liberty of conscience and worship even though the new leaders of the State were all professed atheists. During Lenin's lifetime—he died in 1924—there seems to have been little attempt at persecution for the State was deeply immersed in political, military and economic problems. But when, after a period of conflict for leadership within the Communist party, Josef Stalin became undisputed leader, the position rapidly changed. In 1929 a Statute of 68 articles, entitled The Law of Religious Associations, was promulgated throughout the Union of Soviet Republics. Its main enactments were as follows:

1. The teaching of religion to any person under the age of 18 is punishable by a prison sentence (up to three years).
2. To worship legally a group of at least twenty must petition the local authority for permission to register as a religious society and in so doing must be prepared to accept and fulfil a complex of minute regulations. If the local authority approves, it will submit the application to the next higher authority, and this authority to another, but until it reaches the Central Council for Religious Affairs in Moscow, and until central approval is notified, worship is illegal and severe penalties await offenders.
3. When approved and registered, a "meeting" is allocated a building for the purpose of worship either by the State or by the local authority.
4. The registered local church must operate under the guidance of an executive of three persons, any one of whom may be removed by order of the local authority (some authorities apparently try to get their own nominees appointed to the executive).
5. Evangelism (Gospel preaching) is strictly limited to the registered building. A pastor must not preach elsewhere without express permission.
6. A pastor may visit any members of his flock who are sick in hospital, but his ministry to them must take place in a separate room and not in a public place (in practice this rendered such ministry all but impracticable, for the responsible persons in hospitals could so readily explain that a private room was "impossible").
7. The printing of religious literature is to be strictly controlled by the State.

The obvious, if not the declared purpose of Stalin's Law was to make the practice of religion as difficult as possible. Whereas the original Constitution had stated that every citizen might profess any religion or none

at all, and had recognised the citizen's right to carry on religious or anti-religious propaganda as he willed, the law of 1929 showed the determination of the State to "clamp-down" on all worship and put evangelicals in an all-but-impossible position. There was virtually a ban on all religious activities (that is, to the registered) except worship; and for the unregistered a total ban. It appears that there exists a Council on Religious Affairs which finds no mention in published laws, but which keeps in close touch with all local authorities, intimating government policy as it varies in detail from time to time, and possibly going "well beyond the written law".

### **Matters educational**

As for matters educational, the over-all policy of the Soviet is to guarantee, as far as is humanly (and often, alas, inhumanly) possible, the ultimate establishment of a State totally given over in all its members to atheism by indoctrinating all children and young persons through the State educational system. For this purpose the teaching of the principles of atheism is an essential feature of education at every grade, from kindergarten to university. It follows that a person cannot become a State-recognised teacher who is not prepared to engage in such instruction, and a pupil who professes any kind of belief in God is subject to shame and obloquy before his fellow-pupils. If the pastor of a "registered" local church is subjected to rigorous regulations and kept under close inspection, even more is this the case with the local schoolmaster whose duty it is to hold up religious faith and practice (even reaching to the saying of grace at home before meals) to every kind of shame within his powers of contrivance.

The British press, early in 1971, called attention to a book written by the Head of the Faculty of Scientific Atheism, Ethics and Aesthetics at the Leningrad State Pedagogical Institute, in other words, the Head of the Teacher Training Centre. It stresses the evil said to be done to the health, morals and education of young persons by religious belief and practice, advises trainees and teachers on methods to be adopted to influence religious children to abandon belief in a Deity, and gives directions on modes of making children campaigners for atheism in their homes. Parents and grandparents should be prevented from praying and made the targets of ridicule. While it was the case that, in former decades, church buildings were turned into museums in which evolution was taught as a sure means of overthrowing Christianity, the new policy is to instruct schools to organise their own museums of atheism, and these on completion are to be made the chief attraction of a "parents' day". It is not difficult to imagine the mental sufferings experienced by children who adhere to the faith of Christ when school and home are thus intentionally set in conflict. The following letter, written by a schoolgirl, which has percolated to the West, is doubtless thoroughly typical of the situation: "They call me a sectarian. Because of this they have begun to hate me

in the class. I have lost all inclination to study. Even some of the teachers talk to me roughly and threateningly. I am frightened to show myself to the people who hate me. So I do not like going to school. Where can I go except to the sect, where I hear words of comfort, affection and attention?"

