

# REFORMATION TODAY, 74



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# Editorial

FOUR MAJOR ARTICLES APPEAR IN THIS ISSUE. THE FIRST IS EXPOSITORY in a general rather than in a textual sense and is designed to be the first in a series on Christian experience. The second is historical. How did we inherit the sacral, ecclesiastical structures of today? Herbert Carson explains this from the time of Constantine onwards. When our readers have assimilated this most important study they will be ready for the biographical and devotional study of Calvin by Jim van Zyl. The fourth article is controversial. A smaller type has been used not because the question of the Establishment is not relevant but in order that more ground can be covered.

## *Africa*

Although liberal ecumenism may be a spent force, especially in the West, it has done its fair share of damage. David Kingdon, speaking recently to the congregation at Cuckfield, said he did not know of one African theologian of note who was thoroughly evangelical. Part of David Kingdon's vision, and that of the Lynnwood Baptist Church, Pretoria, South Africa, where he takes up duties as an elder in July, is to promote sound scholarship and biblical study among African people, particularly pastors. It is hoped to do this by means of correspondence, study groups and tapes. Another project Mr. Kingdon anticipates is a series of paperbacks on doctrine, or "pew-level theology", as he termed it. Freed from the administrative duties of a college, more time will be available for writing. We need to support our brother, his wife and family in prayer in their new work.

## *Ministerial Training*

The loss to the U.K. of an outstanding Reformed theologian involved in training men for the ministry, highlights the lack which exists in this realm. The subject has been explored in an interview with Peter Savage (published in *Reformation for the Family*, Carey Publications, 75p), but needs further development practically. Material is to hand for publication and papers may be devoted to the matter at the next Carey Conference at Cardiff University in January, 1975.

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*Front Cover. Make way for the upsurging generation! What are they surging toward? We reach them through families, churches and schools. What impact does each realm have today? We hope to tackle this theme in a future issue of Reformation Today.*

### *Other Conferences*

The dates of the annual Evangelical and Reformed Conference in South Africa are July 8-12. The speakers include H. Carson, D. Kingdon, E. Hulse and J. Van Zyl, among others. Later, the editor is visiting the U.S.A. to speak at a Sovereign Grace Conference in Memphis, Tennessee, arranged by the Memphis Baptist Temple where Dr. G. Roper is pastor. The date is August 5-8. Al Martin, Rousas Rushdooney and Bill Clark of France are among the speakers.

### *The Exorcist*

This film on demon-possession is arousing controversy in Britain. Having almost exhausted all avenues of sexual perversion and violence to titillate the desires of pleasure-seeking audiences, film-makers are turning to the occult. It does seem that *The Exorcist* has shaken some of the blasé youth of the late 20th Century. Several have even been carried out on stretchers, have fainted, or left in a state of severe shock while seeing it. All meddling with spiritual evil is potentially fatal, but it may be that the effect will be to alert a section of the population to the reality of a world beyond the natural. More and more people are claiming to believe in the devil, to the embarrassment of "enlightened" clerics who have long been trying to dispose of this archaic personage! The *Economist* for April 13, in a feature on *The Exorcist*, commented that it is, "one more sign of the end of the era of humanist optimism".

### *'Reformation Today' overseas*

While the idea was mentioned of cutting the magazine to thirty-two pages, which was done in the last issue, the wealth of material to be published may ensure that forty pages is the norm. We look forward to raising the number of subscriptions at home and abroad and more intimate contact is planned among the agents in the different countries where the magazine circulates.

Ken Morey, home on furlough from Japan, described recently how he sent the magazine to many of his friends in the country. Reaction was immediate and enthusiastic. Efforts are being made to spread the magazine in overseas countries. We owe an apology to Scotland, having in an earlier issue made an unfavourable comparison of Edinburgh to London, suggesting the English metropolis nearer to the pulse beat of the world. Some Scottish supporters took this amiss. We are sorry and readily acknowledge that for her size Scotland has done more in former years for Reformed theology, and more in sending out missionaries, than any other nation. We are glad that *Reformation Today* is read in not a few Free Church manses and our prayer is that the revival of the doctrines of grace among Baptists will encourage Presbyterians everywhere to realise afresh the immensity of their heritage.

*During the last few years the Charismatic movement has drawn renewed attention to spiritual experience. A comprehensive study of spiritual experience as we find it in the Bible can be a most enriching exercise. On the other hand true experience is stunted and even destroyed if there is insistence on a prescribed type of experience which is supposed to be the gateway or open sesame to a life of power. This is like telling the skies that the rain must fall through one channel which we prescribe. The prevailing tendency to bypass essential aspects of spiritual experience requires correction. Exposition of the subject from Scripture should not only renew our enthusiasm and desire for the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in our hearts but also equip us and enable us to discern the true from the false. The following article by the editor is one of several that have been prepared which attempt to deal with spiritual experience comprehensively and positively.*

## **Christian Experience — Humiliation**

WHEN WE SPEAK OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE WE ARE REFERRING TO THE whole range of feelings, emotions, affections and resolutions which arise from our hearts as a result of God working within us. For purposes of study we divide man into various parts—body, soul, mind, will, conscience and affections. But the Scriptures always show man as a unity. Man is always exposed before God in a totality. We may view man from different angles but he is always a unity. For this reason I believe man to be bipartite. This is, ultimately he consists basically of two parts, body and soul. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it” (Eccles. 12:7). It is useful to view the different aspects of the soul, especially as we think of the different spiritual experiences to which he is subject, but while doing that we must never lose sight of man as a unity. This important principle underlies the exposition which follows.

The essential areas of Christian experience I see comprehended as follows:

1. Humiliation because of sin.
2. Joy because of justification.
3. Love because of adoption.
4. Patience in tribulation.

I believe that all aspects of the experiences of the Old Testament and New Testament saints can be included in the above. We can think of

Abraham, Moses, Job, Samuel and Elijah and also of Peter, Paul and John. The subject can be studied from a subjective point of view—how we experience God through faith and prayer, or objectively as follows:

5. The work of the Holy Spirit (i) In regeneration (I Cor. 12:13).
- (ii) In filling individuals (Eph. 5:18).
- (iii) In baptising the Church (Acts 1:5).

We now proceed to the first point shown above but enlarge it a little from “humiliation because of sin” to the following.

*The experience of humiliation because of sin and the necessity of the fear of God and humility in true religion.*

Spiritual awakening can be defined as God coming down to work among men. His presence results in an overpowering conviction of sin. This conviction irresistibly lays hold of the heart. A sinner can be in agony for hours, days or even weeks before he gains the joy of justification. When the Lord comes down among men their sins rise up like monstrous giants to crush and condemn them. The holiness of the Lord is such that immediately sinners are conscious not only of all the sins they have committed but are convicted, too, of their sinful state by nature. David not only confessed his actual transgressions but expressed his sorrow at having been born in sin (Ps. 51:5). When God came down to Isaiah the prophet cried out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts”.

“Woe is me!” Isaiah felt humiliation because of his sinfulness. He was convicted because of a particular area of guilt. But Isaiah was a prophet, a man who walked with God. We face the neglected fact that this experience of humiliation is essential both before and after conversion. No chapter of Scripture is more germane than that of Romans seven. In the course of his great exposition of salvation Paul uses his own experience, both past and present to illustrate the place of the moral law or ten commandments. He reminds the Roman Christians that justification can never be achieved by the law (chap. 7:1-6). He then shows how the law was used to convict him and bring him to conversion (chap. 7:7-13), and finally he demonstrates how the law is the means used to convict him of sin and to reveal to him where he falls short of the glory of God.

#### *Experience of conviction of sin before conversion*

That God uses what Paul refers to as “the law”, or “the commandment” to convince men of sin is illustrated by what happened at Sinai. The majesty and glory of God were manifested in physical ways designed to impress sinful men with the necessity of holiness. Lightnings flashed before the eyes of Israelites and thunder filled their ears. The mountain before them smoked. It shook and burned with fire as it became the throne of the Lawgiver and Monarch of all the earth. The holiness of

God was given exact and precise expression in the decalogue, was audibly expressed in words and confirmed by writing in tables of stone. Whenever God is present by his Spirit there is registered in the sinner's experience a feeling or conviction of guilt and unworthiness, of awe and wonder, of fear and reverence. The requirements of the ten commandments clarify in precise terms why there should be this conviction of sin. The words, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," coming from a holy God, strike the adulterer with terror. He cannot stand in the presence of God. The commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," humbles the man of unclean lips. The purpose of giving the law at Sinai is stated in Exodus 20:20. The people were to have a true fear, not just a carnal dread, but a true fear that would result in holiness—"that ye sin not". The moral law is essential in giving expression to the character of God. The Almighty is not just an abstract force or power. He is not just a great light which dazzles creatures of earth. God is light and in him is no darkness at all. Darkness stands for sin and sin is any transgression of the ten commandments. The gulf between God and men is a gulf caused by sin. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Isa. 59:2). Therefore, for this gulf to be bridged, the problem of sin has to be dealt with. Not only does the sinner continue in the practice of sin but he does so proudly and self-righteously. By nature man is at enmity with God. He is self-sufficient and proud from top to toe. In his thinking he is anti-God. In his affections he is worldly and ungodly. There is no fear of God before his eyes. Different stances are adopted by the natural man. He may be blatant and open in his ungodliness or he may persuade himself that he is neutral and able to judge the pros and cons of the Gospel. He may go further and follow Christianity as a way of life, attending services, mixing with Christians and reading Christian books. But two matters are needful and without them a man is utterly lost. Repentance toward God is essential as well as faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance denotes a change of heart or mind. For this change to take place a man must be humbled. He must experience the fear of God. Repentance can not be real or genuine without humiliation. Moreover, *humiliation is an experience*. It is not mere intellectual assent. It is a *living experience* and without it there can be no salvation. There are degrees in this experience. For some, conviction of sin is a deep and protracted experience. For others it is slight. Nevertheless, exist it must.

To safeguard those who have truly repented but who have experienced a minimum of conviction of sin is important. It is also very important that this experience of humiliation is not stereotyped. For example, in Acts chapter sixteen we have two people who experienced salvation in different ways. Both had repentance and faith. Both turned from ungodliness and unrighteousness to embrace Jesus Christ. Lydia saw the loveliness of Christ as Paul preached. The Lord opened her heart

and she embraced him as Lord and Saviour, quietly and sweetly without tempest, earthquake or thunder. Undoubtedly Lydia had repentance but faith is uppermost in her experience. With the Philippian jailor we find a man overwhelmed with conviction. He cries out in anguish. His experience is shattering, like the earthquake under him. Repentance is uppermost and faith must be urged. "Believe," cries Paul, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." It would be wrong, however, to come to the conclusion that the blackest and worst sinners must of necessity be subject to the most intense convictions and be alarmed by the terrors of hell. The work of grace can be gradual in really profligate sinners. John Newton, 1725-1807, was awakened to some sense of his dangerous condition before God during a violent and prolonged storm at sea. He became convinced in his mind that he was the greatest of sinners and doubted whether there could be salvation for him. But his heart was not moved by very deep feelings or terrors. He later testified: "It was not till long after (perhaps several years), when I had gained some clear views of the infinite righteousness and grace of Christ Jesus my Lord, that I had a deep and strong apprehension of my state by nature and practice: and perhaps till then I could not have borne the sight. So wonderfully does the Lord proportion the discoveries of sin and grace. For he knows our frame, and that were he to put forward the greatness of his power, a poor sinner would be instantly overwhelmed, and crushed as a moth". In Newton's case it is clear that grace existed in him for several years to a small degree and then his experience of conviction and of grace grew in intensity. Let it be stressed that we must avoid stereotyping religious experience.

