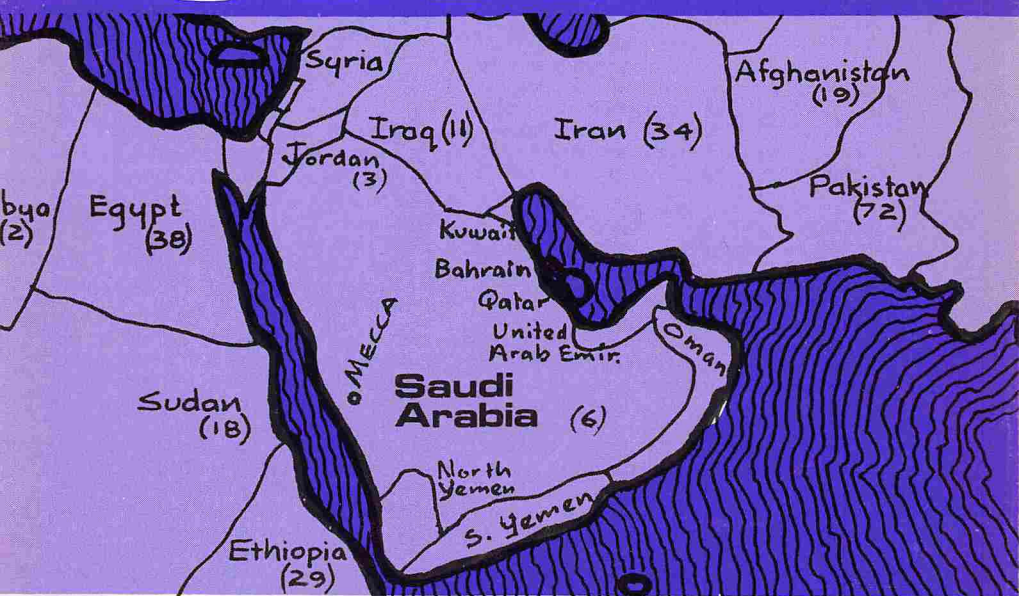


REFORMATION TODAY '81



BOOKS *front inside cover*

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Books

Introducing the Christian Faith. J. K. Davies. Grace Publ. Trust. 15 pages. 25 pence.

Keith Davies has a warm hearted easy-to-understand style in addressing those who do not believe as well as directness in dealing faithfully with subjects such as sin and the necessity of forgiveness. He explains the way of salvation clearly and briefly. The presentation is tasteful; the print large and clear. Just the sort of thing we need to help us in reaching those who are ready to read fifteen pages.

Myths about Missions. Horace L. Fenton. IVP 1973. 108 pages. £ 1.65.

This book is even more relevant now than when it was first published eight years ago. If you are equipped and sense a call to the mission field you will find that reservation after reservation will be removed. In brief readable compass this book shows that missionary work is as urgent and needful now as ever it was.

Who is in Control? R. Devenish. Grace Publ. Trust. 1981. 58 pages. £ 1.20

A forthright exposition of the sovereignty of God this paperback is an easy to read version of A. W. Pink's *Sovereignty of God*. When the Scriptures present forthright declarations about the sovereignty of God these are almost always accompanied by statements about human responsibility and of God's willingness to receive all who come to him. Well known examples are Matthew 11:27-30, John 6:37 and the proximity of Romans chapters 9 and 10. This balance is absent. We should always be sensitive about the seeker who could misconstrue the sovereignty of God. Many cases of lack of assurance have resulted when this balance has not been handled with sensitivity. A suggestion: the stress on human responsibility should be restored in the next edition, not only in all the chapters, but also by way of a whole chapter expounding Ezekiel chapter 18.

God Willing. H. Mockford. Grace Publ. Trust. 1981. 63 pages. £ 1.50.

An attractive superbly abridged version of Flavel's Providence of God. The publishers have hit a home run with this one. The entire presentation is tasteful, clear and sweet to the spirit.

God, Science and Evolution. Prof. E. H. Andrews. E.P. 1980. 127 pages. £ 1.75.

This is an enjoyable exposition. Readers should not be disturbed if in a few places the language is incomprehensibly scientific. It is enjoyable not only because really helpful information oozes out as you go along but also because we share company with a scientist who accepts the authority of the Bible without any reservation. He shows in many ways that the claims of evolution are ridiculous and also that the claims for an exceedingly old earth ludicrous. He deals with almost all the main issues of the subject including theistic evolution which he refutes in a convincing manner. Suggestion: as you read through make your own index of matters you may wish to refer to again. Ask an evolutionist how a giraffe evolved his long neck but be sure you have the correct details about the giraffe's intricate anatomy (see p. 17)!

Diversities of Gifts

being the Westminster Conference papers for 1980. Available from the Westminster Conference Secretary (Rev. Brian Freer), c/o Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate, London SE1E 6BS.

103 pages. £ 1.40. (The print is small as it dare be — a commendable way of giving us a lot in 103 pages.)

Three papers are devoted to the Puritan Thomas Goodwin. His life with salient features is described by Brian Freer, his mysticism by Paul Cook and his views of Independency by Graham Harrison. All the materials are of the usual high standard expected at this conference. Paul Cook's paper deserves to be singled out as possessing exceptional value for he provides valuable definitive material as he gets to grips with the neglected and difficult subject of mysticism. Phil Roberts' paper on the Puritan view of children in the church provides a masterly overview of how the Puritans differed over infant baptism and how this affected their view of children. John Carrick's paper on Robert Raikes and the origin of Sunday Schools is excellent both from a biographical and historical point of view, as is a superb presentation by David Boorman of the Secession issue in Scotland, and how this involved the Erskines and ultimately George Whitefield.

It is crucial that there should be a forum like the Westminster Conference in London to study, debate and contribute towards the preservation of our Evangelical and Reformed heritage. I do not know anything quite like it in any other part of the world.

Editorial

On the 23rd September I was involved in a car crash. Mercifully, nobody was with me and nobody else was involved. My recovery has been steady; and while we do not know at this juncture when I will be able to resume my preaching responsibilities we are hopeful that there will be no permanent ill-effects.

Providentially (the common erroneous word is luckily) we were in a reasonable position as far as the magazine was concerned. Material was already typeset and the article by David Seefried was ready for setting.

Assistant editors

Ian Randall, who has acted as assistant editor since October 1973, is now living in Maidenhead. He is involved with a programme of extra-mural study which precludes the heavy expenditure of hours which he has devoted to the magazine over the years. We are all indebted to him for the energy he has devoted to assessing materials and to preparing articles for press. Especially are we grateful for the biographies which he has prepared. His skill has often been used to boil the life stories down to digestible size without at the same time arousing the indignation of the authors who naturally enough are averse to seeing their precious productions diminish before their eyes! Yet this has been needful in order to cater for the lambs as well as for the sheep.

Don Evans, formerly an elder at Cuckfield, a pioneer of the church at Crawley and continuing elder there with Austin Walker and Michael Parsons, has stepped in to help. For years Don has been keeping a sharp look out for the errors and clumsiness of construction that creep through, especially during the last stages of preparation when the pressure is on to get everything to the printer. It will help to have

Don within reasonable distance. He has not finally committed himself to the job until we have proved the feasibility of the idea over a period of four or more issues. Evening work in connection with his school teaching together with the needs of a growing family of three boys to involve Dad in their interests and activities mean that the hours of a week are a precious and scarce commodity.

Hearing the Word

The accident mentioned above has increased my rôle has a hearer of expositions (James 1:19-25). A preacher is wise to learn as much as he can from other preachers. This we can do by cassettes which have many advantages. Materials can be selected and parts replayed over and over again if necessary. But however valuable cassettes may be they are never the same as the live situation and can never be an adequate substitute for live preaching.

The overall main impression made upon me in the change from pulpit to pew is the fact that industry, preparation, effort and discipline of mind are required if all the advantages designed for our good are to be retained. Light-hearted hearing is futile hearing. The mind and soul must be disciplined to retain the content of the message. The affections must be prepared to receive the spiritual impact that the Holy Spirit may be prepared to impart in the act of devoted hearing.

From the world of temptation that surrounds the preacher I have been suddenly plunged into another cosmos or world of temptation, namely that which envelopes the hearer. The most basic temptation is to miss a service or a mid-week meeting because of an absolutely lawful and legitimate excuse. This has impressed upon me the importance of establishing in-

Front Cover: *Saudi Arabia with her religious capital, Mecca, lies at the heart of the Muslim world. The approximate population figures in millions are shown in brackets for the different countries. The route by which huge supplies of oil comes from the Persian Gulf for the industrial nations of the West is a nerve centre of the world. According to Operation World (see p. 32) there are no known national Christians in Saudi Arabia. Seven percent of the population are negro descendants of African slaves, mainly themselves slaves because slavery is still legal and still practised.*

violable principles and the need to weave consistent habits into our lives. The most important habit is that we never neglect the assembling of ourselves together. Such neglect is downright evil because it is the main way by which the Adversary can weaken our affections for the means of grace, for God and for fellow-Christians. Once he has made us spasmodic hearers the next step is to make us careless and heedless hearers. The next move is terrifying. It is falling away, and to fall away is apostasy which means abandonment of a former loyalty. Apostasy leads to eternal condemnation of the worst possible kind. This horrible slippery slope is fully described in Hebrews 10:23-31. Those who lightly esteem preaching are the most vulnerable because they place little value on that which is designed to give us most profit. The Scripture says, 'if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall' (1 Cor. 10:12). He who knows his own weakness and fears his own frailty will be most careful to keep himself close to God by being a diligent hearer and doer of the Word. The article 'The primacy of preaching' amplifies this subject and refers to present day trends to devalue and disparage preaching among evangelicals.

News

Bob Sheehan, author of *Which Version Now* (Carey, 32pp, 80p) who tackles a difficult subject in this issue of the magazine, is to take up the pastorate at the Welwyn Evangelical Church in December.

The Evangelical Church at Welwyn can trace its spiritual ancestry back to 1695. Almost as old as Welwyn (not to be confused with the modern Welwyn Garden City) is a handsome old building called Guessens. For many years under the direction of the Welwyn Evangelical Church, it has served as a home for students, but now is to become the headquarters of the E.M.F. (European Missionary Fellowship). Omri Jenkins is the director. The Welwyn Evangelical Church has enjoyed an outstanding record in sending missionaries to far-flung corners of the world. We feel it is truly significant that the EMF headquarters is now to be located in Welwyn.

Richard Chester has accepted a call to the Baptist Church at Abingdon, the territory of the Strict Baptist Mission. It is a cause of encouragement to see a strong missionary team

working at Abingdon with determination, relevance and purpose.

