

REFORMATION TODAY 80



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Editorial

Indexes for 1970-1979—Numbers 1-50

THIS MAGAZINE BEGAN IN JANUARY 1970. WE NOW CELEBRATE A DECADE OF publication. It is fitting that we should do so with the circulation of the *Reformation Today* Indexes for numbers 1-50. As explained in RT 52 we planned to print a limited number at 50 pence each. However, this would not be an economic procedure. It is better to print a larger number and dispatch a copy to every subscriber. We trust you will find it as useful as we have. If you require back numbers, copies of the following numbers are available: 11, 12, 15, 17, 19 to 21, 25, 29 to 42 and 44 to 50. A back issue of *Reformation Today* costs 35 pence post free.

If you have sent money for the index we will add that to your subscription.

As for the extra cost involved in sending out the index we trust that our long standing friends will help us through yet again, nevertheless we are constrained to cut back this issue to 24 pages.

Thankfulness expressed

As we complete ten years of publishing we express our gratitude to those who have supported the work constantly. Recently I visited the Chelmsley Wood Reformed Baptist Church, Birmingham, faithful supporters of the magazine over a number of years. Against great odds the work there, under the leadership of Alec Taylor, has been established.

On the other side of the world we greet the newly planted Reformed Baptist Church at Wamberal (Central Coast—between Sydney and Newcastle). Thank you for your support.

Much appreciated are the bulk orders from America. Support of this kind, and individual gifts have sustained the magazine and also enabled us to fulfil requests for free copies from countries in Africa and the Far East. Just received is a letter from Kenya asking for copies for pastors who serve a hundred young and mostly small congregations. The article by Bill Clark, 'Silent Messengers of the Gospel', will indicate how strongly we feel about the necessity of reaching all nations, while 'Will Britain be annihilated?' illustrates the pressures that are increasing upon us all with regard to efficiency and survival. Resilient spiritual and physical resources will be needed to survive, let alone prosper, in the next decade.

The Olympic Games in Moscow, 1980

Great has been the outcry against apartheid in South Africa. In that country, as in many others, including Britain, those who are dedicated to the overthrow

Front Cover. The circles and numbers on the map around Moscow indicate the location of labour camps where our fellow Christians are incarcerated. Up-to-date details of believers who suffer for the faith in Russia can be obtained from Keston College, Heathfield Road, Keston, Kent, 8R2 6BA. Keston College, a registered charity, is a research work devoted to the establishment of factual data concerning conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe, especially as they affect Christians of all denominations. The two girls shown on the inset are the Zaitseva sisters, Lyudmila (left) and Larisa (right). In 1977 Lyudmila, aged 34, was sentenced to four years ordinary regime camp and Larisa, aged 30, to three and a half years. These are the penalties paid for activities such as literature work which are regarded as perfectly normal in free societies.

of the State by violent means are locked up. Of course the position is more complex than that but in the meantime there are thousands in Russia who are dedicated to peace but who are nevertheless confined to prison or to strict regime labour camps. These people are law abiding citizens. Russia does not possess better citizens. They are persecuted for their Christian faith. The Baptist denomination in Russia consists of those who are registered and thus under state supervision and those who refuse registration on the Biblical basis that Church and State are separate. A typical case is that of Johann Steffen, born 1927. Steffen, the pastor of an unregistered church, was arrested for the fourth time in July 1976 and in November of that year was sentenced to five years strict regime camp.

The deception which is being practised in the media today is to display pictures of Russian Baptists gathering for worship. These are pictures of Registered Baptist communities. There are countless numbers of unregistered Christian assemblies, Baptist, Pentecostal and others—communities which are subject to oppression and imprisonment.

Unity, the Covenant and Baptism

Because of abridgment there is a lack of proportion and some disjointedness in the article with the above title for which we apologise. The exposition concludes with a claim that Reformed Baptists do full justice to the covenant of grace. Reference is made to Hebrews 8. A separate chapter has been written on that theme from which a quotation was made in RT 52, p. 31 (the differences between the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant). A brief exposition of that theme appears in the book *Local Church Practice* (Carey Publications £2.40) p. 60ff. It is necessary to mention these factors lest readers feel that a boast is made without 'delivering of the goods'!

'Urban Harvest' by Roy Joslin

Roy Joslin was wonderfully enabled in January 1979 to give one of the most stirring addresses ever experienced at a Carey Conference. As a busy pastor in the heart of London it has not been easy for him to write up his material on the subject of the great unevangelized inner-city areas. He reports however that the work is nearing completion. Readers have expressed their appreciation of extracts we have inserted from his book called *Urban Harvest*. Pastor Joslin writes out of passionate concern for the multitudes. The practical nature of the material will be seen from some of the headings under which he writes. Here is a sample.

Exploring and explaining the unbridgeable gulf

1. Progressive industrialisation.
2. Urban revolution.
3. Social migration.
4. Ecclesiastical formalism.
5. Ministerial professionalism.
6. Introverted evangelism.
7. Cultural estrangement.
8. Religious hedonism.

Concrete jungles and crumbling communities

1. Streets and roots.
2. Changing values.
3. The grey desert.
4. Dimensions of deprivation.
5. Power and the professionals.
6. Glimpse of a ghetto.
7. Spiritual darkness.

Materials held over

The life of Paul Schneider, a German pastor who forfeited his life because he would not submit to the tyranny of the Nazis has been written by Victor Budgen.

'A visit to the publishers' with a discussion of their activities and important new books, is awaiting publication, as well as a number of book reviews and other articles of interest. ■

The following material is taken from the introductory section of what is now a book hopefully to be published during 1980 with the title Unity, the Covenant and Baptism. It forms the first chapter of my reply to Prof. Douma of the Theological Seminary (Gereformeerd Vrijgemaakt) in Kampen. Prof. Douma has written on the subject of Reformed Baptists and their practice. Basic to our discussion is our Christian unity. Here I endeavour to explore those issues which unite us. I conclude by referring to that point upon which everything depends. The hinge upon which the door turns is Hebrews 8. Up to that point we have a far more meaningful unity with our Dutch friends than we do with most general Baptists.

Unity, the Covenant and Baptism

THE FACTORS WHICH UNITE REFORMED BAPTISTS AND REFORMED NON-Baptists are as follows:

1. *A shared thankfulness for the Reformation*

‘The Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century was the greatest event, or series of events, that has occurred since the close of the Canon of Scripture; and the men who are really entitled to be called the “Leaders of the Reformation” have a claim to more respect and gratitude than any other body of uninspired men that have ever influenced or adorned the church.’ So wrote William Cunningham.² When we think of the religious ignorance, gross superstition and spiritual darkness that prevailed in Europe before the Reformation we must truly marvel at the great change that was brought about in recovering the Gospel light which for so long had been extinguished. The Reformation of the sixteenth century reclaimed the Bible for the common people and restored preaching to the foremost place designed for it by God. Christian truth was clarified in a number of excellent confessions of faith. Biblical doctrines which had been all but buried since the time of Augustine were re-established. The bondage of the human will, the total corruption of human nature through original sin, the sovereign election of God the Father according to his own will and not through works or faith foreseen, justification by faith alone, the sanctification of God’s elect by the Holy Spirit—these are just some of the main truths made clear through the Reformation.