John Bunyan, in his autobiography "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners", describes his conversion experience. For two years he underwent intense conviction of sin. For instance, one day he sat down beside a roadway, "and fell into a very deep pause about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to; and, after long musing, I lifted up my head, but me thought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give light, and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me; methought that they all combined together to banish me out of the world; I was abhorred of them, and unfit to dwell among them, or be partaker of their benefits, because I had sinned against the Saviour". Those who have experienced conviction of sin will understand a description like this, as do pastors who have had to counsel those under such convictions. Simplistic easy formulae fail completely to remove the burden. Superficial counselling is tantamount to mockery. Relevant passages of Scripture should be expounded and the convicted person urged to seek the Lord, sue for mercy and plead for assurance which it is his sole prerogative to give.

Those passages of Scripture where the sweet overtures, invitations and offers of mercy are set forth are particularly helpful to those who feel themselves to be so bad that there can be no mercy for them.

The objection may be made that such deep convictions apply only to exceptional people like John Bunyan or C. H. Spurgeon who likewise went through a prolonged experience of conviction before conversion. But this is not so. Preachers who sustain a doctrinal, expository and systematic ministry today find people subject to this kind of experience. It applies, also, to people of all ages. Convictions vary considerably, some being convicted by one part of the moral law, some by another.

A quotation from the diary of a young girl of nineteen will illustrate the point. The following experience is but a small part of a protracted series of her convictions before conversion. "I then went to bed and soon after to sleep but I had not slept long before I awoke in very great terror. I thought I was sinking through the bed and that hell was open to receive me. So great was my terror that I was bathed in perspiration and I took hold of my little brother and held him so fast that he screamed aloud with pain. Oh the terrors of that night, I know not how the night got over but it left me in great misery. But I thought I would put it all away. It would be time enough to think about religious matters when I was older and settled in life."<sup>1</sup> A few months after this the young lady was truly converted.

How long Paul was under conviction is a matter of conjecture. Some believe that the witness of Stephen contributed to his conviction. Our Lord's words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," prove that he was battling against the goads of an awakened conscience.

### *No conviction of sin before conversion*

Multitudes today are the victims of easy believism. They believe themselves to be safe for eternity because they have registered a decision for Christ. It was easy. There was little if any experience involved. They simply ambled along and, with others, registered their assent to an impoverished gospel. Some evangelist or counsellor announced them to be saved either because of their public profession of faith or because of a prayer they uttered in which they said they gave their hearts to the Lord.

Of the struggle associated with repentance or a change of heart these people know nothing. The Scriptures declare the fear of God to be the beginning of wisdom. Concerning this fear they have not the faintest conception. They have been deceived by false shepherds. They know nothing of true salvation. They are still in their sins. Such people who think they are true believers can be a great menace in a church. They maintain a form of godliness but deny the power of it. They are destitute of true soul experience and when faced with these realities turn away. Often the reality of the fear of God comes to them for the first time by way of the preaching of the doctrines of grace sometimes referred to as the Reformed Faith. They hear of man's total depravity, of human

<sup>1</sup> p. 16. Handwritten testimony of 19-year-old Mary Warburton.



inability, of God's right to save whom he wills. But they abhor and loathe these truths because their whole concept of the Gospel rests on the premise that salvation is a matter of man's decision.

### *Legal conviction of sin only*

We have considered those who have no experience of the fear of God but what of those who do have a very real fear but one which is legal rather than evangelical? Jonathan Edwards explains the difference so well that it is to our gain to follow him at this point.

In a legal humiliation, men are made sensible that they are little and nothing before the great and terrible God, and that they are undone, and wholly insufficient to help themselves; as wicked men will be at the day of judgment: but they have not an answerable frame of heart, consisting in a disposition to abase themselves, and exalt God alone. This disposition is given only in evangelical humiliation, by overcoming the heart and changing its inclination, by a discovery of God's holy beauty.

When he says they have not an answerable frame of heart to exalt God he means they lack saving faith. Repentance is to turn from sin and to hate and forsake it but repentance also involves a change of mind or heart by which the sinner believes in Jesus Christ and is enabled to see Christ's atonement as applied to him personally. In other words the sinner exalts and praises God for salvation. He admires the wonderful provision of God for his soul.

Edwards continues:

In a legal humiliation, the conscience is convinced, as the consciences of all will be most perfectly at the day of Judgment; but because there is no spiritual understanding, the will is not bowed nor the inclination altered: this is done only in evangelical humiliation. In legal humiliation, men are brought to despair of helping themselves: in evangelical they are brought voluntarily to deny and renounce themselves; in the former, they are subdued and forced to the ground; in the latter they are brought sweetly to yield, and freely and with delight to prostrate themselves at the feet of God.

Here again we observe faith functioning in yielding to God and delighting in his provision.

### *Humiliation of conviction of sin after conversion*

And what of post-conversion experience? "Oh wretched man that I am," cries Paul. "I am carnal, sold under sin," he declares. At the same time he asserts his delight in the law of God. Paul the regenerate believer is describing his convictions of sin and the struggle and conflict, which he also does in Galatians chapter five, "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would". As it is wrong to stereotype experience and stipulate that all must be subject to deep convictions so it is also wrong to think that it is scriptural for a Christian constantly to bemoan his wretched state. The convictions, not only of Jeremiah, but of Paul and all believers described in Scripture were subject to times and seasons. Sometimes great or deep convictions pre-

vail in our souls. There are intermittent seasons of gladness, joy, victory and praise mixed with times of trial and testing. Paul speaks of a wide variety of experiences (II Cor. 11:23-28). Part of the work of a minister is to understand and interpret the experiences of soul through which believers pass. Intense conviction of sin is often the way for even the most mature Christians. Indeed, the nearer they come to God the more they feel their unworthiness and yet, paradoxically, at the same time, the greater is their rejoicing in Christ Jesus. They see in their Redeemer their righteousness. Their justification before God for time and eternity is certain because of union with him and therein they rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Fundamental to an understanding of Romans chapter seven is an observation of the fact that the "wretched man" is not the sum total of Paul's experience. He did not feel this wretchedness with the same intensity all the time, no more than Job felt his miserable condition all his life. It is the prerogative of the Spirit to show Christians the plague of their hearts when and where he wills. It is obvious that Paul did not spend all his waking moments lamenting the remaining corruption of his heart. To assert this strongly will help to end foolish talk about progression from the latter part of Romans seven to Romans eight. Both chapters apply concurrently to the end of a Christian's life on earth. It is quite unnecessary to set up one experience against another. The joy of justification and adoption spoken of in Romans eight flow out of the experience of humiliation. Indeed the more we know of our unworthiness the more we appreciate the marvel of justification. The one cannot exist without the other.

An example of how a man can suddenly find the latter section of Romans seven the experience of his own soul to the letter is seen in George Whitefield. In 1739, at the age of 24, he embarked for America. As an immensely successful preacher the temptation to pride was as wide as the ocean around him. Yet it was then that he was overcome by conviction of sin and a wretchedness so intense that he even contemplated giving up the ministry. This time of conviction, according to his own testimony, helped him to understand the doctrines of grace: election and adoption. This experience of humbling served to deepen and strengthen him and cause him to lean more upon God. This was not the last time Whitefield was to experience such conviction.

Humiliation as an experience is fundamental and indispensable to true Christianity for of such evangelical humiliation come two essential attributes, namely, the fear of God and humility, both of which we now consider.

### *The fear of God*

The theme of the fear of the Lord receives little if any attention in evangelical circles today. This was a major subject with the Puritans

and predominant in times of spiritual awakening. We still have the phrase, "a God-fearing man", although it is not used as much as it used to be. The fear of God lies at the very heart of true Christianity. Both Old and New Testaments speak much of this fear. Indeed, there are hundreds of direct or indirect references to this matter in Scripture. One of our most able modern preachers has well said: "Take away the soul from the body and all you have left in a few days is a stinking carcass. Take away the fear of God from any expression of godliness and all you have left is the stinking carcass of Pharisaism and barren religiosity".<sup>2</sup> We would go further and say that the most excited and enthusiastic expressions of religion: shouting, raising of hands, singing of choruses, intense speech, praying all at the same time, exuberant laughings or sad wailings, if devoid of a true fear of God, are all revolting in the extreme especially to those who have come to experience the fear of God. How does one discern a true fear of the Lord? The answer is that it is accompanied by a reverence for Scripture, a repudiation of all lightness, frivolity and flippancy, a conformity of heart to the precepts of the Word. A true fear of the Lord is often experienced in awful stillness: "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). Such a fear leads to a thoughtful and loving relationship with God in which those beautiful attributes described by our Lord in the sermon on the mount are developed, namely, sorrow for sin, meekness, purity, mercy, peacemaking and joy (Matt. 5:1-12).

One of the practical effects of the fear of God is humility. The Prodigal Son was brought to humiliation. He soon squandered his substance and his gifts of character, thus bringing himself both to profligacy and penury. The backward slide was permitted in order to bring him to an end of himself. He showed true repentance when he determined to return to his father. That he was humbled was seen in his words, "Father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son". The case of the Prodigal illustrates well God's purpose in the humbling of all his people. Can you think of one saved character in Scripture who was not humbled? This is an essential part of the believer's experience. Humbling commences before conversion when the Spirit begins to convict a man of sin, righteousness and judgment. In most cases this experience of conviction is such that there is a readiness to hear preaching whereas before there was only enmity. After conversion the experience of humiliation or humbling continues. Often men who are greatly used are humbled the most. God reveals to them either by events, such as their failures, or by directly working in their hearts through his Word that they are unworthy. Peter was greatly humbled by his denial of Christ. He was put in the dust. Likewise Paul was sincerely convinced that he was the chief of sinners. Moses was humbled by forty years of obscurity on the backside of the desert, a grim experience for a man of social eminence (Heb. 11:24-26).

<sup>2</sup> A. N. Martin in a sermon, *The Predominance of the Fear of God in Biblical Thought*.

Humiliation of soul, from start to finish, is an essential part of Christian experience. It results from a true knowledge of God. Humiliation occupies a predominant place in Scripture. Much more is said about the fear of God and experiences of humiliation than about joy and ecstasy, although these must not be neglected in any way for they are complementary. Joy follows humiliation. Great is the present day need for joy and power but, strange as it may seem, we do not start with these. The foundation of true joy is a right knowledge of God. This can come only by the proclamation of the whole counsel of God in which souls will first be cast down. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Pet. 5:6). The notion common today is that the person best able to give an account of an experience or of speaking in tongues is the greatest Christian. Jesus never endorsed any such idea. He said: "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven".

Experience of God is all-important. We cannot be saved without it. Of all experiences what is the first and most important? Is it love, or joy, or power? The answer is that humiliation precedes all the rest. It continues to the end. Abraham, Isaac (Gen. 31:42 and 53) and Jacob, Job and David, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel all knew what it was to experience comeliness being turned into corruption and to retain no strength (Dan. 10:8). Likewise the New Testament saints experienced humiliation. Paul was first prostrated on his face. John, like Daniel before him, fell as one dead (Rev. 1:17).

