

REFORM- ATION TODAY'82



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News items

Canada

A number of new Reformed Baptist churches are emerging in the Maritime Provinces of Canada, new works in which the emphasis is on evangelism and preaching. The work at Oromocto led by David Bugden (see *RT59* p. 32) has now been blessed with a handsome new building. Thus the most fascinating and original notice board has gone, but the encouragement of a brand new building more than makes up for that! David reports that six churches have covenanted to support each other under the title the 'Maritimes Particular Baptist Fellowship'.

Dale Cogswell who is a member at Oromocto is now the agent for *Reformation Today* for the Maritime Provinces (his address is provided on the back cover). Max Latchford remains the agent for Ontario, and the rest of Canada. It is hoped to have an agent for the Western Provinces in the future. In the meantime Max Latchford has surged forward in establishing his book supply business, a work which is very important for the simple reason that Reformed books have by and large been left in the shade in the huge country of Canada. The work of pioneering is not easy and Max deserves our prayerful support as he visits shops over vast expanses. He now represents *Evangelical Press*, *Carey Publications*, *Henry Walter*, *Christian Focus* and *Grace et Verite*.

Pioneering work of this kind reminds me of the first introduction of Banner of Truth books into America by Ron Edmonds who travelled across the country. Way out in one of the mid West states he came to a Christian Bookshop and enthusiastically displayed all his wares including the massive Matthew Poole. Dejectedly the manager told him to pack them all back into his case as he had never heard of the authors. Reluctantly Ron began to pack his bag and make his retreat but just then a young man came in. The manager invited him over asking if he

had heard of the authors. The young man spotted a Spurgeon title (*The Early Years*) and went into raptures about that and all the titles — the best in the world he said! Thereupon the manager considered the whole deal and made a substantial order. May joyful spirits emerge at the right times for Max and may his journeys be prospered. He welcomes correspondence or information that will help him in his promotional work. For his address see the back cover.

Australia and the reading revival of the 1960s

Iain Murray spent his last weekend in Britain at Cuckfield before leaving to take up the pastorate of St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Sydney, Australia. His much appreciated ministry here brought back memories of the pioneering days of the Banner of Truth, when we were privileged to witness a remarkable awakening of interest in reading Puritan literature. Only the Holy Spirit can create an interest to delve deeply into Scripture along experimental and practical lines. We stand in need of a new surge of such interest. Not to know what has happened in the past is always to remain a child. Not to be stirred about the present is to be dead, and to have no vision for the future is to be asleep.

Reader, arise, take action! Stir others to read, to study, to apply themselves to doctrine! If you can, subscribe for another, but be sure to back that initiative with your own personal encouragement. The Holy Spirit does not work by magic but by and through prayerful practical industry and effort.

South Africa

On 1st December Jim van Zyl who is an elder in the Reformed Baptist Church, Lynnwood, Pretoria, began a full-time commitment with Trans World Radio. He is to be Announcer-Producer for English programs for Southern Africa. Jim has written expressing concern for the wellbeing of the annual Evangelical and Reformed

(continued on pages 32 and 33)

Editorial

Our business is to be practical in applying the Scriptures to the problems which beset churches and pastors today. The challenge is being made that old values are worn out and need to be replaced by something new. Fifteen years ago the Reformed faith was new, that is new in evangelicalism that had forgotten that the Reformed Faith is Biblical and replete with spiritual enrichment through preaching and practice. A great recovery of strength followed that rediscovery plus the planting of many new churches in different parts of the world. We have always maintained that the Reformed truth if truly embraced affects a Christian's experience in the most profound way. How can a person ever be the same again if he has really experienced in his heart the meaning of Ephesians chapter one or Romans chapter eight. But sovereign grace can be assented to in the intellect only. It is attractive truth to intellectual people because as a doctrinal system it coheres together logically. Many have imbibed the logic of it but never felt the power of it. We should not be disappointed if they do not turn out to be contenders for that truth. If they easily turn aside for the novelties of the hour we should not be unduly alarmed. Some believe that a new age of prophecy is dawning: new powers are being unleashed: new experiences being given.

Since it is our chief aim to be expository and practical this issue of *Reformation Today* carries three positive expository contributions relative to this subject. The first demonstrates that we possess a prophecy which God has exalted to the highest heavens. Nothing could be

more positive than that: nothing better. Simply because we have that which is unique, plenary and infallible we need no further revelations.

Donald MacLeod's positive contribution is to press home the truth that every believer has complete resources through union with Christ, resources which are his to enjoy at all times. That is positive. To teach the contrary, namely, that we do not have such resources but that we must first reach after and somehow attain to a further level, or summit, or peak of experience, before we can enjoy those resources; that is negative in the extreme. It is negative because it strikes at the very heart of *sola fide*, by faith alone, which is the central teaching of the Bible. It is by faith alone that we have union with Christ. Union with Christ is union with the Trinity as expressed in baptism. This is union not in part but in whole. It is a marriage of persons; of Christ and his bride; of the Triune Jehovah and his Church.

The third article deals with spiritual experience. This too is relevant because a new cult has emerged which purports that we should be having special experiences and should be praising God incessantly. Like all error there is much truth in this notion. We could take the exhortation 'pray without ceasing' and I suppose build a cult on that. Imagine all believers spending all their waking moments moving their lips in prayer. The ridicule this could lead to if taken literally can easily be imagined.

It would help if we took the life of our Lord as an example. He worked, he taught, he healed, he prayed, he worshipped. He did not do all these at

Front Cover: India has a population of about 620 million. According to reports the cause of the Gospel is going backwards there rather than forwards. Pictured on the cover are four inhabitants in an area where three provinces meet, Utter Pradesh (25 million), Bihar (60 million) and Madhya Pradesh (41 million). Where will the missionary army come from and how will they gain access to meet the challenge?

once. Certainly his attitudes were concurrent and consistent. He was not always apraising in the sense of this modern cult. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He knew what it was to weep.

The Scripture commands us to mourn and grieve for our sins (Jas. 4:9). Every true revival consists in the first place of tears of repentance, then joy. It is suitable therefore that our worship services be serious, deep, simple, solemn and joyful. That is not easy to attain. Certainly it would be monstrous if the service consisted of an orchestrated ecstasy. Where does the repentant newcomer fit in here? Likewise it would be monstrous if we all behaved like somber undertakers as though ours was a festival of misery. Worship must be suitable for all kinds of conditions of people who should not be put off by impressions of artificiality — that here is something worked up one way or another.

Concerning the spiritual experiences of Christians, Witsius of the reformation era expressed the matter helpfully in some comments on the subject of adoption. He referred to special acts of divine love and intimated that we cannot put any limits to the experience of God's supercelestial light and the views that may be given to his children of his face shining with the brightest love. There is the most endearing and ravishing communion to be enjoyed and sometimes flowing rivers of his mystical love experienced unexpectedly. No pen can represent the variety of blessed enjoyments that there are in communion with the Father. Then Witsius as though possessed for a moment with the wisdom given to

Solomon went on to write: we should note *that this is not the lot of all the children of God, nor the case at all times, nor indeed frequently*, yet nevertheless these experiences belong undeniably to the Lord's offspring.

How can we determine proportion in these matters? The psalms provide a guide for in that book every note on the keyboard of experience is struck. There are psalms of desertion such as 42 and 43. There are psalms of total depression like 38 and 88. There are some of utter conflict and anguish such as 55-60; psalms describing temptation, 73, 77 and 116, some of urgent pleading, intercession, some of beautiful contemplative reflection like 33 and 104, psalms celebrating deliverance of which 22 and 107 stand out in majesty; also psalms with the shout of victory, and one with a crescendo of praise only, namely 150; also one of thanks only, namely, 136. From this we can easily see that no quarter can be given to the magnification of one aspect of spiritual experience at the expense of all the rest.

Illustrations of how easy it is to get things out of proportion can be found from Church history. I have heard of a sect that built their experience on breathing. Did not our Lord breathe upon his disciples? Well then we ought to breathe in! So what better than breathing sessions! Richard Baxter tells the story of one, Dishforth by name who went for novelty to a meeting of the followers of Harker and Coppings called Grundletonians. They breathed on him and he came home so transported that he left his former ways of praying in his family — and did all by ecstasy — and so continued for a fortnight and then returned to humility and repented.

Baptism In The Spirit

by Donald MacLeod

Until the 20th century theologians paid little attention to the phrase *the baptism of the Holy Spirit*; and the relative neglect could claim some biblical justification. The precise wording *the baptism of the Spirit* does not occur anywhere in the New Testament and the idea itself occurs very infrequently. There are in fact only three references: in Matthew 3:11 (and parallels) where John the Baptist proclaims that Christ will baptise in the Holy Spirit; in Acts 1:5 where our Lord himself promises that the disciples will be baptised in the Holy Spirit; and in 1 Corinthians 12:13 where Paul affirms that all Christians were baptised in one Spirit.

The importance of a doctrine cannot be measured, however, by the frequency with which a precise wording occurs in Scripture. Otherwise the doctrine of the trinity would have to be dismissed as quite secondary. Holy Spirit baptism is only one of the several designations for that all-important initiatory experience by which the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence in the believer; and as such it rivals union with Christ as the single most important concept in the Christian doctrine of salvation. Its importance has been further enhanced by the exigencies of controversy and particularly by the construction put upon it by Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal theology. This has raised questions so radical and so far reaching that none of us can afford to ignore them.

The most fundamental of these questions is that of the relation of Holy Spirit baptism to regeneration and conversion. Pentecostal theology insists that the two are quite distinct; that the baptism is frequently, if not indeed normally, subsequent to conversion; that it is therefore perfectly possible for a man to have been born again and yet not have received Holy Spirit baptism; and indeed that some Christians never receive this blessing.

One of the most articulate advocates of this point of view was R. A. Torrey, whom F. D. Bruner has described as 'after Wesley and Finney, the most important figure in the pre-history of Pentecostalism'. 'The baptism with the Spirit,' writes Torrey, 'is a work of the Holy Spirit distinct from and additional to his regenerating work. In other words, it is one thing to be born again by the Holy Spirit and quite another thing to be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' Ralph M. Riggs, a contemporary Pentecostal theologian, is equally emphatic: 'Although all believers have the Holy Spirit, yet it still remains that all believers, in addition to having the Holy Spirit, may be filled with or baptised with the Holy Spirit.' The disciples before Pentecost 'had received the Holy Spirit already, but they yet needed the baptism in the Holy Spirit.'