2. *A common belief in the infallible Word of God as the only authority for faith and practice*

To clarify this point we need to go back to the doctrinal decrees and ecclesiastical canons of the Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople

(381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451). The first two of these councils dealt in particular with the doctrine of the Trinity, the third with the doctrine of the Person of Christ.³ The life of the Church does not depend upon Councils, but with interest we observe that these early Councils based their findings on Scripture alone and were used to clarify teachings which had been obscure.

This matter is relevant today because in the Second Vatican Council the authority of Roman Catholic Church tradition was powerfully reasserted.⁴ For Rome tradition has an equal authority with Scripture. In this way the unique authority of Scripture is denied and the Word of God made powerless and void.

3. *The sovereignty of God and predestination*

One of the foremost characteristics of the Reformed Faith is belief in the Sovereignty of God. The Almighty One is sovereign in creation.

*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made,
Their starry host by the breath of his mouth (Ps. 33:6).⁵*

There seemed to be no struggle on God's part to create the universe nor did it take him long to do it. Immediately he commanded it, it was done. So will it be in the resurrection. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye we shall be changed.

This view of God's sovereign, omnipotent power is the reason why it is rare to find those of Reformed persuasion compromising on the subject of creation.

We believe too that God is sovereign in the history of this world. From all eternity he decreed all that should come to pass in time. All the governments and all the rulers of this world are under the sovereign rule of God. All the fallen angels, Lucifer and his hosts of demons, are under God's control and cannot do anything without his permission (Job 1:12). The archangels and angels of heaven are likewise under his sovereign administration.

*He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth,
No-one can hold back his hand or say to him: What have you done?*

(Dan. 4:35)

These views of God's sovereign omnipotence exalt God and help us to see him as he really is, high, majestic, lifted up. A right perception of the majestic Godhood of God humbles us to proper dimensions. We are brought down to see ourselves as we truly are, unworthy creatures of the dust. Only when we are so humbled are we able to render acceptable worship. A right view of the supremacy of God fills us with respect, awe and thankfulness. We draw unspeakable comfort in knowing that we belong to one who has sovereign control over all things.

A strong faith and sweet sense of security is afforded to those who know God as their sovereign Father. The faith strengthens the believer in times of sorrow and loss because our sovereign God has promised and is able to cause his kingdom to triumph over all evil.

Surely we have far more unity with a humble God-fearing non-Baptist who with us has a profound respect for these attributes of God than with a proud Baptist who argues against the sovereignty of God? This leads us to the heart of this matter.

4. *The sovereign grace of God in salvation*

What is the very essence of the Reformed awakening that has been taking place over the last twenty years? Answer: A personal, inward, spiritual realisation by Christians of the fact that they are redeemed by the sovereign grace of God alone apart from any other factor. In my book *The Believer's Experience* I refer to the free-grace experience as the deepest spiritual experience in the Christian's life. What is the free-grace experience? It is an experimental realisation that we are saved through God's election and not through anything we have done. It is not that God foresaw that we would exercise faith and on that basis he chose us, rather he saw that we were hopelessly lost and that we would always hate and reject him. When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6). Note the words 'powerless and ungodly'. The action that rescues us from a life of ungodliness and from spiritual deadness is an action of sovereign grace.

5. *A joint desire for true Christian worship*

For us the Bible is authoritative for everything, salvation, home and family life, church government and worship. We are not left to our own inventions when it comes to public worship. In the Roman Church the people watch a mysterious and symbolical performance called the Mass, something which is not prescribed by Scripture and which by its very nature is opposed to the finished work of Christ.

Our primary concern when we think about public worship is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. What is it that will please him? That should be our obsession. Yet all too often we concentrate only on impressing men.

We do not gather to celebrate superstitious rituals. Nor do we gather to be entertained by performers, which is the case in some churches. We gather to hear the public reading of Scripture, to sing psalms and hymns in praise to God, to be led in prayer and to hear the preaching of the Word by those called, equipped, recognised by the church, and set apart for the awesome task of public ministry. In some churches today there is a trend towards the idea that no special qualifications are required to lead public worship. There is also opposition to the idea of the

professional minister. The arguments sound plausible enough but in practice the result is one in which the standard of worship soon degenerates. Services become disjointed and poor in content. Worship is not for the uplifting of personalities or to focus attention on each other but for the exaltation of God.

There is truly a place for sharing and for Christian fellowship a practice which is often a strength and advantage in Baptist churches. Let us enjoy such Christian communion yet at the same time be sure that this is never gained at the expense of God-centred worship.

Worship should be joyful and full of thanksgiving. The whole person should be moved by the truth of Scripture to wonder, love and praise. Artificial means such as joking, lightness or frivolity are alien to true worship. A common desire to preserve high standards of preaching, public ministry and worship is an important factor common to Reformed Baptists and Reformed non-Baptists.

6. The recovery of powerful, evangelical preaching

We believe that the recovery of preaching which is Biblical and full of the Holy Spirit is the urgent need of our age. Preaching should be faithful to the whole counsel of God's Word. It should be doctrinal in the definitive sense of being faithful to biblical truth and crystal clear. It should be expository. The meaning of the text should be explained and applied. The lives of the preachers and of the hearers must feel and experience the power and application of the Gospel in all areas.

Preaching must be evangelical. It must be prophetic in the sense that the message comes from God. We believe that those who do not repent will be lost forever in a never-ending place of torment. Preaching therefore should be modelled on that of the apostles for boldness, urgency, integrity and power.

Every significant advance in the history of the church has come by a restoration of preaching. Martin Luther was a preacher of great stature. John Calvin preached daily. The Puritan age was an age of great preachers. After a miserable period in which philosophy dominated in the pulpits the great Awakening of the eighteenth century broke forth in a mighty conquering fashion through the agency of preachers like Whitefield and Wesley, men endued with power from on high to preach to multitudes.

7. A shared belief in the importance of biblical Theology and the covenant

Barton Payne in his work on this subject suggests that the covenant is the organising principle of biblical Theology.¹² By that we understand him to mean that God's purpose in salvation, and in the forming of the Church, the bride of Christ, is announced and expressed in the form of a covenant. The unfolding and development of this covenant is one of the keys by

which we can have a better grasp of the Bible.

Now it is my purpose to prove that Reformed Baptists give proper credence to the place, development and importance of the covenant. Not only do they do this in common with Reformed non-Baptists but they go further. Reformed Baptists alone do justice to the diversity of the administration of the covenant. Reformed Baptists alone are consistent in heeding the tremendous stress expressed in Hebrews chapters 8-10. They and they alone heed the double imperative to observe that the New Covenant has entirely replaced the Old, and that the Old as a way of practice or administration is now totally and completely revoked. Not so much as a stitch or particle remains. As a basis for practice it is utterly and completely done away with.

Reformed Baptists in this way are consistent in their practice. They alone are true and faithful to covenant theology as it respects the New Testament and baptism.

We have so much in common by which our unity is strengthened and our fellowship enriched yet when it comes to our churches there is a gulf. The difference between churches in which the membership is confined to those who maintain a credible and consistent confession of faith in lip and life, and churches where memberships are infiltrated by nominal believers, sometimes in large numbers, cannot be exaggerated.

The subject then is not one of names and parties but one which is full of practical significance.