### *Conclusions*

1. We should avoid exalting one experience at the expense of other aspects. It is thrilling to think of great joy or terrific power but in God's eyes humility is precious in his people. Balaam and King Saul had intense experience but they perished miserably in the end.
2. There is a tendency to create categories of first and second class believers. Those of the first class are those who claim to have been baptised with the Spirit and the rest are second class. The only categories expressed by the apostles were those of babes who drink milk and men, who by reason of their senses being exercised, are able to digest strong meat (Heb. 5:13, 14). As we study the subject further however we discover that the greatest in the Kingdom of God are those who humble themselves (Matt. 18:4).
3. While experience is vital we must never live by our experiences. Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the month of God (Matt. 4:4). Our experiences are to be tested in the light of Scripture.
4. One area of experience supports another. We have seen the importance of humiliation in our experience. With this as a foundation we can go on to see that joy and power must spring from justification by faith.

*If we are to comprehend rightly the complex sacralistic situation we face as Christians today it is important that we understand how it came about. This involves knowledge of what actually happened at the time of Constantine, the changes which occurred subsequently, the actions of the Reformers and the implications of the position which has ensued following the Reformation. Herbert Carson outlines these matters for us in the following helpful way.*

## **From Constantine to Sacralism Today**

A COPY OF THE "GUARDIAN" EARLIER THIS YEAR CONTAINED AN interesting assortment of items. On the front page was the account of the hideous murder by I.R.A. terrorists of more innocent victims. Inside a report from Birmingham highlighted the protest of the Roman Catholic Archbishop at the Home Office refusal to allow Father Fell to celebrate mass in prison—he was there for organising the I.R.A. in Coventry with a view to the inevitable maiming and death which follow bombing. Ironically the front page advertisement from the Catholic enquiry centre carried the heading "The truth about the Catholic Church". Later, on the same day, the radio news bulletin announced that the Dublin High Court had once again refused an extradition order—this time for another Roman Catholic priest, a fugitive from the Glasgow police who had discovered explosives in the presbytery. One is forced to ask if there is no discipline in Rome for criminal priests, and to ask further if Roman bishops are ready to condone violence as long as it is on behalf of a political programme which they approve.

But before we become too uppish about Rome we need to take a long look at the other side of the fence. It is not so very long since an Anglican cleric in Northern Ireland conducted a parade service for a para-military organisation. It is not only I.R.A. terrorists who get a full funeral service; so called Protestants may engage in the same kind of murderous activity but if they are killed they will also be accorded the recognition at death that they are members of the Church, even if their link with any Church is very tenuous, and even though their behaviour is an appalling affront to Christian morals.

However one does not need to go into the realm of actual violence to find the same mentality. We have our clerical politicians or political clergymen whichever way you may describe them. The call of the New Testament to the minister, "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the

affairs of this life", is conveniently forgotten. Paul was also a tent-maker, they claim, ignoring that he only made tents at times to provide his basic needs—he did not tour the country lecturing on tent-making!

But more serious than their divided function is their underlying assumption. It is that the Gospel can be identified with one particular theory. The Gospel is no longer the call of God to all men everywhere to repent. It has become the handmaid to stir men to a political passion which for some ungodly men will spill over into violence. Behind it all lies the old sacralist theory with its idea of the Christian nation standing over against its foes. It is a theory which has its roots far back in Christian history.

### *Constantine the turning point*

"The fourth century was the critical period for introducing those changes which shaped the Christian Church, and determined the character of its relation to the western type of civilisation." So wrote Hanz Lietzmann in *The Era of the Church Fathers*.<sup>1</sup> He continued: "Up to the time of Constantine, the Church had been a voluntary fellowship of Christian believers held together by forces that were born in their own hearts . . . A person joining the Church did so at the risk of his position in life, sometimes even of his physical survival. In addition, he had to relinquish many of the pleasures which could be indulged when morals were not a consideration, and he had to adopt instead a strict self-discipline . . . From the moment when Constantine changed the course of the ship of State, and not only recognised the Church, but gave it public favour; and, in particular, from the time when Theodosius made Christianity the sole religion of the State, the entire situation was radically altered. Up to then it had required courage to join the Church, but from now onwards, this quality was needed rather, in refusing to join".

### *The wrong move*

The crucial year was A.D. 312 when Constantine won the battle of the Milvian Bridge. The day before the battle, he claimed to have seen a vision. A cross of light appeared in the sky with the words, *In hoc signo vinces* (by this sign conquer). That night, so he maintained, Christ appeared to him, directing him to make a standard like it, as a means of victory.

The result was an edict of toleration which gave the Churches the right to exist. The aim at this stage was religious equality, i.e. an equal toleration of both Christians and pagans. After A.D. 323, when he got rid of his co-emperor in the East, Licinius, Constantine moved to the next stage of legislation favouring the Church. It is hard to say how far he was motivated by religious concerns and how far by considerations of state policy. His obvious persistence in pagan superstition,<sup>2</sup> and his postponement of baptism until his death-bed, indicate that J. C. Wand is probably right in his verdict: "One can only conclude that his aim was

to make of Christianity, the cement that was to bind together the empire".<sup>3</sup>

The flood of pagans entering the now popular Church brought many abuses. It is possible to trace the increasing superstition attaching to the eucharist, the veneration of Mary and the deepening of sacramentalism to this period. But more germane to the subject we are considering is the rise of two classes within the Church, the baptised and the adherents. The latter were attracted by the new privileges enjoyed by Christians, but were unwilling to face the more rigorous ethical demands involved in baptism.

The close alliance of Church and State affected the status of the clergy, who received part of the tax formerly paid to pagan priests. Civil power was entrusted to them, thus paving the way for the later developments of the Middle Ages when bishops were really statesmen and minor clerics virtually constituted the civil service.

It is salutary to remember that the creed of Nicaea emerged as a result of this alliance. The Council convened in 325 was summoned by the Emperor. The expenses of delegates were met out of imperial funds. The orthodox creed was declared with the Emperor's backing. The Church was beginning to look to the State to support the truth, and to deal with those like Arius who undermined the gospel.

But victories gained at the expense of essential principles yield a bitter harvest. The triumph of the Nicene faith by means of imperial support was to lead in due course to all the ugly manifestations of the persecuting spirit which raged through the medieval period, and still poisoned the well springs of truth in the days of the Reformation.

When, in 363, Jovian became Emperor after the failure of the pagan re-action under Julian, a decree was issued which declared that "only God Almighty and Christ are to be worshipped, the people to assemble in the Churches for worship". Here is a pattern of uniformity which was still to continue twelve centuries later, in the compulsory attendance in the parish Churches dictated by the first Elizabeth. A decree of 383 forbade the renunciation of the Christian faith, while in 391 an edict of the Emperor Theodosius prohibited all pagan worship. The development begun by Constantine had reached its climax. Christianity was now the only permitted religion of the Empire and, furthermore, it must be that form of Christianity to which the Emperor was prepared to attach the title of "orthodox".

### *Power to compel*

A few years earlier the case of Priscillian and his followers affronted the consciences of many Christians. They were indicted for Manichaeism<sup>4</sup> and magic—though F. F. Bruce, with probably a truer verdict, presents them as a sort of 4th century society of Friends. They were executed at

the instigation of the Spanish bishops. Martin of Tours and Ambrose of Milan both protested against the executions, but the precedent had been set which was to be repeated with increasing frequency in the succeeding centuries. Even the great Augustine capitulated to this sorry perversion of the teaching of the New Testament. The Donatists of North Africa represented the recurring refusal to conform to the worldliness which is a constant menace to the Church of Christ. The extremists on the fringe of this movement, the Circumcelliones, with their clubs and their anarchy gave a handle to their foes as later the fanatics of Munster in the sixteenth century were to provide a rod for the back of the Anabaptists. But the essential Donatist protest was against the assimilation of the Church and the World in the sacralist society. Wrestling Scripture to justify his policy, as later the Reformers were to do, Augustine quoted the words, "Compel them to come in", as a justification for the forcible suppression of "heretics" who refused to conform to the appeal to return to Catholic orthodoxy. The underlying idea, which was to dominate men for centuries, is the conception of the unity of the Church and the Nation. As a result, any breach of Church order or doctrine is viewed as an act of civil disobedience. Any disturbance of the fabric of Christendom becomes an attack on society and must be repressed. The code of Justinian published in 529, which was to influence Roman canon law in the later Middle Ages decreed that: "Heresy shall be construed to be an offence against the civil order" (XVI. 5:40).

The fall of Rome and the collapse of the Western Roman Empire did not materially affect the basic conception. In the vacuum caused by the disappearance of the imperial power, the papacy emerged as the continuance of the old imperial tradition. The Pope moved increasingly into the realm of secular power and authority. The way was being made ready for the medieval synthesis of Church and empire, symbolised by the coronation in St. Peter's on Christmas Day A.D. 800 of Charlemagne, emperor of what was to be virtually a revived Roman Empire. In the subsequent centuries there were to be many clashes between Pope and Emperor. Gregory VII in the eleventh century, and Innocent III in the early thirteenth century both asserted their authority, but in each case it was with the underlying assumption that both Pope and Emperor were divinely ordained to lead the one religio-political community. The only debate was as to who was to be the supreme head.

When the empire began to crumble in the face of the emergence of national monarchies, the disputes between popes and kings were still in this same context. When Boniface VIII confronted Philip IV of France or Edward I of England, there was no hint of severing the close link between Church and state. The only question was one of establishing the ultimate authority. When Edward III's parliament in 1351 and 1352 checked the flow of money to Rome, it was not a severance of the



traditional links but simply the reiteration of the ultimate authority of the Crown over both clergy and laity.

This right of the secular power to assert its supreme authority was formulated by Dante in 1313. It was to be taught in England by Wycliffe in the fourteenth century. It was the basis of the thinking of Thomas Cranmer, who substituted the crown for the papacy as the supreme authority. It was enunciated by Erastus on the continent and expounded in England in Elizabeth's reign by Richard Hooker who expressed in no uncertain terms, when arguing for an Anglican settlement, the co-terminous character of Church and nation.

### *Reformation mistakes*

Sacralism proved to be the hazard on which the Reformation movement crumbled. It is sad to compare the situation in 1520 with that in 1570. At the earlier date the future was hopeful. Luther had sounded the trumpet of revolt. Europe was stirring. Romanism seemed in danger of disintegrating. But by 1570 the outlook was very different. The forces of the counter-reformation had regained much of the lost ground. Rome had consolidated her doctrinal position via the Council of Trent, and had produced a fighting order, the Jesuits, to enlarge her boundaries. The ecclesiastical frontiers of Europe were frozen into a permanence in which we are only now beginning to see a very slight thaw. A major reason for the tragic failure to reap the full fruit of the Protestant awakening was the Reformers' refusal to jettison the sacralist tradition. This led to their opposition to the dedicated zeal of the Anabaptists—the stepchildren of the Reformers, as Verduin describes them. Had Luther, Zwingli and Calvin only seen that these men were not enemies to be crushed, but true friends of the Gospel; had they been able to recognise that their appeal should have been to these brothers in Christ rather than to the nobility of Germany or the city councils of Geneva or Zurich; had they matched the early support of the Anabaptist movement with a readiness to accept their call to a true reform of the Church, how different might have been the course of history!

The fact is that the Reformers were basically at one with their Romanist opponents in their acceptance of the idea of a national settlement of religion. They were the heirs of a millennium of false teaching, and they failed to shake themselves free. They still endorsed the idea that church and nation were one—hence their passionate defence of infant baptism, their assertion of the responsibility of the magistrate to support the Church, and their endorsement of the ugly policy of persecution of non-conformists. During the Middle Ages the Roman Church had developed the idea of the two swords—a strange perversion of their mention in Luke 22:38. The Church wielded the spiritual sword and the state the sword of steel. However, because the two swords were subject to the authority of the Church the state must use the sword of steel, not simply for the purpose of restraining evil in society as Paul

taught in Romans 13, but also to restrain evil in the Church. This theory had the added advantage that heretics could be dealt with without the ecclesiastics incurring the guilt of shedding blood. Even the perpetrators of the Inquisition did not execute heretics. It was the secular arm which carried out the deed. There was the traditional and hypocritical appeal to the magistrate not to go too far, but in fact the last thing expected or desired was that the final penalty should be mitigated.

