

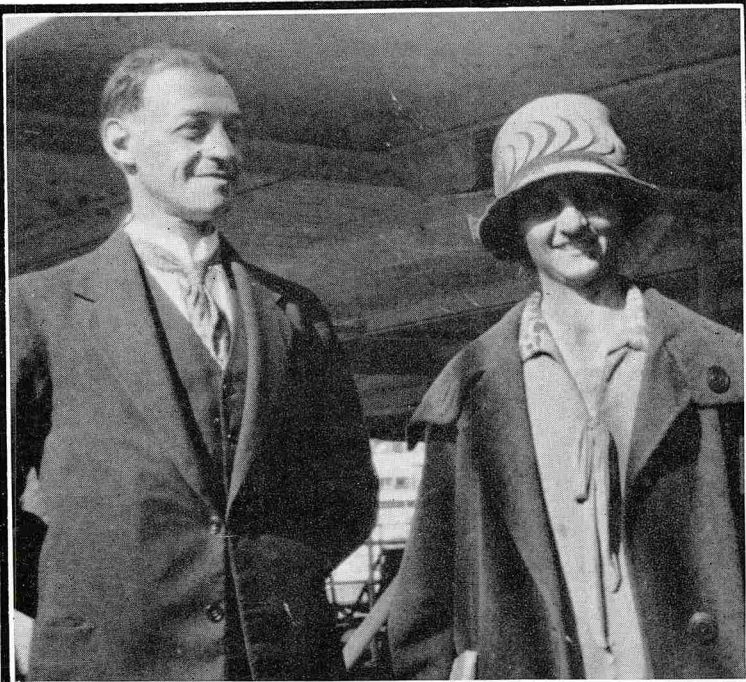
REFORMATION TODAY



-
- 1 EDITORIAL.
- 2 PUBLISHING NEWS AND NOTICES.
- 3 REVIVAL AT SASKATOON?
-
- 4 REFORMATION FOR WIVES. *Erroll Hulse.*
-
- 15 THE CHRISTIAN IN A PERMISSIVE SOCIETY.
Stuart Fowler.
-
- 19 ELI'S MILD REPROOF—a meditation on 1 Samuel 2.
-
- 20 WHAT IT IS TO BE REFORMED. *Erroll Hulse.*
-
- 25 ENOCH'S EXCURSION INTO EXEGESIS—a review.
-
- 27 WHY HAVE A CONFESSION. *Ian Randall.*
-
- 34 THE MAN WITH ONE LEG. Concerning the B.U.
-
- 38 A NEW ASSOCIATION. Correspondence.
-

NUMBER 10

SUMMER 1972



The above photograph of Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Pink was taken in Australia. Since Mr. Pink frowned on photographs of himself only two are known to us. The picture reminds us of the forthcoming article to appear in Reformation Today outlining the life and ministry of A. W. Pink. He is regarded as the most prolific free grace writer of this century. The first part of this new biographical study is in our hands and has made fascinating reading. We hope in the next issue to publish the first part of this study.

Editorial

Spurgeon and the Baptist Union

SINCE THE DOWNGRADE CONTROVERSY HIGHLIGHTS THE ISSUES AT STAKE today, Spurgeon is quoted at some length in the letter bearing the title "The Man with One Leg". The extraordinary blessing that attended Spurgeon's ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and in the many churches which he was largely instrumental in establishing gives us food for thought. In the *Metropolitan Pulpit Sermons 1863* (Volume 9) letters appear reporting results experienced by the students who had trained under Spurgeon.

T. W. Medhurst of Glasgow reported that during the first eleven months of his pastorate he had baptised seventy-six and had received one hundred and twenty-seven. Mr. Genders of Wandsworth described how he was able, after preaching for three months, to form a church with a total of ten souls. Four years later he could report that one hundred and seventy-seven had been received into the church by baptism.

Then a Mr. Harrison testified that after two and a half years of labour, one hundred and sixty-two members had been added to his church, one hundred and ten of these by baptism. In addition there is a letter from a Mr. Gange of Portsmouth. When he began to preach, his congregation numbered fifty and after a few weeks it was nine hundred. After a year of labour he had baptised a hundred and twenty-seven individuals, most of whom had been converted under his ministry.

In contrast to this we read in the annual report of the Baptist Union, April 1972, that there has been a further decrease in membership of 5,800 bringing the number to 263,515. While there is a gradual increase in the population, the downward trend in Baptist membership is marked. The number in 1906 was 434,000 and in 1963, 300,000.

The difference between Spurgeon's Calvinistic Gospel and today's Modernistic recipe surely has much to do with the difference.

If those who deny the divinity of Christ are tolerated within the ranks of a body its effectiveness is destroyed, for what is said in one breath is immediately cancelled by the next. This is like cutting off a man's leg so that he cannot, without artificial means, make so much as a single step.

The annual assembly of General Baptists meeting in London on April 25 was attended by 1,700 members and well illustrates the observation made.

A firm affirmation of adherence to the Baptist Union Declaration of Principle, which acknowledges Jesus Christ as "God manifest in the flesh"

was made. But again while there is no discipline of heretics the B.U. leaders are like sailors on the decks of a sinking ship hollering declarations that they believe in floating—that they truly believe and really believe in floating! In the meantime saboteurs gash holes below.

Publishing News

THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST—THE PUBLISHER *SANS PAREIL*—PLANS TO MOVE its headquarters to Edinburgh this year at the same time taking over the distribution of Banner books in the U.S.A., which, since 1967, has been handled by Puritan Publications of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Unless there are hidden reasons for the Edinburgh move the idea appears to most business minded people like an act in which the chief dramatist talks about going forward when in fact he is walking backwards. But lest we arouse the ire of Scotsmen by saying that in comparison with London, Edinburgh is a backwater, we will desist from further comment!

THE EVANGELICAL PRESS OF 136 ROSENDALE ROAD, LONDON, S.E.21, HAS ANNOUNCED arrangements for the extension of its work in the U.K. At competitive prices over 50 titles will be made available, including Matthew Henry's commentary, *Spurgeon's Treasury of David*, and a number of Calvin's commentaries, as well as paperback editions of Fairburn's *Ezekiel* and Owen's *Temptation and Sin*. E.P. has just published *God's Way of Reconciliation* by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, which consists of studies in Ephesians, chapter 2. 380 pages, £1.80. H. C. Leupold's 1,220 page *Exposition of Genesis* is planned for June at £2.80. Among the smaller publications will be *The Good Fight of Faith*, being the papers given at the 1971 Westminster Conference (the continuation of the Puritan Conference) held each December at Westminster Chapel, London.

CAREY PUBLICATIONS OPERATING FROM 5 FAIRFORD CLOSE, HAYWARDS HEATH, Sussex, in conjunction with Henry E. Walter Ltd., of 26 Grafton Road, Worthing, Sussex, reports steady demand for the first two paperbacks, *Preaching Yesterday and Today* and *The Ideal Church* (both 96 pages, 45p). Some chapters in *The Ideal Church* are particularly relevant, especially the study dealing with the Association of churches, illustrating maximum doctrinal union without structural union.

The poor spiritual condition of the General Baptists and their low standard of doctrine are well known. For a long time there has, as a consequence, been a dearth of material suitable for Baptists. Carey Kingsgate Press, the General Baptist publishing house, went out of business some time ago.

To help meet this dearth a 24-page (demy: large size) booklet, *Baptism and Church Membership*, has just been published at 12p. This is ideal for those enquiring about baptism and church membership.

Two paperbacks are in preparation. The first by David Kingdon expounds the question of baptism in relationship to the Covenant of grace and circumcision. A strong demand is anticipated for this much needed and long overdue study (96 pages, 45p, demy). At the same size and price *An Introduction to the Baptists* by the editor is planned for July.

Third Carey Conference. Liverpool, 1973. January 9-12.

Plans are beginning to take shape for this Conference and Pastor Berge of Brussels has agreed to give two papers, the first "Christianity and Revolution", and the second "The Churches in the new Europe". Herbert Carson will speak on the subject of "Tradition", while David Kingdon will give a biographical study on

William Carey. The latter has been long awaited and we look forward to this with some anticipation. Peter Lewis of Nottingham will speak on "The Puritans and what they can teach us Today". A well known Pastor in the south of the U.S.A., Gerald Primm, aims to be at Liverpool. He edits a magazine, *The Sword and Trowel*. 35,000 Southern Baptist Pastors were included in the circulation of the last issue of this Spurgeonian publication.

Carey Recording Studios

Tapes or cassettes are available for hire or sale. These include both 1971 and 1972 Carey Conferences and a range of expository sermons. Information from P. Dixon, 73 Pasture Hill Road, Haywards Heath, Sussex, RH16 1LY.

Revival at Saskatoon?

Christianity Today reported revival in Saskatoon. We wrote seeking details from Alan Wilson and received the following reply.

One of the reasons why I have not written to you earlier is that I have desired to give you up-to-date information on the "so-called" revival which has been reported from Saskatoon in Canada.

One of my relations is a minister of Reformed convictions who pastors a church in Canada. Like yourself he is intensely interested in revival and on hearing of the reports at Saskatoon travelled there with another pastor to witness the blessings purported to be taking place. He came away with a heavy heart. He would not deny that there has been the work of the Holy Spirit in blessing believers in Saskatoon, and in the first instance this appears to have come about without any special organised effort, but to describe this as revival is very misleading.

The meetings across the country which have been advertised as "the spread of revival fires" are in fact nothing more than glorified high pressure Pentecostal meetings with only the "tongues" missing. There are high pressure appeals for Christians to come forward at the meetings. The idea has been spread that the way to revival is to confess your sins as a Christian. In several areas "After Glow Meetings" have been organised. Opportunity is given for folk to confess their sins and the next night evidence is given of revival that has taken place in their hearts.

All this points to the fact that we have to be very clear in distinguishing between a spiritually successful campaign and a true Biblical revival. It is just at this point where *Christianity Today* has erred badly, reporting revival in Canada which is nothing of the kind. A true revival takes place when the fear of God lays hold upon a community, moving men and women to concern about spiritual things and the state of their souls before God. Personally I cannot see this happening until evangelical churches return to the basic truths of the faith. It is God Himself who is absent in so much of our evangelical activity and preaching.

Nobody denies that there can be spiritual blessing in organised campaigns. It can be said, however, that as long as organised efforts perpetuate a man-centred evangelicalism that this in itself is a hindrance to true revival. This is illustrated by what has happened in Canada. Evidence of some blessing has led to believers working up, by their own efforts, a religious fervour which is far from the genuine phenomena of God coming down to man according to His own Sovereign pleasure and good will. "Oh . . . that Thou wouldest *come down* that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence."

There is in many churches a prejudice against God-centred doctrine, and this is a further factor which militates against a genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Yours sincerely in Christ, Alan.

Reformation begins at home and there is no end to the task of conforming home life to the requirements of Scripture. As stressed in the article, reformation for wives will thrive best in the sunshine of a husband's love. Husbands need not think this article is for women only.

Reformation for Wives

"AND THE LORD GOD SAID, IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN SHOULD BE alone; I will make an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). God did not then take ten million years to evolve a new species called female, but in a spontaneous act of creation He made a woman, called Eve, for the first man, called Adam.

The procedure was precise and deliberate. First, Adam was put into a deep sleep. Then a rib was taken from him and a woman—a beautiful woman—was created. How do we know she was beautiful? We know it because both Adam and Eve were made in the image of God and that image is both holy and beautiful. Eve was lovely in character as well as in outward form. She was ideal for Adam. Woman was made for man, just as man was made for God.