The reformation of the sixteenth century has never been completed because the doctrine of Rome with respect to infant baptism was accommodated. Reasoning from the covenant was utilised for this accommodation.

We are concerned for Reformation in our day. Could any subject be more relevant or practical than that which directly controls the nature and constitution of the Church upon earth?

Practical Conclusions

Suppose an equal number of Reformed Baptists and Reformed non-Baptists, a dozen of each, lived in one specific geographic area, would that mean of necessity that two small separate churches would have to exist alongside one another? When those concerned have so much in common is it impossible to come to some agreement? Certainly unity would be facilitated if the essential differences be properly faced. It would help to observe:

1. That both sides accept covenant theology in every sense but differ over the implications of Hebrews Ch. 8.
2. That both sides are equally jealous about the bringing up of their children and applying to them all the advantages of the Christian Gospel.

3. That the great majority of Reformed non-Baptists accept the implications of original sin and reject presumptive regeneration.
4. That both sides recognise the futility of speculation about infant regeneration. Spurgeon, a Baptist, in sermon 411 takes a position that David Kingdon would not accept. Likewise Kuyper a Reformed non-Baptist takes a position his kinsman Douma would not accept. Nothing is to be gained by doing a merry-go-round on that subject.
5. If unity is to be feasible at the practical level a Church must take a definite position on baptism. This is because the practical implications are so far reaching. This can easily be seen in the chapter on that subject (Ch. 4) in the book *Local Church Practice* (Carey Publications). Nevertheless at the same time the extent of unity is so far reaching (if indeed both sides heartily accept the afore going exposition) that it would be scandalous not to co-operate to an extent commensurate with that unity.
6. The unity could possibly be expressed at the communion table but it is difficult to see how equal church membership can be compatible. The maintenance of two basically contradictory practices on Christian initiation is confusing to converts.
7. It will help when we come together if we can save time by not going over ground which has already been consolidated. It aids relationships all round when we are properly informed of the views of others.
8. Patience and forbearance in these matters is more pleasing to the Lord than the contrary. Any efforts to promote unity among believers is worthwhile.

² *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, William Cunningham, p. 1, Banner of Truth.

³ cf. *The Puritan view of the Early Church Council*, Andrew A. Davies, Westminster Conference Papers for 1978.

⁴ Documents of Vatican II, Austin P. Flannery, ed., Eerdmans, p. 733ff.

⁵ All scripture quotations from the New International Version.

¹² *The Theology of the Older Testament*, Barton Payne, p. 71, Zondervan. ■

(Continued from page 24)

any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.'

So then baptism does not *impart* spiritual grace to the believer, but it

has powerful implications of *salvation from the world* to him. It is therefore more than a 'simple witness', more than 'a sign of the new covenant', but it is a powerful reminder to the Christian that he has died to sin and that 'the world' is a closed chapter in his life because he has been born anew. Like Noah and the Israelites he is in a new situation with a body of water standing between him and his old way of life.



*Bill Clark signs a contract
with Dele Onamusi of Nigeria*

Silent Messengers of the Gospel

WITHIN THE PAST YEAR I HAVE HAD THE opportunity to visit a number of countries in three continents—Europe, Asia and Africa. I have returned home more burdened than ever with the needs and challenged with the opportunities which confront us.

One of the basic principles of missionary work is that the methods employed must be continually reassessed, not only in the light of Scripture, but also in the light of political, social and economic developments in the world. The Scriptures teach us plainly that the primary method of spreading the gospel is through preaching. But there are many countries in the world today where preaching the gospel is either forbidden or the laws of the country are such that they will not permit a foreigner to take up residence as a preacher of the gospel. China, with its 850 million inhabitants, is an example of a country where Christian freedom is greatly restricted. Iron curtain countries and a very large number of African countries fall into the category of those which will only

allow in foreigners who have professional qualifications and who do not intend to be full-time preachers of the gospel.

Recent years have seen great development in social and economic conditions in many third world countries. Gone are the days when missionaries would hack their way through dense jungle to reach unknown tribes who had never come into contact with what we call civilisation. Today most countries offer their citizens some sort of education. Economic conditions are rising, although in many countries they are not rising nearly quickly enough. Many people are now literate and have some money to spend.

Because of the diversity of tribal languages in some countries, especially in Africa (Nigeria has over 700 tribes), governments have frequently decided that all education will be in the language of the ex-colonial power. Thus, in Nigeria, education is in English and in the Ivory Coast it is in French. The result of this is that most educated

people in Africa can be reached through either English or French.

In view of the above I feel that two of the most efficient and effective ways of taking the gospel to our generation are by means of literature and radio. The communists are aware of this fact, and figures published in 1973 show that during the year alone they spent \$5000 million on communist propaganda literature, which amounts to \$1.50 per person in the entire population of the world. What are we doing to meet this challenge? It would appear that missionaries in the past have taught the people to read, and communists today are providing the literature!

In recent years Evangelical Press has been attempting to do something to take up the challenge, but we are conscious of our limited resources and feeble efforts. We have a weekly radio broadcast in French, which reaches into many African countries. Hundreds of letters from listeners in almost 20 countries have been received. Also we have been supplying Christian literature at subsidized prices to many third world countries. Subsidies are necessary in view of the low salaries in these lands where a man's total weekly income can be as little as £10, and in some cases much less. To achieve our aims we have formed links with missionaries and national workers in several countries in Europe, Asia and Africa.

On two occasions I have visited the Philippines, and we now have a working relationship with Brian Ellis (a missionary supported through Wat-tisham Baptist Church) who has now formed a local organisation called Evangelical Outreach Inc. which legally covers the distribution of literature supplied through Evangelical Press. Within the past twelve months we have supplied books to Brian for a

total wholesale value of £12,786, and approximately 50% of this has been given as a direct subsidy.

During a recent visit to Africa we laid the foundation for future close co-operation with Dele Dnamusi and Graham Weeks (a missionary member of Welwyn Evangelical Church) in Nigeria. Dele is presently working on the formation of an organisation called Amazing Grace (Nigeria) Ltd. to distribute Christian literature in Nigeria. During the past year we have supplied Dele with books worth £7,461 at wholesale value. Once again about 50% of this has been given in direct subsidy.

In French-speaking countries the needs are even greater than in English-speaking countries. Compared to English there are very few publishers of evangelical literature in French and to my knowledge the only one which is specifically Reformed in character is Editions Grâce et Vérité in France. The opportunities for spreading the gospel through evangelical literature in French-speaking Africa are almost limitless. In a letter received from Zaïre a few days ago a missionary writes about the situation in and around Kananga:

The mission effort is quite evangelical in that area and many of the PCUS missionaries really are faithful to the Reformed faith, but discouraged by the lack of literature available. They load up their Land Rover with literature and it is all sold before they finish their tour.

Can we do anything to meet that need? It is certainly our intention to try! Through the association of EP with Editions Grâce et Vérité we hope to be able to produce more books in French and to make them available, if possible, in all the French-speaking countries of the world.

S. W. CLARK. ■

Frank Ellis is interviewed by the editor about the gradual emergence in England of a new unity among Strict Baptists which is widening to embrace others.

The Emerging Assembly

Frank it would help our overseas readers if we began with a little historical background. But even before we begin with that all our readers would like to know something of your own background.