Receiving, being filled, being baptised

One major difficulty which immediately faces this doctrine is that the language of the New Testament simply will not allow us to distinguish in this way between being baptised in the Spirit and receiving the Spirit. These — and other terms — are used quite interchangeably. For example, in Acts 1:5 Luke foretells the day of Pentecost as an experience of being *baptised in the Spirit*. In Acts 2:4 he describes it as being *filled with the Spirit*. We cannot, in the face of these statements, go on to say that being filled and being baptised are two different experiences. On the other hand, the same experience is foretold in Acts 1:8 as the Holy Spirit *coming upon them*: and described in Acts 2:38 as *receiving the Spirit*. Putting all these together we have to conclude that having the Spirit come upon us, receiving the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit and being baptised in the Spirit are one and the same experience.

The way that Luke describes the experience of Cornelius and his household is equally significant. He sees it as an exact parallel to Pentecost (Acts 11:15) and as a precise fulfilment of our Lord's promise. 'Ye shall be baptised in the Holy Spirit' (Acts 11:16). Yet in describing the event he does not use the language of filling or baptism. He says instead that the Holy Spirit fell on them (Acts 10:44), that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on them (Acts 10:45) and, most significantly of all, that they simply received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47).

It is surely clear that no one can claim the authority of the New Testament for distinguishing between receiving the Spirit, on the one hand, and being baptised or filled with the Spirit on the other. Equally clearly, no one can claim canonical authority for the form of words, 'All have received the Spirit, but not all have been baptised or filled with the Spirit.'

All believers baptised in the Spirit

But the case does not rest on biblical vocabulary alone. There is considerable direct evidence in the New Testament that all believers experience Holy Spirit baptism.

To begin with, the universality of the gift of the Spirit was one of the main points in the prophecy of Joel (2:28-32), of which Pentecost was the fulfilment. In the old dispensation, the Spirit and His gift were distributed only to special individuals within the people of God. This limitation, says Joel, would be done away with in the last days (the Christian dispensation). The Spirit would be poured on all flesh. Their sons and their daughters would prophesy, their young men would see visions and their old men would dream dreams. The Spirit would come not only on the eminent, but on servants and maid-servants. Moses' longing (Num. 11:29) would be fulfilled: All the Lord's people would be prophets, speaking forth the wonderful works of God.

Luke's account of Pentecost makes it clear that this is exactly what happened: *All* the believers were baptised in the Spirit (Acts 2:4). The *all* is so defined that it does not allow us to believe that any single disciple was excluded. The whole church described in Acts 1:13-26 were gathered in the temple 'all with one accord in one place', and when the baptism came it came on all of them. At that moment, there was not a single believer in the world who was not baptised in the Spirit. Bearing in mind also his use of Joel's prophecy it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Luke wants to establish at the outset that this is to be the distinctive feature of the new dispensation.

The description of the experience of the 3,000 converted through Peter's preaching is certainly in accord with this. He promised that those who responded to his message would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). But he does not portray this as something additional to the basic experience of salvation. Instead, the gift is said to be a direct and immediate effect of conversion: 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' Remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit go together. A few verses later, the total experience of these converts is said to be simply that they 'gladly received his word' (verse 41). It is fair to conclude from this that the only condition of being baptised in the Spirit is a glad reception of the gospel. Every penitent — every forgiven sinner — has undergone Holy Spirit baptism.

It is this very same doctrine we appear to have in 1 Corinthians 12:13, 'For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body.' Some have expressed reservations as to the relevance of this passage to the question of baptism in the Spirit and suggested that it refers to baptism *by* the Spirit rather than to baptism *in* the Spirit. It is difficult to see any reason for this. Grammatically, the expression is exactly the same as in Acts 1:5. Had Paul wished to express the idea of baptism *by* the Spirit he could have done so unambiguously by using the preposition *hupo* (by) rather than the preposition *en* (in). But had he done so, he would have been saying something the New Testament does not say anywhere else. Its uniform teaching is that it is Christ who baptises. In Matthew 3:11, for example, John the Baptist says, 'He will baptise you in the Holy Spirit.' Peter speaks to the same effect in Acts 2:33. The exalted Christ has shed forth the Holy Spirit. The only alternative to this is that sometimes (e.g., Acts 1:4) the Spirit is represented as the gift of the Father. The Spirit himself does not baptise. He is what we are baptised *in* or baptised *with*. Otherwise it would not be possible to contrast Spirit baptism with baptism *in* (not *by*) water or to relate it to baptism *in* (not *by*) fire.

This interpretation is confirmed by the second part of the verse: 'we were all made to drink into one Spirit'. The Greek verb underlying our English

is *epotisthemen*. It was frequently used with the meaning of watering (plants) and as T. C. Edwards points out, this metaphor, expressing the ideas of abundance and power, would be perfectly appropriate here: 'Like plants, we are drenched in the Spirit. The one shower waters all the fields and soaks through to the rootlets of every particular blade of grass.' Michael Green combines what he sees as the meaning of the two metaphors of 1 Corinthians 12:13 in the statement: 'All alike have been immersed in the sea of the Spirit; all alike have had his living water irrigating their parched lives.'

The purpose of this baptism Paul defines in the phrase 'into one body'. He uses the preposition idiomatically, in the sense of '*with a view to*': 'We were all baptised (immersed, drenched, irrigated) in the one Spirit with a view to our forming or becoming one body.'

This surely rules out an elitist interpretation along the lines that Spirit baptism is an experience of the few. All believers are members of the one body and as such all are baptised and all are drenched in the one Spirit. Equally, all have spiritual gifts which are essential to the proper functioning of the body so that no one should feel superior, no one should feel inferior and, above all, no one should feel redundant. It is difficult to see how Paul's argument for recognition of their inter-relatedness and inter-dependence could survive if the body were divided by such a radical distinction as that some had Holy Spirit baptism and some did not. Such a distinction would do exactly what Paul wants to avoid — create a schism in the body (verse 25).

Theological arguments

The argument that it is possible to be regenerate and yet not possess Holy Spirit baptism is as difficult to sustain on the theological level as it is on the exegetical. All Christians are united to Christ. To suggest that this can be so without a corresponding union with the Holy Spirit is to separate these two persons in a way that is quite inconsistent with historic trinitarian theology. The Son and the Spirit are, with the Father, one God. So close is the union that each is in the other (John 14:10), so that the mission of the Comforter is equally the mission of the Son (John 14:18) and Paul can even say, 'The Lord (Jesus Christ) is the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:17). It was upon such passages that the post-Nicene Fathers built the doctrine of the *coinherence* of the divine persons. We have a fine statement of the doctrine in Basil: 'If any one truly receive the Son he will find that he brings with him on the one hand his Father, on the other the Holy Spirit. For neither can he from the Father be severed, who is of and ever in the Father; nor again from his own Spirit disunited. For we must not conceive separation or division in any way; as if either the Son could be supposed without the Father, or the Spirit disunited from the Son.'

If this doctrine of the *coinherence* is true, as it surely is, there can be no

relation with the one person that is not equally and symmetrically a relation with the others. To be fully in the Son is to be fully in the Spirit. To have Christ dwell in our hearts by faith is simultaneously to have his Spirit in our inner man and to be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

To change the perspective slightly: to be in Christ means to have communion with him and this in turn means that we share fully in all that he has. The most precious of all his endowments, surely, is the full and overflowing indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal argument wishes us to believe that we can be in Christ and yet not share in this; or at least, not share in it fully. But this, surely, is impossible. How can he be said to share if he withholds his Spirit, or bestows him only 'by measure' (John 3:34)? To be a member of his body means, if the metaphor has any significance, that we share fully in his vitality. It is his spiritual life that courses through us, enabling us to say, 'Christ lives in me' (Gal. 2:20). We are rooted in him (Col. 2:7), our roots going deep into the resources of Christ so that we effectually tap the fulness of the Spirit that is in him.

The New Testament view of faith

The Pentecostal position is equally inconsistent with the New Testament view of faith. Faith saves; and it is impossible to confine this to regeneration and conversion, excluding the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is the unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9:15). He is the paramount promise of the Father (Acts 1:4) and the invariable seal upon our sonship (Eph. 1:13). Sharing Christ's experience of him is the climax of the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. 13:14). Even to the Old Testament salvation could not be defined apart from receiving the Spirit: 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes' (Ezek. 36:27).

But not only does the Old Testament insist that baptism in the Spirit is part of the very meaning of salvation. It also asserts explicitly that faith and the gift of the Spirit are inseparably connected. This appears clearly in Paul's rhetorical question in Galatians 3:2, 'Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?' He lays down the same doctrine in Ephesians 1:13: 'In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise? All they did was to believe: having done so they were sealed. Galatians 3:14 is clearer still. We receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Part of the interest of this passage is that it equates the *promise of the Spirit* with the *blessing of Abraham*. In other words, the gift of the Spirit was the core of the blessing promised in the Abrahamic covenant. We cannot be beneficiaries under that covenant and lack it. Nor can we conceivably be children of Abraham and lack it. Indeed, we can go further still and argue that the conferring of the Spirit was the great purpose of the atonement and that we can have no share in the blessings of that atonement without having the fulness of the Spirit. The movement of Paul's thought is quite clear: 'Christ has

redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.' We cannot let ourselves be put in the position where, before qualifying for the gift of the Spirit, we must have something additional to faith — some *plus*. Faith puts us in Christ and by doing so makes us nothing short of complete (Col. 2:10).