There is another creation which is similar. If Adam bore a mark in his side, so does Christ. The wound in His side points to the redemption of the church. By blood she is bought and by water she is cleansed. Believers are God's workmanship, created in Christ. The word "in" denotes union. Our regeneration and subsequent spiritual life stem from union with Christ. We are predestinated to be conformed to Christ, and the basis upon which this is carried out by the Father in calling, justification and glorification, is union with Christ. The process of sanctification by the Holy Spirit likewise proceeds on the basis of union with the Son of God.

Christ confirmed the purpose of God that the two—man and wife—shall be one. Any shadow, from without or within, which threatens that union is contrary to God's will. Our Lord builds on this foundation—the two shall be one—through the ministry of His apostles, the main passages being Eph. 5:22-23, Col. 3:18-21, I Pet. 3:1-7, Tit. 2:3-5 and I Tim. 5:9-16. Bearing these passages in mind, and illustrating points from them as we proceed, we will turn to the foundations laid by our Creator.

We observe that Eve was made: 1. To be an ideal companion for Adam, so that he should no longer be alone. 2. To be a specially suitable help to her partner—a help meet. 3. To be the glory of man. As man is to reflect the glory of God, so the wife is to complement her husband by assisting and helping him fulfil his God-given rôle. This is difficult to express, but it is like the sun and moon, both giving light, but the moon

reflecting the light of the sun. God's glory is reflected better when the two are united in the life ordained by Him. 4. To be a wife to Adam and an excellent mother of their children.

When sin entered, all this was greatly marred. Satan determined to attack God and destroy His glory as represented in His creation, the pinnacle of which was the man and his wife. Satan's aim was to overthrow the Creator's order by bringing ruin to the happy relationship which was thriving between the garden and heaven, between Adam and his wife and Jehovah.

Disaster came when Eve forsook her rôle of submission, seized the rôle of leadership, ate the forbidden fruit, drew Adam to do likewise, and thereby plunged themselves and the whole human race into sin, guilt and alienation from God. Adam blamed Eve (the first quarrel on record between husband and wife) and Eve blamed the serpent. Both Adam and Eve took the stance of self-justification and self-righteousness which has characterised all their progeny ever since.

As a consequence, man came under the curse of God in the main area of his interest and activities: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread". Likewise, Eve came under a curse in regard to her vocation respecting the family: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children". The curse of sin was real. Affliction on both sides was to bring strain to the marital relationship. The serpent was also judged. The day would come when he would be crushed by One who would be born of Eve.

These were the immediate effects of the fall. The ultimate wage, or debt, to be paid by man for sin was eternal separation from God. This "second death" would include eternal retribution from God for transgressions committed.

The misery of the human race—the quarrelling, bitterness, separation, divorce and the wreckage seen by way of unhappy and broken homes—bears testimony to the awful reality of the fall.

But thanks be to God for the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He has reconciled us to God and this reconciliation to the Father is followed by the restoration of peaceful relationships among the redeemed on earth, not least in the most important relationship of husband and wife.

In a previous article we have thought about reformation for husbands, and this is right, since the love of husbands for their wives should be as wonderful as Christ's love for His church. In this sunshine the garden of reformation for wives will blossom and thrive magnificently. As Christ's doctrine descends daily as "the small rain on the tender herb", so happiness will be fostered. Happy are those wives whose devoted husbands provide affectionate spiritual nurture and sterling leadership. Many wives do not enjoy such blessings but the substance of what is to follow applies to them nonetheless.

1. God made Eve an ideal companion for Adam

The heart of Christianity and the essence of its life is communion with God. This commences with conversion and increases as the Christian grows in grace and knowledge. Being made in His image we have faculties which, when quickened, enable us to know God, love Him and enjoy Him for ever. This love and enjoyment find their expression in prayer and communion, both in private and in the sanctuary of worship with God's family. By the new birth we become God's sons and daughters. By adoption we become His companions. Such is our fellowship with Him that Christ declares that the life we have is abundant. He is referring to the restoration of communion with God. There is nothing like the life of communion with the Father through union with Christ. This makes a garden of Eden and sweetens all that sin has made bitter.

Marriage is the first relationship to be affected. Communion with God enriches the whole relationship, raises it to a new level and restores it in large measure to what it was intended to be before the fall.

Enrichment from companionship with God should flow into marital companionship. Thus Eve is to be the amiable and joyful companion of her husband, while Adam is to love, esteem and enjoy her company above all others. The name "Naomi" describes what a wife should be to her husband. That word means, "my joy", "my bliss", or "pleasantness". The name suggests that which is charming, agreeable and attractive.

There was much in the life of Naomi which tempted her to change her name to "Marah", which means bitter. The tragic consequences of the fall have engulfed mankind in bitterness. The Lord, however, provided for Naomi Ruth the Moabitess, who proved to be a faithful friend, and a comfort in tribulation and distress. In like manner Christ has become our friend, who comforts, strengthens, and saves us from bitterness in the afflictions of the world.

In bearing, conversation, and in reactions, the wife should try to be pleasant, encouraging and constructive. The word "amiable" sums up these qualities. The priceless nature of God's gift is realised by man when he enjoys the companionship of a wife which is amiable, pleasant, edifying and ideal.

Is reformation needed in this area? Such are the pressures and responsibilities of home that it is easy for the wife to neglect her calling of companionship. Strain can cause her to begin to nag, reproach or even shout at her husband. This is the opposite of amiability. It has always been the purpose of Satan to deform God's sons, made in Christ's image, into his own devilish and ugly likeness. The opposite of an amiable, loving wife is seen in a hissing, spiteful cat, back arched and claws ready to strike—a repulsive sight; Peter speaks of a woman possessing, "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit". The antithesis of meekness is the

description of Solomon, when he says, "A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman are alike. It is better to dwell in the corner of a housetop alone than with a brawling woman in a wide house. It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman" (Prov. 27:15, 25:24, 21:19).

Contention violates the command of submission, and nagging, the law of nature. Instead of creating happiness a contentious wife makes torment for her husband. Some wives, particularly those who have had the advantage of a Christian upbringing, or who may possess a naturally meek temperament, may not have as much difficulty as others in being amiable.

Attention is required in this matter in most homes and we are reminded that this is a life-long work by Paul's letter to Titus, where he is told to teach the elderly women that they in turn may teach the young women and also provide a suitable and becoming example. The seven requirements outlined by the apostle are like the seven colours blending together to form a lovely picture of an amiable wife.

As we visit this home we find, 1. That this wife is affectionate to her husband. It is clear that he is the first object of her love in the home scene. 2. She loves her children. 3. She is prudent and soberminded. Here is calmness and self-control in the midst of all the demands and pressures of running a home. 4. She is pure. It is obvious that she is wholeheartedly devout in her calling and there is no room for flirting, loose speech or covetous conversation which betrays dissatisfaction or rebellion. 5. She is a "keeper at home". She is happy in her domestic world and her happiness makes others in the home feel that the place is thoroughly worthwhile. 6. She is benevolent. The ideal wife is "good", which means benevolent. Stephen Charnock, the Puritan, begins his unrivalled exposition of the Divine Attributes with the "goodness of God", which runs to a two-hundred-and-thirty-page exposition. As God is the source of all goodness in the world, so a wife is to be the source of benevolence in the home. She has her own world to provide for and she is to make this a joy to her husband and family in humble dependence upon God. To husband and household alike she is a constant source of encouragement and refreshment. The preparation of meals apart from anything else involves constant work and forms a major part of her service. 7. The wife is to adorn her Christian profession by obedience to her husband.

Serious defection in any of these points can cause damage to the Gospel! Paul insists on these virtues "lest the Word of God be blasphemed". Maladjusted Christian homes wreck the testimony of the Gospel before the watching world. To cite one instance, if outsiders see that a wife is a gadabout and gossip, not devoted to the care of keeping the home, this will bring reproach to the Gospel.

As Christians are first to be devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ in His Person, and then to the service of Christ, so the woman is first to be devoted to her husband, as husband and companion, and then to the service which accompanies that. This brings us to the second main consideration.

2. God made Eve as a help meet

As the man labours at the coal face, the carpenter's bench, at books, or at the tractor's wheel, the wife is at home doing her best with whatever resources she has at her disposal to make the home a place of helpfulness for her husband. When he returns from work he finds a warm welcome, and a refreshing meal. He might also find a surprise, such as some work done to make the home more attractive.

A tired husband may often fail to appreciate the good works of a wife at home, and she may easily become discouraged. In such circumstances it is well for her to remember God's purpose that she be "a keeper at home". Her rôle is domestic but is often as exhausting and exacting as the work of men who shoulder heavy responsibilities. It will help wives if they think of the angels who are ordained by God to serve Him and to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. And then the whole church of Christ is ordained by the Father to be of service to Christ. In their sphere wives are to reflect this God-ordained structure. If a wife is discouraged by a husband who does not appreciate her devotion and constant work let her remember that her Lord in heaven sees her service and will reward her in due time.

The beneficence which flows from a good wife is described well in the last chapter of Proverbs, although a contemporary wife will find her lot somewhat different to that lady of nobility who was able to buy fields and reward her servants. Nevertheless the lady described in Proverbs¹ did not have the advantage of a washing machine or of the local supermarket, and had to import her supplies from places far away. To illustrate the extent of helping the husband in the home one can think of the matter of clothes. The woman of Proverbs clothed her family in scarlet. This is a salutary reminder that there is nothing in the Bible which commends dullness, drabness, tatty or untidiness. A help meet will see that her husband is not ashamed to appear among his colleagues. Somehow she will find time to sew on the missing buttons!

The right mixture of Martha (good food and clean clothes) and Mary (pleasant and amiable fellowship) should be maintained. Happy is that wife whose husband truly cares for her spiritual diet, who would rather forego his food than have her be neglected in her soul's needs.

The rôle of being a help meet is not confined merely to domestic things. Often a wife has insight and wisdom which exceeds the husband's. She

¹ Prov. 31:10-28.

is to be a help to him by sharing his burdens and anxieties. A note of caution is needed, however, since all too easily a wife may usurp the position of authority. In all matters she is to be in submission and it is the husband's right and duty to make the final decisions which really touch the nerve centres of the home. She is a happy wife who possesses a husband who is able to confer with her and receive her counsel, at the same time keeping her advice in perspective and coming to the right conclusions to the benefit of the family.

A Christian home should be noted for hospitality and that of an elder in the church doubly so. Paul in writing to Timothy describes the qualities to be required of women who are set aside for the service of the church (I Tim. 5:9-14). It is not to be supposed that such women are by this service to assume any authority which usurps the eldership, but we do well to note that a place was made for experienced women in the apostolic church. Such a woman was to be "well reported of for good works; if she has brought up children, if she had lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have followed diligently every good work" (I Tim. 5:10).

A Christian husband is strengthened if his wife is expert in the matter not only of bringing up the children, but also in giving hospitality and in providing humble service in the sphere of spiritual relationships, namely, tireless and patient service to those who are needy. An elder who has a wife who is thoroughly competent in the visitation of the lonely or afflicted has a tremendous help in his ministry. Extreme discouragement assails some wives whose strength falls far short of all that is required of them. They feel that neither strength nor time is adequate to fulfil their responsibilities. This means that a sense of priorities must be practised if depression is to be avoided. Some dusting jobs will just have to wait. A few wives complain that it is impossible to do justice to their vocation because of the size of the family. By today's standards a family with four children is judged to be terrific!