Having been raised among the Gospel Standard Baptists, hyper-Calvinism is something with which I am familiar. After my conversion I became convinced that the attitude of many of those churches to the preaching of the gospel was unbiblical, but I found among them many shining examples of what true godliness is and what it means to have religion in the heart as well as in the head. I also found men and women who, though it may seem to be a contradiction in terms, had a deep love for souls and a longing for the conversion of sinners. My own father was one such. For that I shall always be profoundly thankful.

Joining the Army in 1952 was my way of escaping the restrictions of home and church in order to have a good time. To God's everlasting praise, he stopped me from taking my own way. My conversion—which instrumentally came about through reading a New Testament and Psalms my mother had given me—altered my whole outlook on life and I felt convinced that I should one day preach the gospel. However, I was content with my Army career and pursued it, first in the ranks and then as a commissioned officer.

On leaving the Army I went into management with a departmental-store group. But the insistence of the call to preach made such employment increasingly uncomfortable, so, casting myself and my family upon the Lord, I gave in my notice, convinced that other doors would open. Looking back, I have wondered since how wise that decision was, but God was merciful and doors did open. I found myself as the first full-time secretary of the Strict and Particular Baptist Trust Corporation (a trustee body which acts on behalf of the churches) and then as the secretary of the Strict Baptist Mission.

Whilst with the S.B.M. we lived in London and I became a member, and later an elder of Devonshire Drive Baptist Church. In January 1977 the church called me to be its pastor and I now have the joy of serving with four other elders. The church also has five deacons, which, out of an active membership of between fifty and sixty, indicates the goodness of God and the considerable opportunities for service in an inner-city situation. About one-third of our congregation is black—mostly West Indian—and the chapel is situated in a mixed area so far as social class is concerned.

In 1957 I married Hazel Pankhurst, who, incidentally, was brought up among the G.S. people just down the road from you in Haywards Heath! During all the 'changing scenes of life' she has been a loyal and very hardworking partner. We have five children, all of whom, praise God, are Christians—all, that is, except the last, and since Sandra is only four we await with prayerful anticipation the Lord's call to her to follow him as she advances in years. Sylvia is happily married and lives in Chester. Angela is in her second year at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she is reading history. Karena is doing her 'A' levels and wants to build pipe organs but that's probably just a dream! Richard is fourteen and has a room full of pictures of steam trains!

When we come to survey Baptist history in England we have to go back and see that two main streams developed, the Strict and Particular Baptists and the General Baptists. In the revised edition of 'An Introduction to the Baptists' (Carey, 1976) there is a diagram outlining the streams. The cover depicts those streams but the folding chart by page 40 gives much more detail. It is exciting to think that history is being made today as regrouping takes place. That is what the Assembly is all about. Frank perhaps you can give a brief description of the composition of the Assembly.

Before I answer that question, let me explain that I can only speak as a private individual. Although I serve on the steering committee of the Assembly, the views I express are my own, although I hope they will fairly represent general attitudes among the churches in assembly.

You are right to underline the historic nature of what is taking place. We are witnessing a striking reversal of a trend in Baptist history. This can be illustrated by referring to the history of the Strict Baptists. Over the years the doctrinal standards of the churches became more closely and minutely defined, and historical controversies were dealt with by setting down an increasing number of negative articles of faith. These controversies were absolutised and in time were regarded as essential to the being of the church. Such a process inevitably leads to an increasingly parochial and inward-looking attitude. In recent years this has been reversed. An attempt has been made to distinguish those things which are truly vital to a lively and biblical churchmanship and those which ought to be put into the realm of non-divisive issues. This reversal is the more remarkable in this ecumenical age in that it has resulted not from a defection from biblical orthodoxy but from a desire to allow the Word of God to rule in everything.

The present assembly is made up of churches from a variety of backgrounds. Many are of Strict Baptist stock, but an increasing number of more recently formed churches, and those which have recovered Calvinistic doctrine and Baptist churchmanship, are now associating in this way.

As far as I can recollect the Strict Baptists have been working at the problem of greater unity among themselves for about fifteen years. For about a decade I have served on a committee called 'the 22'. The subject has come into focus over the last decade and with much more momentum over the last five years especially with the arrival from the outside of Baptists who have not had a Strict Baptist background. I hasten to say that my contribution has been negligible. I wholeheartedly support the concept, but like you Frank I am very much overstretched with regard to commitments. Some are very generous in accepting that excuse but others may be cynical—needlessly so because in earlier stages when I was less weighed down I did my stint. This is not the place to go into such detail but since you will be absent yourself from the next Carey Conference (even though one of the organisers) I thought that it would both help our readers to know my attitude and at the same time give you a moment to plead also that absence must be interpreted with charity. But anyway what is your observation as to the time it has taken for the Assembly to reach this stage?

A charitable spirit is essential, and one of the outstanding features which finds expression in the Assembly is this spirit. Geoff Thomas, for instance, has expressed this and has spoken of the great spirit of love and affection which has been demonstrably evident ever since the first such meeting which was held in Birmingham in 1975. There is also a marked lack of ecclesiastical politics. The movement is characterised by an openness which it is a joy to

experience. That is one good reason why, I believe, the Assembly can be a vehicle for a work of the Holy Spirit. Such testimonies as that of Geoff Thomas should help to dispel the reserve which undoubtedly still exists in some quarters among brethren who are fearful of being caught up in the bondage of denominationalism.

As to the time this has taken, I can only say that brethren are often heard remarking upon the speed at which change has taken place and the amount of ground that has been covered along the road to reformation.

This last assembly was well attended and seems to have been the most significant of the gathering of church officers so far. Could you comment as to the number of churches represented and also describe the most important features as far as advance is concerned?

Over 100 messengers representing 67 churches, plus a few observers, met at St. John's Wood on 24th October. Bearing in mind that this assembly was immediately preceded by the annual meetings of the Strict Baptist Mission, this was a most encouraging number. We must not make too much of numbers, but, on the other hand, we should take care not to grieve the Holy Spirit by failing to recognise what he has done. We recognise that our country in general and our churches in particular are in need of the reviving power of God, yet in how many other places would it be possible to gather together such a group as this? Despite all our problems, we ought still to record that 'The boundary lines have fallen for (us) in pleasant places; surely (we) have a delightful inheritance.'

Many significant matters were discussed but I feel it right to concentrate on one. This assembly was called primarily to answer the question whether in future there should be one assembly representing the interests of the two groupings of churches—that is, the Strict Baptists and the Reformed Baptists. To this question there was given a hearty and unanimous 'yes'. In future there shall be one assembly serving this combined group of churches. By this act, which follows a decision taken previously in the Strict Baptist Assembly, the line of demarkation has been re-drawn. In future the fellowship of churches will embrace all those which desire to assemble on the basis of the doctrines of grace and a baptised membership. Local variations of practice regarding visitors to the Lord's table, and the expression of any doctrinal distinctives beyond those expressed, for instance, in the 1689 and 1666 Confessions of Faith will not be essential features of the basis of the ongoing assembly.

The crucial factors upon which those associating together in the Assembly are united are the doctrines of grace and baptism. When we say baptism that means a whole way of church order. Would you like to comment on this and also mention other factors which although important must be placed further back.