Christian service

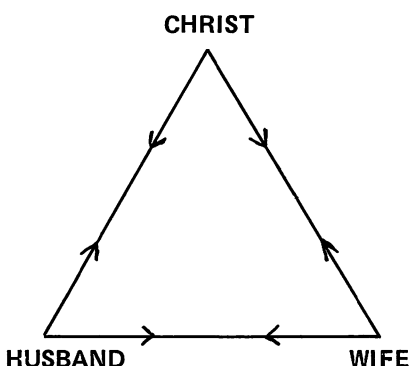
It is just as impossible to reconcile the notion that some Christians do not possess the fulness of the Spirit with the New Testament teaching on Christian service. R. A. Torrey tries to make a distinction between being saved and being ready for service and permits himself the following astonishing statement: 'Now if a man is regenerate he is saved. If he should die he would go to heaven. *But though he is saved he is not yet fitted for God's service*' (the italics are his). This distinction does such violence to New Testament theology that one can only gasp. Far from arguing that because not all have the Holy Spirit not all are ready for service we should have to argue that because all are deemed to be ready for service all must be endowed with the Spirit. The Sermon on the Mount, for example, makes clear that Christ expects from every believer the highest standards of service. Every 'blessed' man will live in such a way as to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13f.). Paul's expectations are similar. He would find the idea of a Christian who is not fitted for service absurd! To be redeemed from sin is to become at once a servant of righteousness (Rom. 6:18), bearing the fruit of the Spirit in a life characterised by love, joy, peace and all other excellences (Gal. 5:22f.). Peter is equally explicit: How could the idea of people being saved and yet not ready for service possibly fit into 1 Peter 2:9: 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the virtues of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light'? The duty of proclaiming the virtues of God is laid firmly on every Christian: but only because of what they are. The imperative rests on the indicative. We are neither exempt from service nor unprepared for it.

The passage from 1 Peter reminds us that among all the various forms of service expected of the Christian, witnessing has a special place. We have to hold fast our confession (Heb. 4:14), hold forth the word of life (Phil. 2:16) and give a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). This takes us right back to the commission given to the church in Acts 1:8, 'Ye shall be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth'. It was precisely to prepare them for this that the promise was given, fulfilled at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell on each of them, enabling them to speak forth the wonderful works of God. Witness — and indeed doxology — is the business of every Christian. To suggest that some believers have been left without the resources for it is to stand the New Testament ethic on its head: as if God expected us to make bricks without straw.

A Christ-honouring marriage

by David Kingdom

If, as the Book of Common Prayer says, marriage is 'an honourable estate, instituted by God himself, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church', then it follows that the more that mystical union is manifested in the relationship of husband and wife in Christian marriage, the more will honour and glory be brought to the Saviour himself. Therefore we must face a practical question: 'How may our



marriages increasingly become Christ-honouring marriages?' I say 'increasingly' for we never arrive at a static state of perfection – we are always *in via* – on the way.

Never an apostolic prescription

Finally, it is surely significant that none of the New Testament writers, facing the perplexing problems of the early church, ever suggested that what they needed was baptism in the Holy Spirit. Consider the churches they are writing to: Galatia, Corinth, Colossae, Ephesus, Laodicea. Their problems were surely serious enough – disunity, heresy, immorality, worldliness, lack of evangelistic concern. There was an all too evident absence of power. The classic Pentecostal analysis of the lukewarm church at Laodicea, for example, would have been that they lacked 'the fire', 'the second wind', 'the baptism of the Holy Spirit'. But this is never the New Testament approach. Their problems are seen not as due to the lack of Spirit baptism but to a failure to reckon with the implications of the deepest spiritual truth about themselves (Rom. 6:2, 1 Cor. 6:2, Gal. 3:3). It was the very fact that they had all received the Spirit that made their heresy, factiousness and worldliness so appalling.

What then are we to conclude? That baptism in the Spirit is an absolutely fundamental element in the Christian doctrine of salvation; that the experience of it is what initiates a man into the Christian life, so that without it we are not Christians at all; and that to have had it is to have received the Spirit in His fulness, enabling us to say, 'I can do all things in the One who strengthens me' (Phil. 4:13).

There are, however, certain passages in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Acts, which seem to teach a doctrine quite different from the one we have set forth in this article. God willing, we shall look at these in the next issue.

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In thinking about this question we shall consider, first, *General Principles* and then *Particular Principles*. Let me stress that principles have to be applied. There is no formula for instant success. Our guide is the Bible not 'The Reader's Digest'. We have to work at our marriages by applying the principles of God's Word. And when we fail we have to repent before God and seek our partner's forgiveness.

1 General Principles

We begin with the matter of our relationship to Christ. Christian marriage, as Joel Nederhood points out, is like a triangle, as shown above. At the apex is Christ. At the base on one side is the husband, and on the other side is the wife. Now both communicate with each other along the base, but both must also communicate upwards to Christ at the apex. Both are related to each other and to Christ. Communication must always be with Christ and with each other.

1. *We must give priority to our relationship to Christ*

In a Christian marriage both husband and wife are 'subject to Christ', since they are members of the Church, his body, of which he is the head (Eph. 5:23, 24). So then it follows that the relationship of the husband and wife to the Lord has priority, even over their marriage-relationship.

The Lord Jesus himself laid down this principle in Matthew 19:29. In A.V. 'wife' is included in the list, but in most modern translations it is omitted because not found in the best manuscripts. But its omission does not affect the point, our relationship to Christ must take precedence over any other relationship, however intimate that relationship may be. (In any case, Luke 18:29 has wife, on good manuscript authority!)

The same principle is spelt out by our Lord in a different way in Luke 14:26; in comparison with his love for Christ the disciple's love for his wife must be as hate, i.e. could not be expressed more strongly. The disciple's relationship to Christ is to come before everything and everyone else.

Far from our marriages suffering if we give Christ the chief place in our affections they will be enriched, for the nearer we draw to him the nearer we will draw to each other, and the more we love him the more we will love one another.

To maintain and deepen our relationship with Christ we must set aside time *individually* for seeking his face in his Word and through prayer and meditation. And then jointly husband and wife should seek his face in prayer together cf 1 Peter 3:7. In the bustle of family life it is not easy to maintain a devotional life but it can be done if there is both determination and discipline.

2. *We must relate to each other as we are related to Christ*

The wife is related to the husband as one who is subject to him. The husband is related to the wife as one who is her head. But that is not the end of the matter so far as *Christian* marriage is concerned: it is the beginning, for Christian marriage has a new dimension to it. The wife is to be subject 'as to the Lord' (v. 22) i.e. as if her husband were the Lord himself. The husband must love his wife 'just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her' (v. 25) i.e. as if he were Christ dying for his church.

This is absolutely breath-taking teaching, so profound and yet so practical. Let us look at some of its implications for our marriages.

(a) *Wives*. If you treat your husband as if he were the Lord himself then you will

find that your service to him and to your children will not be a drudgery, but a delight. It is rendered to the Lord. So, for example, as you wash the dishes they have dirtied you are serving the Lord. And the pain of childbirth and the care of children these too are 'as to the Lord'. The heartaches and the problems which arise in family life — these also are to be accepted 'as to the Lord'.

Then let wives do away with grumbling, bemoaning their lot, resenting their restrictions. Would you want to be grumbling if the Lord came home from work instead of your husband? Well then, realise that when your man comes home, with all his faults and failings, it is as if the Lord himself were coming! 'Do you love your husband enough to live for him?' (Jay Adams).

(b) *Husbands*. You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church (Ephes. 5:25) and still does. He loved the Church enough to die for her. And you must love your wife enough to die for her. Did Christ love a perfect church? Of course not (v. 27). He is still perfecting her. Very well then. You must love an imperfect wife as Christ loves an imperfect church — a wife who sometimes is late with meals, who sometimes forgets what you have asked her to do, who is sometimes not her normal self. You must love her *as she is* for that is just how Christ loves the Church at this moment, with spots and wrinkles! (v. 27).

You must love her with tenderness, and understanding, for that is how Christ loves the church. Yes, and you must love her with patience. You must not get irritable with her, for Christ never gets irritable with his church (though she does displease him, but displeasure is not the same as irritation, cf Col. 3:19). And you must never wish that she were some other woman — more glamorous, more responsive, more

efficient — for Christ wants to give himself only for his bride, the Church.

This then is how we must relate to each other — as we are in Christ. The woman to the husband as 'unto the Lord' i.e. as if the husband were Christ himself; the husband to his wife as if he were the Lord giving himself up for his Church, even unto death itself. O may God's Spirit enable us to lay hold of this teaching — to believe it, receive it and apply it. Then Christ our Saviour will indeed be honoured in our marriage!

II Particular Principles

These we shall draw out of Ephesians 4:25 and the following verses. In this section of the epistle Paul is dealing with the relationships of believers to each other within the Church, the body of Christ (v. 25). Within that body we are to behave toward each other as those who have laid aside the old existence (v. 22), and taken up the new (v. 24). But the new existence is a social reality, as isolated units, for we are related in the unity of the body (v. 25).

Now if these principles which Paul lays down apply to believers as they are related as members of the body of Christ, they also apply to two believers, man and wife, related to each other in marriage. There are three principles which apply to the marriage relationship.

1. *We must communicate with each other on the basis of truth* (v. 25)

On the one hand we must lay aside falsehood. We cannot communicate on the basis of pretence or the concealment of something from our partner, for then there will be a barrier between us. For example, if a woman conceals from her husband the fact that she had pre-marital sexual intercourse with another man she will be in fear and dread lest her husband find her out. She must lay aside falsehood — she must tell him and

seek his forgiveness. Then she will no longer be living a life of pretence, and she will be delivered from fear.

Then, on the other hand, we must speak the truth with each other. If some of her husband's habits grieve his wife she must graciously tell him so. She must not bottle up her dislike inside, for it will fester and damage their relationship. She must speak truth as it relates to his bad habits — truth which is to the point, and not abstract.

Of course, she must speak the truth with a view not to cutting her husband to pieces, but to building him up, i.e. with the purpose of his taking corrective action to remedy the faults which disturb her. In other words, she must speak truth in love (4:15), not to hurt but to heal. What she must never do is to suppress the truth — to suffer in silence because she is afraid of what her husband's reaction will be.

Communication between Christian couples, then, must be on the basis of truth. Jay Adams gives a telling example on pages 28-29 of his book *Christian Living in the Home*.