A further educational Law of October, 1968, stated that religious parents are forbidden to educate their children in their own beliefs, but must inculcate instead the "spirit of the moral code of the builder of Communism". Any attempt to exert a "harmful influence" on them can result in a court case and the deprivation of all parental rights, that is to say, in the placing of the children under the care of persons who are professed atheists.

It is obvious therefore that the Soviet government has no intention of fulfilling its obligations, voluntarily undertaken, under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 (the Soviet joined the United Nations in 1934). These obligations include the acknowledgment that "every one has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion". The right includes the freedom to change one's religion or belief, and "freedom, either alone or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest one's religion or belief, in teaching, practice, worship and observance". No one in his senses could possibly claim that such rights receive even the semblance of recognition in Soviet territory.

The recent death of Nikita Khrushchev is a reminder of the part that he played, as Soviet leader in his day, in quickening the pace of anti-religious activity. The present writer has been astonished to note that, in such a lengthy record of his career as appeared recently in "The Times" no mention was made of his anti-God sentiments and of his bitter and determined attempt to step up an already severe policy towards evangelicals. Possibly his best-remembered statement on religion is that "no Soviet cosmonaut has found any god or angel in the sky", as if this supplied proof positive that Soviet religious policy was based on the soundest of principles. For the most part the British public remembers him chiefly as one who once visited and toured Britain, and as the one who in the Cuban crisis gave way to the demand of the United States of America that withdrawal must take place. But Russian evangelicals doubtless reflect on his hatred for God, His Christ, His Word written, and His flock scattered abroad over Russian lands. If the newspaper press is to be depended on, Khrushchev died, as did John Bunyan's Mr. Badman, "so stilly, so quietly, so like a lamb or a chrisom-child . . . would men not have concluded that he had made his peace with God?" But what will be the case when he appears before the Throne of thrones to give an account of the deeds done in the body?

*We hope to conclude this article in the next issue.*



*We are grateful to Robert Oliver for this study of William Gadsby who, as he points out, did not stand in the tradition of the Reformers and Puritans in regard to the invitations of the Gospel. This is just as serious an error as Arminianism. Gadsby, it seemed, was inconsistent with his doctrinal belief in that he evangelised heartily and would, by his example, put most Arminians to shame. When a leader passes from the scene, it is seldom that the disciples have the same zeal and often serious errors come home to roost in subsequent generations—"Hyperism" leading to deadness, and, on the other end of the scale: Arminianism to Liberalism. Apart from this, there are many lessons we can learn from Gadsby's life. Study of this kind also casts light on the history of Baptists in England.*

## **William Gadsby (1773-1844)**

IN THE YEAR 1803 THE PARTICULAR BAPTIST CHURCH AT BACK LANE Chapel, Manchester, was pastorless. One Sabbath morning the congregation was amazed to watch a very unusual supply ascend the pulpit. Dressed in a coarse brown coat, drab trousers and a coloured neckerchief, he proceeded to announce Samuel Medley's hymn, "Awake my soul in joyful lays". As the service continued one deacon's wife whispered to her husband, "He's a crazy man, that!" during the sermon the man turned to his wife and demanded, "Does he talk like a crazy man?" "No," she confessed, "he does not."

After the service there must have been animated discussion. The preacher, William Gadsby, then of Hinckley, Leicestershire, later remarked of this sermon, "it raised such an uproar among the Fullerites in Manchester as they had not before heard of". The congregation was clearly divided, but the deacon, who was Gadsby's host, went out and begged his friends to come to the afternoon service. Another hearer, an Independent went out and prevailed upon a group of his associates to attend in the afternoon. Later that day a poor weaver, John Warburton, who had resisted earlier pressure to go, was induced to hear Gadsby at the evening service. He later recorded the events of that evening.

"When I got into the chapel I thought to myself, 'What a poor, gloomy, miserable place this is!' And as the people came in, I felt such a hatred rise up in my heart against them as I never felt against any people before. Nay, so much so, that I was just ready to take up my hat and walk out, when Mr. Gadsby got into the pulpit. I was struck with surprise to see so poor and mean-looking a fellow (as I thought him) attempt to preach. I despised him in my very soul, and thought he looked like an ignorant fool that had not common sense."

Warburton went on to describe his prejudice in some detail and also his conviction that Gadsby would sit down in confusion.