To be a Baptist, in our view, has reference to a much wider range of issues than just the mode of baptism. Our doctrine of the church is part of our distinctive testimony. Herbert Carson said recently, in a discussion regarding attitudes to the proposed visit of the Pope to Northern Ireland, 'the church is a company of believers and must not use coercion either to propagate or defend the faith'. The article on civil and religious liberty in the last issue of *Reformation Today* deals with this matter in more detail. Our doctrine of the church will affect our view of the relation of the church and state and that of the Christian and the state. Such issues are not theoretical. Political instability is a reality today and we could well find ourselves involved in such

questions at a very close and personal level.

As to the primary/secondary question, I see no reason to dissent from the view expressed by Warfield; 'If the perfect expression of unity depends on the perfection of the Church, the path towards it is not to be found in yielding our organised testimony to what is best in government or worship or what is true in faith, but in enthusiastically pressing this testimony on the attention and acceptance of all whom we ought not to be ashamed to call our brethren.' This is not the same as saying that all doctrines are of equal importance, nor does it prevent us from pursuing fellowship, both in debate and in practical co-operation, with 'all whom we ought not to be ashamed to call our brethren'—indeed, it requires us to do so.

What understanding has been reached with regard to strict communion?

I am tempted to say, 'it all depends on what you mean by strict communion', but since Dic Eccles deals so fully with this question in his article, 'Discipline in the Local Church', in the book, *Local Church Practice*, I will content myself with saying that a church's attitude to the admission of visitors to the Lord's table is essentially its own affair. The debate on communion will no doubt continue, and it is healthy that it should, but differences of practice will not be a ground for division among us.

The questions of Bible translations vexes some more than others. Has the assembly given any lead on that matter?

Yes, it has declared publicly that a difference of opinion as to the best Greek text to be used for translation is not a matter on which we should divide nor should it be a ground for polemics. Among questions raised at the last assembly was one which asked for an exchange of views among those churches which had used the N.I.V. In response, a number of brethren said they had used this version with advantage, whilst others pleaded for caution and A.V. preference.

The advantages of working together seem obvious. Especially is this true when it comes to church planting, or as some call it 'home mission', and also missionary work. But agencies already operate such as the Strict Baptist Mission so how do you see the Assembly as significant in these areas?

The Assembly is rather more a clearing house for information than a vehicle for direct action. It takes note of those agencies already in existence which enjoy the confidence of the churches, and recommends their use. It notes also that much is being done by individual local churches and seeks to publicise these efforts. In this way stimulus is given to prayer and to greater activity on the part of all the churches, and advice and practical help is made available. Since missionary work is essentially co-operative such a wide sharing of news, and the encouragement which derives from this, is a most helpful feature of our fellowship.

My observation is that some kind of exciting purpose or vision is required for something of this kind to take off. Evangelisation gripped the hearts of the early Methodists and reaching the down and outs gripped the early leaders of the Salvation Army. What vision do you foresee might capture the imagination of those bonding together in the Assembly?

If the Assembly proved to be no more than a talking shop it would quickly fail. Necessity must bring us together. Evangelism is undoubtedly an overriding burden and has the highest priority among us.

Apart from this, however, there are other vital issues; ministerial training is one. The Strict Baptist Assembly sponsored a scheme which made use of gifted pastors and sought to provide a flexible approach to training needs. A mixture of in-church training and central lectures was employed and proved valuable.

This scheme has the full support of the new assembly. The need for full-time residential courses in some cases is also recognised and there are a number of proposals being aired among the churches. The Assembly takes note of all such schemes, and those currently being offered, and is able to provide a valuable opportunity to debate such issues and seek to give guidance to the churches.

A wide range of practical issues also need to be debated, such as divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, the education of our children, the effects of modern technology on employment. At the very least such issues as these are productive of severe pastoral problems. The churches need guidance on such matters.

'We need to earn our spurs' said one brother during a debate on the future of the assembly. This was in response to the suggestion that we should be seeking to attract a wider range of men sympathetic to a Reformed Baptist viewpoint. That is true, and I suppose what I am really saying is that a broadly-based programme is the best way to achieve that end. We must give attention in assembly to those questions which the churches are asking. We must scratch where it itches! If, in addition, we find ourselves under pressure from the State—greater pressure than we experience at present—then we shall value even more our assembling together. Such pressures may well occur in the lifetime of those of us who are now middle-aged and they will make us value our fellowship in a way which is as yet hardly capable of being realised. Pressures such as these will also radically affect such issues as evangelical unity and the ecumenical question. I have no doubt that we need the Assembly.

A question which looms large in the minds of some is the matter of denominationalism. This sort of thing nearly always leads to petty bureaucrats, to a party spirit and to large overdoses of 'committeitis'. Do you really think that these ugly features can be avoided, and if so how?

Yes, I do think such things can be avoided, but not primarily by organisational means. Of course we need to ensure, so far as we can, that we do not construct anything which would militate against the independency and autonomy of the local church but such measures are insufficient of themselves. The only way we can avoid the things of which you speak is to recognise that there is the constant threat that they will come into being. What we must really fear is pretending that there is nothing to fear. Beyond that we have to be eternally vigilant and thus prevent these things from creeping in. The assembly will, of course, reflect the life of the churches. It is vital, therefore, that local church life is lively and strong and that those appointed to guide the affairs of the assembly come from and are committed to the real pursuit of such churchmanship. ■

Easter House Party, Whitbourne, 3rd-7th April 1980, main speaker, Erroll Hulse. For details write to: John Pascoe, 12 Markville Gardens, Caterham, Surrey CR3 6RJ.

For details about **Carey Family Conference** 11th-23rd August 1980 write to John Rubens, 23 Brickhill Drive, Bedford MK41 7QA.

Will Britain be annihilated?

The Times NEWSPAPER HAS IN RECENT YEARS COME TO BE THE BEST QUALITY DAILY newspaper in the world, by head, shoulders and chest. For all round reporting, free comment, well informed criticism, satire, analytical material and feature articles it does not even begin to have a rival. This was made even more apparent when other papers had to substitute for almost a year while *The Times* negotiated new production agreements with the trade unions. The dispute cost 30 million pounds. *The Times* returned on 13th November, 1979.

The editorial for that day summarized the problems and pointed out that the Fleet Street newspaper industry is a microcosm of the overall problem not only for Britain but also those nations which depend on their industries to survive. The difficulty is an excruciating one which is all the more reason why it has to be faced with faith and courage. Too many people are being employed in working obsolete equipment. Gross overmanning leads to financial disaster. The retention of antiquated machinery spells industrial suicide. Using modern technology it is now possible to set one column at the price of six or seven before. The human redundancy problem caused by up-to-date machinery is overwhelming. At their best the trade unions uphold human rights, human dignity and justice. At their worst they hold the rest of the country to ransom for exorbitant wage increases which increases inflation and hurts everybody. The relegation of multitudes of workers to early retirement is an awful and heart-rending problem. But the survival of our industries is imperative for the survival of the nation.

The Times declared that as a result of compromise agreements with the unions productivity will be 30% higher. There will be a smaller staff using advanced electronic equipment. This means higher wages for the employees. It means too a competitive price for a well produced paper.