Attempts have been made to whitewash Calvin in this matter. It is said that his moderate attitude is seen in his attempt to get the sentence of burning in the case of Servetus reduced to one of beheading. One might be pardoned for considering that this was not very much of a reduction. One might also be forgiven a certain cynicism, for the death by execution would stress the fact that Servetus was a civil menace even more than a religious heretic, for which latter crime burning would in that day have been considered more appropriate. Certainly Calvin had no hesitation about what he aimed to accomplish as far as Servetus was concerned. Prior to the latter's arrival Calvin wrote to Farel: "Servetus has just sent me, together with his letters, a long volume of his ravings. If I consent he will come here, but I will not give my word; for should he come, if my authority is of any avail, I will not suffer him to get out alive".<sup>5</sup>

But Calvin was not alone. He had the backing of Melancthon, who wrote to Calvin that "the Church owes and always will owe you a debt of gratitude for having put the heretic to death". This need not surprise us for in Melancthon's background was the Diet of Speyer, which in 1529 drew together the bitterly opposed Roman and Lutheran princes to pronounce the death sentence on Anabaptists.

Nor need we be surprised by the general commendation of the Swiss Churches. When Bullinger, of Zurich, replied to the request for advice and urged the death sentence he was simply following in the steps of Zwingli and continuing the sacralist policy of Zurich which had led the way in the early persecution of the Anabaptists. It was after all in Protestant Zurich that the first Anabaptist martyrs perished.

One can understand the direction taken by the English Reformation when one appreciates not only the long established sacralist tradition inherited by Cranmer and the others, but also the strong influence of Luther and Calvin which would only tend to confirm the policy of achieving a national settlement of religion. The policy might lead Cranmer into strange moral by-paths as he tried to justify Henry VIII's lust, as it also led Luther into an equally strange course in condoning the bigamy of Philip of Hesse. But more seriously it meant that religious reformation was governed not simply by biblical principles, but by expediency and considerations of State. Politics have been defined as the art of the possible. Once religion is wed to politics the same touchstone tends to be applied and the result is the kind of compromise

formula seen in the Elizabethan settlement, an attempt to accommodate as many Englishmen as possible under the one Anglican ecclesiastical umbrella. At one extreme of non-conformity were the Puritans and at the other the Romanists, and for both of these repression was the answer.

### *The impossible dilemma*

Repression has been the unfailing accompaniment of sacralism. It was seen in the days of Mary Tudor, when the combined forces of Papacy and Crown sent nearly three hundred to the stake. But though not on the same scale, it continued in the execution of non-conformists in the reign of Elizabeth. Non-conformity was essentially a religious offence in that it rejected prelacy. But the old idea of the Code of Justinian was still present. Deviation in Church matters was a civil offence and must be punished, if need be with the ultimate penalty of death. It is sobering to reflect that this mentality lived on in Scotland as late as 1696, when a youth was executed in Edinburgh for heresy.

The clash of Anglican and Puritan in the seventeenth century must be set against the same background. The Presbyterian Puritans might differ from the Anglicans on various issues of church policy, but they were united in the sacralist conception of one Church for the nation. The Westminster Confession echoed the sadly familiar theme in Article XXIII: "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed. For the better effecting whereof he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God". It is a classic statement of the Constantinian position and explains the readiness of the Presbyterians when in power to eject the Anglicans and suppress the Prayer Book—an action which was reciprocated in even more abundant measure in 1662.

Cunningham has argued that the errors of Erastianism on the one side and of persecution on the other—both of which he admits the Reformers accepted—do not negate the conception of a national settlement of religion. He maintains that they were right in their contention that the magistrate has a duty to promote the true religion, whereas they were wrong in the method they used.

But in the New Testament, to promote the Gospel means not only the support of the truth but the rejection of error. The means to accomplish both the positive and the negative aspects of this ministry are

spiritual. It is by means of teaching and Church discipline that the truth is maintained and error resisted. But how can a State exercise discipline except by some form of repression? It may forbid the spread of teaching which is opposed to the accepted religious settlement. But if this teaching continues then those who persist can only be dealt with by fines and imprisonment. It is difficult to see how a full national settlement of religion can be carried through without some form of persecution of those who refuse to conform. Repression is not an illegitimate operation in the practice of an otherwise acceptable Biblical principle, it is the logical outworking of consistent sacralism.

### *Conclusion*

It may seem a far cry from this historical survey to the present situation, but in fact the sacralist mentality is still with us—after all we still have Bishops in the House of Lords and established churches in both England and Scotland. The outlook is reflected as we have seen in a stark and ugly form in the Irish situation. It is seen in the worldwide ramifications of Vatican diplomacy. Even in the U.S.A. where theoretically Church and state are far apart the cloak of religion is thrown over the occupant of the White House whoever he may be. It is seen in some countries overseas where ecclesiastics co-operate with statesmen to produce the kind of unified structure which satisfies both ecumenical and national aspirations—even though it may violate Biblical principles and lead to the oppression of those who do not conform. At a more local level it was seen in the attempt which failed in London to allocate sites in Thamesmead only to ecumenical centres. It is seen in the policy of Kent County Council to award student grants only to those attending theological colleges approved by the British Council of Churches.

We do not deny that there is a role for the Christian either in local government or in parliament. But what we insist upon is that the Church as Church does not have such a role. The task of the Church is to preach the Gospel of God and to build up the faithful. Let the believers go out to serve God in whatever sphere God's providence may direct. But let God's Church be seen in subjection only to her one head, the Lord Jesus Christ. And let the state be seen to be the divinely ordained instrument for the ordering of society. To keep the spheres and aims of both Church and state distinct is simply to be Biblical. To confuse their roles is disastrous.

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> P. 97. <sup>2</sup> *History of the Early Church*, p. 131. J. C. Wand. <sup>3</sup> The law in 321 on Sunday observance declared cessation of work and gave the first day of the week its title—"the day of the venerable sun". <sup>4</sup> This heresy taught the pagan idea of the essential evil of matter with a consequent stress on ascetic practices. <sup>5</sup> Quoted by G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 606.

*An experienced missionary from South America here describes some of the problems he has had to face.*

# The Dilemma of the Reformed Missionary Today

INCREASINGLY, THE QUESTION IS BEING ASKED: "CAN A REFORMED missionary work within the framework of a traditional, faith mission?" To say the least, the difficulties are tremendous, and more especially so if the missionary society is under strong North American influence.

The problem is that a Reformed missionary working in an area preaches truths, then another, not Reformed but in the same mission, comes along and preaches completely opposite doctrines. The result is that the national believers are confused, the missionary is frustrated, and no solid church is built up. The issue would not arise so much if the individual missionary were free to dictate the theology of his particular area, but normally he will find it awkward to keep his fellow-workers from paying visits, and in addition probably has the theology of a predecessor with which to contend and the thought of a successor who could be appointed at any time.

These differences in theology are not theoretical. They affect every part of life. They affect, too, the philosophies and policies of mission leaders. At every point there are clashes and frictions with fellow-workers.

The cause of the difficulty is that in the traditional, faith missions the doctrinal spectrum is broad. It is true that there may be nothing in the Mission doctrinal basis with which the Reformed missionary would disagree, but he goes much beyond a minimal statement of faith and his additional clauses have a vital bearing on every part of his life and outlook. Thus the difficult state of conflict arises. It is not only difficult, it is sad, frustrating, and can be heartbreaking.

## *My own experience*

After I had been on the field about a year my eyes began to be opened and I started questioning things. Why do missionaries go with the crowds to the sports stadia on Sunday to watch matches and even to

participate? The reply was given that, "We are not under law but under grace" and that, therefore, the Ten Commandments do not apply to us; the fourth commandment is out, and there is no moral law! (Yet it must be acknowledged in all fairness that the folk were not wild anti-nomians.) Those with sabbath convictions were told they were suffering from "an overdose of cultural overhang".

One aged and respected missionary leader told me that in all his years he had never preached on the Ten Commandments either in an evangelistic context or to Christians.

Getting into the work and seeing the condition of the national church and the state of individual believers, I began to question the staggering reports I had previously read in the homelands of "hundreds being saved", "churches alive" and "church growth exceeding population growth". I found conservative evangelical churches lifeless, and, I dare to say, full of baptised unbelievers who had gone through the ABC of "making a decision" without any work of the Spirit taking place. I saw the situation aggravated by a stress on numbers, "we must have results"—the American success philosophy.

I saw a spirit of deadness come over a mission as Dr. Donald McGavran's "church growth theory" was experimented with. This concept has been described as the latest fad among North American, evangelical, mission leaders. The theory, which comes from the head of the School of World Missions at Fuller Seminary, applies sociology to the realm of church planting and endeavours to discover by means of statistics, graphs, charts and even computers, where ripe fields are and, therefore, where mission personnel should be placed. It leaves no room for the sovereignty of God and the spontaneity of the Spirit's work, and has no concept of an elect to be gathered in. It means the missionary has to be constantly filling in forms and counting heads.

There is also an unhealthy emphasis on goal-setting. One Welsh Calvinist, reading a weighty tome from the "church growth school" described it as "a monumental exercise in futility!" So there is the numerolatry cult to contend with.

Then there are the problems in evangelism. These have recently come to a head in South America with preparations for city-wide campaigns by Luis Palau, the leading evangelist of South America. In correspondence with the mission leadership I expressed my reservations about the venture on the grounds that I felt an inadequate gospel would be preached; the evangelist would make "invitations" and use the counselling room procedure of "The Four Spiritual Laws" booklet produced by Campus Crusade, and the campaign was not church based. My mission was backing this campaign. What was I to do?

A gracious reply was received and I quote one section to show how our understandings of theology differed: "We expect the evangelist to present

salvation in the simplest and clearest of terms rather than a lot of doctrine. Doctrine follows salvation and instruction is given in each church according to its particular emphasis . . . Salvation begins with a message of grace and not of law”.

My own feeling is that there is no church in the whole country to which I can recommend a new convert or send an interested inquirer, no church where there is expository preaching of Scripture, just John 3:16 repeated superficially week after week with the accompaniment of testimonies, choruses and special platform features—and all that after 70 years of missionary endeavour.

The most readily available tracts have tear-off decision slips attached and I know that the use of these in my area has led to a host of false professions of faith. The number of supposed new converts was stated boldly in a magazine of the organisation which produced the tracts.

One of our main problems has been that we have felt starved of fellowship. Reformed literature and journals from the homeland have kept us going. There have been no fraternals to attend to obtain encouragement from people of like mind. Overall there is an air of superficiality abroad and next to no theology. The doctrines I have come to love have at times been scoffed at by my fellow-workers.

### *More dilemmas*

There is the dilemma over the choice of textbooks to be used in Bible institutes and in extension education—Reformed or Arminian. There is the problem of Bible institute lecturers who are of mixed, theological flavours.

There is the dilemma of missionary reporting and the approach that we must always present only the bright side of things. If we fail to paint a rosy picture of success the money will not come in and new recruits will not be attracted. So the argument goes.

The Reformed missionary is in an even more difficult position if his home church is not in sympathy with his doctrinal position. He has to be guarded in what he says to them. I am convinced that the sending church must be whole-heartedly behind the missionary and he in turn must know that he can trust them thoroughly as he reports honestly all his ups and downs; he should be able to expect sympathetic replies, counsel and encouragement at all times.