'A missionary and his wife returned from the foreign field several years ago. She had become severely depressed. When she came home, she went for a year to a psychiatrist, who talked separately first to her and then to her husband; but nothing ever happened in that experience. Somebody told them about our counselling center, so she and her husband came (we insisted that both of them came together). We began to talk, and as we did she turned to her husband and began to talk, and said: "My problem is that when I married you I didn't love you. I haven't loved you since. I've never loved you, but I've never told anyone the truth before." That missionary and his wife are now back on the field, and they love each other. She loves him and he loves her better too. She had a problem, but nothing could be done to help because

she "never told anyone the truth" about it. She did not know how to deal with the problem; and no one else, including her husband, knew what to do. Once communication took place, the problem could be solved. Until then her life had been miserable, hypocritical farce. The work on the field suffered, she suffered, and her husband suffered. The whole body suffered for want of honest communication. Year after year she suffered; in lonely self-pity she told herself. "If only I had married someone else! I could be out from under his roof, and life would be so different." But pitying herself led gradually to a downward spiral that eventually brought on such a depression that her husband found it necessary to curtail his work and at length to return to the United States. The log jam could be freed only when she finally told the truth. Once she did, she received help. And the marriage was rebuilt on Biblical love." (Jay Adams: *Christian Living in the Home*, pp. 28-29.)

Christian love is orientated to truth, and thus it is *real love*. And where you have this you get proper communication because you both face together the reality of what you are and work at what Christ wants you to become (v. 29).

2. Disagreements and disputes must be settled before bed-time (4:26)

How down-to-earth is this verse! There is a place for anger in marriage, for there is such a thing as a righteous reaction to wrong behaviour. For example, disobedient children ought to experience the righteous anger of their parents. But anger can easily become an occasion for sinning — it can issue in an outburst of ungovernable temper which leads to violence against the marriage partner. So Paul says that we are not to fall into sin when we are angry. Now, as Jay Adams points out, anger may be handled wrongly in either one of two ways: 'blowing up or clamping up'.

The book of Proverbs condemns blowing up. See 29:11, 22. It is sinful to ventilate our anger in a fit of temper. At the opposite extreme is clammng up — nursing a list of grudges day by day, year by year, until finally the lid blows off.

Paul teaches that we are not to let the sun go down on our anger (v. 26). We are not to pass into another day without dealing with the matter. We are not to let resentment build up inside us, for if we do we shall give the devil his opportunity (v. 27). Paul implies that there must be a settlement before bed-time — before the sun goes down. In other words, *in* bed is not the place to settle quarrels, but *before* bed. If you try to settle problems in bed you will find you make them worse, because you are tired and thus communication tends to be poorer.

Paul's principle also has its application to a great deal of sexual difficulty which occurs in marriage (I say a great deal, not all!). On this point I can do no better than to quote Jay Adams: 'Husbands and wives frequently complain that they are having trouble with sex, but the trouble usually is not with sex. . . . The real difficulties in bed at night comes from the fact that all kinds of problems have been carried into bed from the day, problems that should have been settled before going to bed. That is where the difficulties come from; the problems get in the way. Husbands and wives must learn, literally, not to let the sun go down on their anger' (*op. cit.* p. 36).

3. *We must constantly practise forgiveness, patterning it on God's forgiveness in Christ* (v. 32)

Paul says that man and wife are to be

kind to one another. That is, they must not hurt each other, but show tenderness towards each other. How important this is in marriage. The most blessed and most intimate of relationships becomes the most hellish of all when one or both of the partners sets out to hurt.

But what if hurt is given? Then there must be forgiveness, swift and complete forgiveness. Again this must be patterned on God's forgiveness in Christ. So it will be a forgiveness which forgets, which does not bring up the offence again (Isa. 43:25). Forgiveness is not forgiveness unless the past is buried never to be resurrected again.

It must also be a creative thing. Forgiveness is not just accepting that the slate is clean, but then keeping one's partner at arm's length. God's forgiveness is creative, for he removes the obstacle of sin and establishes a new relationship — he takes the forgiven into his family, and embraces them in love as his sons (Rom. 8:16-17).

Is this how we practise forgiveness? Is it creative? Does it re-unite? If we profess the name of Christ we must continually practise forgiveness, otherwise we do not mean what we pray when we ask God to forgive us our trespasses even as we forgive others their trespasses. And it must be a forgiveness which is not limited and restricted (Matt. 18:22).

May God help us by his grace to enjoy a Christ-honouring marriage in which truth is spoken, disagreements settled day by day, and forgiveness extended to each other.

Law and Grace in the life and teaching of William Huntington

by Robert Oliver

From the 1780s until 1813, one of the most popular London preachers was William Huntington. Contemporary of John Newton, Rowland Hill, Abraham Booth and John Rippon, Huntington was nevertheless isolated from them all. The congregation, which he preached into existence, grew until 2,000 were meeting each week in Providence Chapel, Gray's Inn Road. He never confined his efforts to London. Regular preaching tours took him through the Home Counties and into the West and the Midlands. Everywhere he drew great crowds. His collected works, which amounted to some twenty volumes, had a ready sale in his lifetime and have been prized by his admirers ever since. Not only did he have a following among his fellow Independents, some of whom were known as 'Huntingtonians' until well into the twentieth century, he also influenced many Strict Baptists. He had disciples in the Church of England. Thomas Wright, one of his greatest admirers and his biographer, was an Anglican.¹

William Huntington was a controversial figure in his lifetime and has remained so ever since. His politics separated him from many of his contemporary Non-conformists. More serious, however, in the eyes of many, was his insistence that the Moral Law was not the believer's rule of life. This led to the charge of Antinomianism. Thomas Wright has effectively dismissed the charge of practical Antinomianism or immorality of life. The danger of practical Antinomianism was certainly present in the late eighteenth century and helps us to see why Huntington became such a controversial figure.

1. Huntingdon's Life

1. Early Life

William Huntington was born near Cranbrook, Kent in February 1745. He was the illegitimate son of Barnabas Russell, a wealthy farmer, and Elizabeth Hunt, wife of one of Russell's workmen. He was brought up by the Hunts, whose name he took, but Russell paid for him to have some education. In later life he was to display some of the energy and enterprise of Russell. There is no evidence of any real Christian influences in childhood or youth.

In 1763 William Hunt began to court Susan Fever of the neighbouring village of Frittenden, but her parents intervened to break up the friendship. By this time Susan was pregnant. After the birth of a son, her parents appealed to the magistrates for a maintenance order against William Hunt. Ill health and unemployment prevented Hunt from keeping up the payments. To avoid gaol he fled the county.

William had a succession of labouring jobs in the districts around London. To avoid detection he changed his name to Huntington. It was at this stage in his life he learned of the death of Susan Fever. Later in life he made a substantial donation to the parish of Frittenden, which had been responsible for the maintenance of Susan and their son at this time. He was also to help his son financially.

2. Conversion

About 1770 Huntington married Mary Short, a devout Anglican. Together at Kingston upon Thames, they attended the parish church, where William was deeply convicted of sin. Of this experience he later wrote, 'the Law with all its awful contents flowed into my soul and all false hopes flowed out. This place to me was Mount Sinai and I have no wish to hear more of these mighty thunderclaps'.² He gained no relief under the preaching at the local church and wandered from church to church seeking help. At this stage he was so suspicious of Non-conformists that he would not attend any of their meetings.

He became convinced of the doctrine of election at this time as a result of a personal conversation. He saw that the Articles of the Church of England taught election and that it was a Biblical doctrine.

I was then as firmly established in these doctrines as ever I have been since, although at the same time I was like to tear my hair and run distracted. And I believe, had I gone to hell in my sin, I should have taken the doctrines of election and reprobation established in my judgement with me, for the Bible appeared to be full of them.³

Deliverance finally came in December 1773, while he was working as a gardener at Sunbury. He described how in desperation he cast himself on the mercy of God, using his own words, instead of prayers from the Prayer Book.

I went into the tool house, where this happened, in all the agonies of the damned and returned with the kingdom of God established in my heart. O happy year! Happy day! Blessed minute! Sacred spot! Yea, rather blessed be my dear Redeemer, who delivereth my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling!⁴

The intensity of his experience stamped itself on Huntington's ministry and helps to explain his subsequent language about the Law.

3. The Preacher

Huntington was persuaded to hear Torial Joss, former associate of Whitefield, preach at a Methodist meeting in Richmond. He was delighted and his prejudices against Non-conformists were swept away. Huntington began to read and pray with his wife and family. Neighbours joined them and Huntington began to comment on the Scriptures. He was soon conducting cottage meetings and then being invited to speak in the chapels of rural Surrey.

In 1776 Huntington was ordained pastor of an Independent church in Woking by Torial Joss. He continued to preach in other villages in the week, but supported himself and his family by working as a coal heaver at Thames Ditton. His outspokenness against profanity and drunkenness caused riots in both Woking and Thames Ditton. The vicar of Thames Ditton discovered the story of Huntington's real name and of his illegitimate son and broadcast the details.

In the early 1780s, Huntington was invited to preach in a London chapel. He was told that if he moved to London he would gather a congregation. In 1782 he moved his family to London. A site was bought in Titchfield Street in the West End and work began on a chapel. Huntington worked hard to raise funds.

He also started a regular week evening service at a chapel in the City. In 1798 Providence Chapel, Titchfield Street was enlarged to seat 2,000. In July 1810 this chapel was destroyed by fire. Sadly for Huntington, this occurred soon after he had publicly given thanks for the burning of two London theatres. However, Huntington's followers rallied round him and built a new and better chapel in Gray's Inn Road.

The congregation in both Providence chapels included an interesting cross-section of London life. There were the desperately poor as well as a considerable number of tradesmen and their families. In addition there were on occasion prominent politicians and members of the royal court.

Huntington undoubtedly had a weakness for pomp. He became quite a wealthy man and kept his own carriage. To ensure that no one believed it was hired, he had inscribed in gold on its doors, W.H.S.S. (William Huntington, Sinner Saved). In London the carriage was pulled by a single horse, but when he travelled outside the capital, there were four horses and the coachman sat on a tiger's skin. His second wife was the widow of a former Lord Mayor of London and Member of Parliament. Sadly the second marriage caused alienation from his own children.