Turning to the major industries the editor of *The Times* had this to say:

'In all three industries, cars, shipbuilding and steel, British output per man is probably no more than a third of the normal international competitive level. Indeed that seems to be the crisis point. Even efficient British firms are usually overmanned by between 50 and 100 per cent; they survive because the British standard of living and therefore of wages is below the average of our competitors. Inefficient British firms are often overmanned by 200 per cent and upwards; they tend to disappear.

In the 1980s this disparity of productivity will probably become much greater. A technological revolution is taking place which substitutes electronic for mechanical systems; in specific cases it can give an increase in productivity per man of several hundred per cent in a single jump. The introduction of these systems is dependent on trade union agreements. Yet if we take British productivity as 100, and American, German or Japanese as 200, and then multiply our competitors' productivity by, say, five, to allow for the general adoption of electronic methods, we are left with productivity ratios of 10:1. Such ratios are not maintainable, and where they apply, the low productivity mechanical British industry will be replaced by its high productivity electronic foreign competitors. It is not just the end, it is annihilation.

How could it be otherwise?

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The call to eldership illustrated from the life of John Calvin

IT HAS BECOME COMMON FOR YOUNG men to think in terms of being called to the ministry which to them means the call to preach. We should never forget that preceding such a call is the fundamental question of eldership. There are many who are able to expound in public but who lack the gifts required for eldership. The qualifications for eldership are of fundamental importance. Many expounders or preachers have made shipwreck in the public ministry for the simple reason that careful assessment of their qualifications regarding eldership was not made in the first instance. It is much easier to study and preach than it is to oversee or shepherd.

If we follow the scriptural pattern of recognising elders in the function of shepherding we can then follow that later with the consideration of which elders, or elder, possesses outstanding gifts for preaching. According to Scripture the shepherding function essentially precedes the preaching function. Today, however, the tradi-

tion has come to prevail that the ministry is for academics who having passed their examinations are then ordained to the ministry. Ability in the basic realm of oversight is an afterthought.

A further consideration related to the call to the eldership is the question of deacons. In what ways do deacons differ from elders? When we read 1 Timothy 3 it would seem that the qualifications required are so similar that the office of deacon and elder are almost identical.

The main difference, however, springs from the functions of these two offices. The elder is involved in the oversight and spiritual nurture and care of the flock. The deacon is a practical helper designed to encourage the elders, enabling them to fulfil their tasks better by relieving them of many of the practical duties which are inevitably involved in their work of administration. Shepherds are sometimes criticised for lack of contact

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How can Britain survive if left using obsolete equipment, being saddled with gross overmanning, while competitors like Germany and Japan use modern electronic equipment and tight manning standards? We cannot escape the reality that only efficient businesses survive.

When visiting Alec Taylor and the Chelmsley Wood Reformed Baptist Church (Birmingham) during November, I questioned Alec about the motor industry in which he has been employed for many years. He said that things could decline to the point where major industries would be sold cheaply to foreigners who would install the modern technology. They would then run the factories with smaller work forces.

This is something which affects Christians. The implications of recession and unemployment are very serious. Let us be alert and prayerful, well-informed and sympathetic to the needs of the hour.

with their flock by the very people who could easily make their work lighter by undertaking some of the practical tasks.

Going back to 1 Timothy 3 we see that the elders are required to have an ability to teach and must be given to hospitality, qualifications not mentioned with regard to deacons. Also, with the elders, there seems to be a greater emphasis on patience, vigilance, justice, holiness, and home life. Obviously all officers must be men of outstanding character but the elders especially so. If they are to lead in the spiritual realm then holiness, patience, vigilance and their domestic lives will have to be of a high order. After all, a leader is one who is chosen because he is able to take a lead by reason of superior gifts and experience. If a spiritual leader is not eminently holy how can he lead others to be holy?

We still have not grappled with the greatest factor pertaining to the call to the eldership, it is a call to spiritual warfare and conflict of a much more intense and subtle kind than that which pertains to the individual life of a Christian. The care and oversight of a church brings an overseer into direct conflict with the powers of darkness bent on the destruction of the church. Why did Satan desire to sift Peter as wheat? Was it not because of the work to which Peter was called?

One of the best illustrations of the conflict involved in the work of pastoral oversight comes from John Calvin. It may be argued that his was a work extraordinary—a work of reformation involving both political and spiritual factors. But are we not involved in similar work? Have we not inherited the debris of traditions? Do we not face the same hostile principalities bent on opposing biblical reformation of every kind?

When Calvin visited Geneva he had no intention of staying there but his friend Guillaume Farel threatened him with imprecatory curses if he did not stay and minister in Geneva, a city divided by evil and dangerous factions. Calvin's own description of what followed will help illustrate that the real nature of the ministry is not peaceful preparation of lectures, but fierce spiritual conflict. Calvin describes his calling as follows:

Because the most direct road
To Strasbourg,
Where I wished to retire,
Was closed on account of hostilities,
It was my plan
To pass through Geneva
Without stopping more than one night
In the city.
A little earlier
Poperly had been driven out
By the fine person I just named
And by Pierre Viret:
But conditions were not yet settled,
And evil, dangerous factions
Divided the city.
Thereupon an individual
Who has since basely revolted
And returned to the Papists
Discovered me and identified me
To the others.
At this point Farel
(Burning with a wondrous zeal
To advance the gospel)
Suddenly set all his efforts
At keeping me.
After having heard
That I was determined
To pursue my own private studies—
When he realised
He would get nowhere by pleas—
He came to the point of a curse:
That it would please God
To curse my leisure
And the quiet for my studies
That I was seeking,
If in such a grave emergency
I should withdraw and refuse
To give aid and help.
This word so overwhelmed me
That I desisted from the journey
I had undertaken.
Still, feeling my shame
And my timidity,
I would not undertake
To discharge any particular function.

After that, scarcely four months passed
Before we were assailed on one side

By the Anabaptists
 And on the other by a wicked apostate
 Who, being secretly sustained
 And supported
 By certain prominent persons,
 Was able to cause us much trouble.
 During this time an incredible number
 Of seditions afflicted us.
 And so, though I recognise myself
 As being timid, soft, and fainthearted
 By nature, I had,
 From the very beginning,
 To bear these violent waves.
 Even though I did not succumb to them,
 Yet I was not sustained
 By sufficient greatness of heart
 As not to rejoice
 More than I ought when,
 As a consequence of certain troubles,
 I was banished.¹

After this Calvin spent two years in
 Strasbourg which time he describes as
 follows:

Then free, released by this means
 From my calling,
 I had planned to live quietly
 Without undertaking
 Any public responsibility,
 Until that excellent servant of Christ,
 Martin Bucer, making use
 Of a curse
 Similar to that of Farel's,
 Removed me to another post.
 Terrified therefore
 By the example of Jonah
 That he set before me,
 I continued to function in teaching.
 And even though I continued
 As always to keep to myself,
 That is, not to wish to appear at
 Or to participate in
 The great assemblies,
 Yet was I led as it were by force—
 I know not how!—
 To the imperial assembly.
 There, willy-nilly, I was thrust
 Into a great crowd of people.