"The words of his text were, 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things;' and he was so long in reading them, that I dropped my head down and thought I would try to go to sleep. He then made a little pause, and I looked up to see what he was about, and he was looking all around the chapel, and rolling his eyes in such a way that I really thought him crazy. The first words that he spoke were, 'Perhaps you will be ready to say that, according to our sentiments, we cannot find a good man on earth. But by the help of God we will, or we will ransack the Bible from Genesis to Revelation'. O how my prejudice was knocked down at a blow! My soul melted like wax before the sun, and I exclaimed, 'God bless thee! The Lord help thee to find the good man'. He first showed that by nature no man was good; and O the depths he entered into in showing man's lost and ruined condition! But when he came to describe the good man as he stood in Christ, and the good things that were then brought out of his heart, my soul was so overcome that I cried out in my feelings, 'Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die'. My very soul was knit to him as closely as Jonathan's to David, and my ears were nailed to the doorpost. I had never heard my ins and outs, my ups and downs, my days and nights, my sorrows and joys, so opened up before."<sup>1</sup>

As may be expected this memorable visit created a great impression at Manchester. Eventually a call to the pastorate followed and William Gadsby moved there in 1805. At Manchester his greatest work was done and he became a national figure, but to understand this it is necessary to consider his formative years.

### **Early years**

William Gadsby's youth was a time of grinding poverty. He was born in January 1773, the ninth child in a family of fourteen. His father worked as a road mender around Nuneaton. There was little money available for schooling and William's education at Nuneaton Church School was of necessity short. Later in life he admitted that he had practically forgotten how to read by the time he was seventeen. He grew up to be an energetic boy with a strong sense of humour. Although he had some attacks of conscience, he confessed, "when young, I gave myself up to profane swearing and hardness of heart". He was a natural entertainer and as a ribbon weaver's apprentice, he would often mount a tub and amuse his fellow workers for an hour at a time with his buffoonery.

In his eighteenth year a change took place in this young man. He had previously experienced occasional fears of hell, but he was now brought under a true conviction of sin. "I was brought to feel now that my sins were against a holy, just and good God . . . When the set time came, He arrested me, broke my heart and brought me to stand and bow before his throne as a guilty criminal—brought me to sign my own death warrant. I gave God leave to damn me if He would. I had nothing to offer, and I could do nothing to save myself."

Some time later he was delivered from this conviction of sin and could declare, "I was brought to his footstool with all humility, simplicity and

godly sincerity; filled with gratitude and thanks for God's unspeakable mercy and pardon and could look up and say, 'He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*'."

At this time Gadsby was attending the Independent Chapel in Bedworth, where he enjoyed close Christian fellowship with the believers. However, one morning in 1793, he called on a friend, whom he found to be entertaining a guest to breakfast. The stranger was James Aston, assistant minister at Cow Lane Baptist Chapel, Coventry. Gadsby and Aston had some discussion on the question of baptism with the result that Gadsby soon began to attend the Baptist Chapel in Coventry, eight miles from his home. At Cow Lane he was baptised with 21 others by James Aston on December 29, 1793. At the service Aston asserted that he could "see something in the young man, although so illiterate and uncouth, that seemed blessedly to prove that he would at some time or another be made very useful to God's dear family".

### **Early ministry**

For over two years William Gadsby was a very zealous member of the church at Coventry. He became noted for his warm adherence to the doctrines of grace, which he strenuously defended against the Arminians. In 1795 he moved to Hinckley and in the following year transferred his membership to a little Baptist church, which had recently been formed there by James Aston. Already he had commented upon passages of Scripture at prayer meetings with the result that many expected him to preach. He himself had a deep aversion to entering the ministry, but finally agreed to address a group of Baptists meeting in a room at Bedworth. There on Whit-Sunday 1798 he preached his first sermon from I Pet. 2:7. He was well received and one hearer wrote, "being naturally unlearned, rough, clownish and illiterate, almost to the extreme, the grace of God shone the more blessedly in him".

From this time William received many calls to preach in the towns and villages of Leicestershire and Warwickshire. Opposition soon manifested itself especially at Hinckley, where an unruly mob caused trouble. On one occasion missiles were thrown at Gadsby through a hole in the roof. Twice the meeting place was broken into and furniture smashed and once the pulpit was loaded with stones and thrown into a pond, but it did not sink as the bottom fell out.