He may discover that he is not practising at home what he preaches on the field—matters like plurality of elders, elders plus deacons, church discipline, or the rightful place of women in the church. This causes added frustration.

The missionary might have come to the Reformed position while on the field and then he may feel that he is not honestly representing his constituency at home and therefore not using their support funds justly.

### *The way ahead*

Quite clearly a lot of re-thinking has to be done in the realm of reformation and overseas missions. What is the role of the sending church? Some missionaries do not have a home church, and others discover that they have sent themselves out! The missionary society can so easily usurp the place of the sending, local church. There is the deputation ritual—dashing all over the country for one-night appearances which often prove fruitless from every point of view. Re-integration and thorough spiritual union with the sending church is biblical.

Perhaps some can conscientiously stay in a traditional faith mission and endeavour to reform from within, especially if there is a nucleus of Reformed men and they are not too far apart. It would seem to depend on one's make-up and temperament and the possession of special gifts of patience and wisdom.

On the other hand the suggestion has been made for the formation of a Reformed Baptist fellowship in order to help in this dilemma. Of course, one can possibly go out sent and supported by a single, local church, but in the long run some sort of loose-knit structure or agency seems necessary to act in an advisory capacity for new recruits and to help with practical matters such as the transmission of funds. For myself, I would never consider going out from a local church "alone" in the sense of not having fellow-workers. I believe, from my reading of the New Testament, that pairs or groups of families must go out together. The issues overseas are so complex that one needs, perhaps even more today, to have others of like-mind with whom to consult on the spot. Rare are those who can go it alone. Carey had Marshman and Ward to form a dynamic trio. Paul was sometimes accompanied by one companion but more often than not by several.

The urgency of the matter can be seen at the home end, where Reformed Baptist churches are wondering what to do about missionary giving, what to do about fostering missionary interest, what to do about the missionary call within the local church and about the opportunities and openings for Reformed missionaries overseas.

The glorious doctrines of grace have been muzzled on the mission field for too long and the fact has almost been forgotten that our greatest missionary forebears such as William Carey, John Paton, David Brainerd, William Burns, John Eliot and Henry Martyn, were men who had these doctrines embedded deep in their minds and hearts.

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# John Calvin the Pastor

OF THE MANY TOWERING FIGURES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN Church, John Calvin is probably the most maligned and misunderstood. Much has been written about his brilliance as a theologian, and this is undoubtedly true. One has only to read his *magnum opus*, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, to see that. It is quite wrong, however, to categorize his theology as something cold, academic and forbidding. Only the uninformed could talk in this way. Even a cursory reading of his works will reveal, immediately, how deeply and warmly he writes and speaks of the things of God.

Again, much criticism has been directed against his logical mind and his lawyer's ability. He was too much of a machine in his dealing with men and God's Truth, so the criticism runs. It is certainly true that Calvin was a trained lawyer, trained under Pierre de L'Estoile, one of the finest French lawyers of his day, but it must never be forgotten that Calvin used his logic almost exclusively in the service of God's Church, and never as an end in itself, much less for his own glory. One of the finest examples of this occurred in neighbouring Lausanne in October, 1536, only a few months after Calvin's entry into Geneva. During a religious debate, at which Calvin and others were present, the topic of the Lord's Supper came up for discussion. Angered by the ignorance of Mimard, one of 174 Roman priests who had accused the Reformers of holding the teachings of Augustine and the Church Fathers in low esteem, Calvin stood up and, without any books or manuscripts before him, proceeded to quote and expound from the Fathers in such a manner as to set the opposition reeling. So powerful was Calvin's refutation that a well known priest, Jean Tandy, stood up, confessed that he had sinned against the Spirit, was denouncing his priesthood and would henceforth "... follow Christ and his pure doctrine alone ...".<sup>1</sup> So much for Calvin's *cold* logic! To a right use of logic Calvin added scholarship. Jean Cadier, quoting from Luchesius Smits, points out that Smits "... has discovered in the Reformer's writings 1,700 actual quotations from St. Augustine and 2,400 references, a fact which shows an extremely thorough acquaintance with Augustine's work".<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most perverted image that has come down to us through the centuries has been that of Calvin the dictator and tyrant of Geneva. The following quotations will highlight this assessment of Calvin. Newman says: "As a thoroughgoing theocrat, Calvin was necessarily and on principle a persecutor".<sup>3</sup> Daniel-Rops goes even further when he says: "... The atmosphere in Geneva during these astonishing years

almost defies the imagination. It was that of a régime of 'public safety' in the most complete and rigorous sense of the term . . . a reign of terror was established; but in Geneva its horror was aggravated by the fact that it was founded on religious principles . . . the rigidity and apparent cruelty of his theocratic dictatorship".<sup>4</sup>

These wild allegations can be refuted but I hope, as we look at the reformer as a pastor, we may see some sort of balance restored and justice done to the real figure of Calvin. We shall look at various aspects of Calvin's life and work that throw particular light on him as a pastor.<sup>5</sup> We will examine his theology, character, suffering and missionary zeal, but first a little background.

On the evening of a day in July, 1536, a carriage from France arrived in Geneva, Switzerland. It held, amongst others, John Calvin, his brother Anthony and their sister. Like many other French Protestants, they had fled from France because of Roman Catholic persecution. The exigencies of the war between Francis I and Charles V—or perhaps, more accurately, the providence of God—forced them to travel via Geneva en route to Basel where they hoped to stay for some time.

In Geneva the Protestant Reformation was being led by Froment, Viret and William Farel. The latter was a colourful extrovert from Auvergne. A man of tempestuous nature, he had stormed Geneva with the Gospel, winning many to its cause. Farel, however, was wise enough to recognise his own limitations and knew that in time Geneva would need an abler man to grasp the reins if Biblical reformation was to be properly worked out. Upon hearing that Calvin had arrived in Geneva from France, he went posthaste to see him at The Bear's Inn. After a long altercation in which Farel threatened to call down God's judgement upon him, Calvin agreed to remain and enter into the reformation work in Geneva.

On Farel's recommendation the Genevan City Council appointed Calvin as Reader in Theology or Reader in the Holy Scriptures. This allowed him to preach in St. Peter's. Of so little importance was this to the Council that in their minutes of September 5, 1536, they refer to Calvin as "ille Gallus"—this man from Gaule (France).

It was only towards the close of 1536 that he received a pastoral office, at first as Farel's assistant. Thus Calvin entered into his long association with the Church in Geneva. We must never forget that within the city of Geneva, and in his own view of his work, Calvin was in many ways pre-eminently a pastor of a church, not merely a theologian or academic figure or even an international reformer. For some 25 years, excluding his three years of exile, he was engaged in preaching, counselling, writing, struggling, suffering, planning and evangelising—as a pastor!

## 1. *The Pastor's Theology*

James Denney said on one occasion: "Every theologian should be an evangelist and every evangelist should be a theologian". It is equally true that every pastor should be a theologian and every theologian a pastor!<sup>6</sup> John Calvin was an excellent demonstrator of this truth. His example provides a complete refutation of much current evangelical thinking, which separates these two facets and almost makes them mutually exclusive.

Calvin's theology was never conceived or practised in a sterile vacuum; what he believed, he practised. Indeed it was because of his theological views that he took his pastoral office so seriously. We may go further and say that his doctrinal views enabled him to function as a Biblical pastor should. Let me elaborate briefly on Calvin's theology, with particular reference to his doctrine of the church.

In striking contrast to today's Evangelicalism, Calvin and the other Reformers thought of God's dealings with his children, almost exclusively in terms of the framework of the Church, be it Catholic (universal) or local. Thus, Calvin points out, God met his people in the Old Testament period *in* the Tabernacle or *in* the Temple, and through the ministry of the Levites. In the New Testament this truth continues in the invisible church, visibly manifested. The church is our mother from which we are born and by whom we are nourished. Moreover, through the faithful preaching of the Word and dispensing of the sacraments (by those duly called to this task), the Christian experiences forgiveness, grace and sanctification. He has now become a definite member of a definite family—the family of God—and his life is incomplete if he ignores it or circulates outside it.

For a church to be true there have to be the distinguishing marks of preaching of the Word, the dispensing of the sacraments and discipline. I should add by way of enlargement that in Calvin's understanding of the New Testament, the pastor is also a preacher! He would have denied strongly the modern dichotomy between these two functions.<sup>7</sup> He himself preached well over 250 times a year. Indeed, there is evidence that it may have been considerably more, for he speaks of preaching "every day". Furthermore there must be a subordination to the church, for as he says: "... no man may with impunity spurn her authority, or reject her admonitions, or resist her counsels, or make sport of her censures, far less revolt from her, and violate her unity . . . So highly does he recommend her authority, that when it is violated he considers that his own authority is impaired".<sup>8</sup> Again, to be a true church, there must be a Biblical Church order. Thus, in his now famous *Church Constitution* which he presented to the city-government of Geneva, he laid down from Scripture the necessity of having preachers, doctors, elders and deacons. Finally, we must mention that while the church is not yet perfect, nevertheless she should jealously guard her

purity. In other words, the admission or exclusion of individuals from the Lord's Table is not to be a haphazard procedure, but an active concern, whereby the church seeks to keep herself pure.

In all this (and, we add, in every other department of Christian Doctrine) Calvin always stressed, (i) The glory of God and his Son. To defy or defile the church of God was to dishonour the Lord of the church. (ii) The spiritual welfare of the church. Of Calvin's 4,271 letters preserved a large number are addressed to churches.

This very brief theological survey is absolutely crucial for an understanding of much of Calvin's conflict and suffering as a pastor. It was precisely his Biblical and doctrinal views of God's church and the pastoral office which drove him to act so vigorously as the Pastor of Geneva's growing Protestant church, and which brought him into conflict with the government of Geneva. An application to today's Evangelical church lies readily at hand; we need to grasp afresh the truth that no man can ever function as an adequate pastor unless he works within a framework of scriptural doctrine, and in particular within the framework of the doctrine of the Church.

## *2. The Pastor's Character*

Nobody doubts that Calvin had weaknesses. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence to suggest that contrary to popular opinion, he did exemplify the instructions of Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth".

Calvin had a shy, retiring nature, perhaps even being something of an introvert. In his altercation with Farel, when the latter was seeking to batter down his excuses for not remaining in Geneva, Calvin's sensitive nature was revealed in the sheer terror with which he heard Farel threaten to pronounce God's judgement upon him. One of the arguments he used in an attempt to fend off Farel he put this way: "I am timid, weak, and fainthearted by nature, and feel myself not equal to such opposition".<sup>9</sup>

In the heated and bitter controversy over the Lord's Supper, which set the Lutherans and the Zwinglians at each other's throats, Calvin sought (if we may change the metaphor) to pour oil on troubled waters. His aim in writing his work *Brief Treatise on the Holy Lord's Supper* was primarily to bring about concord amongst the different evangelical communions. A contemporary vividly describes how Luther, having ended a lecture and being surrounded by students, entered the bookshop of the Wittenberger Moritz Goltsch. Upon asking what new books Goltsch had purchased at the Frankfurt Fair he was given Calvin's short work on the Lord's Supper. He immediately sat down and read it and when

he had completed it confessed in deep contemplation that if Zwingli and Oekolampad "... had so declared themselves from the start, we would never have been involved in so lengthy a controversy".<sup>10</sup>

Again, we see the graciousness in his attitude to two of the pastors who remained in Geneva during his exile and allowed themselves to become pawns of the anti-Reformation party. Upon his return he could no doubt have insisted upon their removal, or at least made life unpleasant for them. He did neither, but showed patience and longsuffering.