Afterward the Lord, having pity
 On this city, had calmed
 The dangerous emotions and troubles
 That had prevailed here
 And by his wonderful power
 Had defeated both the wicked plots
 And the bloody efforts
 Of the disturbers of the republic.
 Then, contrary
 To my desire and inclination,
 The necessity was laid upon me
 Of returning to my first post.
 For although the welfare of this church

Was so much on my conscience
 That for her I would not have hesitated
 To lay down my life,
 Yet my timidity gave me
 All kinds of reasons
 To excuse myself
 For not reshouldering straightway
 Such a heavy burden.
 But finally regard for my duty,
 Which I considered
 Reverently and conscientiously,
 Won me over
 And made me agree to return
 To the flock from which I had,
 As it were, been torn away.
 This I did with sadness,
 Tears, great care, and distress—

We see from this testimony the personal cost involved in the work of oversight. The difficulties and hazards which Calvin subsequently faced he describes as follows:

A long history it would be
 Were it to recount the various conflicts
 With which the Lord exercised me
 Since that time;
 With what trials he tested me.
 But to avoid boring my readers
 With useless words,
 I'll now briefly repeat
 What I touched on a little while ago:
 In considering
 The whole course of David's life,
 It seems to me that at his every step
 He showed me the way.
 This was for me
 A marvellous solace.
 For although with continual wars
 This holy king was troubled
 By the Philistines
 And other foreign nations,
 His enemies,
 Still more grievously was he stricken
 In the midst of his own people
 By the ill will
 Of certain disloyal, vicious men.
 I can say similarly of myself:
 On all sides have I been assailed,
 Scarcely even for a moment
 Experiencing repose;
 Always the brunt of some attack
 Either from without or from within.
 Satan has often tried by his plots
 To overthrow the whole structure
 Of this church.¹

So difficult was the calling and so many the anxieties in caring for God's church, and at the same time advancing the work of reformation, that

Calvin, writing to a friend, described it as follows:

'I would prefer a hundred other deaths to that cross on which I would have to die a thousand times a day.'²

These quotations from the Calvin's testimony aptly illustrate the matter of pastoral calling and responsibility to which reference was made at the beginning. A few observations by way of conclusion might be helpful.

1. Qualities of life as outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are the first considerations for the ministry.

2. Abilities of leadership and oversight likewise are prior considerations to the office of preaching. Calvin possessed outstanding qualities of leadership.

3. Preaching and counselling are twin functions. If a man's life and example are inadequate and if he is not equipped to counsel souls and thereby minister to the wellbeing of the body how can he fulfil the function of a preacher? The wisdom that God gave to the reformer was used to stabilise the church in Geneva.

4. Submission to those in authority is a good test of character. Calvin submitted himself to the judgment of others both in his call and by the way he conducted affairs in Geneva.

5. Those called to pastoral oversight must be prepared to face times of fierce spiritual conflict. The Genevan pastor talks about 'violent waves'.

6. Perseverance is a vital factor. Among others the Lord used John Calvin to calm 'dangerous emotions and troubles' at Strasbourg.

7. Facing up to the toil of spiritual oversight can involve great distress.

The reformer speaks of 'sadness, tears, great care and distress'.

8. The psalter becomes for many hard pressed elders a book of comfort and counsel. Calvin refers to David's stormy life and the attention he gave to psalmody should be noted.

9. The awareness of conflict with a power immeasurably above the power of men is evident—'Satan has often tried to overthrow the whole structure of this church.'

10. Calvin was far from perfect. It is very easy with the hindsight of history to point to tragic errors in his judgment. His language at times is extravagant (one cannot stop to balance out every statement). His vivid descriptions including those about the infamous Anabaptists!—nevertheless drive home the intensity of the spiritual struggles involved in the Lord's work.

¹ Quotations are from a book with the title *The Piety of John Calvin*—an anthology illustrative of the spirituality of the Reformer translated and edited by Ford Lewis Battles and music edited by Stanley Tagg. The text is produced in easy-to-read lines as seen in the quotations of the above article but in a handsome large print. The materials were originally brought together to acquaint Roman Catholic scholars with the life and teaching of the Genevan reformer. There are chapters on true holiness, the pilgrimage of Calvin, the true knowledge of God, prayer, some examples of Calvin's prayers and finally metrical psalms translated by Calvin. A joy to possess the book is published by Baker Book House, 175 pages, 9.95 dollars. It will need its own niche in your library because of its unusual shape measuring about eleven inches across the top and nine inches down the spine.

² Letter of 25th June, 1539. Francis Wendel's life of Calvin, p. 67, Fontana paperback.

Because of expenses involved in currency exchange we request that subscribers in Holland send their subscriptions to our agent: Mr. D. H. Gritter, Ludestraat 173-1, 8261 CL KAMPEN Holland. The subscription for one year is 12 Gulden. For Ireland (see back cover): Mr. George Morrison, 6 Fairfield Park, Rathgar, DUBLIN 6, has kindly agreed to act as our agent.

How are we to react when church members just leave or as we say ‘take-off’? The Scripture never advocates separation except from heretics or criminals. For instance in the very worst situations such as that at Corinth the apostle never suggests that the believers just opt out to form a new party. The existence of a party spirit is discouraged and denounced by Paul in the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians. Again, even in the case of the pathetic Laodicea, the head of the churches does not counsel that the members leave and try and find something more congenial (Rev. 3:14-22). While in America an experienced pastor suggested to me that the Americans were unlike the British. The British, he said, are accustomed to authority! Do they not have the royal family and the Queen? But in America there is such a spirit of independence that every person does what is right in his own eyes. We cannot agree. Britain is in the process of self-destruction because of unwillingness everywhere to accept submission to others. This lawless spirit has penetrated churches. It is commonplace for members, if they are aggravated or provoked, to resign, or to do so for many other causes, some of which are purely personal or petty. Great is the harm done by such fragmentation. A position can quickly be reached in which the witness or testimony of a church in an area is destroyed. The material here quoted is from the Cambridge Platform of 1648. It is entirely relevant. You would think that they sat down and wrote it for us today.

Resigning from your church?

Of Church-members, their Removal from one Church to another, and of Letters of Recommendation and Dismission

1. CHURCH-MEMBERS MAY NOT REMOVE OR DEPART FROM THE CHURCH, AND SO one from another as they please, nor without just and weighty cause but ought to live and dwell together: forasmuch as they are commanded, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.¹ Such departure tends to the dissolution and ruin of the body: as the pulling of stones, and pieces of timber from the building, and of members from the natural body, tend to the destruction of the whole.
2. It is therefore the duty of church members, in such times and places when counsel may be had, to consult with the church whereof they are members, about their removal, that accordingly they have their approbation, may be encouraged, or otherwise desist. They who are joined with consent, should not depart without consent, except forced thereunto.
3. If a member's departure be manifestly unsafe, and sinful, the church may not consent thereunto: for in so doing, they should not act in faith: and should partake with him in his sin. If the case be doubtful and the person not to be persuaded, it seems best to leave the matter to God, and not forcibly to detain him.²
4. Just reasons for a member's removal of himself from the church are,

(1) If a man cannot continue without partaking in sin.³ (2) In case of personal persecution, so Paul departed from the disciples at Damascus. Also, in case of general persecution, when all are scattered.⁴ (3) In case of real, and not only pretended, want of competent subsistence earning a living, a door being opened for a better supply in another place, together with the means of spiritual edification.⁵ In these, or like cases, a member may lawfully remove, and the church cannot lawfully detain him.