One village where Gadsby preached with acceptance was Desford, between Hinckley and Leicester. At Desford a chapel was built for him in 1800 and there it was arranged for him to be ordained. James Aston called the night before and asked to read his confession of faith and call to the ministry, but Gadsby firmly refused to write anything down so it was finally agreed that Aston should sit next to Gadsby at the service and check him in the event of irrelevancies. When the time came for the laying on of hands as was usual among the old Particular Baptists,

Gadsby evaded the assembled ministers, saying that he had enough Popery about him without that.

At this time he divided his time between Desford and Hinckley, giving one church the morning service and the other the afternoon and evening one week and alternating the following. At first services at Hinckley were held in a barn, but in 1802 work began on a chapel. Gadsby made a number of preaching visits to raise money for the building as the people were desperately poor. At this time he heard that the Baptist Chapel at Manchester was without a minister, and although he knew no one there he wrote offering to supply the pulpit as he had business in Manchester. He received a somewhat cool invitation to supply for a month with the results already described.

### **The Manchester pastorate**

In October 1805 William Gadsby with his wife and three daughters moved to Manchester, a town which was experiencing the combined pressures of war and the industrial revolution. From 1803 until 1815 this country had to summon all its energies to the herculean task of defeating the French under Napoleon Bonaparte. Commenting on these changes, David Smith, a modern historian wrote, "in the north of England, where the majority of England's population was now to be found, the war meant change and progress. The progress was hindered by the Continental System, which deprived the textile industry of its markets, and interrupted by the war with the United States, which deprived Lancashire of cotton. But it had reached a speed by now at which it could not be halted. The war meant more steam engines, more blast furnaces, and more power looms; more factories and mills. It also meant for the people who lived in the new towns and worked in the mills and factories, twelve, fourteen or sixteen hours work a day, for wages which lagged behind the rising cost of bread and meat. The town labourers' new houses had been built in a hurry, back to back, without proper ventilation or drainage and sometimes without floors or windows. The biggest windows were in the mills, designed to let in every hour of daylight for the increasing work which the machines and their masters demanded".<sup>2</sup>

In this busy commercial centre Gadsby immediately found himself in difficulties, principally as a result of a charge of Antinomianism. He insisted that the Gospel and not the Law was the believer's rule of life. At this point he parted company not only with Christians of other denominations, but with the teaching of the Particular Baptist Confession of 1689 and also Doctor John Gill, a representative hyper-Calvinist divine of the previous century. Ministers throughout Manchester united against him and suspicion was widespread. While Gadsby's views were new, there can be little doubt that much of the rhetoric was directed against a caricature of his position and no doubt some opposition was

the result of sheer jealousy. Gadsby himself declared, "I believe I was for some time as great a dread to the professors as Bonaparte was to the combined forces". As his preaching tours took him in ever widening circles through Lancashire and Yorkshire, so he had to face and overcome this hostility. In spite of all his own congregation increased steadily and his son, John, related that from 1807 to 1812 the increase in the membership of the church was from five to ten every month.

Robert Halley, Principal of New College, London, and a contemporary of William Gadsby wrote an interesting description of his preaching.

"He seemed a preacher made on purpose for the working classes. The common people heard him gladly. His popularity with the factory people of Manchester was extraordinary, as he was not a Lancashire man. A native of one of the midland counties, when he came to Manchester he could not speak the dialect of the place; he had none of the intonations and modulations of voice which, especially 50 years since, were so agreeable to the ears and hearts of the Lancashire folk. He had to speak to hearers who seldom gave heed to strange speech; but he knew his business well and succeeded where many greater men than he have utterly failed. A man of plain sense, he sought to be nothing more than a plain preacher of Christ's plain gospel. He had not a particle of affectation. He spoke thoroughly good English, perhaps more like the English of William Huntington (some say of William Cobbett) than that of any other speaker of his time. Scripture he knew well and quoted it with verbal accuracy and often with great effect. One author he had certainly studied, John Bunyan, and he was much the better for his study. Besides Bunyan's books, I cannot doubt he had read many a page of racy English with great delight. He had no learning, but he had no small share of mother wit and native humour. A little learning would probably have spoiled him. Illiterate as he was, he sometimes attracted men of learning and culture (I could mention remarkable instances), who heard him with great pleasure. His thoughts were natural, closely connected, logically arranged and lucidly expressed. Quietly earnest, never impassioned, never vehement, but always arresting attention, he is said to have presented in manner as well as in doctrine, a remarkable contrast to the popular Methodist preachers of his early days. His voice was wonderful and he knew well how to manage it." <sup>3</sup>