No one could deny that Huntington was a diligent worker. He was often in his study by 5 a.m. He poured out a succession of writings including letters to his many correspondents. He was involved in many a controversy. His sermons took from one and a half to two hours to deliver. In addition there were the extensive preaching tours.

4. Huntington's Death

William Huntington's health broke down in the winter of 1812 to 1813. He died on 1st July 1813. His funeral took place a week later, when his body was laid by the side of that of Jenkin Jenkins, behind Jireh Chapel, Lewes, Sussex. Jenkins had been one of his few ministerial associates. The funeral was a remarkable demonstration. The hearse pulled by six horses

headed a procession over a mile long, making the journey from London to Lewes. There was no service at the grave, but later the crowds crammed into Jireh Chapel to hear Joseph Chamberlain of Leicester preach from the words, 'he shall enter into peace', Isaiah 57:2.

II. Huntington's Teaching

Huntington was a vigorous defender of what he believed to be the truth. He was intolerant of opposition and often attacked his opponents with unjustifiable bitterness. From the early days of his ministry he upheld the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, defending it against the attacks of the Arians and Sabellians. He was a staunch Hyper-Calvinist with no time for the teaching of Andrew Fuller on the free offer of the Gospel. It was the way in which he saw the doctrine of justification that led him to deny the Law to the believer's rule of life.

1. The Place of the Law

Huntington believed that the Law had a very definite place in God's economy. Replying to Rowland Hill, who suggested that Huntington wanted to abolish the Law, he answered from Matthew 5:17, making Christ to say,

Were I to do this (that is, abolish the Law), mine elect would have no schoolmaster, the bond servant no rule, the sinner no transgression and the ungodly no damnation.⁵

To John Ryland senior, he wrote,

The Law is still what it ever was — an everlasting, unalterable, unrepealable Law; and a covenant of works in every sense; and to him that works under it the reward is still of debt.⁶

To John Ryland junior, he declared that our Lord,

always sent the curious, the pharisaical and the whole-hearted enquirer to the Law. 'What is written in the Law? How readest thou?'⁷

In the light of these statements, it is not surprising to learn that he expected the genuine convert to have had a deep and painful experience of conviction by the Law. In this respect he differed from those Antinomians, who rejected the idea of the Law as a means of convicting the unconverted.

2. Freedom from the Law

Huntington laid great emphasis on those Scriptures, which speak of the believer's freedom from the Law, Romans 6:14; 7:4; 8:2 and Galatians 2:19. 'Thus all the non-elect are under the law to Christ. But the believer is under grace to Christ.' Sometimes he seemed to suggest that this obedience is to Gospel exhortations, but he counteracted this by a tremendous emphasis on Divine activity. Commenting on the words, 'If

ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love,' John 15:10, Huntington wrote,

This proves that there is a manifest distinction between the commandments of a killing letter and that commandment, which is eternal life. The one is the Father's commandment which was given by Moses, the other is the life giving command, which is of grace, and which came by Jesus Christ. The one is a command given to us to work for life, the other is a command given to Christ to give us that life which man could never earn and which the law could never give. Upon Mount Zion hath God commanded the blessing even life for ever more, Ps. 133:3. Here is a blessing commanded to be given to Zion, the elect of God; and this blessing is life for evermore. But then to whom was this command given? I answer to Jesus, the great king, whom God set upon his holy hill. . . . Why is it called a commandment? Because the Saviour, in obedience to his Father's will, by his own powerful voice, speaks life to the dead sinner's soul.⁸

He developed this further in another place,

It is one thing for Christ to say to a dead soul, 'Live!' and it is another for the Father to say, 'This do and thou shalt live!' Besides the Law never held forth eternal life. 'For had there been a Law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have come by the Law.' Life in Eden was all that was intimated to Adam before the fall; with the loss of which he was threatened in the case of disobedience. Length of days in the land of Canaan was all that the Moral Law held forth to Israel.⁹

To Caleb Evans of Bristol, he was even more specific.

Good works do not spring from the will of God's commandments, but from his will of purpose: 'Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'¹⁰

In the same letter he went on to assert, 'nor is man the active agent of good works, but God, who works in him to will and to do.'¹¹

Thus for Huntington, freedom from the Law meant freedom from any objective standard. The Christian's obedience was the direct and immediate work of God upon his soul and expressed in his life.

3. Opposition to Practical Antinomianism

Huntington's doctrine of freedom from the Law did not mean that the believer was free to live in sin.

If you see an Antinomian living in a flaming profession, when at the same time, he is proud and haughty; a hater of and a declaimer against those, whom he knows in his conscience to be good; a lover of Mammon; aiming at wealth or an independency of divine providence; following the antediluvian professors, in making an affinity with the

offspring of Cain, or the children of the devil, either to gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes or the covetous spirit of Mammon . . . you may well say that such men are in love with their own lusts; and that all their harangues about the Law are nothing but their own whims and fancies, for they hold unscriptural notions and live in the practice of licentious principles.¹²

Unlike some other doctrinal Antinomians, Huntington strictly observed the Lord's Day.¹³ As a young Christian he had left one job, because he was required to work on a Sunday and in his later ministry he never hesitated to denounce Sabbath breaking.

4. Doctrine of Sanctification

William Huntington departed from Reformed theology in his doctrine of sanctification. At times he seems to be teaching a form of perfectionism. 'We may warrantably assert, that sanctification, as well as justification, is God's work, and sometimes an instantaneous work.'¹⁴ He wrote,

I believe all God's work is perfect; nothing can be added to it to make it more so; nor taken from it to make it less so; and the weakest believer, who holds the head is God's complete workmanship and is complete in Christ.¹⁵

At times Huntington seems to be discussing what later theologians have described as definitive sanctification, but this is not balanced by a doctrine of progressive sanctification. When he discusses the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, he appears to reduce man to a state of absolute passivity.

Once more sanctification is by the Holy Ghost; who subdues the will, renews the mind, enlightens the understanding and sheds abroad the love of God in the heart: 'That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, Rom. 15:16. All this is willed and determined by the secret counsel of God; as it is written, 'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.'¹⁶

Rejecting the idea of progressive sanctification, he wrote,

As to sanctification being a progressive work, it is best to consent to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, lest we set poor weak believers to inquiring how long this progressive work is to be on the wheels, what part of it is wrought, what measure of it is required, and how much remains to be done: and like Sarah with her bondwoman, they begin to forward the business by the works of the flesh, instead of lying passive to be worked on. 'He that believeth shall not make haste, but he that hasteneth with his feet sinneth.'¹⁷

III. Conclusion

The life and teaching of William Huntington provide us with a number of important lessons.

1. Good men are not always right

William Huntington was undoubtedly a godly man with a profound experience of the grace of God. He lived a remarkable life: the Kentish labourer became a prominent figure in Georgian London. Certainly he was an able preacher, who could draw all classes and who could hold a large congregation for over thirty years. He had a good command of language. Sometimes profound in worship, he was also devastating with his opponents. Huntington was a character, who drew people. These facts did not mean that he was always right. Unfortunately many of his followers treated him as though he were infallible and some of them would never hear another preacher. He was steeped in Scripture, which he could quote with the greatest facility, but his Scriptures were not always relevant to the matter under discussion. His skilful use of Scriptural phrases and sentences carried many along with him.

2. The importance of a right view of the Law

Huntington rightly taught that salvation by obedience to the demands of the Law was an impossibility. Unfortunately he went on to drive a wedge between the Law and Christian obedience. He has smarted under the conviction and condemnation of the Law and the Law thereafter remained his enemy. As a Christian he wanted nothing to do with it. This led on to a passive view of Christian obedience. Good works seemed to be produced in the believer in a mechanical sort of way.

3. The danger of mishandling controversy

Men such as Rylands and Rowland Hill were sensitive to the danger of practical Antinomianism. John Wesley recorded examples of such teaching developing under the shadow of the growing Evangelical group.¹⁸ Fear of licentiousness made men ready to denounce Huntington without proper attention to what he was really saying. In the early years Huntington tried to establish a friendship with Rowland Hill. Thomas Wright however described what happened when a friend of Huntington asked Hill what he thought of Huntington's book, *The Arminian Skeleton*.

‘Having rung for his footman, Hill took up the book with the tongs and bade him “Put it on the kitchen fire.” “But first of all,” he added, “watch that man down the stairs lest he should steal the silver or anything else he can lay hands on, for his master does not hold the Law to be a rule of life.”’¹⁹

Huntington repaid his opponents in similar coin and did not hesitate to ascribe their illnesses and deaths to the judgement of God.

There can be no doubt that both sides were responsible for the polarisation, which took place in the Antinomian debate of these years.

As a preacher and writer Huntington was sometimes compared to John Bunyan. Unhappily Huntington had no John Gifford to instruct

Are there prophets today?

by Paul Noble

When we try to bring the gospel to our unbelieving contemporaries they sometimes retort: If God exists, why does he not speak to us directly? Some sections of the church answer that God does today speak to us through prophecy. This is a reply which sounds much more exciting and appears to promise far more than the usual evangelical answer that God does speak today, but through the Scriptures alone. In this article I argue that a proper understanding of biblical prophecy precludes any resurgence of the prophetic gift today.

I shall show that the prophetic gift or office share the same characteristics in both O.T. and N.T. and then I shall indicate the importance of prophecy in

connection with the progress of redemptive history.

To hear the charismatic enthusiasts talk, one would think that the faith is dynamic in their hands while those who hold the traditional evangelical position are merely passive custodians of a bygone glory. But the Bible in our hands, on our lips and in our hearts *is* the God-ordained instrument by which we declare the gospel which is his power unto salvation.

Who was the O.T. prophet?