Herbert Carson has accepted a call to the Knighton Road Evangelical Church, Leicester. He is due to begin there next February.

The Carey Conference for ministers

The next conference is due to take place at Swanwick, Derbyshire, 12th-14th January. Leith Samuel is to speak on the subject, 'crisis points in the ministry and how to deal with them'. Harry Kilbride is to address the subject of 'mobilising the church for evangelism'. Donald MacLeod is the preacher. If you have not yet booked your place write to the conference secretary: John Rubens, P.O. Box 65, Bedford.

Correspondence: What constitutes a New Testament Church?

In the last issue, Pastor David Kingdon explained that the Church is constituted by the saving action of God, the preaching of the Gospel, and the believing response of men. The elements of believing response were shown to be repentance, faith and baptism. In arguing for the significance of baptism in the Pauline epistles, Edwin King was quoted as writing; '*Paul reproves division over water-baptism, declares his indifference and says, "Christ sent me not to baptise but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:10-17).*'

Edwin King pointed out in subsequent correspondence that (a) his article was explaining the view of *Bunyan* on the subject of baptism; (b) in context his use of the word '*indifference*' referred in no way to the 'spiritual worth and significance' of the ordinance but *only* to the apostle's desire to refuse glory for those persons he had baptised.

In reply David Kingdon apologises for not making it clear that he quoted from an article by Mr. King on Bunyan. Interested readers may refer to Rev. King's article in *Fellowship* (Nov/Dec 1978).

The above-described correspondence is detailed (4 pages) and can be supplied upon request. Cost: 35 pence. We are sorry that we have to resort to these economies which apply also to the abridgment of Mr. Budgen's work on Flavel.

As he was reading Spurgeon's sermons a pastor in America began to wrestle with the doctrines of grace. This led in turn to books published by the Banner of Truth. Being a man of enterprise he boarded a plane for Edinburgh determined to make rapid progress in the newly discovered dimensions of free grace. Iain Murray helped him along and then directed him for further counsel to the editor of this magazine. To shorten the story David Seefried went as a missionary to Germany but his health broke down so badly that it was questioned whether he would survive. He was compelled to return to America where he took up the pastorate of a small church in the centre of Rochester City on Lake Ontario, New York State. That church (Trinity Baptist Church) has grown and has been wonderfully prospered. In addition to the usual responsibilities of a minister Pastor Seefried loves radio preaching. His voice can be heard almost daily over the air.

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.²⁶ For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.²⁷ Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.²⁸ Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.²⁹ Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him,³⁰ because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me. *Philippians 2:25-30.*

Reformation of our missionary principles

In the course of expounding Philippians, I came to know Epaphroditus, one of the early missionaries. I found that there was a striking similarity between his experience and mine; he was sent, he became ill, he returned home. A real affinity developed between us and in this way what could have been of theoretical interest only became something alive and practical.

To introduce the subject, let me point out some of the basic facts of missionary work before considering in more detail the principles involved.

Because missionary work is of great importance to God, it should be important to us. Missionary work is not easy and so the more we know about it the more likely we will be to get involved and stay involved. Missionary work that is guided by biblical principles will be both intense and fruitful. Missionary work is suffering from insufficient numbers of personnel as well as from *ineffective* personnel.

As we turn to principles, would you, please, first read Philippians 2:25-30 and then be ready to keep referring to the individual verses as we come to consider them.

Principle Number One – (Phil. 2:25a)

The character of the missionary is vital

The right Christian character is essential to the success of all Christian endeavour; this is especially true for missionary work.

Paul, in discussing Epaphroditus (v. 25), describes the character of this missionary in three ways: ‘my brother’, ‘companion in labour’ and ‘fellow soldier’.

My brother – Christian attributes of quality and love. This term is one of tender affection and shows us that Epaphroditus knew how to get on with fellow Christians. This was not just a cordial relationship but one of real love and concern. Both of these men were in union with Christ and therefore they were in communion with each other. They were brothers; they had the same Father, the same Saviour, the same faith and belonged to the same family.

Our usefulness to the cause of God will depend upon our ability to get on with each other and to love one another fervently: to see that, although we look at things a little differently, we are ‘brothers’ who walk according to the new commandment of John 13:34, 35 to love one another.

A missionary must be all that is required of an elder in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. We usually distinguish between a pastor and a missionary inasmuch as a missionary leaves his homeland for a foreign land with its distinctive culture and language. He has much more to contend with than the minister or pastor at home. The requirements or qualifications for eldership are therefore even more important for him. What are they? First of all, an elder must be a man. We have come to think of missionaries as predominantly women; but strictly speaking the women are valuable helpers. Depending on your exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:11 you might call them deaconesses; but it is a misnomer to call them missionaries.

The missionary is involved in church planting which includes preaching, ruling and leading. As an elder the missionary should have a good marriage and rule his family well. His children should be in submission to the teachings of the Bible. He should be above reproach and be holy and disciplined in his life; not violent, but gentle; not quarrelsome. He must not be quick-tempered. This is especially important in a strange environment where there is much to try one’s patience and disturb one’s composure while attempting to perform such an awesome task. The missionary’s grasp of truth needs to be comprehensive, clear and firm, for he must be able to teach and be competent to refute those who oppose sound doctrine.

Such positive attributes are most important. We should never underestimate the personality. Remember, the people most used of the Lord are those who have warm hearts and can express genuine love. Epaphroditus was one of

these people. There would be no petty jealousies for him; no rivalries, no vindictiveness; but rather a warm expression of love. Paul calls him 'my brother'.

Companion in labour – Christian labour. Here a statement is made by Paul that shows us that Epaphroditus was not afraid of work. Perhaps it was his zeal for work that exposed him to the illness that almost killed him. He was not slothful, lazy or negligent regarding his work; certainly not if he was running at Paul's pace (see 2 Tim. 3:10, 11). We must understand that being a missionary involves *work*. Being a missionary is about one percent glamour and ninety-nine percent work. As soon as the plane touches the runway, the glamour is over and the work begins. The trip to Rome by Epaphroditus was by ship and probably had its moments of excitement; but once there it was *work*. Every area of the Christian life involves work. Note these verses:

'choose you this day whom you will *serve*'

pastors – '*labour* in word and doctrine'

teachers – 'study to show yourself approved, a *workman*'

all believers – '*work* out your own salvation'.

Take the illustrations used in the Bible regarding a Christian: he is a builder, a sower, a fisher, a farmer, a runner. All these denote labour. Missionary work is no exception and if the missionary has the same qualities as Paul and Epaphroditus he will labour to the point of exhaustion in the work of the Lord. It is possible for missionaries to become lazy. The temptation to do little is greater if there is isolation combined with discouragement.

Fellow soldier – Christian battle. Epaphroditus was not one that shrunk back from the battle; but one that 'earnestly contended for the faith'. The implications are many:

it implies an awareness of doctrine,

it implies a knowledge of the enemy,

it implies a strong faith,

it implies being equipped (Eph. 6:12-18).

The missionary must not be a weak man when it comes to contending for the faith. He must be able to use the sword for aggression and the shield for protection. I personally believe that the foreign mission field is *front line* duty. The attacks of Satan are intense, prolonged and unusual. The lost are indifferent, hard and wary of strangers. Therefore, a missionary must be a 'soldier' ready for battle, following closely his Captain into the thick of the fight. Epaphroditus was such a man, willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with Paul. What encouragement that must have been to the Apostle.

To summarise, let me stress that these matters – love, labour and battle – must be kept in balance. A missionary cannot be all love, to the neglect of the work and the battle; nor can he be all battle, to the neglect of love and labour; nor all labour, to the neglect of love and battle. Our tendency is to go to one extreme

or the other rather than keeping a balance. Balance was shown by the men of Nehemiah's day who built with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other.

Principle Number Two – (Phil. 2:25b)

The local church is central

The local church alone is responsible for sending forth missionaries. After the missionary is sent forth, the local church has a responsibility to remain actively involved in that missionary's work.

Paul uses two further titles in talking of Epaphroditus; these being 'your messenger' and 'your minister'. These touch two areas and show us that Epaphroditus was commissioned by the church at Philippi.

Your messenger – The word used here is the word for 'apostle' but used in the general sense. It means one sent forth or commissioned. This means that Epaphroditus was set apart by the church, instructed by the church and sent out by the church. He was their messenger, and we should note that the church was responsible for the work and for the worker. The messenger, in turn, was responsible for the work and he was responsible to the church.

The commissioning of a missionary is a very important undertaking.

It is no token matter, undertaken just to appear scriptural.

It must be done with much prayer.

It must be done only by a well-taught congregation.

It must be done only for a local church-oriented missionary.

'Your minister' – or 'he that ministers' or 'one sent to take care' (NIV). This phrase signifies one who has aim or purpose. Certainly Epaphroditus was not 'an arrow shot at random into the air' but a man with a definite objective and purpose. The church sent him forth with a twofold responsibility. The first was to take a monetary gift to Paul. The second was to labour for and with Paul. These were the definite objectives defined by the church, the completion of which would mean success, and the lack of completion, failure. There is a hint in the text that disappointment was present at Philippi and indeed with Epaphroditus because of his becoming ill and not finishing the assigned tasks.

It is of utmost importance that when missionaries are sent forth the goals are clearly defined by the church and understood by the missionary. Much energy is lost, money squandered, and time mis-spent when a missionary swerves off course. Then indeed we can feel some disappointment. While allowing for the leading of the Spirit, we must also be prepared to do practical diligent research and full preparatory work before sending the missionary.

Two Scripture texts give us some light on how the early church conducted themselves in this area of local church responsibility.

1. *Acts 13:1-3* – Although some things have changed since the passing of the Apostles, the involvement of the local church in prayer and sending forth labourers has not changed. This was a blessed privilege for the church at Antioch. In their identifying with Barnabas and Paul, they also identified with their labours. Let us note that this privilege should never be given to an organisation (mission board) but should be kept by the local church. How wrong to say that the church is not able to handle the task of missions. She can and must!

Mission Boards are service agencies, designed to help the local church in any way possible. They should never usurp the churches' authority, nor diminish their responsibility or rob them of the blessings and growth resulting from meeting missionary responsibilities.

2. *Acts 14:26-28* – This passage shows us missionaries with a sense of local church authority and involvement. The church had sent them out on a specific mission to preach and establish churches. Paul and Barnabas returned to give a report of their activities.

From this we observe that a dual sense of responsibility should be developed between the local church and her missionary who should realise that his ministry is a vital part of that of the local church. The problems, disappointments, successes and struggles of the missionary are all followed by the local church to her own enrichment.

Principle Number Three – (Phil. 2:25)

Money is important

Paul required support (Phil. 4:18) but it was not finance alone that the Philippians provided. Epaphroditus was sent with a monetary gift for Paul, but we are told that Epaphroditus himself was also a gift to Paul to help him in his labours.