This attitude became particularly apparent in his pastoral work in the Genevan church. He robbed himself of sleep. His home was always open to anyone seeking advice. He was constantly in touch with all the affairs of the church and state. He visited the sick and lackadaisical, and knew almost every citizen; all in the midst of continuing illness, writing, heavy commitments in preaching and lecturing and attention to the minutiae that crowd every pastor's life.

Not only was his home open to give any advice that Genevans might seek, but he showed constant hospitality in providing lodgings for strangers passing through the city. This, by the way, was one reason why he received a higher remuneration than his colleagues. Incessant labours crowded his hours. What pastor does not sympathise with his lament, in January, 1542 (he returned to Geneva from exile in September, 1541): "Since my arrival here I can only remember having been granted two hours in which no one has come and disturbed me"?<sup>11</sup> Thus was Calvin's theology forged and applied in the daily, yea, hourly furnace of intense pastoral work, counselling and practical decision making! Here was no ivory-tower theologian!

He also took his turn in the normal duties expected of the other pastors in Geneva, namely preaching, lecturing, baptising and visiting. He never dispensed with routine work allotted to him because of any superior eminence of position. Even when he approached death he did not stay away from the regular pastors' meetings where they practised what was called "grabeau", or mutual criticism. He willingly and humbly took his fair share of pastoral criticism from his colleagues.

In the terrible plague which visited Geneva in 1543 Calvin wrote to a friend in Lausanne: "I fear that if something happens to Blanchet it will be up to me to take his place. For we belong to every member of our flock and cannot withdraw ourselves from those who most need our assistance".<sup>12</sup> This quotation clearly underlines the direct relationship between Calvin's theology and his practice. His desire to come to the aid of the plague victims springs directly from his grasp of the fact that they belonged to the Flock of God. Once again we see how his doctrine of the Church governed his pastoral actions within the church. It was only the Council's persistent refusal which frustrated his determination to carry his theology into practice when at last Blanchet did become a plague victim.

### 3. *The Pastor's Suffering*

In John 5:18-21 our Lord warned his disciples that they would suffer as his servants, just as he did and on his behalf: "A servant is not greater than his Lord".

To begin with, there was a time when Calvin had to suffer the traditional pastoral affliction of financial poverty. After Farel had introduced him to the city Council and they had cryptically recorded their interview with "that Frenchman" it took another five months before they decided to give him any remuneration! They agreed to pay him five *Sonnentaler*, and this was after he had already been in their employ for that period. How many modern pastors would wait five months for their first stipend cheque?

His years of exile in Strasbourg did not improve matters. He was so poor at one stage that he had to sell his household utensils and even his beloved library. Any book-loving pastor will know what that involves! Only after eight months in Strasbourg, and after he had been in their employ for almost that whole period, did he receive a salary for his lectures of a *Gulden* a week. A few weeks before his death, in Geneva in 1564, the city Council (they had travelled far from those early years) made him a gift of money and sent it through his brother, but although Calvin had suffered poverty, the wealth of this world had no attraction for him and he refused it, like he had refused other, earlier gifts.

However, this suffering was small in comparison with what he suffered for the sake of the Church and the Christian Gospel. At the height of his conflict with the Libertine party, the city Council records disclose all kinds of subversive attempts by his enemies to discredit him. "Even love letters without name or date were smuggled to him to undermine his reputation."<sup>13</sup>

For many years, until the Reformation became established, he could not walk across a street without being mocked, his name twisted to "Cain"; more than one dog was named after him, and on many occasions his life was in mortal danger. The Libertines, on one occasion, drew swords in St. Peter's and on another Calvin himself counted between 50 and 60 arquebuss shots fired outside the door of his house.

On top of this Calvin had to cope with constant, racking illnesses. O. R. Johnston lists them as follows: "From about the age of thirty we are told that he suffered from headaches, catarrh, asthma and indigestion. On occasions he could not see his lecture notes because his vision was so impaired by migraine. After 1558, when he had an attack of quartan fever, he was never anything but an invalid, stricken with arthritis, haemorrhoids and the pleurisy leading to tuberculosis. He was ceaselessly in pain, and had finally to be carried to the cathedral to preach".<sup>14</sup> To these Stickelberger adds the following: "Subjected to maladies of the trachea, he had with pains in his side to spit blood when

he had used his voice too much in the pulpit. Several attacks of pleurisy prepared the way for consumption whose helpless victim he became at the age of fifty-one . . . He was plagued by gallstones and kidney stones in addition to stomach cramps and wicked intestinal influenzas . . . It was no exaggeration when he parenthetically wrote in a letter, 'If only my condition were not a constant death struggle . . .'.<sup>15</sup>

While his marriage to Idellete de Buren was a happy one, the couple lost three children at birth, no small sorrow in itself! Some years later one of his adversaries reproached him for the fact that he had no children, to which Calvin replied: "My sons are to be found all over the world".<sup>16</sup>

Saddest of all were the moral and doctrinal failures of friends, intimates, colleagues and relatives. Who does not know this experience! Among them was Sebastian Castellio, who was the Rector of Calvin's new college in Geneva. Brilliant as an educationalist and ahead of his time in matters relating to the freedom of the conscience, he was nevertheless ambitious, quarrelsome and impulsive. He threw away a magnificent opportunity when he espoused some liberal views. Calvin drank deeply of the cup of suffering when the wife of his brother Anthony was caught committing adultery in Calvin's own home with his factotum Peter Daguet. The court proceedings further revealed that this trusted man had been stealing from Calvin for years. Anthony finally divorced her. To Calvin this would bring the further blight and scandal of divorce right into his own home. One can well imagine what sport the anti-Reformation party must have had with this sad event.

There was still more to follow: the Reformer's own stepchild, Judith, the daughter of Idellette de Buren, fell into the same sin of immorality. So crushed was Calvin that he had to leave Geneva for a few days' rest in the country, something he never did even at the height of other conflicts.

#### *4. The Pastor as missionary and evangelist*

Calvin's love for the Church and for the souls of men was basic in the establishment of his Academy or College in 1559. Under his training, over 100 men went out as pastors, missionaries, evangelists or colporteurs between 1555 and 1562. Their geographical range of activity indicates Calvin's genuine concern for God's work everywhere for we find them going to France, the Piedmont Valleys, Turin, Antwerp, London and even Brazil. Already in Strasbourg, while in exile from Geneva, Calvin trained a few students for the ministry. In the same year, 1540, in a letter to Beza, he indicated his deep desire for pastors who would continue in that work. The very opening sentence shows again his love and concern for the Church: "If we would really make provision for the profit of the Church, we must call to the office of pastor people who will be able some day to take on the responsibility after us".<sup>17</sup> Note again how church-centred and pastor-centred Calvin was in his thinking.

The possibility of Christian service outside the visible manifestation of the Church in its local form never crossed his mind!

Together with this growing educational institution, Geneva became famous for her printing trade, for many refugees had fled to her for refuge bringing with them their skills. Thus Geneva poured forth Bibles, Catechisms, Hymn Books, Theological works, Commentaries and general Christian literature. These flowed out across Europe in an ever increasing stream. Again we see the Biblical emphasis on the local church and its importance, for the church in Geneva became a fountainhead of missionary and evangelistic endeavour. Calvin's great desire was to spread the Gospel, and that Gospel he succinctly summarises in his Institutes when he says: "Therefore, the moment we turn aside from him (Christ) in the minutest degree, salvation, which resides entirely in him, gradually disappears; so that all who do not rest in him voluntarily deprive themselves of all grace".<sup>18</sup>

It is also satisfying to discover that Calvin had no small part in the establishment of French Reformed Churches which in 1555 numbered exactly one, namely the church in Paris, and in 1561 (a mere six years later) numbered 2,150 churches!<sup>19</sup> Many of the pastors of these churches were trained in Geneva and many who were converted and joined these churches were thus only the end result of Calvin's own pastoral ministry and desire to spread the Gospel as widely as possible.

Indeed, it is even more thrilling to discover that Cadier himself bears testimony to the power of Calvin's written ministry by referring to a man he knew who came to a saving faith in Christ through reading the Institutes!<sup>20</sup> Thus does the great evangelistic thrust begun in Geneva's church, printing and publishing houses still continue to this day.

### *Conclusions*

We have thought of Calvin in relation to his theology, his character, his suffering and his missionary concern.

Beginning with the first of these we recall that lying at the foundation of all the God wrought through him was an outstanding grasp of theology, a theology which has given strength and backbone to countless churches since that time. The effect and benefit of Calvin's books and commentaries, which continue to be in demand by all those who esteem thorough exposition of the Scriptures is beyond calculation. Ours is an age of appalling spiritual weakness in which theology is treated with impatience. Spiritual experience is given first place whereas true experience should follow the enlightenment which truth brings. Little wonder, then, that so much activity in the churches is characterised by superficiality. Our generation is infantile because theological perception is dim. John Calvin reminds us that theology, doctrine and faith are primary and not secondary needs.



Not disconnected to theology is character. Character is strengthened by faith. Although averse by nature to conflict and controversy Calvin never gave up. He did not forsake his post despite constant pain and illness.

Is this not a rebuke to ministers who, with only a fraction of tribulation, are ready to quit, or look for an easier position?

With such pressure of work the Genevan reformer could well have confined his efforts to Switzerland but his vision for reformation extended to all people and to future generations. His missionary zeal was not circumscribed. True, he did not think, as we do today, in terms of reaching every language group but then the world was not open in the sense that it is today. The lesson, surely, is that he did his utmost where the door of opportunity opened to him. We do well to follow his example.

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Stickelberger, *Calvin*, James Clarke, London, 1959, p. 53.
- <sup>2</sup> Jean Cadier, *The Man God Mastered*, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, London, 1960, p. 22.
- <sup>3</sup> A. H. Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, Vol. II, The American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1957, pp. 216-217.
- <sup>4</sup> H. Daniel-Rops, *History of the Church of Christ*, Vol. IV, The Protestant Reformation, J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1963, pp. 415-417.
- <sup>5</sup> I am using the word "Pastor" to include the office of Preaching and Ruling Elder, and therefore recognise that a man may be an Elder and so apt to teach, but not necessarily given to public preaching.
- <sup>6</sup> It is, surely, significant that with monotonous regularity the leading modern theologians move out of pastoral circles into what really are no more than academic ivory-castles. By contrast the Puritans, and probably the majority of Scottish, Welsh, English and American Evangelical leaders in the 17th, 18th and even the 19th Centuries, were both pastors and theologians. Jonathan Edwards is perhaps the most notable example.
- <sup>7</sup> This is not to deny that amongst elders some do not have a direct public preaching ministry, although they must all be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2).
- <sup>8</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, James Clarke, London, 1957, Book IV, I, 10, p. 290.
- <sup>9</sup> Calvin, *Commentaire sur le Livre de Psaumes*, 1859, p. IX, quoted Stickelberger, op. cit., p. 47.
- <sup>10</sup> Paul Henry, *Das Leben Johannes Calvins*, Hamburg, 1838, Vol. II, pp. 502 f., quoted Stickelberger, op. cit., p. 68.
- <sup>11</sup> Cadier, op. cit., p. 119.
- <sup>12</sup> Rudolf Schwarz, *Johannes Calvins Lebenswerk in seinen Briefen*, Tuebingen, 1909, Vol. I, p. 160, quoted by Stickelberger, op. cit., p. 97.
- <sup>13</sup> Stickelberger, op. cit., p. 134.
- <sup>14</sup> O. R. Johnston, *Calvin the Man*, paper read at the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, December, 1964, quoted from Conference papers entitled "Able Ministers of The New Testament", p. 27.
- <sup>15</sup> Stickelberger, op. cit., p. 86. <sup>16</sup> Cadier, op. cit., p. 101. <sup>17</sup> Cadier, op. cit., p. 136.
- <sup>18</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, James Clarke, London, 1957.
- <sup>19</sup> Cadier, op. cit., p. 167 states that these figures were given to Catherine de Medici, by Admiral Coligny. Cadier's phrasing suggests that we must treat these figures with caution, but even halving them is indicative of enormous growth.
- <sup>20</sup> Cadier, op. cit., p. 178.