Luther expressed himself in a pungent but often very helpful way. He declared that "women should not speak of their wretchedness in front of Eve", for "at the last judgment Eve's distress will exceed that of all women" for she must see that all die on her account. He goes on to suggest that Eve bore two hundred children! "Adam got to be very old, nine hundred and thirty years—after the fall, when they had been comforted again, for I think they were often comforted by angels; otherwise it wouldn't have been possible for them to sleep together because their fright was so great. After about thirty years they began to beget children." We are thankful for Luther's forthrightness for the Bible itself hides little, but he is not to be taken too seriously at this point for even if Eve did have a large family they were not all at home at the same time.

Wives do well to extend a helping hand and sympathy to those of their kind who for one reason or another feel that they cannot stand the pace of life. How sad it is when women "let things go", when they cease caring about personal appearance or about their homes. In apostolic times it was a custom for women to wear their hair very long and use gold leaf to adorn their hair. Peter speaks against extravagance in dress (I Pet. 3:3). This ought not to be taken as an excuse for unkempt appearance. Moderate payments to the hairdresser are warranted where this helps a wife's morale. Shallow legalism is to be avoided in regard to matters where liberty of conscience is the rule. Customs and styles vary in different countries and each wife must judge for herself as to what is tasteful, suitable and modest.

What is to be said to wives whose husbands are unconverted? How can they be said to be the glory of their husbands? Clearly their cases are different and fraught with great difficulty which is one of the reasons why the Scripture forbids mixed marriages (II Cor. 6:14-16). Yet two passages of Scripture in particular make it very clear that the duty of a Christian wife is fidelity to her husband whether he be converted or not. These are I Pet. 3:1-6 and I Cor. 7:13-16.

The dilemma of the Christian wife whose husband opposes her testimony is to what extent she should submit to him where he forbids her to worship on the Lord's day. She is bound to obey God but also to obey God's law in regard to submission. She is far more likely to win him to the Gospel by her example and consistent conduct than by speeches. Careful not to neglect her domestic duties she ought to devote some time on Sunday to public worship, for without a firm stand in moral issues such as this her example will fall short of what it ought to be. Those women in this position should pray much over the passages of Scripture referred to and seek strength to be faithful and persevering in face of their grave difficulties.

3. God made Eve to be the glory of Adam

The more the church exalts Jesus Christ the more she herself shines in beauty and glory. An important lesson can be derived from this in the sphere of evangelism. The more consistent the church is in her love for Christ and in holy living, the more powerful her evangelism will be in its intrinsic power. No amount of talking, or even preaching, will be of much use if the quality of life is lacking and if the people round about are convinced that the Christians are hypocrites. Likewise with husband and wife, the more the marriage prospers the happier the partners will be in their partnership.

God made Eve to reflect and show up the glorious image of God stamped upon Adam. The full glory of God's creation was seen by the angels when they saw both man and woman together, rather than the man by himself. So in the family the real virtues and gifts which come

from the grace of God are better seen in the mutual support of husband and wife and wife and husband. The quickest way for a wife to destroy herself is to destroy her husband. Alternatively, his happiness is her joy.

The passage which best illustrates this point is Ephesians 5:22-33. Here the marriage relationship is compared to the relationship which the redeemed church bears to Christ. As the church reflects and highlights the glory of Christ, so the wife reflects the glory of the man. We are told that heaven is a world of love and the main lesson to be derived from this is that husbands are to cherish their wives with a unique love, and wives are to love their husbands likewise.

When we speak of the glory of man we are really speaking of the glory of God, for it is to His glory when we live as He originally intended us to live; that is, to glorify Him in all that we do.

Is reformation required here? It is advisable for wives to be diligent in their attention to expository preaching, to the reading of Scripture and the study of literature which aids them in their rôle. Lack of understanding of the place of the woman in the home is often the cause of bitterness or resentment. Pastors are greatly encouraged when they find that wives in the congregation show the same interest in theology, doctrine, reading and application of spiritual truth to daily life as the husbands. Christian husbands ought to see that their wives have the same opportunity as themselves to attend services, even more so because wives lack time for reading and study because of domestic responsibility. Misguided is the notion that women are to be relegated to the kitchen while the men take sole possession of the spiritual realm.

4. God made Eve to be an excellent mother of children

The real pressures for a wife begin when the family begins to multiply. In a few years there may be five times as many people to care for than at the beginning. There is no end to the work involved in training up children to be models of what men and women ought to be. For perhaps twenty years each child will have the example of the father and mother before him. Added to the sight of personal example must be a world of provision and discipline.

Most men seem to spend the bulk of their time away from the home, leaving an ever-increasing responsibility to the wife. For instance, men in the New York area have to add to their working hours three hours a day for travel. Likewise those in the Greater London area must allow for two or three extra hours a day for commuting by train or car. Sailors, long-distance lorry drivers, doctors and salesmen are some whose vocations often require an excessive proportion of time being spent away from the home. Thus the wife is left to manage affairs single-handed. Should this be the case, or should a wife find that she is landed with the main responsibilities for the family because of the negligence of her

husband, she will do well to begin by establishing a set routine for time-keeping.

It is good that a fixed time be set for breakfast when the whole family eats and prays together before activities begin. The family will be happier when there are sensible clearly defined rules which are to be kept. The wife should understand that she as well as the husband is to use the rod and when discipline is necessary it should be administered in a timely fashion, remembering the text, "Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil" (Eccles. 8:11). For every mother who tends to be too severe with her children there are perhaps ten or twenty who are lacking in control of their children. Many mothers spend far too much time nagging, threatening, quarrelling with or hollering at their offspring. One firm stand which consists of a spanking, capably administered, will deliver the whole family from much unnecessary unpleasantness.¹

Our age of lawlessness has developed to the stage where children read what they like, see what they like and behave as they like. Godly mothers are to keep an eye on what children read, which friends they go out with and what they listen to on the radio, or what they watch on television. Many mothers take the easy way out, planting their children in front of the television set, while they are freed to attend to their chores. This not only robs the children of the fulfilment of finding under the direction of their parents suitable creative pastimes, but it is a means by which their impressionable minds are saturated with amoral principles and adjusted to a situation in which filth, violence, disgusting language and blasphemy are regarded as normal. In England there are some excellent instructive programmes but also a vast amount which if it is not trivial and worthless is sadistic, vicious and lascivious. It is a source of deep concern that the country is no longer governed from Westminster but by anti-Christian, amoral tycoons who have control of the mass-media.

A common failing to be observed among mothers is that they tend to be engulfed by the relentless pressures of providing for their families. As a consequence they seldom, if ever, take time to view their children in perspective and make an intelligent survey of their growth, their needs and their development as a whole. It is said of Susannah Wesley that she spent one hour a week with each of her nineteen children. Perhaps servants helped in the household, but the idea is helpful nevertheless.

In most Christian homes the custom is for one of the parents to pray with each child separately before the lights are turned off at night. This is accompanied with a Scripture reading and often with a story from a secular book. These times with the children are invaluable and the events of the day can be reviewed and the challenge of tomorrow

¹ There is more wisdom in the following contexts concerning this issue than all the modern thinkers put together, namely, Prov. 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15-17; Heb. 12:6-8.

surveyed. This time forms an ideal opportunity for the child to confide in its parent.

Parents do well to remember that they are training up future fathers and mothers. Gradually the children need to be introduced into the daily round of responsibility that will one day be theirs. A girl who does not know how the stove works, and a boy who has never been shown how to handle a screw-driver is ill-equipped. The Eskimos live precariously in a freezing climate and necessity brings young children to a high degree of skill in the art of survival. Young boys, for instance, become expert in the art of fishing and handling the sledge. We are not pressed in this way but we are fools if we do not train up our children in things both theoretical and practical. When the Scripture says, "train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it", the "way" referred to is the way of life as a whole, which is lived within the framework of the revelation of Scripture.

The choice of priorities for mothers poses a constant source of difficulty. Reference has been made to what children receive in their minds and real firmness and discipline in this realm requires time and courage and is more important than shining floors. Some housewives will give fastidious care to dusting the ornaments on the mantelpiece but neglect vital aspects of their children's character. Leighton is reported to have said, "the Lord sends them to a better wardrobe" in reference to women who are converted to Christ. Christian mothers should see, for instance, to the wardrobes of their daughters. It is not enough that they should be chaste and modest in their dress. It is their duty to insist that their children dress with moderation. It is no credit to the home when the girls are classed by outsiders with the loose and the worldly. The pressure to relax requirements in the realm of dress and make-up are colossal, especially when standards have fallen throughout society. We read of Eli who failed to restrain his sons, but it is even more frightening to read that despite Samuel being witness to the judgment of God in the case of Eli's sons, his own sons, "walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and perverted judgment" (I Sam. 8:3).

The charge will always be made by outsiders that we will lose our children if we are too strict, but we are certain to lose them if they are allowed to do as they please.

Under extreme pressure of caring for the family, wives must be careful to discern weaknesses in their own characters, which are much more likely to appear when they are exhausted by the daily round. For instance, if there is a tendency to be too harsh with the children, and lash out against them in rage when inconvenience is caused, thereby incurring injustice in the eyes of the children, this will be worse during times of fatigue or temptation. But for every mother that is too harsh there are many more who may have the opposite tendency to spoil their children. It is tragic for grandparents when they visit their families and find that

the children are left to run wild, the cat is held up by its tail, the dog is tortured, toys are smashed ruthlessly, heavy blows are exchanged in rounds of fighting, and yelling and screaming go uncorrected. Grandparents can be grieved deeply as they have to watch such chaos. Mothers, especially those whose husbands may be absent, should be watchful to insist on good behaviour and respect from their children at all times. Nor should they hesitate, even when grandparents or visitors are present, to remove an offender and deal with it in the scriptural manner. Children are very quick to observe that discipline is likely to be relaxed when others are present, thus taking advantage of the situation.

During seasons of discouragement or depression a wife can be tempted either to carelessness or laziness. This too is to be resisted. Some wives during a time of weakness may be tempted to take advantage of their husbands, and some men who are unusually helpful in domestic matters can very easily become a nanny to the mother of the house. A man who dons an apron and eases the domestic burden is to be admired, but a man who runs about like a messenger boy at the beck and call of a dominating woman denies his manhood.

If wives are to be excellent mothers of children they will be jealous to ensure the instruction of their children in all things that are wholesome, but particularly in a knowledge of the Scriptures, which are able to make their children wise unto salvation. It is not by bossiness or by nagging that the children learn, but rather by a warm heart to heart communication that they receive a practical knowledge of the ways of the Lord. When conversation naturally flows into the spiritual realm the best opportunity for the diligent instruction of the children is offered. Moses wrote: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them (God's precepts) when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up".

To conclude, we might describe the ideal wife as being an amiable companion to her husband, his industrious and enterprising help meet, the one who causes him to prosper and reflect the glory of God in all his ways, and also, should it please God to grant offspring, the excellent mother of his children.

Bibliography. It is good to read something on this subject at least once a year. Several books on the home are available but most can only be recommended with caution. Larry Christensen, the Lutheran-cum-Pentecostal pastor, is robust, personal and wholesome in *The Christian Family* (216 pages, Fountain Trust). Wholeheartedly recommended in every respect is material, *Directives for Family Living*, by Al Martin, which may be published by the Banner. D. H. Small writes well and covers much ground, including questions like family planning, in two books, *After you've said I do* (256 pages, Revell) and *Design for Christian Marriage* (221 pages, Send the Light Trust). A work by Matthew Henry, *The Quest for Meekness and Quietness of Spirit* (144 pages, last published by Eerdmans in 1955), is helpful. Two volumes in the works of John Angell James are devoted to the family. A rare work. If you find a set send us a telegram!

The material which follows is drawn from a paper read at a Conference in Australia by Stuart Fowler. Here salient points are reproduced in a much abridged form omitting details which are of more interest to experts than to the average reader. The article ends on a positive note although most would concede that we are very far from being able to implement all the suggestions put forward.