Our involvement in giving can be a real blessing because our hearts go where our hard-earned investment is sent. But if we ever conceive of the church as merely a place in which to raise money, or if we feel satisfied in giving our money only, then we have missed the point. It often appears that those of us who belong to smaller churches can do little more than help the larger churches send forth missionaries, but in doing so we must never comfort ourselves that our responsibility is fulfilled. Though Rome was 800 miles away from Philippi they had an esteemed elder there as well as their financial backing.

The need today is staggering. There are mission stations being closed and nations not being reached. Our churches need to be like the Sea of Galilee with an inlet and outflow; not like the Dead Sea that always takes in but never flows out. The local church must always be encouraging people to go forth, even though the ones who go are the tithing, dedicated backbone of the church. God will water the church (Prov. 11:25), giving us back *more* than we give out. We ought to take up the principle of tithing when it comes to sending forth Christian workers. One of the constant matters for our prayer lists ought to be that the Lord would send forth labourers (Matt. 9:35-39).

Seeing that missions involve finance and elders, men as well as money, we must be careful to emphasise and encourage giving in both areas. What hinders us from doing so when it comes to giving our best men?

Is it a desire for numerical success in the church?

Is it a fear that there will be inadequate giving?

Is it a fear of causing instability in the church by losing our best people?

What will conquer these fears? Fear will be overcome by realising the urgency of the hour, the desperate state of the lost, and the omnipotent power of God to provide.

In concluding this section on money, we remember that all missionary work begins with prayer – prayer for labourers to be raised up and sent out. That, in turn, leads to the necessity of full and adequate financial support of those elders sent out. This is pleasing to God as Paul said of the Philippian financial support, ‘The gifts you sent are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God’ (Phil. 4:18). Remember that the financial needs of a missionary and his family can sometimes be twice the average. All the needs of travel, setting up home and giving hospitality, literature, education and care of children have to be thought about. Deacons, who have a responsibility to the churches in these matters, ought to take all these factors into account.

Principle Number Four – (Phil. 2:26, 27)

Mutual care and concern must be promoted

In all missionary endeavour there should be evident a spirit of tender concern and sensitivity between the church and the missionary. This is a two way street. These two verses illustrate a great deal of concern on the part of the missionary for his home church and on the part of the home church for the missionary. (Have you looked at the verses? We must not be lazy Bible students!) The cause of all of this concern was the illness of Epaphroditus. We have reason to believe that it was an extended illness of three months duration. Though we are not told what illness Epaphroditus had, we are told that it was *severe*, even to the point of death. Such a severe illness is hard physically and emotionally but especially so for anyone far away from home.

Have you ever noted the large number of missionaries who become ill on the field? This is not happening just because they are exposed to new diseases, but often as a result of the added strain that they experience on a foreign field. Also, if a missionary is conscientious about his responsibility before the Lord and to the church, he will labour with great intensity which many times causes illness (note verse 30).

There is often a tendency among Christians to equate illness with being out of God's will. I know that upon our return home from Germany it was hinted and sometimes openly stated that our return proved that we were out of God's will in going to Europe. Nonsense! There is not even the faintest hint of that reasoning in this text but rather rich praise and commendation for Epaphroditus by the Apostle. This text is instructive in the areas of sickness and divine healing. Epaphroditus was not automatically healed and neither was Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20).

The reaction to this illness can be discerned. First we can see that being sick affected Epaphroditus emotionally as well as physically. He became home sick and longed to be with the people at Philippi. Also Epaphroditus was full of heaviness, or greatly grieved, which resulted from the reaction of the church. Can we not see a missionary here that is very sensitive to the mood of the local church? He was troubled in his spirit because word had reached Philippi about his illness; and now the church was troubled. Many missionaries have this sensitivity when they leave for the field but too often it is lost. This is not always the case, but too often it is! Secondly, we see that the church was very concerned about Epaphroditus' illness. There is a lot of speculation as to what the concern of the church was; whether they were disappointed that their missionary outreach had not been fully successful, or whether they were disappointed in Epaphroditus himself. It is all speculation and we must not read our own ideas into the text but note that Paul highly commends Epaphroditus in verse 25, goes into detail about how bad the illness was in verses 26, 27, encourages the church to give Epaphroditus a good reception in verse 29 and finally encourages them to hold such a man in high regard, giving the reasons in verse 30.

There was disappointment but not anger. The church sends out and supports a missionary with certain understandings and with certain expectations regarding that missionary's future ministry. If these expectations are not realised or if misunderstandings arise, the church is going to experience disappointment which must be accepted graciously because patience and perseverance glorify God.

Can we see the sensitivity that existed between the church and their missionary? Would to God we could recapture this spirit today!

To sum up this principle we see that an independent attitude on the part of the missionary is not right, nor is it correct when a church simply gives money and leaves it at that without taking an affectionate personal interest in the missionary and his family or, as is so commonly the case, simply concedes personal responsibility for the missionary to a mission board.

Principle Number Five – (Phil. 2:29)

Missionaries are to be held in high esteem

Good servants are to be recognised as such by the church and held in high reputation as we see here where Paul exhorts the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus with great joy and to honour such men. He was their missionary and he was a good missionary. Paul wished the church to overcome any feelings of discouragement and to give Epaphroditus a hero's welcome. Not only were they to receive him with unalloyed joy, but they were also instructed *to honour* such a servant of Christ, or to hold him in high regard. We should hold these faithful and fruitful labourers for Christ in high respect in our churches.

This matter raises the question of the missionary and the pulpit. If he fulfils the standards we have been considering then he will have the 'prime time' and not just a half hour on Wednesday evening.

Now, the specialised role of some missionaries (translation work) often means that they are not as proficient or as expert as we would expect in exposition. Prayerful thought must be given to the best use of gifts and time. Care must be taken not to overlook the proper use of talent where it is present.

I believe all these things I have mentioned, if taken to heart could, in the long run, lead to an improvement in our missionary endeavours.

Do you have difficulty in getting books? For instance if you want to procure one of the titles reviewed on the front inside cover how do you go about it? Sometimes one has to employ a private detective to track down that elusive volume! If you have difficulty why not become a member of the Puritan Reformed Discount Book Service. See the back cover for the address. Their range of books is terrific and the service excellent but you will have to keep the rules which are easy.

The Primacy of Preaching

When confusion reigned at Corinth Paul wrote to the Church there and said that he was coming to them not with philosophy, not with miracles, but with preaching! To those who were looking for new philosophies and to those who were looking for supernatural signs, preaching was foolishness. What was foolishness to them was power to God. With that power he, Paul, was coming!

Was this emphasis on preaching consistent? Well, John the Baptist was preeminently a preacher and so was our Lord. Peter was commanded to feed the lambs. At Pentecost and subsequently we find that Peter was not a debator nor a chairman, trying to collate the views of contributors, but a preacher. Paul instructed the Ephesian elders as to their priority, namely, to feed the flock. In his letter to the Ephesians (4:1-16) he explained that the great gift of Christ to his Church was the ministry in order that the believers might be built up and made strong, not blown about with every new idea that comes along.

To attain to the standards required by Scripture for preaching is immensely difficult. Few do attain. And if true preaching is attained how many are there who prove to be receptive hearers? We can never presume that the hearers will be worthy. Elijah was not appreciated and our Lord was thrown out (Luke 4:28-30). We can understand why he stressed the importance of listening well, often saying: 'take heed how you hear' and 'he who has ears to hear let him hear'. Paul stressed that saving faith comes by hearing the proclamation of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17).

Since this is so we must not be surprised that the enemy of souls hates and attacks the function of preaching with all the diabolical powers at his command. If he can supplant this activity then he has removed the greatest threat to his kingdom that there is. Imagine if the present Pope, so vigorous, popular and articulate, was a mighty preacher of the Gospel! The possibilities defy the imagination! But Satan has taken care of that. Pomp and circumstance, not to say Mariolatry, the Mass, politics and all the rest has obscured Christ from view. We simply do not think of Gospel preaching when we think of the Pope. And when we go to America the main impression we receive is that Christianity is an entertainment and that the Gospel is really an easy and slick provision for all man's emotional needs. And then in so many churches in America it is organisation and administration that has the pre-eminence, not preaching. I mention America because of the enormous potential that country possesses; a potential that is crippled by superficiality. In Russia any potential is automatically crushed by the iron grip of a tyrannical anti-God state.

Now what does Satan do about preaching? He does two things. First he tries to hinder the preacher and second he endeavours to distract the hearers.

1. *Opposition to the preacher*

Any preacher or potential preacher will be the target of Satan's enmity. If he cannot destroy the preacher or ruin his reputation he will sidetrack him to become an administrator, a talker, an entertainer or anything else in sight which falls short of preaching. If that fails then he will use his favourite device which is to discourage the preacher and persuade him that he is ineffective and useless and that his labour is in vain.

To be a preacher one has to be an incessant student and intercessor. Paul believed in the primacy of the intellect (Rom. 12:1,2) and in the primacy of labour (1 Tim. 5:17, 2 Tim. 2:15). Yet there are so many other aspects to preaching that it takes all one's time and powers to do justice to it. The absence of only one vital element can ruin the whole. The presence of some unfortunate distortion or imbalance can also cripple this vocation. Included among the ingredients are exposition, doctrine, law, gospel, practical application, spiritual experience (spirituality), relevance and power. In this solemn and awesome exercise there must be something for everyone, life for the dead, healing for the diseased, cures for the distempered, sight for the blind, correction for the errorists, comfort for the afflicted, warning for the careless — the list is endless. All this can never be accomplished without diligent and constant labour within the means of grace. Korchnoi the chess player goes to tremendous

lengths to attain maximum alertness of mind and body for his matches for the world championship against Karpov. Preachers should do all they can to keep themselves in prime condition spiritually, mentally, physically. They cannot afford to be lax in any way.

2. Opposition to the hearers

One of Satan's best methods to destroy preaching is to spread dirty propaganda tricks about preaching being boring, dull, ill-prepared — or to hinder and deceive in such a way that wretched substitutes take over. They are all too well-known: the power of personality and preaching of self; the presentation of sentimental stories; the recital of obvious and trite comments on a passage of Scripture which reveal inadequate preparation or sheer lack of ability for the calling. Another device is to get hearers to regard preaching lightly. Then they do not prepare themselves prior to hearing, do not concentrate properly during the sermon and make no effort to retain what they have heard. Did our Lord not show that this battle is so intense that the demons are ready to pluck away the seed immediately the hearing is over? The demons do not even have the decency to wait until the hearers get home to lunch, so keen are they to wrest away that seed which could germinate by the Spirit into eternal life!