5. To separate from a church, either out of contempt of their holy fellowship, or out of covetousness, or for greater enlargements with just grief to the church; or out of schism, or want of love; and out of a spirit of contention in respect of some unkindness, or some evil only conceived, or indeed, in the church, which might and should be tolerated and healed with a spirit of meekness, and of which evil the church is not yet convinced (though perhaps himself be) nor admonished:⁶ for these or the like reasons to withdraw from public communion, in Word, or seals, or censures, is unlawful and sinful.

6. Such members as have orderly removed their habitation ought to join themselves unto the church in order, where they do inhabit if it may be: otherwise, they can neither perform the duties, nor receive the privileges of members;⁷ such an example tolerated in some, is apt to corrupt others; which if many should follow, would threaten the dissolution and confusion of churches, contrary to the Scripture.⁸

7. Order requires, that a member thus removing, have letters testimonial; and of dismission from the church whereof he yet is, unto the church whereunto he desires to be joined, lest the church should be deluded; that the church may receive him in faith; and not be corrupted by receiving deceivers, and false brethren.⁹ Until the person dismissed be received into another church, he ceases not by his letters of dismission to be a member of the church whereof he was. The church cannot make a member no member but by excommunication.

8. If a member be called to remove only for a time, where a church is, letters of recommendation are requisite, and sufficient for communion with that church, in the ordinances, and in their watch: as Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, had letters written for her to the church of Rome, that she might be received, as becomes saints.¹⁰

9. Such letters of recommendation and dismission were written for Apollos: for Marcus to the Colossians; for Phoebe to the Romans; for sundry others to other churches;¹¹ and the apostle telleth us, that some persons, not sufficiently known otherwise, have special need of such letters, though he for his part had no need thereof.¹² The use of them is to be a benefit, and help to the party for whom they are written; and for the furthering of his receiving amongst the saints in the place to which he goes; and the due satisfaction of them in their receiving of him.

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Noah's Baptism

By Fred Arnot, pastor of the Baptist Church, Uitenhage, South Africa.

THE ROLE OF BAPTISM IN THE BELIEVER'S salvation has been a subject of controversy for many hundreds of years. The sacramentalist view has been that the church (i.e. the organised church) is the storehouse of grace and distributes the Holy Spirit in regenerating power at baptism and in continued grace by the bread and wine of the communion service. It is as simple as that. Lapses into sin are taken care of by the sacrament of confession, liberal doses of forgiveness being handed out from the storehouse of grace.

Sacramentalism has had its advocates amongst certain extreme Baptist, Pentecostal and sectarian groups, with widely divergent views on the extent to which baptism contributes towards regeneration. Some believe that it is the vehicle or means of salvation while others see it as putting the finishing touches to the work of grace. However, what makes these groups essentially sacramental in their position is that they do not regard the believer as regenerate or saved unless he or she has been baptised.

Those who hold to the evangelical position that a man is saved by grace through faith in the perfect righteousness and death of Christ alone find themselves instinctively opposed to any sacramental view of baptism. The argument is usually that baptism does not figure in any of the great

passages on salvation such as John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Acts 16:30f.; Ephesians 2:1-10, and in the whole of Romans it is discussed only in the sixth chapter. Debate tends to be a ding-dong affair with neither side taking the other side's Scripture passages seriously.

We believe that 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God'. Holding with Martin Luther to the principle of 'sola scriptura', we turn to the Scriptures which are used to bolster the sacramental point of view. One of these passages is 1 Peter 3:20f. Let us not bypass it and pretend it doesn't exist, but let us face up to it and see what it really teaches.

The words which are difficult for the evangelical to understand are the opening words of verse 21: 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us,' which superficially seem to teach baptismal regeneration. In fact this is one of the proof texts of those who hold to this teaching. We are given a strong clue as to its meaning by the use of the word 'figure' or 'antitype'. In Platonic teaching there was the 'type', the original ideal, and 'antitype' that imperfect representation of it in our present experience. In Peter's writing, baptism is the 'type' and the flood of Noah the 'antitype'. Thus if we want to understand baptism we must understand in what sense it is symbolised by the flood of Noah.

As we turn to the flood of Noah we find an astonishing paradox. The

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¹ Heb. 10:25.

² Rom. 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:22; Acts 21:14.

³ Eph. 5:11.

⁴ Acts 9:25,29,30; 8:1.

⁵ Neh. 13:20.

⁶ 2 Tim. 4:10; Rom. 16:17; Jude 19;

Eph. 4:2,3; Col. 3:13; Gal. 6:1,2.

⁷ Isa. 56:8; Acts 9:26.

⁸ 1 Cor. 14:33.

⁹ Acts 18:27.

¹⁰ Rom. 16:1,2; 2 Cor. 3:1.

¹¹ Acts 18:27; Col. 4:10; Rom. 16:1.

¹² 2 Cor. 3:1.

salvation of Noah was not said to be brought about by means of the ark, but by means of water. In other words the flood was the means of salvation to Noah. 1 Peter 3:20 ends with 'eight souls were saved by water'. The word 'saved' actually means 'brought through in order to save' or 'rescued', while 'by water' can mean 'through water' or 'by means of water', with the latter meaning most likely to be the correct one. If we take these meanings mentioned above, then Noah had to be brought out of one condition and through water and by means of water be brought to another condition.

The water of the flood did do something to change Noah's situation totally. It destroyed the 'world' as Noah had known it. Noah had been part of a world that had finally come under the judgement of God. God had seen that 'the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually. And it repented God that he had made man on the earth' (Gen. 6:5f.). The earth was corrupt and full of violence (Gen. 6:11f.). The flood which brought death, destruction and judgement on the world separated Noah from it.

Once the water was poured out, Noah was rescued from being a part of a violent world under God's judgement and became part of a new world with his family's safety being assured by a covenant made by God with Noah. Had Noah wanted to he could not have gone back to his old world of violence, the world of disobedience and refusal to heed the warnings given during the building of the ark. He was cut off from it by a body of water and by death.

To return to 1 Peter 3:20ff. baptism in like manner represents judgement and death to the 'world'. The believer was a citizen of the City of Destruction,

but he died with Christ and there is a literal body of water standing between him and his old way of life in the flesh—the waters of baptism.

This was not only Peter's view of baptism, but Paul's as well, as we see if we turn to 1 Corinthians 10:2 'And were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and the sea.' This verse is used as a proof text for infant baptism, but it has a much more powerful meaning as we will see.

Egypt had always represented 'the world' to the pious Israelite, so that going to Egypt was always representative of backsliding and disobedience to the voice of God. Moses refers with scorn to the flesh-pots of Egypt. In Egypt the children of Israel were slaves. By God's grace and power Israel was called and brought out of Egypt, the house of bondage, by Moses, but it was only when the Israelites had passed through the Red Sea and the waters had closed in on the Egyptians that the Israelites were safe. Then they could no longer go back to Egypt. Why not? Because there was a body of water separating them from Egypt with its flesh-pots and bondage. Therefore 'baptism unto Moses' refers to the children of Israel's commitment to follow Moses to the Promised Land. There was no other choice.

Paul puts this teaching concerning baptism to a very practical application in Romans 6. He raises a rhetorical question after explaining justification by faith alone. In verse 1 the question is asked: 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?' His reply is that this is impossible! Why? Because a body of water stands between the believer and his old life of sin and he cannot go back.

'How shall we that are dead to sin, live

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