*Since personal details are referred to, this article is published anonymously.*

# Inflation and the Minister's Pay

AS A MINISTER WHO IS WELL CARED FOR BY THE CHURCH IN WHICH I minister, I am glad to have the opportunity to write a short plea on behalf of others who are not in this position, and who are suffering because of inflation. Rather than expounding the passages of Scripture relating to the support of the ministry, such as Numbers 18:26-28, I Corinthians 9 and Galatians 6:6, I will begin with some facts and figures.

My present, annual salary is £2,800, which is regularly adjusted according to inflation. It takes account of the size of my family and their approximate appetite! Having been a professional man before entering full-time ministry, I have a house which, if we are spared will, we hope, be our own in about 18 years time when the mortgage repayments are completed! I believe it to be most undesirable that many ministers have no prospect of a place of their own. They, like all others, have to follow the injunction to provide for their own, otherwise they are worse than infidels. Few women work so hard as ministers' wives. The prospect of penury in old age and retirement to a park bench hardly encourages them.

No amount of talk about "the Lord will provide" can replace the responsibility of the church in this realm. I suggest that not only should the salary be sufficient to allow the minister to buy his own house, but a pension scheme should be provided on a sliding scale to keep up with inflation. My own church can request my retirement from the age of 55 onwards and have made arrangements for this. At present the pension scheme costs £500 *per annum*.

What about allowances? My car is bought by the church and (fuel apart) is paid for in full by the church. It is fairly large, one reason being that we seek to transport friends to worship with us. I also receive a small book allowance. Dutch ministers get £200 *per annum* for books. I met a minister recently in England who could not even afford a proper concordance. This is like asking a gardener to mow the lawn, not with a mower but with a pair of scissors!

One way of resolving the thorny problem of salary is to base it on that earned by a member of the congregation of about equal age, qualifications and size of family. Indeed, the minister often needs more. One of the qualifications for eldership is that a man is a lover of hospitality. The meal-table must be used for fellowship. Is this one of the reasons why I Timothy 5:17 literally translated refers to the double salary of the elders who rule well? It is a point to consider, whether all elders in the church should have some financial recompense for their large outlay. While I am not suggesting the immediate introduction of the double salary, I am pleading for the abandonment of the half salary so often paid to ministers by church members or deacons.

*Gordon Murray, principal of the Kensit Memorial Bible College, a former editor of "The English Churchman", who for a short time was a member of the Church of England Evangelical Council, but who now exercises his ministry outside the Church of England, kindly answers questions put by the editor in the following interview.*

## Another Look at the Establishment

IN ORDER TO GET TO THE FIRST QUESTION IT IS NECESSARY TO DEFINE WHAT WE understand by evangelical.

*The word "evangelical" is derived from the Greek word evaggelion, which occurs about seventy-six times in the New Testament. Evaggelion means good news, good news about salvation. An evangelical is one who believes in salvation from guilt, condemnation and eternal perdition through faith in Jesus Christ and his atonement. Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer and upon this basis alone a sinner is justified. Authority for the proclamation of salvation is derived from Scripture. The evangelical believes in the inspired Word of God which declares the only true God; his character, his law and his Gospel. Into the world he has sent his Son, born of a virgin, crucified, risen, ascended. The life of Christ reminds us of the omnipotence of God and supernaturalism. The evangelical believes in the supernatural: the creation, the flood, angels, devils, the miracles and the new birth. Indeed, an evangelical is such because he has been born from above and can give testimony to the life of God in his soul. This life is born in him and is sustained in him by the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures. These are the minimum requirements of evangelicalism.*

*For centuries, evangelicals of all denominations have recognised the unity already possessed by them through their faith in Scripture, their experience of the new birth and their recognition of the all-important matter of salvation. This evangelicalism rightly, logically and happily overrides all other factors such as culture, politics, background, class, race, language or denomination. Before any other consideration whatever we are disciples, believers, saved people—Christians.*

*Essential to this common faith is the belief that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12) and that this salvation is a free gift. Justification is by faith alone and by grace alone. As soon as compromise is introduced at this point evangelicalism is overthrown. If it is accepted that evangelicalism offers but one of several ways of salvation then justification is deprived of its force. If it is accepted that salvation is by good works or through building up a credit account by receiving sacraments, then evangelicalism loses its life. For evangelicalism to be what it is, it is essential to maintain, as the apostles maintained, that there is none other name (than Christ) under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

*1. If an evangelical forsakes this position and suggests that what he believes is but one of two or more alternative ways to eternal life, he then ceases to be an evangelical. He may write beautiful expositions, he may be Reformed in his exposition of passages of Scripture, but if in practice he denies all that he writes and in his actions recognises those as Christians whom Paul and the apostles expressly and*

*explicitly reject as unbelievers (see Galatians 1) then all is lost. His doctrine, exposition and evangelicalism are rendered null and void.*

*During the last decade, relationships between evangelical Anglicans and Non-conformist evangelicals have deteriorated drastically. The cause is that many evangelical Anglicans have decided that evangelical union with Anglo-Catholics is desirable. This was not always the case.*

*When did the change begin? What notable books have advocated, verified and defended the change? To what extent has the situation deteriorated? Is this the end of evangelicalism as we have known it in the Church of England?*

*Are we justified when we say that a change for the worse was seen at the Keele Conference for Anglicans in 1967? Can you tell us about that Conference and its outcome?*

There was certainly a change for the worse in relationships between Anglicans who supported the Keele Statement, especially the section advocating denominational and ecumenical involvement, and Non-conformists who held to an anti-ecumenical position and who were hoping for closer relations between Evangelicals across the denominational frontiers. It ought to be recognised, however, that this division had already been displayed in the previous year when John Stott and Dr. Lloyd-Jones clashed publicly at the National Assembly of Evangelicals organised by the Evangelical Alliance, so that Keele represented the specific formulation of a development stretching back over several years.

I would like to make these points about Keele, though. First, it had no official status or authority. It spoke only for those who actually supported the Conference Statement. Therefore, it did not commit all Evangelicals in the Church of England. Second, that Statement did cover a wide range of topics, and in fairness, therefore, any particular section needs to be set against the background of the whole. Third, even when this is recognised, it is still correct to say that the Conference fairly represented the pace-setters in Anglican Evangelicalism.

The attitude of the Keele leaders is well represented by these words of John Stott from *Evangelicals Today*. "Keele marked our coming of age, for there we publicly repented of our immature isolationism and resolved to take a more responsible part in the life of both the visible Church and the secular world."

Since then this policy of involvement has been actively implemented. It is probably true that Evangelicals are listened to more than before in the central councils of the Church. At the same time I believe that the price paid in following this policy has been too high.

2. *Two books, All in Each Place (1965) and Growing into Union (1970) offended Non-conformist Evangelicals. We have known all along that the Church of England consists of all kinds of people who are not Evangelical but we have always depended upon the Evangelicals to maintain a strong and clear stand within the system. We are distressed, to say the least, to see advocated the idea of Evangelicals uniting with Anglo-Catholics and no amount of double-talk will deceive us into thinking this to be honourable or faithful. What are your comments?*

Before dealing with the present, a word or two about the past might indicate that things have not always been as clear-cut as sometimes we imagine. For example, Bishop Ryle was prepared to speak to Church Congresses despite the objections of other Evangelicals, and some of his essays in *Principles for Churchmen*, particularly the one on the Comprehensiveness of the Church, in which he defends the existing Anglican system, make enlightening reading. Also at the time of the publication of *Essays and Reviews*, a liberal work which shook the Church, the Evangelical Lord Shaftesbury joined with the leader of the Oxford Movement,

Dr. Pusey, and the *Evangelical Record* newspaper, in a joint declaration affirming the authority and inspiration of Scripture and the everlasting punishment of the wicked. Around 11,000 clergy put their signatures to that affirmation.

However, what we are seeing today is really a resurgence of denominational consciousness in which the bonds between fellow Anglicans appear stronger and more important than those between fellow Evangelicals. Some of your readers may not be aware that *All In Each Place* was a collection of essays intended to point the way forward to a united Church in this country. Though produced by Evangelicals it envisaged a finished product of unity in Anglican terms with the continuance of the historic episcopate.

*Growing into Union* took this a stage further in that it was a collaboration between two Evangelicals and two Anglo-Catholics, laying a doctrinal foundation for progress in reunion discussions. Some of the doctrinal positions taken up in this book give justifiable ground for grave concern. In *Growing into Union*, episcopacy has become part of the skeleton or essential framework of the Church.

There are Anglican Evangelicals, such as David Samuel, who have been strongly critical of this book. Not all Anglican Evangelicals are walking this way. At the same time, not all Anglo-Catholics fit the standard image we may have of them. It really is a case of applying scriptural tests rather than tying on labels. Inevitably, renewed emphasis upon Anglican churchmanship is bound to re-open old wounds, especially where it is blandly assumed that the Anglican pattern is right. The more serious question, though, relates to the Gospel itself, and where some Anglican Evangelicals are compromising at this point we do have a situation which should cause us even greater concern. This is the area which needs most careful attention, because Scripture is clear that there is only one Gospel, and there is no room for compromise here at all.

3. *A more recent book*, Evangelicals Today (1972), admits that a deterioration has taken place in relationships between Anglican and Non-conformist Evangelicals. Am I right in my conclusion that this book confirms and encourages the trend of Evangelicals in the Church of England to make one and unite with non-evangelicals?

In general I think that you are right. Admittedly, the book contains a wide-ranging series of essays, very similar to the breadth of the Keele Statement, and there is no claim to a monolithic approach. Each contributor is responsible only for his own views, so readers should beware of attributing the sins or virtues of one writer to all the others.

Nevertheless, there runs through most of the essays a criticism of the Evangelicalism of the past which suggests a changed, and no doubt what the writers would regard as a more enlightened, outlook. John King's introductory essay epitomises this approach.

I think this is a book which ought to be read widely for the light it throws on Anglican Evangelical approaches to important subjects. For example, careful attention should be paid to Michael Green's essay on New Testament study, particularly the position he holds regarding the authority of Scripture. This should be compared with the more conservative view of Alec Motyer on the Old Testament. Dr. Packer's essay on Theology makes interesting reading in the light of his association with *Growing into Union*. These, and the other essays too, help us to realise the great variety of views which come under the umbrella of Anglican Evangelicalism, though another ingredient, the increasing effect of the charismatic movement is, strangely, almost ignored, despite its impact on ecumenical relationships.

Judging by reviews in the Church press, the book should bring Anglican Evangelicals closer to other Anglicans, while at the same time my judgment is that it will have made the breach with Non-conformist Evangelicals even wider.

*4. Many Non-conformist Evangelicals now see those who claim to be Evangelical in the Church of England as compromised and having rationalised their compromise so that there is very little hope of co-operation or even happy relationship. What do you think can be done about this?*

I think we must preserve the distinction between those who still walk in the old paths and those who are following the Keele policy. Among the latter we must recognise that while some no longer hold to the Gospel as Evangelicals should, others genuinely feel that the policy of involvement will allow them to use that Gospel without compromising its content (we see the confusion in this) to change the face of the Church of England.