It would seem in the present climate that the Adversary has enjoyed immense success in cutting people off from preaching altogether. This he has succeeded in doing by the use of ideas, the main one being that the Bible is gobbledigook with its creation and other make-believe stories. But there are also the popular ideas that churches are dungeons, pulpits are out of date, preachers are bumbler and pews are incongruous or out of keeping with modern life. Such simple things — yet from them grossly unfair caricatures are portrayed and perpetuated. Satan will use any means whatever to be derogatory about preachers and the pulpits they occupy because this serves his purpose so well. He is so clever with his propaganda that believers themselves eventually succumb and become rebellious. The enemy will take any unpleasant feature in the preacher's personality, style, voice or delivery and blow it up to the point of distraction. And let us freely confess that listening is a very exacting exercise. For unbelievers the prospect of repenting and changing their lifestyle is more terrifying than hell itself. They will rather risk the Bible being wrong about the judgment and eternal hell than change their ways. That is why our Lord said that it takes divine omnipotent power to draw sinners to hear — they won't come without it (John 6:44). But believers have their own desperate struggles too because discriminating preaching is often like a blow-lamp which searches out and scorches out our secret sins and lusts. That can be intensely painful. It is a marvel that anyone at all listens to true preaching! But there are also attractions. The sweet consolations and enjoyments of the Gospel are of inestimable value. The unsearchable riches of Christ come to us mostly through preaching (Eph. 3:8). What can compare with the burning of heart we sometimes experience when the Word is opened to us (Luke 24:32)?

In his book on preaching Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones devotes the first two chapters to the subject of the primacy of preaching. He outlines the subtle devices used to destroy preaching in his lifetime. The battle continues today. Now we have the cry for participation, that is that we all need to participate rather than being regimented. The proportion of fellowship and sharing is an issue for every individual assembly to decide. But the emphasis which disparages preaching is coming through clearly as though we do not participate when we listen to a preacher. I maintain that nothing is more 'participatory' than this exercise which should absorb all our faculties, mind, heart, emotions, conscience and will.

I will illustrate this by referring to Bunyan who was admittedly an outstanding preacher. Recently I was able to view a half-hour film of Bunyan's preaching, produced by professional and secular actors. This film depicted Bunyan being allowed out of the prison at Bedford for an hour during which time he went into the woods for a secret rendezvous. There he preached to his people. He then disappeared as mysteriously as he had appeared. The sermon was on the heavenly footman — 'so *run* that ye may obtain'. It was pure preaching. Every listener young and old was totally taken up, totally absorbed, totally participant. Here and there the tears rolled as mine do now at the remembrance of it. Every listener was spellbound. The preacher spoke as though he had come from the throne of heaven and was about to return any moment. What he said had order, substance, imagination, illustration and the clearest doctrine about God, Christ, Satan, justification by faith, heaven, hell,

There is no office so honourable as that of the preacher. There is no work so important to the souls of men. It was an office which the Son of God was not ashamed to take up. It is an office to which he appointed his twelve apostles. It is an office to which St. Paul in his old age specially directs Timothy's attention. He charges him with almost his last breath to 'preach the word'. It is the means which God has always been pleased to use above any other, for the conversion and edification of souls. The brightest days of the Church have been those when preaching has been honoured. The darkest days of the Church have been those when it has been lightly esteemed.

John Charles Ryle.

holiness and discipline of life. This was a secular programme in which those responsible simply studied Bunyan's life and works. Here were secular people who saw the main point, namely, that here was a true preacher. Is not that a rebuke to Christians who disparage the primacy of preaching? The tragedy is that those secular producers are unlikely ever to hear living preaching of the kind which they acted so accurately and so well.

What then can we do to preserve the primacy of preaching?

First let us not in any way fall into the trap of serving the Devil's cause in disparaging preaching. Instead of grumbling about the hardness of the pews let us rather make a contribution for cushions to be supplied. Instead of giving way to talk about being regimented in rows into pews let us remind such critics of the comfort of that compared to our Russian brethren standing for hours in cold buildings or outside in blizzards in the woods. They welcome preaching for as long as the Word comes with edifying, soul enriching power. What is wrong anyway in sitting in rows? What do people do when they listen to politicians, sit in s-bends or circles? Remind people too that hearing true expository preaching is the most participatory activity in which we could ever indulge. I see those people again hanging on the words of Bunyan — yet not his words — the Word of the living God captivating their minds, hearts, emotions, wills! Is there anything more participatory than for us to love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, bodies as we have seen him in the sanctuary? An hour as a doorman in God's house is better than 1,000 elsewhere. The nearest to home we will ever be is when heaven invades our souls and as God takes us up to himself through his Word made alive, quick and powerful. Singing and praying are acts of participation in which all our minds and spirits are absorbed, but the supreme act of worship is when God takes over our souls as he speaks to us from his Word. The wisdom we receive and retain from the Word in preaching is wisdom supreme. Solomon was commended for the request that he made. It is through preaching that we can receive wisdom.

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding (Prov. 4:7).

Besides combating Satan's dirty propaganda tricks let us encourage our preachers. If they lack the books they should have let us help them. If they can be relieved of counselling tasks and helped with their visiting responsibilities let us give them assistance. Also if we do not pray for them as they study and also prepare ourselves for receiving the Word with meekness we will fall short of the benefits of the life-giving food and drink that our heavenly Father designs for us by that means. The best gift he has given us is his Son (1 John 4:10). That gift he describes as a revelation (logos) (John 1:1) which in turn is synonymous with the Scriptures (Ps. 138:2). In other words, Christ is mediated to us through the Scriptures: supremely so in preaching. We can be sure of this, that when the earth is filled with a knowledge of his glory as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14) it will be because preaching has at last been recovered to its rightful place, as it was at the beginning, and as it has always been in the great evangelical awakenings of the Church throughout her history.

The Godly Sorrow of Repentance

by Richard Brooks, Pastor of Send Evangelical Church, Surrey

‘Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death’ (2 Cor 7:10, N.I.V.).

On one occasion the Lord Jesus Christ said, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change (are converted) and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Matt. 18:3). Unless you are converted! Jesus was pointing to the essential in becoming a Christian – you *must* be converted. There can be no becoming a Christian without being converted. Now we know that the Bible sets forth the great matter of conversion as having two essential aspects to it – there must be repentance and there must be faith. When saying farewell to the elders at Ephesus, the apostle Paul exhorted them in this way: ‘I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus’ (Acts 20:21). There is no conversion without repentance and faith. With regard to repentance, there must be a finishing with sin and its enjoyments; with regard to faith there must be a laying hold of and a clinging to the Lord Jesus Christ as the sinner’s only refuge and hope.

This article is concerned with the first of these essential ingredients in conversion – repentance. It is most important that we give serious consideration to this subject, for it is being forgotten about, side-stepped and even denied in many quarters today, including evangelical ones. When reviewing a book recently for a Christian newspaper, I was confronted with the recommendation that the ‘proclamation of the Gospel of individual salvation, that has been the hallmark of evangelical revivalism throughout this century’ needs to be abandoned in favour of what he calls ‘festivals of praise’ or ‘celebration evangelism’, when ‘we simply praise God and give him all the glory, and his power, the power of the Holy Spirit, is poured out’. With amazement, we ask what sort of evangelism is that? What sort of conversions will be produced? At the very least, it is wholly unfaithful to the biblical way of conversion – the preaching of the whole counsel of God in the power of the Spirit of God, leading to repentance and faith in a sinner’s life.

Yet even when repentance *is* preached upon or written about, it is a word often used jokingly, wrongly or inadequately. And there must be lots of people walking the streets, and sitting in the churches, who imagine they are Christians, but who have never known or felt true repentance. I say *true* repentance, because there is a phoney, unreal sort of repentance as well, which may be mistaken for the real thing.

The verse of Scripture at the head of this study puts us right. It speaks of a godly sorrow which brings repentance — a repentance which leads to salvation and does not leave any regret. Let us enquire, by means of three questions, into this matter of godly sorrow.

1. *What is godly sorrow?*

Paul explains the answer by means of a most helpful contrast between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Now godly sorrow is (literally) ‘the according to God sorrow’ and worldly sorrow is ‘the according to/of the world sorrow’. That points up the distinction and shows that these two ‘sorrows’ have nothing in common, although the latter is sometimes falsely taken for the former.

What is worldly sorrow for sin? For a start, it comes from and is manufactured by the world. It is humanly produced. Think of it this way. If you possessed a fast car with up to, say, 140 m.p.h. on the clock, and the makers boasted that it could manage such a speed, you might argue to yourself ‘now what’s the use of having a car that does 140 if I can never try it out?’ So you head off for the M1 and put your foot down. Before long 70 m.p.h. is left behind as a forgotten stranger, then 100 is crept past. Then, deciding that you will admire the scenery at the same time, you look into your rear-view mirror and are alarmed to see a white range rover, with blue lights flashing and a couple of stern, beefy looking men in dark blue uniform in it, coming up behind you and signalling to you that they desire the pleasure of your company on the hard shoulder! It is very likely that at that point you will have worldly sorrow! And if the end of this little story is that the police book you or you lose your licence, then you will most certainly have worldly sorrow. Why? Not because you are overcome with a sense of wretchedness for having broken the highway code, not because you have offended the policemen whose business it is to maintain the law, but rather because you are embarrassed, you are inconvenienced, you are annoyed with yourself, you are cross that you have been caught. You have got yourself into a mess — you’re in a tight corner. In a word, your sorrow is because of the consequences as they affect *you*; self is always the central point in worldly sorrow. There is no real conviction of wrong-doing or law-breaking. And so it is on a revolutionary change of mind, heart and behaviour. The adulterer is sorry that he is found out, the thief is sorry that he has been caught, and so on — because of the consequences for *himself*.

But godly sorrow is altogether different. Godly sorrow arises in the sinner’s heart and mind not just when he sees that he has sinned, done wrong, transgressed the Law which God has set — but when he sees that his sins are *an offence against God*. It is not, primarily, that he has been inconvenienced or that he has got himself in a hole that he can’t talk himself out of. It is, rather, that he has grieved and offended the holy God. That is the vital aspect of godly sorrow. It sees sins from God’s viewpoint, as it were.