The Christian in a Permissive Society

STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM, ALTHOUGH "THE PERMISSIVE SOCIETY" IS A stock phrase in contemporary literature, I have been unable to find a definition of it. John A. T. Robinson goes so far as to say that it not only defies definition, but that the very attempt means that "it slips through your fingers, and you end up . . . by concluding that it does not exist". It appears, then, that definition is a difficult, perhaps a perilous, task. Nevertheless, we must make the attempt.

Undoubtedly it is used to describe the ethical attitudes of contemporary society, and I think it is fair to say that the particular feature of our society that has given rise to this description is the marked relaxation of moral sanctions and restraints. I propose, therefore, as a working definition, that the permissive society is a society in which traditional moral values, and the social sanctions for enforcing those values, are openly being abandoned. By social sanctions I include all the devices, legal and otherwise, by which society discourages certain types of activity. Some would go further than I have here, and say that our society has abandoned all moral sanctions, but this seems to go too far. There has been marked relaxation of traditional sanctions, and this process of relaxation is continuing, but society as a whole has not abandoned all sanctions against immoral conduct.

A brief analysis

Before we can determine the appropriate Christian response to such a society we must attempt a radical analysis in order to uncover the religious root of the ethical changes that are taking place. Christians, as Christians, are not opposed to change as such. By reason of union with Christ by the Spirit we are ourselves catalysts of change in the world. The authentic Christian witness turns the world upside down. At the same time, we cannot welcome change just because it is change, for we know that, in a world of sin, pervaded by grace, change may be either progressive or retrogressive.

When we begin to examine the determining religious principle of today's permissiveness, what alarms us is not that the permissive society is a society of change—every society is—nor that it is a society in which the traditional moral value system is crumbling—this was inevitable—but that the changes in moral values that are taking place are taking place under the dominating influence of the humanistic doctrine of the self-regulating man. Everywhere it is taken for granted, implicitly if not explicitly, that man has within himself all that he needs to correctly regulate his life, in the area of morals as well as everywhere else.

If this doctrine is accepted, it follows that all moral regulation and restraints other than those that are self-imposed are not only unnecessary, but are morally harmful, hindering the attainment of moral maturity.

I would stress that the humanistic doctrine of the self-regulating man is the dominant influence in modern society, but not the only influence. Modern society is a complex of very diverse forces, none of which can have it all its own way. These other forces, such as conservatism and ethical legalism, serve to check the progress of the humanistic doctrine. Nevertheless, that doctrine remains the dominant stream and determines the direction being taken.

It is also important to recognise that the humanistic stream itself has many, diverse, sub-streams. Some are optimistic; some are pessimistic. Some are materialistic; some are idealistic. Some are individualistic; some are socialistic. All are bound together by a common religious root finding common expression in the doctrine that man is ethically self-regulating.

Because of the diversity of humanistic thought, however, the working out of this doctrine may vary greatly. It may, for example, lead to the view that the State exists purely to serve the individuals, or it may lead to the view that the interests of the individual must be subordinated to those of the State. It may lead to the contention that every individual must do what he considers right, or to the view that men must recognise the moral values of a supposed communal conscience, or to the view that moral values are to be determined by experts on the basis of empirical data.

The lesson is that, if we reduce humanistic thought to a stereotype we will remain blind to its pervasive influence in contemporary society.

Again, we cannot assume that, because the changes in moral values that are taking place are governed by a humanistic principle, they are all bad. Right changes may be made for wrong reasons. Common grace has not ceased to operate in the permissive society.

We cannot assume, therefore, that when there is a conflict between today's moral values and those of yesterday, it is today's that are wrong. Neither can we assume, because they are presented as the sure fruits of progressive and enlightened thought, that today's judgments are superior. We may not ignore history, but neither may we permit it to determine the

issue. Aware of the humanistic root of today's dominant stream of thought, but aware also of common grace, we must submit all to radical criticism in the light of the Word of God. For this reason it seems to me highly dangerous for Christian writers to join in the popular derision of "Victorian" morals, as though our prime need is to get away from "Victorian" morality. It seems to me too much like playing to the gallery.

The moral value system of the Victorian age was seriously defective, but it was not by any means all wrong. It was often artificial and hypocritical, but also contained many valuable moral insights. Like all caricatures, the popular caricature of the Victorian era contains some truth, but not balanced truth. If we encourage the idea that to be "Victorian" is to be wrong, so that a moral value judgment only needs to be called "Victorian" to be condemned, we will find ourselves throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Today's response

Christians, on the whole, do not approve of the permissive society, but, beyond that, reaction divides into four main categories.

There is the monastic response, with its retreat into the fortress of the Christian community whose defences are further strengthened to shut out the influences of the permissive society.

There is the reactionary response, with its protest against falling standards and its hopes pinned on preserving and restoring traditional sanctions.

There is the synthetic response, found throughout the whole theological spectrum from conservative evangelical to Christian situationist, which thinks to divert the course of the permissive society by adding to it a Christian plus factor.

This is specially dangerous. It thinks it is salting the earth when all it is doing is throwing a handful of Christian currants into the humanistic dough. What is needed is not a Christian plus factor, like currants in the dough, but the working radically of Christian faith, like salt and yeast, permeating and transforming the whole lump.

The fourth response is the reformational, which, if it means anything, means the radically Biblical response. It is an integral response, dealing with society as a whole and not supposing that ethical renewal can come without the renewal of the whole society.

It is also, so far as it is truly reformational, self-critical and open to fresh insights, provided they will pass the test of the Word of God. While rejecting the other three responses as fundamentally unsound, it will acknowledge that each of them shows important insights which the reformational response must make part of its own integral response. It must embrace the keen awareness of the antithesis between the world and the Christian community as seen in the monastic; it must adopt the

reactionary's firm hold on the never-ceasing militancy of the body of Christ on earth; it must recognise, with the synthetist the urgent need for effective communication with our age.

Yet, not stopping here, a reformational response will take four lines of action in direct response to the permissive society.

Lines of action

1. We must engage in prophetic proclamation. We must strive for radical ideological confrontation with the humanistic thought of our age. We must seek ways of meaningful communication with our age at every level.

Our proclamation will only be prophetic if it includes a decided and specific protest against the evils of our society. We need the spirit of Paul, who, walking the streets of Athens, and seeing idolatry all around him—and intending only to pass through—found “his spirit provoked within him”, till he must speak. We must covet the heart of Jeremiah who, when he wanted to stop rebuking the sins of his generation, found in his heart like a fire shut up in his bones, burning into him till he could keep quiet no longer. By protest I do not have in mind waving banners and chanted slogans.

2. We must make a creative, radically Christian cultural contribution, particularly in literature and the arts. Without this, all our preaching, our moral instruction, and our legal sanctions, will have as much effect on the permissive society as trying to keep a boat dry by bailing with a billycan while there is a gaping hole in the bottom.

This is no simple task, for we have forgotten how to act as Christians in this field. We are all infected, more or less, with humanistic ideals. Let no one deceive himself it is different with him.

This means that we must practise the most rigorous and ruthless criticism of our own efforts. We must dare to create, to construct. We must not wait till our theories are nicely polished to our satisfaction before doing so.

3. We must develop a relevant, coherent Christian ethic. The moral valuing processes of Christians are in a state little short of chaotic. We have no distinctive, coherent ethic with which to confront the permissive society. Our only distinctive contribution is the tattered remnants of an ethical code, so that the face we present to the world has every appearance of ethical legalism.

4. We must pursue reformation in the structural functioning of society; that is, we must apply our Biblical, reformational insights to the internal and external functioning of the structures of society. We must pursue this hand in hand with personal, scientific, cultural, and confessional reformation.

ELI'S MILD REPROOF—*A meditation on 1 Samuel 2*

HOPHNI AND PHINEHAS WERE GUILTY NOT ONLY OF EMBEZZLING THAT which belonged to the Lord but also of committing adultery within the precincts of God's holy sanctuary. It was a great burden for the faithful in Israel, who knew these things and who observed that there was no intervention to curtail that which brought grave dishonour to the name of Jehovah. Not only did God speak to Eli through Samuel but he also sent a prophet (whose name is not given) to him. This spokesman was very clear in his reproof of the iniquity in Eli's family (I Sam. 2: 27-36).

The substance of the message was that the patience of the Lord was tried to the limit. The time was at hand when He would remove the existing leadership pertaining to the Temple. In its place He would raise up another who would be faithful to Him.

If we analyse Eli's failure it was that he was unprepared to exercise the necessary discipline. It was unthinkable that the young men should be permitted to continue in the exercise of their ministry. Eli was content with a mild reproof (I Sam. 2:22-25). Eli's mild rebuke achieved precisely nothing as far as discipline was concerned.

In our century a different kind of adultery pertains. There are those who have sallied forth into the ministry from institutions of learning where the Word of God has been belittled. These false teachers have wrought havoc in the churches by undermining the faith of God's people. This spiritual adultery in God's sanctuary has received mild reproof from the Elis of our time. The expulsion of unfaithful pastors has not taken place. They have been allowed to continue, with the result that the disease has spread. In some denominations the whole body has consequently become rotten. We should not be surprised, therefore, if the Lord proceeds to judge denominational structures which at one time served His people well, but which have now become unfaithful in the exercise of essential discipline. We should not be surprised if the Lord raises up a new body or movement or new churches in which there is an appreciation of truth and a desire for purity of life and practice.

The man of God described in I Samuel 2 was forthright in his message and declared that the Lord would raise up "a sure house". In other words Samuel would be used to bring about a new order of things. If we study the ministry of Samuel we will discover that what pertained in his life was nothing less than a widespread religious awakening which resulted from years of faithful preaching by Samuel. This awakening began with the day of small things and can be traced back to the prayers of Hannah recorded in 1 Sam. 1.

In our day let us not despise the little things, the concern and desire for better standards, the prayers and pleadings of God's people, and let it not be counted a little thing to contend for a ministry which is faithful to the Word of God.

The use of the term "Reformed" has increased much among evangelical Christians during the last decade. What does it mean? This question is sometimes asked by believers who desire a simple answer to the question. Some would confine the use of the word to orthodox Presbyterian churches which faithfully adhere to the Reformed Church traditions. My aim is to explain the word as it is being employed today. Words used to describe various groups change with the passing of time. Words have values just like mines whose shares go up and down on the stock market depending on many different factors. For instance the word "Methodist" used to stand for something evangelical, disciplined and vigorous, but now for the most part conveys an idea of religion which is pathetic in its weakness, something evangelically destitute.

What it is to be Reformed

To be Reformed is to have the following:

1. A heart experience of Grace.
2. The practice of the Puritans.
3. Belief in the doctrines of the Reformers.

1. A Heart Experience of Grace

The word "Reformed" necessarily reminds us of the Reformation. The birth of the Reformation can be traced to the heart experience of Martin Luther. This is not to forget that there were those before the time of Luther who had an experience similar to his own. We might think of pre-Reformation period men such as Wycliffe and Huss, or go right back to the fourth century to Augustine. But it pleased God that Luther should be the instrument by which the Papacy should be overthrown and by which light the Gospel should again shine brightly in the world.

With Luther's conviction of sin we must begin, and this is where the Reformed faith begins. He plunged deeper and deeper into a knowledge of his own depravity and inability to save himself. He came to that point where he realised that God would be just to damn him for ever. He then began to understand that God in His love and grace had provided salvation in Jesus Christ. Luther realised that good works could never save him. His justification must be by faith in Christ alone. Thus the doctrine of justification by faith only became the main issue of the Reformation. But we must not stop here because basic to Luther's experience was the truth that man's will is in bondage to sin.¹ Man is unable of himself to come to God.² "*The Bondage of the Will*" has been regarded by many as Luther's most vital piece of writing. In this work

¹ Rom. 3:11; Eph. 2:1-3.