Discussing Gadsby's ministry, Halley made the point that more moderate Calvinists did little for the working classes in comparison with Gadsby and his associates. Writing of the more moderate men, he went on to say, "they might have made better Christians of Mr. Gadsby's converts if they had been the agents of their conversion; but could they have influenced in any way the men and women who listened with intense interest around the pulpit of William Gadsby?"

At the time of Gadsby's arrival in Manchester the chapel was badly in debt as well as being in a bad state of repair. Eventually a house was built at one end to keep the building up. Soon afterwards Gadsby set off on a preaching visit to London, hoping to raise £100 towards clearing the debt. His ministry was mainly at Red Cross Street Chapel, which was soon so packed, aisles as well as pews that Gadsby had to scramble over seats to reach the pulpit. Three services were held on Sundays and the afternoon congregation was usually waiting to enter, when the morning one left and the evening hearers were waiting outside by the end

of the afternoon service. Gadsby returned to Manchester with nearly £400 for his chapel. In 1820 he preached at the opening of Gower Street Chapel, London, to which he usually paid an annual visit. There and at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, his visits were eagerly anticipated.

Usually Gadsby preached four times a week to his own people, three times on Sunday as well as on Tuesday evenings. In addition he made frequent journeys on foot into the Lancashire towns and villages, the West Riding of Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire, in which counties his son stated that he was instrumental in opening nearly 40 chapels. Sometimes he was invited by persons whose own ministers strongly opposed, and he would preach in a barn or in the open air. When he formed a church at Rochdale, he preached in a field to nearly 2,000 people from the words, "Search the Scriptures", after which he baptised six people in a stream. It was said that on that day the sound of his voice could be heard nearly a mile away.

Throughout his ministry William Gadsby made great efforts to alleviate the terrible poverty around him. The distress in Lancashire was particularly bad in 1826 and so Gadsby made an appeal at Gower Street Chapel, London, for old clothes for the poor. As a result he took north with him 29 cwt. of clothes, the carriage of which was paid by donations, as well as £14 to distribute. The *Manchester Gazette* reported his efforts on December 9, 1826, and added, "some members of his congregation have copied their pastor's laudable example. In recording the above, which does so much credit to Mr. Gadsby's feelings, we cannot let pass the opportunity of hinting to other clergymen and other influential persons that it is their duty to 'go and do likewise'." During the Irish potato famine, he preached from the words, "He that withholdeth corn the people shall curse him", Prov. 11:26, and collected nearly £40 from his own people to send to Ireland. On other occasions he joined in public appeals with considerable success as well as making continual efforts to help the needy from his own pocket.

### **Gadsby's writings**

Gadsby wrote a number of polemical pieces against Arminianism, Sandemanianism and against those who held the Moral Law to be the believer's rule of life. He also compiled a catechism as well as writing tracts and publishing sermons. Probably his widest influence has been through his hymns. He was himself a prolific hymn-writer and also edited a hymn book, which was first published in 1814 and with various additions continues in use today. Some of his hymns reach a very high standard. Such hymns as "Immortal honours rest on Jesus's head" and "O what matchless condescension the eternal God displays" ought to be more widely known than they are. Not all, however, are of this standard.

Another lasting result of Gadsby's labours was the establishment of the *Gospel Standard* magazine. The suggestion for this came from Gadsby's

printer son, John, who persuaded his father that there was a need for such a venture. The first issue appeared in August 1835, when 500 copies were printed and sold at 2d. each. It was intended for the Manchester congregation and Gadsby's friends in the North, but demand increased, notably from London, so that within five months the circulation had quadrupled. Within five years editorial responsibility passed to Joseph Charles Philpot and John M'Kenzie, although John Gadsby remained proprietor of the magazine. Philpot's gifts were no doubt better suited to literary work, although Gadsby's preaching had been important in forming a receptive public for the magazine.