We have important examples of this in both Old and New Testaments. Just consider one from each. First, remember David, the man after God's own heart. Psalm 51 shows David after he had been convicted before God of his sins — adultery with Bathsheba, which led to the murder of Uriah on the pretext that dead men tell no tales. Yet he did not say in this psalm 'O Lord, what will people think of me now — the king of Israel in this mess — soon it will be the talk of the town — please help me to salvage some of my reputation and hold onto my kingdom before it's too late'; nor did he say that he had sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah (although, of course, he had). What he *did* say was 'for I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight . . .*' (Ps. 51:3f.). David had no doubt about the seriousness of his sin as first and foremost against God himself. And then there is the prodigal son — you remember that he took his share of his father's wealth, went off to the bright lights in search of freedom, let it rip with wine, women and song, and then ran out of money, friends, employment and hopes. Then he came to his senses, decided to go back home, and prepared his speech: 'Father, *I have sinned against heaven and against you . . .*' (Luke 15:18). Not, 'please bale me out'. Both David and the prodigal are brought to the place of humiliation and heaviness of soul before God, because they see that in all their sinfulness it is against God himself, it is against heaven that they have sinned — and that their sin is abhorrent, odious and vile before the One whose 'eyes are too pure to look on evil' (Hab. 1:13) and who 'is light; and in him there is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5). They are not taken up at that point with the consequences (though sin *has* consequences), but rather with a view of sin that they had never had before — God's view. Here is godly sorrow — grief for sin because it is sin: grief for sin because God hates it, because it is a great offence and cause of dishonour to him, grief for sin because it is an insult to his glory, holiness and excellence. This is the godly sorrow that we must preach about — and that we must feel in our own hearts.

Let us not have a light view of sin, as if easy sin can be followed by easy repentance. Oh for more brokenness of heart — for the Spirit of God convicting, hammering and smashing us afresh. Godly sorrow is a deep thing, coming from the innermost recesses of heart, mind and conscience. Sometimes it will be accompanied by tears. Though we must not fall into the trap of assuming that the fact of tears *alone* proves a godly sorrow or true repentance. And similarly, let not the absence of tears be taken automatically for a lack of godly sorrow or true repentance. Some sorrow can be too deep for tears. Or as John Flavel puts it, 'it is possible, the waters of sorrow may run deep in the heart, when the eye cannot yield a drop'.

2. *How may I attain godly sorrow?*

If we take up this theme in preaching or conversation (and let us indeed do so!) it may be that some one will respond, 'yes, I accept the commandments as from God, I see that I have broken them and so am a sinner, I hear the

summons to repent and acknowledge the fact of my sin, but I cannot honestly say that I actually see my sins from God's view or have this godly sorrow that you urge is necessary. How may I have it? There are no doubt many answers we could give. In the brief compass of this article we shall consider the two most important ones. They may look simple— even oversimple. But don't be deceived. If they are taken seriously, they will be found to be far more profound than their wording implies.

First: ask God for it. For remember we saw earlier it is the 'according to God sorrow'. We must go to God for it. Naaman took a dim view of things when Elisha told him to go and wash himself seven times in the Jordan to be rid of his leprosy (2 Kgs. 5). Naaman considered himself too big a man to be told and the command he was given too simple. He deserved special treatment. Consequently at first we read that 'Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy"'. If we would have godly sorrow, then we must be ready to ask God for it. Only God gives sight to the blind and life to the dead. We must encourage our hearers to look upon this as his gift— not something you work yourself up into an emotional state for, not something that is no more than being carried along with the crowd at a big evangelistic meeting. Come to God for it. Ask him for it. A person must plead earnestly and persistently with God that he would so work in their heart as to give them his view of their sin. And incentives and encouragements in this direction can be drawn from all over the Scriptures— Ezekiel 36:26, for example, where God says 'I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.' That heart of stone (selfcentred, insensitive, proud and cold) must be replaced by a new heart of flesh (tender, warm, responsive).

*Come, O Thou all-victorious Lord,
Thy power to us make known
Strike with the hammer of Thy Word,
And break these hearts of stone.*

*O that we all might now begin
Our foolishness to mourn,
And turn at once from every sin,
And to our Saviour turn!*

(Charles Wesley).

While you are about it, look up that hymn and meditate upon every verse!

Second: dwell upon the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ for sinners. Dwell long, carefully and deeply. Dwell in an attitude which beseeches the Holy Spirit of God to enable you to see, understand and in some measure enter into what you are dwelling upon. For this is very much directed to producing godly sorrow in the sinner's heart. We need what John Colquhoun, in his famous treatise on

evangelical repentance, speaks of as ‘spiritual and heart-searching views of the Lamb of God bearing our sins and carrying our sorrows’, for only thereby do we behold what an evil and a bitter thing sin is. Rather than leave sin unpunished or rather than leave us ignorant concerning how detestable he finds sin, God spared not his Son — his own, his beloved Son, the very apple of his eye — but delivered him up upon the tree. The Father poured out upon his Son the full basin of his wrath against sin, the full force of his fierce anger, denying him (the eternal Son of God!) the very comforts of the fellowship of the Godhead which were his by nature and by right, leaving him at that awful moment of the Saviour’s cry ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ without any feeling that God loved him, or pitied him or supported him. We are even told (Matt. 27:45) that the sun refused to shine, for ‘from the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land’. From 12 noon until 3 p.m.! The sun which God had created and set in the heavens and which he causes to give out its light and heat — the very sun refused to shine when the Saviour hung upon Calvary. It was black dark in the middle of the day!

May we never be content ourselves to stand distant, or to encourage others to stand distant, from Calvary. We need close views. In treating of this matter, John Flavel writes: ‘a believing sight of Christ will work upon a gracious heart, as a dead son, a beloved and only son, uses to do upon a tender father’s heart . . . was it ever thy sad lot to look upon such an heart-rending object? Didst thou ever feel the pangs and commotions in thy bowels that some have felt upon such a sight? Why, so will thy heart work towards Christ, if ever thou believingly lookest on Him whom thou hast pierced’. He adds a little later: ‘The piercing of Christ by our sin, is that which must pierce thy soul with sorrow.’ Oh the ocean of sufferings that Christ has waded through on the sinner’s behalf. Think what it is to have his death laid to your charge — to have had your sins drive Christ to Calvary, hammer in the nails, pierce his side, mock him and spit upon him, cause him to be made a curse (Gal. 3:13) and be forsaken. Can we still say ‘what has Calvary to do with me?’ What a sea of wrath and punishment he willingly bore for us. Does not your heart break as you consider these things?

A different hymn of Charles Wesley from the one we mentioned earlier begins with these lines:

*All ye that pass by,
To Jesus draw nigh;
To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?
Your ransom and peace,
Your surety He is,
Come, see if there ever was sorrow like His.*

3. *What flows from godly sorrow?*

Once again, the contrast of godly sorrow with worldly sorrow is so helpful and points the way for us. We note that ‘worldly sorrow brings death’. In the ultimate application of

that, of course, there is the death of eternal physical and spiritual separation from God, when there will no longer be any opportunity for repentance. Of this he speaks in another place; referring to the time ‘when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels’, Paul says that ‘He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power . . .’ (2 Thess. 1:7ff.). Yet without waiting for that day, even now worldly sorrow brings death — the sinner goes down, sinking in misery, regret, all the consequences he has to bear for his folly, increasing loneliness and so on. Indeed, the logical end of worldly sorrow is suicide — many have committed suicide because of the surfeit of worldly sorrow. Think of Judas Iscariot. He had been party to many intimacies with Jesus, along with the other disciples. Yet after betraying Jesus and seeing the consequences, after finding that those with whom he had plotted Jesus’ death did not want to know him any more (so much for partners in crime!), he was so overcome with worldly sorrow and regret that he killed himself. He could not bear it — he could not deliver himself from his own consequences. Death seemed the only way out. Judas stands as the classic example of the unconverted man expressing worldly sorrow and regret in the only way he knew how. Worldly sorrow brings death.

But ‘godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation’. For what did the psalmist say in that 51st psalm we noted earlier? ‘A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.’ And what about Joel 2:13? ‘Rend your *heart* and not your *garments*.’ Godly sorrow is not of itself alone repentance — but it leads to repentance and on to salvation. It leads the sinner to come and fall down before the offended God, and, from that position of humiliation in the dust, to look up to the suffering, bleeding and dying Saviour who died upon the tree as the substitute for sinners, and to plead for God’s mercy upon the rock-like ground of Christ’s merits.

*Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?*
*Was it for crimes that I had done,
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!*

(Isaac Watts).

There *is* a glorious haven of rest for the sinner! There *is* the application of pardon and peace for the troubled and labouring conscience! There *is* an everflowing and everwashing fountain for the sinner who feels the filth of his sin and the desperateness of his condition!

(continued on page 20)

Bob Sheehan, author of this article, has just accepted a call to be the pastor of The Welwyn Evangelical Church, some details of which are described in the book 'Local Church Practice' (Carey Publications).

The Problem of Birth Control

In 'The Basics of Marriage' (R.T. 60), there was an implicit acceptance of birth control. It is necessary to face the problems that some godly folk have in this area.

1. How can birth control be permissible when sexual intercourse was instituted for the purpose of producing children?

As I sought to show in my previous article, reproduction is the second reason for sexual intercourse, not the first. Primarily, sexual intercourse removes isolation and seals the couple together. The evidence for this is to be found in Genesis 2:18f and in the fact of the menopause. If the purpose of sex was to produce children we

would expect it to cease after the menopause, but it does not. Additionally, we may note that for many women the period between honeymoon and menopause and menopause and death are equal, or in some cases the latter period is longer. Throughout this period sexual intercourse has no child-producing value. Sex that does not result in child-birth is, therefore, permissible.

2. Isn't birth control a contradiction of the command 'to fill the earth' (Genesis 1:28)?

While we accept the fact through Adam mankind has indeed been commanded to fill the earth, and this will be accomplished through child-bearing we must remember that this command was to the first pair and not necessarily without qualification to *all* pairs. What responsibilities, however, are laid by this divine blessing on the individual couple?

If we pressed the command too literally we could argue that God requires us to have sexual activity every night so as to ensure a state of constant potential pregnancy. The earth must be filled; we must play

THE GODLY SORROW OF REPENTANCE

(continued from page 19)

That is why this godly sorrow which brings repentance that leads to salvation *leaves no regret*. Where is the true Christian who cries out 'Oh for the old life!?' Surely he is nowhere to be heard or seen! Where is the Christian who wishes he never knew Jesus – wishes he had never known godly sorrow – wishes he had never been enabled by the Spirit of God to repent of his sin and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ with a whole heart?! There are plenty of worldly sorrowers who *thought* they had repented and were all set for a lovely time under God's favour, whilst continuing to enjoy sin, the old life and the old ways, whenever the fancy took them. But no believer in his right mind will ever regret that God has worked in his life – plucked him as a brand from the burning flames – stretched out his hand to him, lifted him up out of the mire, established his feet upon a rock (even the Lord Jesus Christ!) and put a new song in his mouth, even a song of praise to God. No! 'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.' Know it! Proclaim it!

our part fully. Few, if any, would push the verse that far! Rather, they would recognise that the command is an encouragement to have children and that it places on married couples the responsibility of propagating the human race. However, they would also acknowledge that the frequency of sexual relations and the number of children to be produced by a couple is not defined. Other factors must determine that. It is in this context that family planning takes place.