He was a man in whose mouth God had placed his word. The Lord's promise to Moses is typical: 'I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say' (Exod. 4:12). The point is made even clearer in the case of Jeremiah: 'Then the Lord stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, Behold, I have put my word in your mouth' (Jer. 1:9). Time and again we read such statements as

him. As a young man he had too many unhelpful teachers and he ended by trusting very few. He wrote,

This private method the Saviour took in instructing me by His Word and Spirit without the ordinary use of public ordinances led me to love private study and meditation and even to this time, I had rather spend a day alone with myself in communion with Christ, than a whole week in company with all the Gospel ministers in the kingdom; yea I would rather spend a day in communion with Christ alone, than in the company of the twelve apostles, even were it possible for them to pay me a visit from heaven.²⁰

All Christians would echo Huntington's overwhelming desire for communion with Christ, but he does seem to ignore the fact that Christ often reveals his mind through the instrumentality of our brethren.

¹ Thomas Wright, *The Life of William Huntington*, London, 1909. ² *Ibid.*, quoted on p. 19. ³ W. Huntington, *Kingdom of Heaven taken by Prayer*, Redhill, 1966, p. 87. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94. ⁵ W. Huntington, *Works XI*, London, 1811, p. 266. ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147. ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70. ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72. ¹⁰ *Works X*, p. 86. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87. ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 34. ¹³ See for example *Kingdom of Heaven*, pp. 127 & 178. ¹⁴ *Works X*, p. 31. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30. ¹⁶ *Works XI*, p. 233. ¹⁷ *Works X*, p. 30. ¹⁸ See for example John Wesley's *Journal*, 23rd March, 1746, also J. Ryland, *Pastoral Memorials II*, London, 1820, p. 42. ¹⁹ Wright, op. cit., p. 192. ²⁰ *Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 117.

'the word of the Lord came to Isaiah' (Isa. 38:4). The O.T. prophet was not merely prompted or guided into a knowledge of God's word, but rather the word was directly and objectively given to him.

This is why it was so characteristic of the prophet to say 'Thus saith the Lord.' God himself establishes the foundations of the prophetic institution by saying through Moses, 'I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak . . . all that I command him' (Deut. 18:18).

Thus, what the prophet actually speaks is directly identified with the word that the Lord himself gives.

This gave the prophets their inerrancy and, consequently, their authority. They had every right to say, 'listen to the Word of the Lord' (Jer. 42:15).

The prophetic office

Although God occasionally used a man to give a particular revelation, and yet without making him a prophet in the permanent sense, nevertheless such instances were exceptions to the rule. Usually God spoke through those he had appointed to the office of prophet. Such men would prophesy over an extended period of time. (They can be referred to as vocational prophets, in contrast to the occasional prophets.)

The writing prophets, such as Isaiah and Ezekiel, were clearly vocational prophets, as were also the members of the established 'bands' or 'schools' of prophets that flourished under Samuel, Elijah and Elisha.

A man entered the prophetic office only if he was commissioned by God through an explicit special revelation. Such a revelation was usually given directly to the prophet himself, but sometimes, as with Elisha or John the Baptist, given through another servant of God (see

Exod. 4:10-16; 1 Sam. 3; Jer. 1:4-9; Luke 1:13-17, etc.).

It was characteristic of the false prophets that they had not been commissioned by God.

The prophets are prophesying falsely in my name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you . . . futility and the deception of their own minds . . . it was not I who sent them' (Jer. 29:8ff.).

It is important to note that where the commissioning does take place, it is both supernatural and objective. It was no mere hunch, or inner conviction. A classic case is the calling of Samuel. The voice calling him was not in his head — it came from outside; it had an existence of its own; it was objective.

True and False prophets

Of course it was one thing for the man himself to be sure that he was called to be a prophet; it was another thing entirely for the people to judge whether or not he was genuine. To help the people discern the true from the false, God gave them three tests:

1. The true prophet must exhibit a morally upright and godly life.
2. His message, in spirit and letter, had to harmonise perfectly with the revelation that God had already given and also speak to the *true* condition of Israel at the time.

The false prophet would continue to preach peace and optimism even when the nation had provoked God to great wrath (see Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 23:9-32; Ezek. 13:10 - 14:11, etc.).
3. If a true prophet makes predictions, they must come true.

We see at once that these are pretty stringent tests. Taken one by one,

someone falsely claiming to be a prophet might appear to pass the test; but considered together the possibility becomes very slim indeed. For a person to claim that he is 'not the predictive kind of prophet' will not do. How would it do today for a university candidate, needing a pass in three subjects to claim that he only wishes to be examined in two subjects?

N.T. Prophets

The role of the N.T. prophet is not articulated as clearly as that of the O.T. prophet because the concept of prophet had been already established by O.T. usage and, of course, they had been superseded by the apostles (1 Cor. 12:28; 14:37).

I believe we can examine the prophets of the N.T. and establish decisively that they functioned according to the existing O.T. pattern.

First of all, we observe that the word *prophet* in current secular use denoted 'one who speaks in the name of a god, declaring the divine will and counsel in the oracle . . . he is the mouthpiece of the god . . .' (Prof. Kramer). We have an example of this use of the word by the Roman soldiers in Luke 22:64 where they say to Jesus: 'prophesy who it is who has struck you'.

Secondly, we see that the N.T. authors understood the word 'prophet' in the sense I have indicated above, by the way they refer to the O.T. prophets Samuel, David, Isaiah, etc. In particular they refer to the *authority* of the O.T. and they appeal to them in support of their own teaching.

And an examination of the N.T. prophets would show us that they measured up to the three tests already referred to.

The clearest teaching on the nature of N.T. prophecy occurs in 2 Peter 1:19-21

where Peter describes the scriptures themselves as 'the prophetic word' and 'the prophecy of Scripture'. It would have been impossible for Peter to so directly identify the inerrant Scriptures with the concept of prophecy developed in this article if the meaning of 'prophecy' in his day had become sufficiently elastic to embrace the sometimes fallible as well. Peter applies his words to *all* prophecy so that he always understands prophecy as the speaking forth of the very words of God, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Were the N.T. prophets vocational?

Although in some cases this point is difficult to establish, it is quite clear I think that those prophets in the Corinthian church meeting were vocational. This is how Paul addresses them:

let two or three prophets speak. . . . But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first be silent. For you may all prophesy one by one . . . and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets (1 Cor. 14:29-32).

These men had an abiding gift of prophecy which they could exercise or refrain from exercising at will. Paul also says that they received revelations which they delivered to the people; and when these points are taken together with the general N.T. teaching on prophecy that we have outlined then it is not at all surprising that he called these Corinthians 'prophets' just as he called Samuel and Isaiah prophets (Acts 13:20; 28:25).

Modern-day Prophets

It should be clear from the discussion so far that the question of whether 'Charismatic' prophets can arise in the church today is fundamentally a question as to whether God completed his special revelation at some time in the past, or whether such revelations are still given today. The Evangelical answer has consistently been that special revelation

ceased when the canon of Scripture was completed, and that therefore the Bible is, in a quite unique sense, the word of God, to which there is no comparable word available today. The Westminster Confession opens with a classic statement of this view: having stated that God's general revelations 'are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation', it immediately continues, 'therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the holy scripture to be most necessary; *those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased*' (I.I).

Likewise we read later in the same chapter: 'The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men' (I.VI). Or in the words of that pregnant Reformation motto: 'Sola Scriptura!'

Modern Charismatic teaching — in all its forms — is in direct conflict with this doctrine. The claim that there are prophets in the church today is a flat contradiction of the Confession's statement that 'those former ways of God's revealing his will . . . (have) now ceased'. Nor can one claim that there are still in the church today prophets who, in essence, are no different from Elijah or Jeremiah, and yet still say 'Sola Scriptura'. A choice has to be made here one way or the other: when someone asks you 'Where can I hear the word of God?', are you going to answer

'In the Scriptures only,' or are you going to say 'In the Scriptures, *and* in the mouths of our modern-day prophets'?

Of course, I am well aware that most Evangelical charismatics have no intention of undermining the completeness of the Bible. Often they stress that their prophecies are of a much 'lower' order — that they are fallible, and need to be tested by the Bible to remove errors. But this shows a very deficient understanding of the Biblical teaching on prophecy. As we have seen, it is of the very essence of *all* true prophecy that God puts his own words into the prophet's mouth; the message of a *true* prophet is therefore every bit as much the word of God as the Bible itself. Indeed, we saw above how Peter explicitly set them on the same level, and if the Charismatics are saying that they cannot follow Peter here, then they are in fact admitting that their prophets are not genuine.

No middle ground exists here. There is no such thing in the Bible as a genuine prophet who sometimes makes mistakes; instead there is a clean either/or drawn between the true prophet and the false. The purpose of testing the prophets was not to distinguish the true *message* from the false, but to tell the true *prophet* from the false: 'The prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I did not command him to speak . . . that prophet shall die' (Deut. 18:20). Of course I am not suggesting that false prophets today should be summarily executed; but what this verse does make clear is that, right from the start of the prophetic institution, a prophet only had to be wrong once to be completely disqualified from ever being recognised as a prophet again. The widely-held Charismatic opinion that this testing implies that prophets were fallible is completely without Scriptural basis and in direct conflict with the very full and

Joy Complete !

A black Christian wrote to us not so long ago describing a revival in Africa in which heaven came down to earth. As reported in the great Cambuslang revival in Scotland¹ in 1742, such a visitation can bring terror into the hearts of sinful men who then strive desperately for forgiveness and a felt sense of pardon, justification and reconciliation. The brother who wrote to us testifies that for several weeks through day and night he experienced a phenomenal sense of heaven saturating all his faculties. This experience departed as suddenly and mysteriously as it had come. He then returned to a normal life of faith.

On a more usual plane it is common for believers during times of great physical weakness or periods of trial to experience fullness of joy and

explicit teaching that true prophets are inerrant.

How then are we to respond to the Charismatic claim that there are — or even that there could be — prophets in the church today? As I see it, there are three alternatives:

1. We can try to reconcile the completeness of Scripture with the presence of prophets by setting aside the Biblical definition of a prophet as one explicitly commissioned by God to inerrantly speak his words — including his words about the yet unknowable future — and adopt instead the Charismatic notion of fallible, non-commissioned, non-predictive prophets, who are in some vague sense 'guided' by God when they speak, as being the norm for today. This alternative must surely be rejected by all who take the Bible as their final authority on all matters of faith and conduct. (In fact the vast majority of modern-day prophets bear so little resemblance to those of the Old or New Testament that it becomes difficult to see how they were ever mistaken for a resurgence of N.T. prophetism.)