### **Last days and death**

William Gadsby's constitution was robust. From 1798 until November 1829, he preached at least once every Sunday and sometimes three times. During the 1830's he was occasionally prevented from preaching by illness. In September 1840 he fell in his own garden and broke his leg, but was eventually able to resume his labours. Unhappily, his last years were clouded by church trouble. In 1840 James Wells, of London, preached for Gadsby and was very warmly received. He came again in 1842 and was unwise enough to hint from the pulpit that Gadsby's usefulness was ended. Needless to say, such interference was resented and the deacons made it clear to Wells that he would not be invited again. However, a disaffected group left the church and obtained another chapel, which was opened by a sermon from Wells. Gadsby's health was failing and these troubles made matters worse. He preached for the last time on Sunday, January 21, 1844, from Isa. 43:2. In the following week his health gave way completely and he died on Saturday, January 27. His last words were, "I shall soon be with Him, shouting, 'Victory! Victory! Victory for ever!'". Shortly afterwards he said, "Free grace! Free grace! Free grace!", and soon passed peacefully away.

### **Gadsby's theology**

We have a succinct statement of William Gadsby's doctrinal position in the first issue of the *Gospel Standard*. As far as it goes this statement is in harmony with the historic Particular Baptist position as expressed in the Confession of 1689. There were, however, two areas of teaching in particular, where Gadsby came into conflict with men who held to the teaching of the Confession of Faith. These were the questions of the moral law and man's obligation to repent and believe the Gospel.

### **The moral law**

In the first issue of the *Gospel Standard* William Gadsby wrote, "the Gospel, which contains all the glory of all the laws that were ever promulgated from the throne of God, and in which harmonise all the glorious doctrines, promises and precepts of the grace of God, is the only perfect rule of the believer's life and conduct, everything else leaving him destitute of hope". The Confession of Faith states, "The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others to the obedience

thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, Who gave it; neither doth Christ in the Gospel in any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation" (chapter 19, section 5).

In the early days of his ministry especially, Gadsby was often accused of Antinomianism. Robert Halley wrote, "he was called an Antinomian and probably did not speak with sufficient discrimination or exactness on the nature of moral obligation, but no minister in Manchester lived a more moral life or presented to his hearers a more beautiful example of Christian discipline and self control".

Halley also paid tribute to the high standard of discipline maintained in Gadsby's church. It is certain that Gadsby was not a practical Antinomian: both friend and foe testified to the purity of his life. In an excellent article on Antinomianism in the *Encyclopedia of Christianity*,<sup>4</sup> Dr. William Young wrote, "the precepts of the Gospel, which J. C. Philpot and others following Huntington regarded as the Christian's rule of life, are not held by hyper-Calvinists of that school to disannul the moral law". Dr. Young goes on to argue that this position is the result of a false antithesis between the Law and the Gospel.

### **The preaching of the Gospel**

In his doctrinal statement Gadsby says nothing of man's duty to repent of his sins and believe the Gospel. He certainly disassociated himself from the teachings of Andrew Fuller, whom he considered, according to his son, to be "the greatest enemy the church of God ever had, as his sentiments were so much cloaked with the sheep's clothing"<sup>5</sup> At this point Gadsby stands apart from the original Particular Baptists as well as from the Puritans and Reformers. Andrew Fuller's *Gospel worthy of all acceptance* had been an exposition of the teaching of the Confession that God "freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe" (chapter 7, section 2).

Gadsby's sermons do not reveal direct exhortations to unbelievers, although he did address such people and warn them of their state. Subsequently his followers took up a more entrenched position to the extent of denying that the records of apostolic preaching are a safe guide for ministers today. It would be idle to deny that Gadsby's ministry was used to call many, but it would be sheer pragmatism to suggest that this justifies his approach to the preaching of the Gospel. This must be settled on Scriptural grounds.

### **Conclusion**

It is impossible to study the life of William Gadsby without being impressed. His honesty coupled with his devotion to his Lord and his



indefatigable zeal mark him out among men. Clearly he had considerable gifts as a preacher. His compassion for the needy was experienced by many who never heard his voice from the pulpit. Unhappily, however, his views on preaching the Gospel have had considerable influence in the intervening years. A man's aberrations are often developed and emphasised by his followers.