Indeed, Scripture forbids us to think that sexual activity and reproduction are our constant duties. It expects there to be a monthly cessation of sexual activity (Lev. 20:18) and other reasons for abstinence (1 Cor. 7:5). If hygiene and devotion are reasons for birth control then it is obvious that the prevention of reproduction for good reasons is permissible.

3. Isn't birth control an affront to God's sovereignty?

It is argued that as God is in control of child-birth (1 Sam. 1:6), we must not interfere with his activity in the natural realm. However, this reasoning is faulty. God is also the Healer (Psalm 103:3) but few of us in practice see medicine as an affront to his sovereignty in this natural realm. We accept that sovereignty does not make us passive or remove our responsibility.

Just as God can sovereignly over-rule medicine to make it of no effect when he has purposed, so he can over-rule contraceptives (and even sterilisation!) when he determines. The number of unexpected pregnancies by those taking precautions proves it. Sarah teaches us that he can over-rule the menopause (Gen. 18:11-12; 21:7). We need not fear that birth control over-rules God's sovereignty.

4. If birth control is desirable, why is there such an emphasis on having children in the Old Testament?

The Old Testament emphasis is without doubt. Barrenness was a burden and disgrace (1 Sam. 1:1-6); emasculation a barrier and shame (Deut. 23:1); a big family was a boon (Ps. 127:3-5) and of great importance.

In contrast to the New Testament, the Old gives great emphasis to the outward and physical. There was scarcely anything more important than the continuation of the family name. A childless widow could expect her brother-in-law to give her children to be named after her husband (Gen. 38:8; Deut. 25:5-6). In this way inheritance rights relating to land possession in the promised land were secured (Deut. 25:6; Num. 27:1-11; Ruth 4).

In accordance with this emphasis the favour of God was signified by prosperity in the home and family (Ps. 128:1-4; Deut. 28:4, 11), and his displeasure by family disaster (Deut. 28:18; Ps. 69:25; Jer. 22:30). This general rule of Divine providence explains the attacks made by Job's friends on his godliness when his family suffered disaster (Job 5:3-4, 17-25) and the exasperation of the psalmist with the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 37 and 73).

This connection of physical blessing and divine favour cannot be ignored in our appreciation and interpretation of the Old Testament. The church is now a spiritual body with a spiritual inheritance. As a result, we are cautious in promising physical blessings such as national and financial prosperity to the godly. In the same way, we need caution in applying the Old Testament passages which relate to physical fruitfulness. While the essential principle of God blessing the

godly remains true, its outworking often differs.

This is not to say that it is anything but a blessing to have a large family. Nor is it to deny that children are a gift of God. It is a check, however, on those who would make large families necessarily virtuous and small families suspect, if not sinful! The nuclear age family is 2.4 children! As a person who has already fathered 4 children in 9 years, I make no plea for the nuclear size, but do want to emphasise that Christians must be given the liberty to take all factors into consideration and use family planning methods if they so desire. Old Testament family largeness was accompanied by all sorts of factors foreign to the New Testament situation.

5. 'But God must be obeyed whatever the cost!'

There are those who feel that whatever may be said in favour of birth control, the general tenor of Scripture is against it and therefore obedience to God must take priority over everything else. The problem, however, is what is true obedience to God?

The bread of the Presence was for priests only, but our Lord justified hungry men who ate it (Matt. 12:3-4). The Jewish Sabbath was not for work, but Jesus justified its breaking to help men or animals in need (Matt.

12:11-12). The immoral were to be condemned and punished, but our Lord associated with them to save them (Matt. 9:10-12). In these instances our Lord demonstrated that one Scriptural principle could clash with another and that in such cases people mattered most of all.

It is undoubtedly true that our Lord wants his earth populated, and delights in the families of his children. However, our Lord does not delight in the ignoring of the problems of his people. Is it the obedience that God requires to tell a woman that she must continue to have children when it costs her mental and physical health or even her life? Is it Biblical Christianity that tells couples under great pressure that they must learn to cope and that if their family and married life is wrecked in the process that it is the cost of obedience? I do not think this is the spirit of him who desires mercy and not sacrifice.

This is not to say that all birth control methods are correct – but that would require another article. Nor is it to say that the tacit assumption made in the modern word that birth control is normal and only small families are respectable has any value. Just as it is legitimate for the Christian to use medicine without becoming addicted to it, so it is permissible for Christians to practice birth control in the light of all relevant factors.

One of the oldest evangelical papers in England, *The Life of Faith*, has been purchased by a group that promotes the Charismatic Movement. The name and character of that paper have changed completely. The hitherto reliable *Evangelical Times*, in the November issue 1981, published a forthright and vigorous appeal for the Pentecostal position. We have observed that trend over the past few months and the new editorial policy does not come as a surprise! This does put those who are not Pentecostals or Charismatics in a quandary about what paper to support and recommend.

The following comments on what is involved in sermon preparation are designed as an introduction to Victor Budgen's article on Flavel. Mr. Budgen shows how much care Flavel devoted to the presentation of his material. Prior to presenting the message was the labour of careful exegesis — a study of the meaning of the text. Just how did preachers like Flavel set about their work?

Preparation for preaching

The Puritan approach to expository preaching is a fascinating subject full of rich rewards especially for those whose responsibility it is to rightly divide and apply Scriptures. At the early Puritan conferences Jim Packer presented valuable materials on this theme. In a paper 'The Puritans as Interpreters of Scripture' (1958) Dr. Packer first established the fact that the Puritans regarded the Scriptures in all their parts as the utterance of God, that is, God's word set down in writing. 'Think in every line you read that God is speaking to you,' says Thomas Watson (*Body of Divinity* page 25, 1st Banner edition). He then went on to show that Puritans interpreted Scripture literally and grammatically, consistently and harmoniously, doctrinally and theocentrically, experimentally and practically, and with a faithful and realistic application. To make a truly relevant, searching, edifying application of Scripture is 'a work of great difficulty for the expositor himself, requiring much patience, zeal and meditation, and to the natural and corrupt man will be very unpleasant' (*Westminster Directory*).

The following year a further paper was given by Dr. Packer with the title 'The Puritan View of Preaching the Gospel'. He showed how the Puritans faced up to the deep question of human inability and human responsibility. This consideration of man's inability did not paralyse their preaching and they did not regard evangelistic sermons as a special class of exposition needing special occasions or conventions. Rather, their position was that all Scripture bears witness to Christ and all sermons should aim to expound and apply what is in the Bible and to that extent must be evangelistic. 'The Lord Jesus Christ,' said Robert Bolton, 'is offered most freely, and without exception of any person, every Sabbath, every sermon, either in plain and direct terms or impliedly, at the least.' To the Puritans the Gospel was entirely comprehensive and this is seen in their treatment of all the Biblical subjects, sin, the person and work of Christ, faith, conversion, treatises on the covenant of grace and on the nature of hypocrisy and nominal Christianity. The Puritans were masters in diagnosing the plight of man and his guilt and in displaying the all sufficiency of Christ to meet fallen man in his hopeless condition. Finally Dr. Packer showed that the Puritans were entirely uninhibited in proclaiming the free offers of the Gospel and defends the bulk of them from the charge that they were not entirely clear about the warrant of faith.

It will be helpful here for us to consider the Puritan approach to preaching with a very simple analysis.

First the Puritans concerned themselves with the meaning of the text (many of our modern scholars make wonderful progress up to that point but get not one inch further!). They then explored the doctrines introduced by the text. Finally they concerned themselves with a thorough application of the text and its doctrines to daily life. Sometimes the applications were presented under the heading of 'uses'. The employment of this method occasionally resulted in a complete compendium of systematic theology that was firmly planted in the minds of the hearers, indissolubly joined to the texts of Scripture, and so firmly established that it would be of strength and advantage to them for the rest of their lives. An example is Gurnall's 'Christian in Complete Armour' which developed into a comprehensive theology of practical divinity; not only an armoury of truth but also a most readable 1200 page volume on how to fight successfully the spiritual war. Besides that it is also an explanation of the subtleties of Satan and the counter strategies required to repulse his attacks. Victor Budgen in his first paragraph mentions Flavel's complete work on one text, namely, Revelation 3:20, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock. . . .' That work is a masterpiece in which the whole theology of human responsibility and divine sovereignty is kept in perfect Scriptural harmony.

(continued on page 24)

How Flavel held his hearers

by Victor Budgen

John Flavel rejoiced in seeing the Saviour lifted up and he exulted when many were drawn to the glorified Saviour. No one can miss the vibrant note of joy in the words he penned for the preface to his series of sermons on Revelation 3:20. 'In preaching these sermons, I had many occasions to reflect upon the mystical sense of that scripture, "The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed" Amos 9:13. Sowing and reaping times trode so close upon each other, that, in all humility I speak it to the praise of God, it was the busiest and blesseddest time I ever saw since I first preached the gospel'. But how did he go about preaching this gospel? How did he seek to keep the attention of the men of his day? Obviously many flocked to hear him preach. Quite clearly, as we see from the above quotation, he had seasons of reaping. In his own writings we are told how the sailors of Dartmouth eagerly read and even memorised parts of his tracts. What follows is an outline of some of his methods. I am not suggesting that they are all equally good or even equally scriptural but I believe we can learn from the earnest way in which Flavel attempted to catch and hold the attention of his hearers.

1. *Catchy Titles*

Many people today have a violent aversion to any hint of alliteration. If they read attentively parts of 'Navigation Spiritualised' they are likely to have apoplexy! (Unless they feel different standards apply to the Puritans!) There is a constant elaborate play on words as Flavel, for the benefit of his sailor readers, goes through the various points of the compass, thinking up what can only be described as the most fantastic applications. Yet he had a restricted audience and a restricted aim and, whilst it is easy to criticise, it is important to realise that even here he was straining every nerve to use the vocabulary and thought forms of his hearers in order to convey gospel truth.

PREPARATION FOR PREACHING *(continued from page 23)*

Mr. Budgen's article on Flavel illustrates the concern of the Puritans to prepare thoroughly and yet allow adequate time to reflect upon the details of presentation. Their concern was to grip and hold their hearers in such a way as to establish the truth permanently in their minds, memories and consciences.

Mr. Budgen's work has been abridged and his page references to Flavel's works omitted for the sake of economy. Any scholar specialising in this subject can obtain from us a photo copy of the original work in which all the references are documented for £ 1.00, which includes postage.