² John 6:44, 65; I Cor. 2:14.

the Reformer establishes the truth of man's inability to save himself as well as God's free and sovereign grace. God chooses who will be saved¹ from the race of rebel sinners who of themselves will never come, even though they are all invited to come with the most tender overtures, and commanded by God Himself to repent.²

The common belief today is that salvation results from the choice of man and that all have equal ability to believe: so it is up to the sinner by his own will-power to turn to God. In contrast to this Luther believed that man's will has become enslaved to sin by the fall and that God must therefore regenerate the sinner before he believes.³ This is the core of the matter, and to be Reformed therefore means not only that we have an intellectual grasp of the free and sovereign grace of God but that we experience this ourselves. Without the powerful working of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin and to enlighten as to the saving efficacy of the cross it is impossible for a person to be truly Reformed. Needless to say, to reject the truth of the free grace of God in personal election or to reject the bondage of the will is to reject the Reformed faith.

2. The Practice of the Puritans

Luther was the dynamite by which the site was cleared. Calvin was the builder of the new structure. The Puritans furnished it with the details of day-to-day holiness. John Calvin more than any other man before him provided careful and systematic commentaries upon the text of Holy Scripture. The vision of the holiness, majesty and sovereignty of God greatly affected him. He saw the revelation of God in Scripture as a unity which forms the foundations for deportment of life. He also saw the plan or predestination of God as governing every aspect of history.⁴ In other words, he rejected the idea of chance and believed that God ordains all things that come to pass yet so as not to be the author of sin.

Following the epoch of the 16th-century Reformers, we now consider the Puritans. They were given that nickname because they sought to purify the Church of England particularly in regard to its discipline and worship. To these men, who lived from about 1558 to 1662, belonged the distinction of producing an unparalleled output of expository and practical literature. After 1662 the Puritans became Non-Conformists and the urge to reform disappeared from the Church of England. Puritanism is the best expression of the Reformed faith in history. Because of their balance, their pastoral insight and ability, and their overall practice of the Christian Gospel, the Puritans are in a class on their own. They were robust where we are puny. Their expositions can help us today, probably more than any other literature. This can be illustrated by comparing our weak points with their strengths as follows:

¹ Eph. 1:4; Rom. 9:24; John 15:16; I Thess. 1:4.

² Acts 17:30; Matt. 11:28; John 6:37.

³ Acts 13:48; John 3:3; Acts 16:14; John 1:12; Rom. 8:28-30.

⁴ Eph. 1:9-12; Psalm 2; Acts 2:23.

Our Weak Points

Understanding of the place and importance of doctrine. Doctrine is regarded as stodgy and divisive.

Expository preaching which is at one and the same time doctrinal, experimental, practical and systematic is rare.

The Moral Law. Neglect of the ten commandments in preaching has resulted in ignorance of the holiness required by God.

Communion with God tends to be restricted to a Q.T. (Quiet Time), a brief time of reading and prayer in the mornings.

Christian Experience. Self-examination and meditation and contemplation seldom practised in our modern world of bustle.

Practical discipline. Flippancy in conversation, shoddiness in work and rebellion against authority abounds everywhere.

Concept of the Church. We tend to think in terms of organisations run by private individuals, who are not pastors, rather than in terms of the local church.

The Covenant of grace. Rather than thinking in terms of a united family of God's people we tend to think only of ourselves and our own circle.

I have discovered more help in understanding the Word from writers such as Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), Thomas Manton (1620-1677), Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), Thomas Brooks (1608-1680), John Flavel (1627-1691), and Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679) than any others apart from Calvin, Luther and John Bunyan (1628-1688). The latter, although a Baptist, was one with the Puritans in their experience and doctrine. I have not mentioned John Owen (1612-1683) who is difficult to read but

Puritan Strength

Doctrinal comprehensiveness provided a firm foundation upon which to erect the godly life. The holiness, majesty and sovereignty of God must always be in view. Practice arises from doctrine.

The Puritans were noted for their thoroughness. In preaching they were never content with a superficial view of the Christian faith.

The Puritans explored every facet of the moral law and brought it into all their preaching, so as to achieve conviction of sin and make way for the Gospel of good news for guilty sinners.

Communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit was developed and applied to the whole of man's working thoughts resulting in godliness of a high order.

Expert in the realm of the life of God in the soul of man the Puritans developed a massive understanding of assurance, affliction, the wiles of the devil and providence.

The Puritans insisted on the necessity of being doers of the Word. They applied authoritative and comprehensive directives of the Scriptures to every area of life, church, home and work.

The Church, to the Puritans, was the body of Christ. We are to strive for the glory of Christ to be seen in His body as a whole in its local manifestation. Not all Puritans saw this clearly. Today Reformed Baptists have a great opportunity of developing this truth and putting it into practice.

The Puritans thought in terms of God's purpose and the distinctive work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in redemption from the beginning to the end of time.

who rightly has the title "The Prince of the Puritans", or Matthew Henry, the son of a Puritan, whose commentaries are invaluable. Spurgeon, who has been called a Puritan born out of due time, although he did not follow the Puritan practice of systematic consecutive exposition, did more to popularise the writings of the Puritans than any other.

We do well to emulate the Puritans in their strong points, but it would be fatal to our best interests to imitate them in language or dress, or in eccentricities which we may find. That would be ludicrous. We have to apply the Gospel to our own age, and there may be many points in which our application will be different from theirs.

3. To Believe the Doctrines of the Reformers

The modern evangelical situation is characterised by a lack of cohesion and system. Many preachers dart from one part of the Bible to another. Their thoughts seem to be fragmented. In contrast to this the Reformed faith presents a unity of truth and places a high premium on a systematic grasp and presentation of theology. Separate elements of truth can only shine as they are seen within the whole orb of divine revelation, each part having its own place in reference to the whole. Thus, as we would expect in the Reformed confessions of faith, we start with Holy Scripture and the character of God, His decrees, His creation and providence. After that we are presented with man, the fall and then the way of salvation through Christ the Mediator is outlined.

Few dispute the supremacy of the Westminster Confession of Faith as the greatest of the Reformed confessions. This was published in 1647 and represents the quintessence of Puritan theology. The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith follows the Westminster Confession almost word for word in all but four of thirty-three articles. If any preacher feels that his ministry lacks in doctrine let him examine the content of his material in the light of the confession and ask himself when last he did justice to the subjects defined. The Scripture references supplied for justification, sanctification, adoption, effectual calling, and assurance of salvation, provide themes which are ideal for exposition.

Reference ought to be made to a synod which was convened in Holland at Dort in 1618. The conference refuted five articles that had been stated by the followers of James Arminius (1560-1609). The synod replied to each of the points stated by the followers of Arminius, who had subsequently been nicknamed Arminians. The points clarified at the Synod of Dort are:

The unconditional and gracious character of election.

The atonement of Christ limited to the elect of God as to its design and extent.

The total depravity of man and his utter inability to any saving good.

The irresistibility of the divine grace.

The perseverance of the people of God.

It is questionable whether contention about the five points is the best way to present the doctrines of the Reformers. Whole churches have come to understand the meaning of free grace when their teaching elders have expounded epistles such as Romans or Ephesians. This may have taken several years but it is light shining out of the oracles of God that establishes believers rather than stiff polemical treatises, although we should always be flexible in our thinking and allow for exceptions.

Warfield and some of the Dutch theologians such as Abraham Kuyper, Bavinck and G. C. Berkouwer are useful for those whose intellectual level is high, but they cannot compete with the Puritans when it comes to reaching the hearts of ordinary people with the truth. If doctrine is divorced from experience and practice it can be harmful. Men with intellectual gifts who are divorced from the practical realities of a local church can become a danger to the cause of Christ. For instance, they can write books of a Reformed character, but in their own practice deny the faith by uniting themselves to heretics. Thus many can be led astray. The apostles always presented the great facts of God's sovereignty within the context of knowing and obeying God. Take, for instance, the eighth chapter of Romans and see how Paul comforts the godly with the doctrine of predestination (verses 28-39), or the first chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians in which he speaks of the doctrine of election within the context of maintaining the unity and purity of the church.

One ceases to be Reformed when one becomes unbalanced. Our Lord and His apostles did not present one particular truth to every enquirer. The person who proclaims nothing but election is just as unsound as the person who never proclaims that truth.

Moreover, a preacher who restricts the free invitations of the Gospel is not Reformed. He is a hyper-Calvinist. It is absolutely essential that there be urgency in preaching the Gospel to every creature under heaven. Restriction in any way of Gospel invitation is a curse, for it is not known to preachers *who* may be under conviction, and the way to Christ our saviour must always be clear. Calvin himself followed Christ well in emphasising the freeness of the Gospel. "All that the Father giveth me will come unto me (election and effectual calling) and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (let any man under the sun come to Christ just as he is for healing and forgiveness and he will not be spurned). Many have gone astray in trying to reconcile particular redemption with God's command to all men everywhere to believe and repent.¹ It cannot be done. We simply accept and believe this antinomy because it is clearly set forth in Scripture.

In proclaiming an omnipotent God who saves sinners, and in urging all to repent and to believe in Christ we have the glory of the Reformed faith.

¹ Acts 17:30; I John 3:23.

*A review by the editor of an
exposition by Enoch Powell*

Enoch's Excursion into Exegesis

JOHN ENOCH POWELL, M.P. FOR WOLVERHAMPTON, WAS BORN OF school-teaching parents in England in 1912. He has a glittering array of academic awards. At one time he was Professor of Greek at Sydney University in Australia. During the war he became a member of the general staff, having risen from the rank of a private to that of a brigadier. A brilliant linguist, historian, author and politician he is known throughout Britain for his political speeches and television interviews. Not a few throughout the country would like him to be the Conservative leader and prime minister. Others, however, cannot agree with this because of Powell's radical outlook in many matters, not least his outright opposition to Britain's entry into the Common Market. He is, of course, famous for opposition to any large-scale entry into Britain of coloured immigrants. He has made the claim that by the year 2000 there will be between five and seven million such (approximately one-tenth of the whole population).

According to a report in *The Times* (28.4.72) two recent controversial speeches by Mr. Powell have been banned by the Tory central office. The one concerns the Common Market and the other Northern Ireland.

While we believe in following political events it is not the purpose of this magazine to side with any party or leader. Obviously our interest concerns the Gospel and since Mr. Powell, who is an Anglican, is known by the statements he has made to have firm religious beliefs, we are interested in what he says. An example of his serious approach is seen by an exposition of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) which appeared in *The Times Saturday Review* (4.3.72).

Any hope that Mr. Powell might take the evangelical view of Scripture seems dispelled by a statement within his exposition to the effect that the raising of Lazarus is a "piece of imaginative and poetic writing". This statement is only incidental to the main thrust of what he has to say.

With a vigour and clarity which exposes most religious writing in *The Times* to be the utter tedium that it is,¹ Mr. Powell arrives at the astonishing conclusion that "the rich are punished for having been rich, and the wretched rewarded for having been wretched". His reasoning leading up to this main conclusion is potent and on the face of it seems irrefutable. Since nothing in the text shows otherwise he declares that Lazarus "never

¹ Occasionally there is an exception. Some time ago a refreshing exposition of Scripture by Peter Masters, the Reformed Baptist pastor of Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle, was published by *The Times*.

bothered his head with the law and the prophets any more than the rich family had evidently done”.