Many who regarded themselves as his followers seem to have shown no concern for evangelism at home or abroad. Some have simply neglected this responsibility; others have developed a harder attitude. Thomas Witts, a minister in the latter category, could write in 1888,

"Painful exercises through a series of years have enabled me to see through the missionary zeal of some in our day; even some calling themselves Particular Baptists. A most ardent wish to benefit those around me, either in ties of blood or otherwise and to convert their souls by earnest prayer and supplication, if haply they might be in the Covenant was often revolving on the wheel of my thoughts. But it may be asked for what? Well I thought because they would be eternally blessed and the God of salvation eternally glorified. No answer to prayer showed me at length that something beside God's glory was at work at the bottom, viz. natural affection and selfwill . . .

"If the reader wants to prove the doctrine of discrimination, let him do as others have done, pray for certain individuals of his own kin; and after years at this, find at last that they go out of the world without giving the slightest hope of being saved. A little business in that way will initiate him into the mysteries of Christ's kingdom or show him the Lord does not save just the persons we fix upon to pray for. He will then be able to leave the rest of the world at his disposal, or at all events to those who make a living out of going to save them; seeing as he says, 'My kingdom is not of this world', neither India, Africa, China or Japan. I admit the Lord may take advantage of free will now and then and save a Hindoo or an African." <sup>6</sup>

Sentiments as stern as this will not be found in William Gadsby's writings, nor would all his followers subscribe to them. They do, however, show the extreme to which hyper-Calvinism may carry a man and warn against the danger of allowing human philosophy to weaken the force of the Great Commission or any other Scriptural statement. The present age needs men who will seek to be loyal to the Word of God in every aspect of their belief and practice. One danger to be avoided is that of reacting against error to an extent that we lose the balance of the Scriptures. In maintaining this balance we have so much that can help us in the writings of the Reformers and Puritans and those who have succeeded in their tradition.

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**The photographs in this issue are explained in the following report.**

## **Starting a New Work**

Don Evans (see front inside cover), one of the elders of Cuckfield, stands before the open door of Bethel Chapel, Crawley, which is about twelve miles north of Cuckfield. Built in 1858, Bethel Chapel has had a Strict Baptist tradition. Typical of the era in which we live decline set in, especially during the post-war years. Despite determined efforts to keep the work going the Chapel closed two years ago.

Several believers who worship at Cuckfield live in the Crawley area, including Don Evans. Should these unite to establish a Church at Bethel, which is centrally situated in the Crawley area, there will be a nucleus of about a dozen adults.

It is hoped that soon there will be a thriving Sunday School, which aspiration is illustrated by the photo shown at the top of the opposite page.

A team of workers is making progress in the restoration of both the inside and outside of the building. Mr. Ebenezer Tingley, a foundation member of Cuckfield and the first to be baptised after the forming of the Church with twelve members in 1962, has performed the herculean labour of removing a jungle of weeds. Surveyor, architect, carpenter, decorator, glazier and artist are some of the professional skills already employed to transform the building. New floor joists are to be constructed and a new platform-cum-pulpit has been designed to provide more space for the preacher and gain more proximity to the congregation. The old pulpit has a rather disdainful feeling about it.

But all this is temporal. We wrestle not against wet rot or dry, not against weeds or dandelion, but against spiritual powers set against any realistic effort to proclaim the glorious tidings of glad news. It is not imagined for a moment that even one soul will be retrieved from the eternal destruction to come upon the indifferent without reliance upon the means of grace. Indifference is the arch sin of these parts. The ungodly take shelter behind nominal religion, especially Anglicanism, but that tree is by no means the only hiding place for those who really do not care. In our prayers; public, family and private, we often pray in particular for new or young churches around the world. It will help if readers remember Crawley, especially that the evangelism to be undertaken will be prospered.

In this connection the design is to engage in systematic visiting. Every area is different and flexibility of thinking as to outreach is important. In the centre photo, opposite, the possibility of open-air preaching in one of the shopping centres is being discussed.

The present population of Crawley is 65,000, but there are rumours of development schemes which will bring the number up to 250,000. Surely we should aim to establish churches in population centres, churches where the grand old doctrines of grace will be preached with a new relevance.

We pray that the new work will be a Bethel indeed, a cause where the Lord Jesus Christ is present in power, drawing people from all stratas of society by means of a vibrant witness and powerful expository preaching.



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