When he discusses what the Christian is to do in time of affliction, he summons his reader to look upward, downward, inward, outward, backward, forward, to the right hand and to the left hand. What is more, he supplies a scriptural text for each injunction. Hence, in looking forward, the reader is to be guided by 2 Corinthians 4:18 and in looking to the right and left hand his gaze is to be controlled by Matthew 25:31-46.

That the message should come over as pleasantly and easily as is humanly possible is seen not only in his approach but in statements which he himself made. Here is one. 'Some of Christ's ministers excel in neat and pleasing plainness of language. From this Austin was so affected with the style of Ambrose. "With his sweet words, which I loved, came into my mind the duties which I neglected." And Zanchy saith of Viret, "I admired his eloquence, and the force it hath in moving the affections."'

2. Striking Sayings

In common with many of his Puritan contemporaries Flavel did not interpret 2 Corinthians 4:5,6 to mean that the writer or speaker should mumble away in some kind of anonymous obscurity and faceless false humility. The Puritans did not string together glistening caskets of sparkling sayings for the sake of it; but, excited, enthused and gripped by their themes, they nevertheless did produce a constant stream of arresting and memorable sayings.

'If Abraham's faith be not in your hearts, it will be no advantage that Abraham's blood run in your veins,' is striking enough to challenge any man in any age. And who, under stress, can fail to catch the comfort of this? 'We live among lions, and them that are set on fire by hell, Ps. 57:4. The only reason of our safety is this, that he who is the keeper of the lions, is also the shepherd of the sheep.'

With a quite deliberate play on words (perhaps partly lost in our day), he tells us, writing of the cross in the Christian life, 'Many there are that affect the reputation and sweet of it who cannot endure the labour and sweat of it.' Elsewhere people filled with a proud and surly spirit are likened vividly to blown up bladders. Obviously such cannot happily lie next to others. Flavel shrewdly comments. '... bladders blown up with wind, will not lie close together, but prick them, and you may pack a thousand into a little room. . . .' Proverbs 13:4 is his proof text. And how clearly he sums up false profession. 'These professors have more of the moon than of the sun, little light, less heat, but many changes. . . .'

Listen also to Flavel describing how God delights in pardoning great sinners and yet in doing so is still just. 'What an argument is here for a poor believer to plead with God! Lord, if thou save me by Jesus Christ, thy justice will be fully satisfied at one full payment; but if thou damn me, and require satisfaction at my hand, thou canst never receive it: I shall make but a dribbling payment, though I lie in hell to eternity, and shall be infinitely behind with thee. Is it not more for thy glory to receive from Christ's hand, than to

require it at mine?' 'Dribbling payment' expresses the point strikingly.

3. *Apt Quotations*

Works by Puritans like Watson, Brooks and Flavel abound in quotations from writers other than the Bible itself. Not a few of them are classical allusions! They are in the main quotations which illustrate and support Scripture, and are not simply to draw attention to the learning of the preacher.

Flavel himself excels in this sphere. He surpasses Thomas Goodwin whose style is terse and bare. He surpasses Owen who often does not trouble to translate the Latin for his less classical readers. He surpasses Brooks whose illustrations are perhaps too heavily weighted in the direction of Roman history. Only Thomas Watson would seem his equal in this ability. And Watson is a writer who particularly earns the praise of Spurgeon for his skill in illustration.

'To those that plead for the salvation of heathens, and profane Christians, we may apply that tart rebuke of Bernard, that while some labour to make Plato a Christian, he feared they therein did prove themselves to be heathens,' shows his skilful and relevant use of a remark by a medieval churchman.

In the course of his work on providence Flavel alludes to the helpful comment of Augustine, 'If no sin were punished here, no providence would be believed; again, if every sin were openly punished here, no judgement hereafter could be expected.'

Flavel was in the happy position of being able to refer to Norton, Marshal, 'divines of good note', Lockyer on Colossians, Howe on Job 14:14, ten expositions of 1 Peter 3:19, 'holy Mr Perkins', Poole and Bolton, 'our British divines', Roberts and Trapp — to give but a few examples. One of his references to Owen is interesting. 'Heaven itself (said one who is now there) was not what it is, before the entrance of Christ into the sanctuary for the administration of his office.'

In a verse which he himself composed, Flavel conveys something of the sense of the Puritan brotherhood.

*The learned Twisse went first (it was his right),
Then holy Palmer, Burroughs, Love, Gouge, White,
Hill, Whittaker, grave Gataker and Strong.
Perne, Marshall, Robinson, all gone along.
I have not named them half; their only strife
Hath been (of late) who should first part with life.
These few who yet survive, sick of this age,
Long to have done their parts, and leave the stage.*

Quite fittingly, as he thinks of the longing we should have for the coming of Christ, he calls on the testimony of Rutherford. 'O, said Mr Rutherford, that Christ would make long strides. O that he would fold up the heavens as a cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way.' When men quote in this manner, may they long continue to quote!

4. *Simple Illustrations*

Flavel is very adept at illustration. Christ's blood in its efficacy reaches backward in time as well as forwards. Flavel expresses it thus, 'The sun makes day before it actually rises, and continues day sometimes after it is set.' As we study the biblical teaching on adoption we must realise that God's adoption is essentially different from ours'. '... the one was found out for the comfort of them that had no children; the other for the comfort of them that had no father.'

He drew on a wealth of funds from his own spiritual pilgrimage and pastoral experience. His work 'A Token for mourners', written to comfort someone in distress, begins with this simple personal testimony. 'You cannot forget in the years lately past, the Almighty visited my tabernacle with the rod, and in one year cut off from it the root, and the branch, the tender mother, and the only son.' Perhaps this is what gives a particular tenderness to his treatment of 'the advice of Christ to a distressed mother, bewailing the death of her dear and only son'.

He displays constant sensitivity to the varying needs of men, whether bruised seeking soul, hardened hypocrite, tempted sailor, bereaved mother or troubled saint. Here is Flavel recounting his reason for writing, 'Saint indeed or The Great Work of a Christian opened and pressed.' He explains how a 'dear and choice friend of my intimate acquaintance being under much inward trouble, upon the account of some special heart disorder — opened the case to me, and earnestly requested some rules and helps in that particular.' The pastor's heart reveals itself in many an illustration.

Flavel had the art of telling a story interestingly and simply. Here is an illustration which Brooks also uses but which Flavel puts over far more effectively. 'A late writer tells us, that he hath been informed, that in the famine of Germany, a poor family being ready to perish with famine, the husband made a motion to the wife, to sell one of the children for bread, to relieve themselves and the rest: the wife at last consents it should be so; but then they began to think which of the four should be sold; and when the eldest was named, they both refused to part with that, being their first-born, and the beginning of their strength. Well, then, they came to the second, but could not yield that he should be sold, being the very picture and lively image of his father. The third was named, but that also was a child that best resembled the mother. And when the youngest was thought on, that was the Benjamin, the child of their old age; and so were content rather to perish altogether in the famine, than to part with a child for relief. . . . What is a child, but a piece of the parent wrapt up in another skin? And yet our dearest children are but as strangers to us, in comparison of the unspeakable dearness that was betwixt the Father and Christ. Now, that he should ever be content to part with a Son, and such an only One, is such a manifestation of love, as will be admired to all eternity.'

5. Application to Particular Hearers

In his God-owned sermons on Revelation 3:20 we find Flavel stopping, as it were, in full flight to specifically apply the message to different classes in turn — rich, poor, seamen, aged, young, convicted, scoffers, believers — all come under the preacher's scrutiny. None escape the pointed application.

However, it is in his work 'Navigation Spiritualised' that we see this aspect supremely illustrated. Because his ministry was set in Dartmouth, Flavel had many seamen in his congregation. 'Navigation Spiritualised' like so many of his writings, begins arrestingly. At the outset he quotes the pagan philosopher Aristotle to good effect. '... three things do especially repent me: (1) That ever I revealed a secret to a woman, (2) that ever I remained one day without a will, (3) that ever I went to any place by sea, whither I might have gone by land.'

At once interest is aroused — and then Flavel outlines what he is intending to do. 'I have endeavoured to clothe spiritual matters in your own dialect and phrases, that they might be more intelligible to you. . . .' The eternity of hell is symbolised by the vastness of the ocean. The devil lies in wait like a cunning pirate ship. Men have great skill in understanding the Equator, Meridian and Horizon (there was scientific achievement then!) but in spiritual matters they are as blind as bats. And with regard to the danger of spiritual pride in times of seeming security we have this salutary reminder. 'For one ship swallowed up in the ocean, many perish upon the coast.' Who can doubt that many of these words went home to many a seasoned sailor?

Indeed there can be no reasonable doubt on this matter. Flavel was encouraged to write 'Husbandry Spiritualised. The Heavenly Use of Earthly Things' because of the success of his similar work for seamen. This is a kind of spiritual 'Gardener's Question Time'. Some things must be labelled as far-fetched, pedestrian or absurd. For example, he likens a leek with its white top and green base to an old man with a shock of white hair whose lusts are not extinguished but are still fresh and green! But even here he makes pointed application. 'It is a thousand pities, that those who have one foot in the grave, should live as if the other were in hell.'

As the opening pages of this work make clear, in the Bible itself there is abundant use of agricultural imagery to illustrate spiritual themes. Flavel stretches all this to the limit, even finding an unusual lesson in the early song of sparrows.

*The early chirping sparrows may reprove
Such lazy bishops as their beds do love.*

It would be easy to criticise such writing as ephemeral. It is far harder to write such a tract that would be read by as many in our day as read Flavel in his day.

6. Appeal to Interests of Natural Men

Flavel did this in very glaring and sometimes risky ways. Spurgeon was pin-pointing a truth but not referring to Flavel when he said, 'Why are writers upon religion so often dull, while the world commands talents and vivacity? One work by Flavel, 'A treatise of the soul of man', actually made me wonder for a while on reading it whether Banner of Truth had made an error of judgement, until all ended well in a blaze of orthodoxy! But what actually did Flavel do? He gripped his hearers with various theories as to whether departed spirits can communicate with us; recounted stories of apparitions (ghost stories in effect) and amazing premonitions; and then, having drawn his readers to the edge of their seats, proceeded to demolish the false theories with hammer blows of scriptural orthodoxy.

When he has finished, not only has he interested us but he has also shown us something of the subtlety of the devil's power. For example he declares that through Satanic means murders may be detected. (Shades of police in despair consulting spiritistic mediums.) Some, says Flavel, argue that the devil as a deceiver would never do this. He comments, 'Though it be not his interest merely to discover it, yet it is certainly his interest to precipitate wicked men, and hasten their ruin by the hand of Justice; and he will speak the truth, and seem to own a righteous cause, to bring about his great design of ruining the souls and bodies of men.'