To be fair to Mr. Powell, he does bring out a second conclusion which is that there was a resurrection which has left “all, or perhaps nearly all, of us no different”. In this conclusion, of course, he is on the mark. It is heartening to observe that on the way to these conclusions he demolishes the idea that the passage teaches a social Gospel. The urgent message which the rich man desired to get across to his brothers was *not* that they should build a hospital or rehabilitation centre but rather that they should receive witness to the truth and avoid finding themselves in hell as he was.

The handling of this difficult passage by Mr. Powell, as we would expect, aroused many readers. Thereafter several correspondence columns were devoted to the subject. The assertion that the rich will be punished for having been rich, and the wretched rewarded for having been wretched, created not a little indignation. It is at this point that we are reminded of the necessity of a fundamental principle of exposition which is that the whole teaching of Scripture must be brought to bear upon the particular part under scrutiny. Careful exegesis of the actual passage is not enough.

All Scripture bears eloquent testimony to the fact that faith is essential for salvation. The unbelieving perish because of their unbelief. Those who exercise faith in Christ are united to Him and on that account are justified once and for all. Thus it would surely be right to conclude that the rich man was an unbeliever. Destitute of saving faith he was consequently destitute of the good works which form essential verification of saving faith. On the other hand Lazarus could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven without faith. Therefore it is right to assume that in all his poverty and misery he did possess the pearl of great price: saving belief in the Son of God.

The account (Mr. Powell rightly points out that it is not a parable) must be interpreted within the context of justification by faith only. In so doing the main lesson becomes more striking. Abraham highlights the heinous character of unbelief. Even if one were raised from the dead men would not believe. Unrepentant sinners are destined for hell. Unbelief is part of their sin. Unbelief rejects the only remedy even when it is attested with power.

Wealth invariably increases a man's unbelief because he trusts in his riches. (See Luke 18:23-30.) Poverty does not induce faith. The wealth of the rich man and the plight of Lazarus provide colour to an account in which faith is the central issue.

The conclusion we would draw from all this is that we and Mr. Powell ought to make certain that we understand and act upon the words of Scripture, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on Him” (John 3:36).

Ian Randall, a member of the church at Cuckfield, discusses objections commonly made against creeds.

Why have a Confession of Faith

THERE IS A GAME WHICH MAY WELL GO UNDER THE NAME OF "MUSICAL newspapers", which largely consists of attempting to stand on successively smaller pieces of newspaper whenever the music stops. The inevitable result is that the paper eventually becomes so small that in attempting to remain on it the participants overbalance! A somewhat similar theological process has been taking place over several years in the realm of creeds and confessions of faith. Creeds which were once large and full, so that a whole church could stand upon them, have been whittled down until anyone who ventures to use them as a base may find himself balancing precariously on a tiny spot.

Not everyone would see the virtual demise of creeds and confessions in this light. To some, these doctrinal statements detract from the supremacy of Scripture. They maintain that the Bible alone should be our guide. It, after all, has divine authority. Every other document, since it is the product of human wisdom, is faulty. Why then use creeds at all? They could be more of a hindrance than a help. This line of argument is common and is sometimes upheld with vigour.

The Case for a Confession

The primary case for a confession rests on the fact that our faith is an objective one, that is, it may be spelled out in words, and when definition is made of the terms which are used, the meaning is clear. This is in contrast to a subjective faith. Subjectivity belongs to the realm of feelings. Such religion consists in the consciousness of something deep within but which cannot be defined. The strictly subjective approach rules out any idea of having a statement like a confession. Thus evangelicals who stress the experience side of Christianity are unlikely to be impressed with the need for creeds. On the other hand, those who place emphasis on the fact that our faith rests squarely upon actual acts of God in this world will see the importance of being clear in our understanding of what in fact God has done. The importance of definite statements of truth is apparent when we view it in this way.

It is a mark of Biblical Christianity that it does proclaim this very objectivity as an essential foundation. What is written in the Scripture

is final. We give heed to the declaration of the apostle Paul that "the church of the living God", should be "the pillar and ground of the truth". Our business, then, should be to be taken up with this revelation, making it the centre of our authority. The Scriptures should control our thoughts, not our thoughts and feelings the Scriptures. We should build our theology upon the Word of God and not upon the way we have been led personally. If some extraordinary experience has come to us we ought not to build a doctrine upon it. Our doctrines must stem from God's Word. This is basic to our understanding of the place of confessions of faith. Further arguments flow from this initial position.

Maintaining Sound Doctrine

Obviously if one's Christianity stops short with the simple idea "I accepted Christ" or "I love Jesus", there is no need for sound doctrine. We can love Jesus and believe in large measure what we like. But if the whole Word of God is taken as our rule of faith and if salvation depends upon belief of what is true, the picture alters. Any deviation from this body of truth is then seen as dangerous. A confession serves as a concise standard of truth and summary of doctrine by which all teaching in the local church may be judged. Since errors have a constant tendency to reappear in different forms it will be a useful source of correction.

Ultimately the appeal of the local church in matters of doctrine is to the law and to the testimony, that is, to Scripture. Error makes its appeal to Scripture—the misinterpretation of Scripture. A confession based firmly upon Scripture and drawing the various strands of truth into a cohesive whole is invaluable. Error can also arise by disproportionate emphasis being placed on one doctrine of the Bible over against the others. For example, there are those who overstress the place of prophecy and of the future. This mistaken emphasis may be countered by judicious attention being given to the way in which the historic confessions have placed weight on other doctrines, and it can be pointed out that the bulk of Scripture concerns the work of the Trinity in salvation, also this is reflected strongly in the way truths are set out in the confession.

Historic Continuity

Baptists have used confessions of faith to make clear that in fundamental matters they stand with the whole body of orthodox Christians over the centuries. This is important to them, because sometimes they have been regarded as fanatics because of their vigour in evangelism. Also they have been regarded with suspicion and disdain in countries like Holland, being associated with the eccentric Anabaptist movement of long ago. It sometimes surprises Dutch Reformed believers when they find Baptists with a Reformed confession to which they cleave with zeal both in faith and practice.

Baptists today who aim at reformation according to the Scriptures will wish to emphasise that they preach essentially the same Gospel of free and sovereign grace as did the Reformers and Puritans. Some discover, to their delight, that their Baptist heritage is primarily Calvinistic. A confession of faith will emphasise this fact, particularly if it is one drawn from the past. Over the centuries there have been those who have been united in the great truths.

Some time ago a minister in the south of England began to read some of the free grace books which have become so popular in recent years. Spurgeon's sermons were particularly helpful and he embraced the doctrines of grace. Immediately his preaching began to have more authority and power. This was relished by many in the church but some stoutly opposed the emphasis upon the sovereignty of God. This pastor, anxious to avoid division, was concerned about what he should do and sought the Lord in prayer. Suddenly he realised that he had never seen the trust deeds of the church. A search was made and to the surprise of the whole church a full confession was unearthed stating the doctrines of grace in no uncertain terms. The pastor was then in a position to assert that they should long ago have insisted on free grace preaching! This kind of thing has been happening increasingly in England. Often it is discovered that C. H. Spurgeon was the sterling initiator of churches embracing a free grace confession. He was responsible for encouraging the commencement and growth of an astonishing number of local causes.

Fellowship Among Churches

A sound confession of faith forms a solid basis for fellowship among local churches. In the New Testament it is obvious that the churches were not individualistic in their outlook. Mutual prayer, financial support, and interchange of members was common. The same situation should pertain today. Organisation will not by itself bring this about. A denominational structure will not guarantee the emergence of the features mentioned.

More important than denominational structures is unity of thought and purpose. This unity could be shown very clearly in a confession of faith to which local churches would adhere. The bond of fellowship is deeper and more secure when it is known that sister churches truly adhere to sound doctrine and practice, that their evangelism is based on scriptural principles and that there is resistance to the many gimmicks of the day which detract from the worship of God.

Admission of Members and Discipline

Providing due care is taken by the overseeing elders, confessions are useful in the admission of church members. Where a church has a full confession of faith it would be asking too much to expect every person

who applies for membership to have a thorough grasp of all parts of the confession. Babies in Christ are not to be treated as though they are experienced theologians. While it is right that all applicants for membership should read the confession, the question is rather as to whether they agree with it than whether they understand it fully.

Recently a young man in a church noted for the doctrinal stature of its members asked one of the elders whether he was eligible for membership although he had difficulty with the doctrine of particular redemption. The elder replied to the following effect: "I took a long time to chew over and swallow this truth and am not surprised that you are having difficulty with it. When you grasp it, it will strengthen your understanding of Scripture as a whole and put iron in your soul. Providing you do not oppose particular redemption you are welcome to join the church".

What about admission to office in the church? All the elders and deacons should not only understand the doctrines of the confession but have enthusiasm for their propagation. The elders in particular should be noted for their insight into the truth and their ability to explain and defend it. That elders be able to refute gainsayers is essential (Tit. 1:9). Teaching elders, especially those who have been set aside to devote their lives to the ministry of the Word, should be marked by power and clarity in setting forth the truths of Scripture—truths summarised in the confession.

If a local church takes a wrong direction in the course of time, an appeal may be made by the members to the confession in order to regain correct Biblical teaching and when ministers are challenged by members of their church they can likewise refer to the confession and the Scriptures upon which it is based.

Importance of the Ministry

Of course a confession of faith by itself, however good, will not prevent decline in a church if it sets in on a serious scale. Hence the importance of a powerful, faithful and explicit teaching ministry by which the doctrine of the confession is proclaimed and defended, can hardly be over-emphasised. The structure of a Reformed confession is in itself a reminder that the most logical and effective method of preaching is systematic, consecutive exposition. Weakness in the ministry of teaching—whether in the main services, the Sunday school, young people's meetings or gatherings for women—will be reflected in the whole life of a local church. If the teaching elders hold erroneous doctrine it will not be long before the leaven spreads to the whole lump.

Objections to the Use of Creeds

Believers fall into opposite schools of thought when it comes to the validity of creeds, this largely depending on the background from which

they come. To some, the idea of having a confession is as natural and obvious as the idea of having the Bible itself. They recognise that the church has always had these formulations and that there are immense benefits in adhering to them. The opposite approach is usually taken by those who come from churches where no such tradition exists. Creeds have not been so much attacked as ignored. Why, it is argued, worry about creeds when the Holy Spirit shows us all we need to know.

Spurgeon has a timely word for those who minimise the value of what God has revealed to others. In his famous lecture "A Chat about Commentaries" he says: "Of course you are not such wiseacres as to think or say that you can expound Scripture without assistance from the works of divines and learned men who have laboured before you in the field of exposition. If you are of that opinion, pray remain so, for you are not worth the trouble of conversion and like a little coterie who think with you, would resist the attempt as an insult to your infallibility. It seems odd, that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what He has revealed to others".

Perhaps the main argument put forward by evangelicals is this: We have a word from God and that is sufficient. It is a Protestant axiom that every Christian has the right to interpret Scripture for himself. We may be in danger, with our man-made creeds, of plunging right back into the bondage of tradition from which we were rescued at the Reformation.

In fact Baptists are not likely to advocate complete acceptance of any Reformation confession. They have been constrained to differ from creeds of the Reformation on matters of baptism, church government, the place of the magistrate and of the synod—four points out of thirty-three if we go by the Westminster Confession. It is noteworthy that other important corrections have been made if we compare the 1689 Confession with the parent Westminster Confession, such as the omission of references to a covenant of works with Adam. Some eminent Presbyterians approve of this amendment. The attitude of Baptists who do value the Reformation is that they will not question the Reformation creeds lightly. But finally they must appeal to Scripture where they find these creeds deficient. It will not do to appeal to the tried faith of God's people as a whole in order to maintain the position of the Reformers on these disputed points. A large body of Christians hold that paedobaptism, which is the most crucial of the points of difference, is unscriptural, and they are not surprised to find some paedobaptists who for lack of New Testament evidence lean heavily on tradition.