The first point I would make about what can be done is to urge that we treat men as individuals rather than writing them all off because of the public pronouncements of some. Some of our Anglican Evangelical brethren in difficult positions may possibly be helped to maintain the Gospel more clearly through fellowship with them and prayer, and the genuineness of our concern for them and for their maintenance of the truth could strengthen their ties with us, whereas a hostile and suspicious spirit on our part may create such division that we are then unable to be of benefit to them.

Secondly, I think we must accept that there are Anglican Evangelicals who sincerely hold that the New Testament is no guide to church principles, and we must not allow that question to become confused with the major issue of whether we have a mutual stand on justification by faith.

Thirdly, I hope that there will not be a complete abandonment of efforts to bring Anglican and Non-conformist Evangelicals together from time to time for representative discussions on the points at issue between them and to see how the situation looks from each side. Too often in the past Christians have divided because of misunderstandings and prejudices, without trying seriously to implement New Testament teaching about relationships between fellow believers.

Fourthly, when the Anglican Evangelical looks out of his own denominational window at the Non-conformist scene he is so often put off by what he sees, or thinks he sees, that he hastily draws the curtains and may not look out again for quite a while. This factor should be taken into account.

*5. Since the great ejection of 1662, hopes have been entertained of reformation in the Anglican Church, hopes which have never been realised. We must be realistic. The situation has deteriorated drastically during the last decade. Is there any tangible evidence of hope or is this the end of evangelicalism as we have known it in the Church of England?*

The only real hope of reformation lies in the possibility of a change of attitude towards the Scriptures in two ways. First, there would need to be the application by Anglicans of Scripture to church principles. There has always been a basic divergence of view between Anglicans and those who hold the position of the Puritans that Scripture is binding for church practice. Second, there would need to be a widespread turning among non-Evangelical Anglicans to the Evangelical doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. So far as I can judge, there is little evidence that either of these changes is taking place. Rather, there appears to be a weakening in some Anglican Evangelical circles in the concept of the authority of Scripture.

There has been also a very clear move away, legally, in the Church of England from the doctrinal position of the Reformation. In the revision of the Prayer Book some Evangelicals have accepted what I believe to be totally unacceptable

compromises on matters such as prayer for the dead and the consecration prayer in the Communion service.

There have been also the doctrinal discussions between the Church of England and Rome leading to a measure of agreement which a few years ago would have been unthinkable, and which may be paving the way for actual reunion.

At one time this would have been the point at which Evangelicals would have seceded, but now it is not so clear. Some would no doubt be unable to continue in such a situation, but there has been such a change in Evangelical attitudes towards Rome, especially among younger men and those affected by the charismatic movement, that I imagine many would feel able to stay, especially if no limitations were placed upon their preaching.

The increasing number of men at the Evangelical Theological Colleges is often quoted as a sign of hope for the future, but this depends very much on the nature of their Evangelicalism. In this respect present trends are far from encouraging.

The continuance of true Evangelicalism in the Church of England will, I think, depend upon how far denominational involvement leads to an unconscious drift away from the authority of Scripture in the presentation of the Gospel and in attitude towards error. In the past individuals who began as Evangelicals often have adopted a more liberal position later in life. Obviously, this may happen again, and almost certainly is happening to some, but it does not rule out the continuance of a faithful remnant. I would feel much happier, however, to see a clearer application of Galatians 1:6-9 in the present situation.

*6. The Evangelical Alliance being the largest organisation representing Evangelical co-operation in the U.K. has as one of its slogans: "a sure foundation". Is it not true that by far the major support for The Evangelical Alliance comes from Anglicans, not a few non-conformists preferring to group under the mantle of the British Evangelical Council? If Anglicans do form the mainstay of The Evangelical Alliance, and if Anglicans are now crippled with compromise, how sure can the foundation referred to be?*

This is a very difficult question to answer. While Anglicans probably do give major support to the E.A. (Evangelical Alliance), we should not underestimate the contribution of a wide variety of Non-conformists. Nor should we forget the distinctions we have made already between different types of Anglican Evangelicals, distinctions which are likely to be found among those associated with the work of the Alliance. All I can say is that, while the E.A. maintains its Evangelical basis of belief, not all those associated with it necessarily adhere to it equally closely.

There is also the point that the E.A. has maintained a neutral position over ecumenism, hoping vainly to remain a forum for the opposing groups of those who are ecumenically committed and those who are not.

This has led those who want a more clear-cut stand, or a surer foundation, to associate with the B.E.C., has weakened the E.A.'s position as an agency for wide-spread Evangelical co-operation, and renders it no longer genuinely representative of all Evangelical views. It is difficult to see how, in the present atmosphere, the E.A. can retrieve the situation.

At the same time, those churches who support the B.E.C. need to realise that it can only be as effective as those churches are prepared to make it. There needs to be greater recognition of the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ is more than our local church and that there is a need to develop B.E.C. as an effective agency for fellowship and co-operation in united action between the member churches.

*Classic Covenant theology as expounded, for example, by the Westminster divines in their Confession of Faith, teaches that children of believers are, by virtue of birth, within the covenant of grace. On this ground they should be baptised. Baptists oppose this, teaching that we cannot presume that our children are within the covenant of grace. The question was put to David Kingdon, does this mean that Baptists are unduly pessimistic about the salvation of their children?*

## A Theology of Pessimism?

THE QUESTION NEEDS TO BE MORE PRECISELY STATED, SINCE THERE ARE significant differences among Baptists, as there are among Paedobaptists, on the issue, for example, of infant salvation. Some Paedobaptists, (e.g. Boettner) hold that all children dying in infancy are saved, while others are not sure. Baptists like Spurgeon agree with Boettner, whereas other Baptists think that the Bible is silent in the matter. It is, therefore, misleading to imagine that there is a uniform, Baptist theology of children.

As a Reformed Baptist I can have strong hope that, if I faithfully employ the means which God has ordained (prayer, example, instruction and discipline), then he will be graciously pleased to draw my children by his Spirit to a knowledge of himself. I also know that the Christian family is a God-ordained organism in which God has placed many of his elect. However, it by no means follows that if I do not view my children as Christian children (as many Paedobaptists do) I have no real hope of their conversion. On the contrary, the fact that God has placed them within a sphere of Christian influence, though by no means an infallible guarantee of their salvation, is an indication that he will be gracious to them. To me, this seems to be more biblically grounded and more in accord with the facts than the assertion that children of Christian parents are by reason of birth in the covenant of grace.

I believe that the example of Christian parents is a vital factor in determining the attitude of children to the gospel. In my experience as a minister of the gospel, the lack of the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of Christian parents is a potent factor in turning many children away from the truth. On the other hand, parents of exemplary character are not without rebellious offspring. An aspect of what might be thought of as the pessimism of my own baptistic theology of children is my statement



in *Children of Abraham* that I am “reverently and hopefully agnostic” about the question of the salvation of children who die in infancy. As I have already mentioned, some Baptists would be more confident than I. C. H. Spurgeon has this to say in preaching on II Samuel 12:23, where David speaks of going to his child who has died. “Now where did David expect to go? Why, to heaven surely. Then his child must have been there, for he said, ‘I shall go to him’ ” (New Park Street Pulpit, VII 1861, p. 509). Unfortunately I cannot share Spurgeon’s assurance that this is the obvious meaning of the text. Is it so clear that David is expressing the hope that his child is in heaven, or is he saying no more than that one day he will join the child in death? If he was certain that his child was in heaven and that he would join him, one would have expected a more positive affirmation. May not David be recognising the immutability of death in the words “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me”?

I appreciate that there are expressions of the resurrection hope in the Psalms, but one would need to be able to show that David held such a hope at the time of his son’s death. This one cannot do, and so I think it is unwise to build a case for infant salvation upon this text.

If one argues for the salvation of all children dying in infancy one must do so, it seems to me, on general theological grounds—the goodness of the nature of God, the known character of Jesus Christ, the ways of grace, and the multitudinous number of the saved which must, according to Spurgeon, include a majority of infant souls. My difficulty with this approach is that it is inferential, and that it is not supported by any plain and unequivocal declaration of Scripture. I prefer, therefore, to say that while I hope that all infants dying in infancy may be saved, I do not *know* that they are because God has not seen fit to say so in his Word. Nor do I accept that this is to take a pessimistic position. Rather would I argue that it is the only prudent one to take. Where God has not seen fit to reveal, we must keep silence.

The lack of recent Baptist writing on the subject of children is to be deplored. There are signs that this lack may be made good. The reason is not because of the Baptist theology of children but rather the theological weakness from which the past few generations of Baptists have suffered. They have been so concerned to evangelise that they have neglected theological study, with disastrous results. Yet it is a matter of history that the early Baptists were intensely concerned for the spiritual nurture of children. Benjamin Keach, for example, wrote a primer for children, which he re-wrote after becoming a Calvinist. It ran to many editions. Spurgeon’s Catechism is further evidence. Coming to the present day, *A Catechism for Boys and Girls* is baptistic and is most useful for those in the Spurgeonic tradition.

*In a recent issue (No. 17) a number of newly planted Reformed Baptist Churches were described—in countries such as the U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand. Here are some more, this time nearer home.*

## Churches being planted

### *Dewsbury, Yorkshire*

The work was begun late in 1972 by two single men and a married couple, all in their 20's, who had worked in Methodist Churches since they were converted. They had reluctantly come to believe that it was useless to remain in decayed Methodism in which evangelical truth was rarely heard from the pulpits. The desire is to see a free grace witness established in this needy West Riding town with its wool industry. In October, 1973, the church called Graham Heaps, a member of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, to serve it in the ministry of the Word of God. The attendance at services has grown slowly and house to house visitation is carried on. Graham Heaps writes that there is "good ground for optimism in the Lord's blessing so far".

### *Forfar, Scotland*

One brother whom we met at Leeds in January has rebuked us all. Gary Kopfstein was at that time about to begin services in the country town of Forfar and was full of enthusiasm about those who had promised to attend. Those who knew the reluctance with which Scots change their way, quietly wondered. Since then, attendances at the Forfar services have increased ten-fold! Admittedly this was starting from a base of two adults! Our brother is working in close conjunction with the church in Perth. He has had excellent opportunities to make known his doctrinal position in the local paper and good contacts have been made.

### *Send, Near Woking, Surrey*

Eric Olsen has been engaged in evangelistic work in several European countries. Increasingly, as he has embraced the doctrines of grace, he has seen the need for evangelistic endeavour based in the local church. His own house is in the village of Send, and it is here that he is now leading the establishment of a new church. A building has been purchased which was formerly a Congregational church. The nucleus of members come from Horsley Evangelical Church, two of them, Martin and Julia Brunning, having been converted and baptised at Cuckfield before moving to that area. We rejoice with our friends, and with Paul Basset, from East Horsley, in this new move forward.

### *Birmingham*

Recently, the editor was able to speak at the new Reformed Baptist Church in Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham. Outsiders, including members of a Hebrew family, have been drawn in. Since then, a school-teacher who was in the Anglican ministry until he seceded three years ago, has obtained a post in the area and with his wife will be settling there.

### *Gotenberg, Sweden*

Don Ritter, until recently a tutor in a Bible College in Sweden, has ventured out to plant a church in a neglected area of Gotenberg. At the same time, the first issue of a quarterly magazine, *Det Star Skrivet*, has been produced. The approach and emphasis is very similar to *Reformation Today*.

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