2. We can accept the Charismatic claim that there are genuine prophets today as true, and reject therefore the traditional

doctrine that the word of God can be found in the Scriptures alone. I cannot accept this alternative myself, because I believe the traditional doctrine does accurately summarise the Bible's own teaching on its own completeness and sufficiency, and the cessation of all revelatory gifts after the apostolic age.

3. I am compelled therefore by this Biblical teaching to reject the possibility of there being any genuine prophets in the church today, and maintaining instead the traditional Evangelical doctrine that God's former ways of revealing himself have now ceased, and that the word of God can be found in the Bible only. As C. H. Spurgeon said, 'The Law of the Lord is perfect in all its parts, and perfect as a whole; it is a crime to add to it, treason to alter it, and felony to take from it.'

Revelation and Redemption

Our case for rejecting the claims of modern prophets does not rest merely on empirical grounds; that is, applying the three tests and finding the 'prophets' wanting. A more weighty reason is the progress of redemptive history which culminates in the glorious victory of Christ and the sealing of the infallible scriptures.

peace. This comes as a special supply or bonus for special reasons, whereas most of the time we live a life of faith with occasional enablings and strengthenings and many ups and downs, heights and depths, chastisements and joys, trials and deliverances, all mixed together. Yet there are seasons of great joy when we tread near the borders of heaven. We should make the most of such blessings. The wife of the famous preacher Jonathan Edwards recorded her experiences; times of rich and intimate spiritual communion and heavenly elysiums² as to be beyond human expression to describe. She was exceptional for Edwards said of his wife, 'She had the greatest, fullest, longest continued, and most constant assurance of the favour of God, and of title to future glory,' that he ever saw in any person.

Only a few days prior to writing this a young man of five years standing in Christ described an experience to which he was subject for five hours. In that time all his faculties were raised to intercede with a power and clarity never experienced, before or subsequently. He was raised to the highest possible plane of his ability in heavenly communion which was unceasing during most of the entire period. Distinct communion with each of the three persons of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit was enjoyed. Although nearly frozen physically and with a minimum of rest, he nevertheless was enabled to go to work refreshed and do full justice throughout the day to his secular employment.

Enough has been said up to this point to illustrate the reality of heightened experiences. We now proceed to the practical subject of what can be done to experience richer communion with the Trinity. After that some general conclusions will be made.

A. Complete Joy in Communion

'We write this to make your joy complete' (1 John 1:4).³

The Greek language can express with one word that which takes a whole sentence to explain in English. When it says 'to make our joy complete' the Greek word for 'full' meant that something has been accomplished on our behalf as to make our joy 'to be as having been filled full'.⁴

What is this completed joy that has been accomplished for us in the past, the effects of which continue in full through the present time and into eternity? It is the joy of the incarnation and our oneness with Christ in all his accomplishments on our behalf. The truth of that depends on the validity and reality of the apostles' testimony. . . . Did they see properly, hear correctly and report accurately? Yes! With absolute certainty the apostles have written down the testimony. It is not a cunningly devised fabrication that they concocted (2 Pet. 1:11). Rather we possess eye witness accounts that they have shared with us. The purpose of the apostles writing the testimony, says John, is 'that our joy may be as having been filled full'.

There is no joy like this joy of believing, trusting in, and being joined to Christ. It is joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:8). There is no joy more complete than that, and it is the joy of all believers which they enter as they are given to understand the momentous nature of their salvation.

How is this joy realised experimentally? James can help when he says 'come near to God and he will come near to you' (Jas. 4:8). The fact that this exhortation is set in the darkest shadows of sin — killing, coveting, fighting, quarrelling, selfishness, adulterous attitudes, worldliness, grieving the Spirit (Jas. 4:5) devilish temptations — is most significant. Christians are sinners (1 Jn. 1:8). Sin in its roots and branches is vile. These sinful ways must be repented of with sorrow from the heart so genuine as to be seen in tears⁵ (Jas. 4:9).

So we are to draw near to God? How? By calling on him in prayer, by repentance, by persevering, by waiting upon him in prayer, by pleading the fullness of Christ's righteousness and merit to cover our sin, by pleading the promise that if we persist in drawing near in this way, the promise is that he will draw near to us.

Complete joy consists of entering into communion with the Trinity. When dry, in doubt, feeling guilty, dull of heart, slow of apprehension, we should always make our approach to the holiest of all by going to Christ's atonement. The high priest of old began with the brazen altar of sacrifice and with the laver for washing. Note how John proceeds in his first epistle from the portrayal of complete joy to speak of confessing sin and trusting in the propitiation or atoning sacrifice (1 Jn. 1:2).

Providing we are in possession of a right view of our standing in God's clothing of righteousness, we have liberty and boldness to pray to the Father and commune with him (Heb. 4:14-16).

Fellowship with the Father is a fellowship of adoption. It is a festival of praise because of his glory and a celebration of that love he has demonstrated toward us in his gift to purchase us (1 Jn. 4:7-21). It is a rejoicing in that amazing grace which determined to rescue us (Rom. 8:28-30). It is gratitude for his purpose to make us his sons and endow us with an inheritance of unimaginable worth (1 Jn. 3:1, 2, 1 Pet. 1:3-5, Eph. 1:14).

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit is a fellowship with him as he indwells us. Fellowship with the Holy Spirit is an appreciation of his love as he opens our eyes to see wonderful truths in the Word and as he warms our hearts to admire and love the triune Jehovah. He guides us into the ways of wisdom and peace. He so indwells us as to empower practical, good works and fruitfulness. By the Spirit too we are given ability to pray (Rom. 8:28).

Our view of Christ and his love and achievements on our behalf, our appreciation of the attributes of God and our fellowship both with the

Father and the Son is enormous and varied in potential. Such experience is encouraged when James says, 'Draw near to God.' Note the promise that follows, 'and he will draw near to you'. The ways in which God draws near are various: a still small voice (Elijah), a grand view of God's sovereignty in creation (Job), a heartwarming understanding of the progress of revelation (Emmaus), hearing powerful preaching (Cornelius and his household). God sometimes draws near when we do not expect him to. God drew near to melt mountains of ice in the heart of Christmas Evans in several hours of spiritual experience as he walked home over the Welsh mountains.⁶ God can draw near to us in the night watches or he can draw near by empowering us in daily practical secular work or by giving us a heart to devote ourselves to his glory. He can draw near by impressing upon us in an unusual way the reality of his love. That may be the experience of a lifetime or we may be blessed with many such experiences. On the other hand a person may live a tough life of faith with little felt sense of such glorious visitations. Afterwards on a death bed he may be filled with the glories of paradise as was Mrs. Edwards. It may be, and often is, the case that the last scenes of life consist of struggling faith, a battle all the way up to the gates of Emmanuel's land. We should remember that God is glorified more by our faith than by our experiences. Hebrews chapter eleven bears that out to the full.

B. How to regard powerful spiritual experiences

1. We should always look for the love of God and be open to his visitations meditating upon the feast which Christ spreads for those he loves. The Song of Solomon is enormously helpful to many Christians.⁷
2. We should always seek balance in Trinitarian experience. True experience whether weak or strong, meditative or ecstatic, always centres in the Father and the Son. Mostly we rest in the Father's sovereign protecting love and in union with Christ as the God-man. While we are helped by the Holy Spirit, something has gone radically wrong if we preach 'pneumatology', that is we become Spirit-centred. Preachers should expound on how the Holy Spirit testifies not of himself (Jn. 16:13), but reveals the Father and the Son. In other words the Holy Spirit makes us theocentric and Christocentric. The apostle Peter did not preach the Holy Spirit. He hardly mentioned the experience of Pentecost. That experience resulted in Christ-centred preaching calling for repentance toward the Father. If believers boast about their Holy Spirit emphasis and at the same time are weak in persevering evangelism and poor in fruitfulness, you can be sure they are misguided and misled.
3. We should not tolerate any form of false stimulation of experience. We never try to work up feeling by artificial means,

chorus-repeats, beat-music, harangues, laying on of hands and so on. All that is in itself a complete denial of the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit. Elijah's prayer at Carmel was so different to that of the noisy prophets of Baal who were jumping about in an hysterical manner.

4. We must always preserve trial, affliction and chastisement as central in our faith. Look again at all the contexts of joyful, powerful experience and you will find trial interwoven with it. Here are just a few examples:

Romans 5	Love poured into our hearts	we rejoice in sufferings.
Romans 6	Union with Christ	mortification of sin.
Romans 7	Delighting in God's Law	evil waging war within us.
Romans 8	Crying 'Abba' Father	sharing the sufferings of Christ.
1 Peter 1	Inexpressible and glorious joy	suffering grief in all kinds of trial.
1 John 1, 2	Complete full joy 1 John 1:4	the sorrow of those who went away. The joy of those who remain true. 2 John 4.
James 1, 2	Pure joy	facing trials of many kinds and testing of your faith.
Hebrews 11	Living by Faith	persecution, torture, martyrdom — enduring the race of agony ⁸
Hebrews 12	A harvest of righteousness and peace (v. 11)	Discipline, rebuke, chastisement, hardship, pain.
Job	Happy restoration	Tribulation, pain, humiliation, desertion by God (23:8-10).

The last two cases could be transposed. That is the trial came first, the joy afterward. Job is reputed to be the oldest book in Scripture, the first, as though the first lesson which God wished to teach mankind is his sovereign right to desert a faithful and true man like Job. In this way Job was a type of Christ. Both were deserted in their hour of greatest need. Both held faith in the darkest hours.