Extremes are to be avoided. To despise the confessions is to despise the history of the church and the work of the Holy Spirit who has undoubtedly led God's people into truth. Truths such as those associated with the Trinity and justification by faith have been clarified to a remarkable degree by believers having to defend them because of heresy. We

only have to think of Athanasius and Luther for verification of this. On the other hand, to enshrine a confession of faith as the final or infallible word is to supplant the unique place which the Scriptures occupy as the oracles of God.

No Systematic Theology

Objection is also made to confessions of faith in that they attempt to put the truths of the Gospel in a systematic form whereas the Bible does not set things out in this way. It is argued that it is sufficient that each part of the Word of God be given its full weight, and that it is artificial to create a body of extracted truths in which all the parts are related to each other in a systematic way. Biblical theology¹ is sometimes the slogan of this school of thought. To them, systematic theology is unnatural.

What this really implies is that one could know one part of the Bible in isolation and it would be true, but when we know it in relation to all the other parts it becomes less true. The very opposite is the case. We only really appreciate the force of any part of the revelation of God when we see it as it exists in the context of the whole. Van Til rightly says: "If we do not pay attention to the whole of Biblical truth as a system, we become doctrinally one-sided, and doctrinal one-sidedness is bound to issue in spiritual one-sidedness".² Credal statements are, then, invaluable summaries of systematic theology.

Divided We Fall

There is the view that confessions of faith are divisive, and that we should not allow doctrinal points to mar our unity. The truth is that only a full statement of belief can bring about any Biblical unity. Among the glorious statements of Ephesians 4 we find the expression "the unity of the faith". The teaching here is that unity is only possible in the one faith. There are not many faiths, but only one. Any unity which purports to exist without doctrinal agreement is bound to be shallow.

A scriptural confession of faith, far from being divisive, creates unity since it promotes that truth which is the only basis of genuine unity. The process of finding the lowest common denominator must be reversed. The example of the Reformers is the one which must be copied since it savours of the apostolic approach. Let us have much doctrine. Let us fearlessly proclaim the absolute sovereignty of God, the total inability of man to believe the Gospel, the necessity of effectual calling on the basis

¹ "Biblical theology traces the revelation of God in Scripture in its historical development. It brings out the theology of each part of God's Word as it has been brought to us at different stages" (Adapted from Van Til).

² An Introduction to Systematic Theology, p. 5. See the whole discussion in this section.

of a definite atonement, the full and free offer of the Gospel together with the importance of the gathered church and believers' baptism.

The fragmentation which we find among Baptists is precisely due to their failure to preserve the confessional witness which characterised the early Particular Baptists. Liberty can be enjoyed in the civil realm only within the framework of law and order. Likewise, freedom in the church can only be enjoyed within the framework of truth. If a person opposes right doctrine confusion is bound to follow. One only has to think of the chaos among the General Baptists which has followed the denial by Rev. Michael Taylor of the Divinity of Christ. Complete failure to discipline the offender is partly due to the lack of a basis of reference. There is no confession of faith to appeal to and no hope of restoring order.

Different Confessions and Our Need Today

Baptist confessions of the past were designed as a means of coherence and unity. The 1689 Confession¹ contained the doctrine of the faith and practice of Baptist churches which denied Arminianism, and remained the confession of the Calvinistic Baptist churches for 150 or 200 years. Based, as it was, upon the Westminster Confession,² it emphasised the unity of all those who held the Reformed faith. The New Hampshire Confession,³ while not so full or satisfactory, is definitely Calvinistic, and has had beneficial influence among American Baptists.

At a time when many local churches are seeking reformation, it is essential that thorough attention be given to this question of the use of creeds. It would be helpful to have more information about contemporary confessions being drawn up by Reformed churches. It is also vital to reconsider the place of historic confessions like that of 1689. Such a confession is valuable in that it exhibits the unity of thought which has existed among free grace Baptists throughout the centuries. However, in places modification is required, and if this were to be done with care, a strong and comprehensive document could emerge. May God give us grace to ensure that the trumpet gives no uncertain sound, particularly when muffled and indistinct notes are the order of the day.

¹ Sometimes known as "Things most surely believed among us". Published as the second London Confession in 1677. Republished in 1689 with signatures of the "Elders and Brethren", including, as Spurgeon says, "almost all the most eminent Baptist ministers of the day".

² Presented to Parliament in 1646 and intended as a basis for reformation in the Church of England. This was never achieved but the confession did become the doctrinal standard of all Presbyterian churches in the world of Scottish and English descent.

³ Drawn up in 1830 to offset Arminian teaching in New England.

The Man with One Leg

Thank you for your letter in which you ask for information about the controversy in the Baptist Union following the Rev. Michael Taylor's public denial of the deity of Christ. It will help to view the background first.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland was founded in 1813. Its basis at the beginning was Calvinistic and it consisted largely of Particular Baptist churches and ministers. In 1831 the union changed its constitution so as to allow affiliation of churches and ministers of the New Connection. These churches were Arminian in theology.

Even though leaders like C. H. Spurgeon were in opposition to the move, the word "evangelical" was dropped by the union in 1873.

It is important to remember that when the Down-Grade Controversy took place in 1887-88 the Baptist Union had no real doctrinal basis. When the word "evangelical" was dropped in 1873 the idea was advocated and established that the concept of believers' baptism by immersion would provide a better doctrinal basis than an evangelical confession of faith. When we bear this in mind it helps us to understand why Spurgeon appears to have been overwhelmingly defeated in his attempt to get the Baptist Union to declare itself in regard to doctrine.

During the 19th century two powerful forces militated against the adoption of doctrinal standards. The first was an emphasis upon shallow evangelism. The population was increasing rapidly and opportunities abounded on every side. Of course, it is right that we should emphasise evangelism, but it should not be at the expense of doctrinal faithfulness. However, it proved that there was a growing unwillingness to define the Gospel. The second powerful factor was the rise of liberalism and an undermining of confidence in the inspiration and authority of Scripture. This increased gradually and extensively in an incipient way and when Spurgeon became deeply alarmed by the extent of liberalism it was already too late.

It is interesting to observe that a paperback with the title *C. H. Spurgeon's Final Manifesto* has just been republished by a group in the Isle of Man flying under the flag of "Grace Publications". Matthew Else is the pastor of a small Reformed Baptist Church in the island, and they have done well to produce an attractive paperback of about eighty pages, consisting of an address given by C. H. Spurgeon in 1891. Originally it had the title, "The Greatest Fight in the World". The volume concerns the Down-Grade Controversy and consists of a clarion call to faith in the Word of God.

Since it is known that Baptist ministers take leave of absence to study at Liberal Institutions in Europe, where they embrace the teachings of Modernist theologians such as Bultmann of Germany, this prophetic word from Spurgeon is still highly relevant. Let me quote him in reference to the infallibility of the Bible which he vigorously defends because of the spread of Modernism in his day, a downward movement which has continued ever since:

If this book be not infallible, where shall we find infallibility? We have given up the Pope, for he has blundered often and terribly; but we shall not set up instead of him a horde of little popelings fresh from college. Are these correctors of Scripture infallible? It is certain that our Bibles are not right, but that the critics must be so? The old silver is to be depreciated; but the German silver, which is put in its place, is to be taken at the value of gold. Striplings fresh from reading the last new novel correct the notions of their fathers, who were men of weight and character. Doctrines which produced the godliest generation that ever lived on the face of the earth are scouted as sheer folly. Nothing is so obnoxious to these creatures as that which has the smell of Puritanism upon it. Every little man's nose goes up celestially at the very sound of the word "Puritan"; though if the Puritans were here again, they would not dare to treat them thus cavalierly; for if the Puritans did fight, they were soon known as Ironsides, and their leader could hardly be called a fool, even by those who stigmatised him as a "tyrant".

But to come back to the Baptist Union today, it has always been a mixture as far as doctrine is concerned. It is possible to find the most extreme Modernist in the ministry as well as a small handful of those who follow C. H. Spurgeon in his Calvinistic and Puritan convictions. Between these two wings lie the majority—liberals and evangelicals. Some evangelicals are ecumenical, some Pentecostal and some fairly conservative but not Reformed. The *Baptist Times* would represent the middle-of-the-road group and is noted its being so general as not to affirm anything definite at all. I have in front of me the issue dated March 23rd in which there is an article "End of the controversy may be in sight". This concerns the events of last year when the Rev. Michael Taylor used the annual assembly platform to declare openly his denial of the Deity of Christ, but the article gives no valid reason for an end to the controversy. Taylor's denial took place in April 1971. Since that time the Baptist Union has not condemned the address, but rather asserted that such statements are tolerable within the ranks of accredited ministers. Doubtless the controversy will continue, but I can assure you that the Baptist Union will never run the race of truth for it has only one leg. Have you ever known a one-legged man compete? Those who hope for the resurrection of this athlete hope in vain.

The forces of Modernism in the union today are very powerful. For instance there is a group called the Baptist Renewal Group. This group of seventy members stands firmly behind Mr. Taylor's theological position. An extract from his address in April 1971, may be appropriate at this point:

I believe God was active in Jesus, but it will not do to say quite categorically: Jesus is God. Jesus is unique, but his uniqueness does not make him different in kind from us. He is the same sort of animal . . . the difference between him and ourselves is not in the manner of God's presence in Jesus. The difference is in what God did in and through this man and the degree to which this man responded and co-operated with God.

I am not troubled or surprised to find that he (Jesus) doesn't know everything or sometimes makes a mistake, or gets angry, or doesn't have all the gifts, or betrays himself as a child of his time. However remarkable his life, I think I must stop short of saying categorically: Jesus is God . . .

So first, Jesus is a man like you and me, and second God is present and active in Jesus as he is present and active in us all.

The weak state of the denomination is evidenced by the fact that only a few protests were made following the denial of Christ from the public platform. Sixty-three ministers and thirty-six churches protested. Since then about twenty churches have seceded from the union. Some have expressed themselves well, such as Dr. G. R. Beasley-Murray, the Chairman of the Baptist Union Council, who withdrew from the chairmanship, dissenting from the council's inadequate position in regard to this controversy. A Baptist minister described the reaction of the Baptist Union authorities very well when he summarised their resolutions following the protests that were made as follows:

1. We believe that we must constantly re-examine the question: "On which side of the road should we drive?" 2. We gladly and explicitly reaffirm our conviction that we should drive on the right. 3. We recognise that there are those who in conscience feel that they should drive on the left; and 4. We assert our tolerance and mutual respect for all drivers, whether they drive on the right or the left, in the middle or off the road altogether.

When we consider that the Gospel concerns eternal life or death, it perhaps would be better to express the matter as follows:

1. We believe that we should constantly keep a watch on foodstuffs. 2. We gladly and explicitly believe that all foodstuffs should be free of poison. 3. We recognise that there are those who in conscience feel that they should add arsenic to foodstuffs. 4. We assert our tolerance and mutual respect for all food producers whether they add arsenic or not.

Since the Baptist Union Council met in November 1971, and produced lengthy resolutions which proclaim nothing but vapour, as has just been pointed out, there have been several developments.

For instance, the Baptist Revival Fellowship at their conference in the week following the council's meeting issued a statement declaring that, "We cannot in conscience remain associated with the life of a union which decided to tolerate the denial of the Lord Jesus Christ among its accredited ministers". The statement then goes on to say that, "the way in which we translate this conviction into action will be a matter for individual judgment". Since the conference about forty men have resigned from the Baptist Union accredited list (this includes the twenty churches previously mentioned).