In his work on Providence he tells with some detail the story of the attempted suicide of a man whom he himself was instrumental in helping ultimately to find the Saviour. It is a moving and vivid tale and Flavel does not spare us the details. He gives us some very gory details of the stomach wound and how parts of the man's body were hanging out. It may be said that the spiritual interest is sufficient justification but it may also be said that he 'lays it on thick' and, as if we had not had enough of remarkable fare, he immediately goes on to tell the equally amazing story of Mrs Honeywood who in a time of desertion, sure of her own damnation, threw down a Venice glass, exclaiming, 'Sir, I am as sure to be damned as this glass is to be broken,' only to find as she threw it forcibly to the ground that it remained unharmed! Many of the Puritans liked a good story.

7. Use of Verse

'I have been informed that many seamen, induced by the pleasures of a verse, have taken much pains to learn the poems in the compass by heart,' our author informs us. Flavel's endeavours in the realm of versifying are not likely to get into any anthologies of poetry; but once again they reflect his desire by all means to reach the men of his day.

During the times when he was silenced from preaching Flavel described his feelings in verse.

*The law to him no pulp it doth allow,
And now he cannot preach, he means to plow,
Though preaching were a crime, yet he foresaw
Against the plowman there could be no law.*

He goes on to justify the practice in this way. 'I have shut up every chapter with a *Poem*, an innocent bait to catch the readers soul. That of Herbert is experimentally true.

*A verse may find him that a sermon flies
And turn delight into a sacrifice.'*

Like Spurgeon, C. S. Lewis and many others after him, Flavel shows a particular love for Herbert, referring to him as 'that divine poet Mr Herbert' and quoting from him frequently. Another poet whom he quotes is Quarles. Flavel himself is no Herbert. But he sought so to write that his words would live. He had in mind first of all his own age. Yet the future ages never seemed far absent from his mind, as these lines show:

*A public spirit scorns to plant no root
But such from which himself may gather fruit,
For thus he reason, If I reap the gains
of laborious predecessors pains,
How equal is it, that posterity
Should reap the fruits of present industry?
Should every age but serve its turn, and take
No thought for future times, it soon will make
A bankrupt world, and so entail a curse
From age to age, as it grows worse and worse.
Our Christian predecessors careful thus
Have been to leave a heritage to us.
Christ's precious truth conserved in their blood
For no less price those truths our fathers stood.
They have transmitted, would not alienate
From us, their children, such a fair estate.
We eat what they did set: and shall truth fail
In our days? Shall we cut off th'entail
Or end the line of honour? Nay, what's worse,
Give future ages cause to hate, and curse.
Our memories? Like Naboth, may this age
Part with their blood sooner than their heritage.*

Conclusion

The above verse brings us to a suitable conclusion. The selfish attitude of going all out for short term gain irrespective of the long term effects is much in vogue today, in industry, in agriculture and in depleting the world's energy resources. This attitude invades all areas of thought. Even in the realm of evangelical religion the attitude of gain at the expense of truth and principle is common. So long as there is success little else seems to matter. We gladly receive the benefits of the written works of the Puritans and too easily forget the price paid by those ministers for their faithfulness to Biblical truth.

They toiled, sacrificed and suffered in their efforts to reform their churches. By the time of the Great Ejection in 1662 it would seem that it was all in vain. However we are enjoying the long term results of their faithfulness precisely as the verse above suggests.

But most of all we have been reminded that it is not enough to have faithful preachers who present worthy content; the times call for such men who will go further in their labours to be lively, gripping and effective so that the hearers can never forget the Gospel.

News from Sweden

Don Ritter (Box 50 S-424 21 Angered, Sweden) pastors a small church, and at the same time promotes a literature ministry. A report from him gives a clear picture of the work. He says:

'Book sales last year surpassed all former records – more than \$60.000. The future appears to be very bright for a continued increase. Rejoice with us, not just in the fact of the sales figures, but in the fact that the message of the Gospel is being spread far and wide. Most of these books have been sold to pastors and theological students, who in turn influence many others. Of course with the increased sales comes an increased work load. Pray with us for additional co-workers.

During 1980 we published five issues of our magazine – a total of 232 pages. In order to cut down on some expenses (postage, etc.) we plan during 1981 to publish only four issues, but with a total of 240 pages. There are many different people (both within and without our little congregation) who assist us in producing this magazine, which is now beginning its eighth year of publication. Our subscriber list totals just over 700, of which many are pastors within all the various denominations in Sweden, as well as a number who are scattered throughout Denmark, Norway and Finland. Last week we got our first subscriber from Greenland. The magazine even goes to several Swedish-speaking people in such far-a-way places as: Holland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Spain, Congo, India, Brazil and Papua New Guinea.

Our three published books (mentioned in our last newsletter) defending a creationist view of the world and man – *From Nothing to Nature*, *Bone of Contention*, and *Is Evolution Scientific?* – have been selling very well. Within the last month we have had to re-print all three titles.

Presently we have four books in various stages of translation: *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Thomas A. Thomas; *How to Develop Deep Unity in the Marriage Relationship*, Wayne Mack; *Baptism and Church Membership*, Erroll Hulse; *Now That I Am a Christian*, Ernest Kevin. These materials are going to be used first as series of articles in our magazine and at a later date hopefully we will publish them in book form, finances permitting.

Share your faith with a Muslim

The members of the Reformed Baptist Church at Crawley, like so many other churches situated in educational centres, enjoy the opportunity to show hospitality to overseas students by inviting them into their homes for meals. Some of these students are Muslims. It is important for us to be well informed about the Muslim world and religion, which, with 650 million adherents, is as large as it is diverse in character. Attempts to reach Muslims with the Gospel can be nullified if there is ignorance of their beliefs or customs. The work involved to inform ourselves adequately is not formidable. I would recommend a little book by Charles Marsh, *Share your faith with a Muslim* (96 pages 95p). It is published by S.T.L., P.O. Box 48, Bromley, Kent. S.T.L. is the publisher of that outstanding book *Operation World* which has concise information on the state of evangelicalism in all countries. It is a bedside book and has been described as 'a global-prayer atlas'.

But to return to S.T.L.'s *Share your faith with a Muslim*, it is worthy of note that the author writes out of 45 years of experience as a missionary in Muslim countries, Algeria and Chad in particular.

A secular book, fascinating to read and a mine of information is *Islam* by Professor Alfred Guillaume (Pelican, 210 pages, 95 pence). The author describes Muhammed, the Quran and the evolution of Muhammadism as a system of faith, law, religion and philosophy. He draws attention to the emergence of the new Muslim States such as Pakistan which has the avowed intention of showing the world what a free and enlightened Muslim State should be (p. 164). Prof. Guillaume clearly shows the crucial place and importance of the Shari'a (sacred law) for Muslims. The sharp contrast between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis is described and we are reminded that the former regard both Jews and Christians as ceremonially unclean. If you visit Baghdad do not try to enter the mosque! A glossary of terms helps the reader understand basic Muslim expressions.

A great awakening is now in progress in the Muslim world. Our responsibility as Christians is to be careful, fair and accurate in our judgements and reactions concerning the implications of the vast wealth and increasing influence and spread of Islam. Some responses such as a book with the title *The Unholy War* by Marius Baar (Walter, 211 pages) are alarmist and unbalanced. Without any reference at all to principles of interpretation Baar in typical dispensationalist style selects texts in an inexplicable arbitrary way to support his ideas about the future. For instance the beasts of Daniel 7:4ff. (which refer to the period prior to Christ) he takes as describing Hitler, Russia, Nasser's Egypt and Iraq! He darts incoherently from one assertion to another without a logical line of progressive thought (p. 149 is typical). We appreciate that the author's purpose is to awaken Christians about Islam. The Muslims threatened to overwhelm Europe during the 16th Century. Some regard Islam as more menacing today than Marxism. However, indulging in apocalyptic drama does nothing to contribute to thoughtful preparation of ourselves to take advantage of the rapidly changing situation.

Reformed Christians, with their emphasis on subjects like the importance of doctrine, the sovereignty of God, the attributes of God, human responsibility, heaven and hell, regeneration and repentance should be well equipped to reach Muslims, many of whom are peculiarly sensitive about some of these subjects. Care about detail is important. For instance if you cannot speak Arabic (which to many Muslims is the language of

angels) it will not help to tell them you have the gift of incomprehensible tongues. They associate that with evil spirits!

It does help to appreciate the fact that diversity in Islam is probably even greater than it is in the broad spectrum of Christianity. On the one side there is the fanaticism of leaders like Gaddafi and the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, but then there is the extremely active Baha'i sect founded in Persia in 1844, an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam. The Baha'i faith is religious, social and political. Unrealistically, it believes that all the great religions of the world are equally true and should unite in the Baha'i faith!

As is the case with Christianity in all its forms, so with Islam, it is common to find many differences of interpretation. Quotations can be selected from the Quran to support aggressive policies or, in contrast, pathways of peace. For instance *The Times* (October 5th, 1981) reported that a recent Islamic Council of Europe produced a declaration of human rights which outlaws without qualification, slavery, torture, imprisonment without trial, religious persecution or discrimination, forced marriage and oppression of minorities. What a contrast that declaration is to the appalling extermination of the Armenian people by the Turks this century!

Yet looking back over the centuries the Islamic protection of minorities such as the Jews (before the rise of Zionism) puts the Christian-record to shame.

Now to return to the book by Charles Marsh, *Share your faith with a Muslim*, here are a few matters which he explains in much more detail.

1. Great care must be taken in the use of our evangelical vocabulary. Some terms we use are meaningless to Muslims or may mean something quite different to what we intend. The word 'heaven' is an example.
2. We should avoid being derogatory about Muhammed or the Quran. It is better to concentrate rather on the unique saving truths of the Gospel. There are some parts of Scripture in particular which impress Muslims.
3. Love is not a prominent feature in Islam. It is vital that the attribute of love be prominent in our lives, in our attitudes, and especially in our message.
4. It is helpful to know about the Islamic customs of prayer, the fast of Ramadan and the religious feast of 'Id which follows.
5. Muslims are often sympathetic to hearing personal testimony: how you came to believe in Christ and how your life has been changed subsequently.
6. Muslims have their own views of Jesus. They reject his Deity and do not believe he was crucified (it only seemed so to men). They believe he will return, get married, have children, reign for 40 years and establish Islam in all the world before he dies and gets buried at Medina.
7. The difference and separation between men and women is much more marked than it is with us. A knowledge of correct etiquette with respect to Muslim women is imperative to any who seek to minister among them.

E.H.

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Professor Edgar Andrews - *Creation/Evolution*

Geoff Thomas - *Power in Preaching*

For other speakers and details see *Editorial*

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