Then in January 1972, about eighty ministers met at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London to discuss a new association.¹

Looking back over the years one might say that the decision in 1873 to avoid being precise about the word evangelical was the sentence of death upon the denomination. A remarkable meeting of the union took place in 1888. A resolution was carried by two thousand votes to seven, which was interpreted as a censure of Spurgeon for his insistence on clarity in doctrine. Spurgeon had sought a basis which as far as possible would not permit men to "say one thing and mean another", a basis which would decidedly answer the question, "Is the Union an assemblage of evangelical churches or is it an indiscriminate collection of communities practising immersion?"

You ask in your letter about the position in regard to property. Many churches in the Baptist Union have lodged their trust deeds with the union, and so are not able to secede without losing their property. This is not precisely the case in every instance because matters of this kind are always complicated by detailed clauses. Churches which have borrowed money from the union have usually been required to lodge with the union the trust deeds of the property. Other churches, however, are independent in regard to property.

Secession is not always easy, because a wise pastor will try to carry his people with him. All too often churches are divided in their loyalties.

How far has Reformed teaching advanced among members of the union? The position is very different from what it was ten years ago. The number of ministers who love the doctrines of grace is, of course, much larger outside the Baptist Union than inside, where the proportion is small. But if all Baptist ministers who preach these doctrines were to answer a trumpet call, it is not unlikely that a band the size of Gideon's would assemble. One is constantly finding ministers who have embraced the sentiments of the Reformers through literature, but who have little fellowship with others of like persuasion and who have never attended a distinctly Reformed conference.

In your own country, the Baptist Union may have a different character to that which I have described in this letter. Nevertheless there may be features which are similar, and you are well advised to observe these carefully. Great care should be taken about vesting property with your Baptist Union as this may be the cause for regret should a decline set in.

In closing I would say that the situation in England is fluid, and there is the belief in many quarters that a better era is on the way in which churches will insist on a proper Reformed confession of faith.

Yours sincerely in the Gospel.

¹ David Kingdon commented upon the A.E.B.C. meeting in the last issue of *Reformation Today* and correspondence arising from that appears in this issue.

The editor has received the following letters in connection with the observations made by David Kingdon in the last issue of Reformation Today.

A New Association of Evangelical Baptist Churches

From Graham Harrison and Robert Horn

Dear Sir,

We were sorry to read in the editorial of your last issue Principal Kingdon's somewhat misleading account and assessment of the meeting held in January at the Metropolitan Tabernacle to consider the formation of an Association of Evangelical Baptist Churches. The impression he gave was that this new body will be decidedly shaky on the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment, not to mention its being hopelessly equivocal with regard to the sovereignty of God.

Perhaps you would permit us as men who were partly responsible for the compilation of the doctrinal basis in question to set the record straight. In a meeting with an attendance of over one hundred people there was only one who expressed difficulty with the clause dealing with the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment. There were a couple of other men who while themselves believing in the doctrine in question expressed doubt as to whether it would be right to include it in the basis if *ipso facto* this other person would be unable to join the AEBC. At this point we made reference to the importance of this doctrine in, for example, the Down-Grade Controversy, and we pointed out how incongruous it would be to claim Spurgeon as our spiritual ancestor only to part company with him in this matter.

On being put to the vote the clause was approved by an overwhelming majority and thus is now an accepted part of the proposed basis that will come before the meeting to be held later this year when the AEBC will be constituted (D.V.). This basis, therefore, in no sense allows annihilationism as a valid option.

The whole basis is in fact a much stronger and more adequate one for a fellowship of churches than is the Baptist Revival Fellowship doctrinal basis (from which it is largely derived). Interestingly enough it is just as explicit on the doctrine of hell as the doctrinal basis of the Irish Baptist College (with which Principal Kingdon presumably works happily), and much more explicit than the latter on the sovereignty of God (which does not even get a passing mention there).

We trust that these comments will help allay the fears of your readers—especially those overseas who may be largely dependent on your journal for news of the British ecclesiastical scene—and that they will be encouraged to pray for the formation of what under the blessing of God could yet become one of the most significant and helpful groupings of evangelical Baptists in Great Britain in the present century.

The situation amongst Baptist Union churches here is certainly a desperate one, and there is much need for prayer that churches and ministers will act decisively for the Gospel by severing connection with a body that tolerates such blatant Christological heresy from its own platform. Undoubtedly it will be a help to many churches as they do this to associate in a fellowship such as the AEBC could become.

It would be a great pity if Principal Kingdon's remarks—based as they were on a second-hand account of the transactions of a private meeting—unwittingly should be responsible for causing fellow evangelical Baptists to write off the AEBC before it has even started. We, at any rate, would not have the least interest in belonging to it were it the crypto-annihilationist, semi-Arminian body depicted in what is in other respects a helpful editorial.

Yours sincerely, Graham Harrison (Newport, Mon.), Robert M. Horn (Horley, Surrey).

From David Kingdon in reply

Dear Erroll,

I am accused of giving a "somewhat misleading account and assessment" of the meeting held in January last to consider the formation of an Association of Evangelical Baptist churches. Further it is suggested that I was wrong to write at all because my remarks were "based . . . on a second-hand account of the transactions of a private meeting".

I would make the following points:

1. Since the meeting was reported in the *Evangelical Times* at some length, albeit somewhat selectively, it would appear that either a reporter from that paper was present or a report was submitted to it.
2. A second-hand account is not necessarily wrong for being that. Both Mr. Harrison and Mr. Horn believe the New Testament accounts of the witnesses to our Lord's resurrection, yet they are second-hand *in that neither of them was present*. What is important is the reliability of the witnesses, not the fact that a report is second-hand.
3. My information is that the doctrinal statement which was laid before the meeting contained no clear reference to eternal punishment, but only a section which affirmed the sovereignty of God in redemption, creation, revelation and final judgment. Quite clearly annihilationism is allowed by such a form of words. This omission was rectified after, I understand, objections had been made from the floor. Would your correspondents deny this, and would they also deny that the late chairman of the Baptist Revival Fellowship, the Rev. T. M. Bamber, was quoted to the effect that differences over the issue of eternal punishment or the annihilation of the wicked should not debar a man from fellowship?
4. The doctrinal basis of the Irish Baptist College is the same as that of the Baptist Union of Ireland. I have never made any secret of the fact that I would like to see a fuller basis, but at least it does not resort to ambiguity.

Finally, my concern in writing as I did may be repeated: "We earnestly hope that those responsible for drawing up the confession of faith will frame one which *unambiguously* spells out the meaning of the faith once delivered to the saints".

Sincerely Yours, David P. Kingdon.

Comments on the issue from Geoff. Thomas

Dear Erroll,

Thank you for sending to me the letter of Graham and Bob. I appreciate their concern in underlining what was written in the earlier editorial that "some, admittedly a minority present, objected to the doctrine of eternal punishment"

and clarifying that in the final revision of the doctrinal basis a large majority did accept a statement on "the eternal punishment of the wicked". I had given you my own impressions of the meeting and told you that I saw about a dozen people voting against the inclusion of this statement, but estimated about a quarter of the number present abstained from voting, including some who helped to organise the meeting. This I believe did not mean that they opposed the teaching but were so committed to "evangelical unity" that they questioned whether division over such a doctrine advanced the cause of an evangelical Baptist witness at this juncture. Opinions, of course, will differ on this! This "private meeting" received a pretty public airing in the next issue of the *Evangelical Times* but it made no mention of the afternoon discussion on hell.

But perhaps Graham and Bob have gone a little far in the other direction in giving an impression to readers unfamiliar with the British evangelical scene, that the new Association will be Calvinistic. When Ron Luland introduced the subject of the nature of the doctrinal basis of the proposed Association two examples were given of points over which we should not divide from one another, they were the Arminian view of the atonement and the Pentecostal view of the gifts and baptism of the Spirit. From this I believe an inevitable conclusion is that a statement which claims acceptance of "the Sovereignty of God in . . . redemption" is being read in different ways by Calvinists and Arminians. [In the latest *Bulletin* of the B.R.F. Ron Luland argues persuasively for this minimal statement, saying it "ensures that those not at one with us in the Gospel do not join us, but yet allows a church or minister to join *whether Reformed or not*".]

Another view which must not cause division, we are told, was that of baptism and church membership. As many Baptist churches from England have for years only required office-holders or simply the minister to be baptised, this view was to be maintained in the AEBC.

When I asked about a Baptist Church subscribing to the London Confession of Faith I was told that it would be fine for individual churches to hold to this while uniting with other Baptist churches on the minimal basis. There was no possibility that a motion proposing uniting on the London Confession of 1689 would have gained any support.

I shared some of my misgivings briefly both with Graham and Bob after the meeting and Graham urged me to be patient as this meeting was a considerable step forward (which I believe) and he stressed how great had been the progress in the B.R.F. in recent years over this issue of church reformation. I recognise that and have much admiration for men in far less encouraging situations than myself who have taken a stand over the doctrinal inclusiveness of the B.U. at some considerable cost.

I agree that it is not time to criticise a body which has not yet got off the ground and my own reservations are with this whole concept of "evangelical unity" now being pursued by so many groups in Britain. It is possible now for a church like my own to join the British Evangelical Council, or the Evangelical Movement of Wales, or the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches or this new AEBC. All four bodies opt for independency and a minimal basis of faith (actually our own church affiliated to the B.E.C. some years ago). The question confronting a church considering affiliation is this: what *Biblical function* does one of these bodies fulfil more than another? What *Biblical function* is the AEBC going to fulfil which is not found in existing bodies?
Greetings from Aberystwyth, Geoff. (Thomas).



The photo above shows construction work in progress as a missionary radio station is established in the Seychelle Islands. The photo below shows Geoff Cook chatting with Bob Twynham-perkins. Geoff Cook, who is the programme director, is an elder of the Welwyn Evangelical Church of which Ian Tait is the minister. An article by Mr. Tait on missionary outreach has just been published in full in "The Ideal Church".



Reformation Today is a quarterly magazine published by
Cuckfield Baptist Church, Sussex.

Editor

ERROLL HULSE.
*5 Fairford Close, Haywards Heath, Sussex,
RH16 3EF.*

Associate Editors

DAVID KINGDON, N. Ireland.
67 Sandown Road, Belfast 5.

JOHN DAVISON, Scotland.
23 Muircroft Terrace, Perth.

JIM VAN ZYL, South Africa.
P.O. Box 225, Hill Crest, Natal.

STUART FOWLER, Australia.
*58 Adam Crescent, Montmorency, Victoria
3094, Australia.*

Agents

Agents to whom subscriptions should
be sent.

GREAT BRITAIN *David Guthrie,
4 Gander Hill, Haywards Heath, Sussex,
RH16 1QX.*

AUSTRALIA *Ray Levick,
25 Amaroo Avenue, Mt. Colah, N.S.W. 2079.*

U.S.A. *Bill Carey,
205 Victoria Avenue, Wilmington,
Delaware 19804.*
*Tom L. Daniel,
P.O. Box 1757, Waco, Texas 76703.*

*Ron Edmonds,
4443 Linden Avenue 3, Long Beach,
California 90807.*

CANADA *Alan Wilson,
P.O. Box 282, Galt, Ontario.*

SOUTH AFRICA *Jim van Zyl,
P.O. Box 225, Hill Crest, Natal.*

Subscriptions

GREAT BRITAIN 50p per annum

AUSTRALIA A \$ 1.10

U.S.A., U.S. \$ 1.50

CANADA C \$ 1.50

SOUTH AFRICA R 1.00

Single copies one quarter the
above in each case which includes
postage.

Gifts are welcomed and those who wish to support the Magazine
should make out their cheques to 'Reformation Today'.