Here is no press button, automatic, superficial kind of joy to be created by human will, or human control, or human power. God is sovereign in this area of experience as he is sovereign in all other realms. We should avoid name tags, but we do follow the reformers where they were biblical. They and their spiritual progeny were biblical in this question of sovereignty. Some believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation. They believe faith and repentance to be wholly gifts from above. But they do not believe in the sovereignty of God in experience. They believe that they possess the keys to this matter and

that they can do what all Job's friends were not able to do, that is, dispel Job's depression. We deny that there is any formula which will guarantee to raise believers from a low level to a high level. The adoption of that idea spells disaster in the long run because sooner or later dark and testing times will come. All formulas will fail. The victims will be easy subjects of despair because they have not been properly taught that our journey is a journey of faith, and that the greater experiences are bonus blessings which cannot be self induced but come by God's will. His will is that every Christian's faith be tried that it may come forth as gold (1 Pet. 1:7). We can see then that spiritual knowledge is no small asset. Peter urges that we add to our faith, good works, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love (2 Pet. 1:5-7). There is not a word about adding experiences. This does not mean that Peter is contradicting James 4:8, but it does mean that when the storm is riding high, it is faith, not memories of blessings, that brings us through. Especially does faith work when fortified by the additions just described. Such faith says Peter will ensure a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom.

5. We should avoid becoming experience centred Christians. Doctrine, practice and experience blend together to make a mature believer. Sure we should be God-loving believers, and brother-loving Christians. Sure generous room must be made to exalt in our joys. But if a church member is one track minded about his inner experiences and always hankers to have everyone focus on him, he will soon become a pest rather than a blessing! It is a pity if leaders in a church allow the assembly to be swayed in an unbalanced way simply because a minority will be peeved if their emphases do not have priority.
6. We should be discreet and modest in sharing our inner experiences. Someone may be going through a time of desperate anguish and weakness. Such need the support that gentle, loving, caring spirits can supply. A boisterous gale force wind or boastful testimony can do far more harm than good. The best testimonies of experience are often from those who have long and hard struggles. Eventually they have come to a felt sense of the love of God (Rom. 5:5). To be sure the whole church is not necessarily the place where we open up our innermost emotions. It is very much in order to share with a few or one or two. They need not be those who are specialists in this subject. Our motive should always be mutual encouragement and edification and also the promotion of unity in the whole assembly.
7. We should encourage drawing near to God and plead that he will draw near to us, not only on the personal level but in revival locally, nationally and internationally. In our quest for a knowledge of God which is both affectionate and intellectual (loving him with *heart and*

mind), we should distinguish between true experience and sentimentality. It is common for preachers to be criticised for preaching the law, sin, judgement, justice and hell. The cry goes up that we are not loving! We are loving and we show and demonstrate it by following the example of our Lord and his apostles in preaching the whole counsel of God. We aim at light and love, atonement and forgiveness. The false prophets preach love only. But love without law and justice is mere useless sentimentality. Experiences that are devoid of the fear of God are delusions.

8. We must persevere even if we do not enjoy love feasts. Our basic truth by which we live is justification by faith. One of the foremost dangers of our time is the long absence of the Holy Spirit's powerful work in conversion and conviction in our land. God's people get discouraged. When nothing seems to happen the temptation comes to get something done ourselves. To deviate from Biblical ways can prove to be fatal in the extreme. How solemn is the warning of the Lord through Isaiah:

*Who among you fears the Lord
and obeys the word of his servant?
Let him who walks in the dark,
who has no light,
trust in the name of the Lord
and rely on his God.
But now, all you who light fires
and provide yourselves with flaming torches,
go, walk in the light of your fires
and of the torches you have set ablaze.
This is what you shall receive from my hand:
You will lie down in torment.* (Is. 50:10, 11)

If in contrast to feelings of our own creation we seek our experience by drawing near to God through the precepts of Scripture, then we can be sure that he will draw near to us. We know too that whatever the state of our present feelings our joy has been made full. We are confident that we will finally enter into perfect joy. In the meantime we know that the enjoyment of the Trinity is through our union with Christ. Yes, we can say, 'I am assured that whatever trials may come I know that 'the Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him' (Lam. 3:24).

¹ Cambuslang. ² Elysium is used here as an expression denoting entrance into paradise without dying physically. ³ Some manuscripts have 'your' joy. ⁴ The perfect passive participle is used like an adjective 'having been fulfilled' is our joy. See Lenski on 1 John 1:4. ⁵ See article on repentance by Richard Brooks, *R.T.* 64 p. 14. ⁶ See biography in *R.T.* 29. ⁷ George Burrowes defends the conservative allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon in his commentary on that book. *The Song of Solomon* Banner of Truth, 1977, pp. 9-86. Earlier editions of this work did not include this most valuable apologetic. ⁸ The Greek word for contest, that is the race, is the root of our word *agony*.

NEWS ITEMS (Continued from inside front cover)

Conference which is scheduled for July, 1982 at Skoegheim in Natal. The last occasion when J. W. Baker of Bay City, Texas, was a main contributor was much appreciated. Deon Thom, Professor of Missions at the University of Fort Hare was one of the speakers. The conference is inter-denominational and multiracial. If it is to truly fulfil the meaning of the last category, multiracial, then much more effort is needed to encourage ministers of all racial groups to attend. Subsidies would be of no small help in encouraging those who have distances to travel or whose own financial means are straitened. Please help the organisers if you can, especially Mr. Ian Thomas the conference secretary and organiser, who with his wife Bobbie did an outstanding work to make the last conference a success. Ian Thomas' address is: 4 Portman Avenue, Westville, 3630.

Dublin

Chris Robinson, who for twenty years has pastored Grace Baptist Church, is now devoting his whole time to evangelistic ministry in the Republic of Ireland. The experience gained in building up Grace Baptist Church from very small beginnings is a valuable asset in helping a number of small recently planted churches in the Republic. The 6th and 7th March have been set aside for conferring together in Co. Wicklow. Benny Clark of Surrey and Mike Harris will be speaking. For details write to N. Reid, 17 Willington Avenue, DUBLIN 12.

Hong Kong

Tony Lambert, one of our subscribers, is due to settle in Hong Kong during January. He has accumulated a library of treasures which he has decided to sell. Pastor Francis Bates, 5 Rushout Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, has charge of them and interested readers can obtain a list of details from him. A set of William Bridge is available at £65.00 and the works of Ezekiel Hopkins at £40.00. The editor

of *R.T.* has charge of Thomas Shepherd's, *Doctrine of the Sabbath*, £55.00, and a fine copy of Richard Baxter's *Directory*, over 1000 pp. £70.00. Mr. Lambert's presence in Hong Kong is news but the availability of some of his library not strictly so, but it is informative to be reminded of the current value of Puritan volumes which during the fifties were selling for a few silver pieces.

The Evangelical Times

Such was the concern about the articles which appeared in *E.T.* over the period from April to November, 1981, that the matter was discussed at eldership level in some churches to decide what course of action to take in the future. *E.T.* is a paper of quality not easy to replace by churches holding to the Reformed truths. *R.T.64* drew attention to what was described as a change of policy in the *Evangelical Times* concerning the Charismatic movement.

One of the *E.T.* Directors has denied that there has been a change of policy and attributes the offending editorials and articles to a lapse. We earnestly hope his statement is correct. It was good to see an article on this subject in which the trumpet gives a certain sound. It appears in the January 1982 *E.T.* It is written by John Blanchard and consists of an eye-witness, point by point, analysis of one of the recently concluded series of Youth for Christ meetings held in 21 different centres in the U.K. David Pawson was the main speaker. A brilliant communicator, Pawson is described by Blanchard as compelling but confusing. There were a number of entertainment items and at the end of the appeal those needing counsel went to four different rooms one of which was designated for those wanting to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That was supposed to be gained by Ishmael laying his hands on the heads of the expectant. Ishmael had in the preliminary part of the meeting been clowning about and singing a roisterous piece with a multi-coloured tea cosy on his head.

All this is a universe removed from the serious work of raising up a new generation of missionaries to evangelise the world. In the same January 1982 *E.T.* there is a heart-warming and stirring letter by Omri Jenkins on the subject of the absence of revival which leads us to our next item.

The Whitefield Fellowship

Omri Jenkins, who is the director of the European Missionary Fellowship, has agreed to present to ministers of the Whitefield Fellowship on 23rd February the subject 'Can we expect revival today?' In the context of contemporary Britain he will grapple with the nature of true revival. What are the central truths we can expect to hear in times of awakening? Why has revival been withheld? It is claimed everywhere that modern people are not willing to come to our churches. Many reasons are given. The singing is not modern. The buildings are shabby or old. The people are middle-class. The preaching is too this, too that or too the other. Yet even in these non-revival times we find over and over again that the first work of the Holy Spirit is to humble souls. Once their pride has broken down and they see that they are guilty, lost, unworthy, with an endless eternity of condemnation yawning before them — then all those things which are too this or too that evaporate! They become hungry and appreciative hearers of expository preaching. They then accord with God's justice and holy law and embrace his saving Gospel. It does not matter what sex, age, class, race, vocation or background, when a soul is convinced of sin the barriers break down. (Then instead of criticising they come forward to offer help with regard to whatever poverty the church is experiencing.) This subject we anticipate on 23rd February.

The second subject for the afternoon session is as vital: 'Where will the future missionaries come from?' Our affluent society is breeding a generation of softies, a self-centred, entertainment-centred band of chocolate soldiers. The present generation lacks stamina, has little depth, little appetite for serious study and precious little staying power or perseverance in the face of the gruelling, long-term demands of an unevangelised, hostile world. Exams are not passed by dreams and visions, only by the painful exercises of the brain. People are not reached by good wishes and ecstatic feelings, only by personal long-term outreach of quality. Mr. Jenkins says that this is almost unknown in some quarters. If this activity is not found at home, where will the 'extra plus' come from for the much more exacting requirements of foreign lands with different cultures, complicated languages and entrenched resistances? How can we recover some of the sterling qualities that marked the lives of the missionary pioneers? We look forward to some answers and suggestions.

Al Martin has agreed to lead the fraternal on Monday 5th April. He has not yet decided on the subjects.

Subscription rises

Due to the continuing diminution of the value of money caused by inflation we are compelled to raise the subscription price from January 1982 to £3.50 for one year and £6.50 for two years, in the U.K.

Overseas readers are urged to send in their renewed subscriptions before their prices go up. The increases will be indicated and will pertain from the next issue, number 66, March/April, 1982.

We thank readers for their support and urge them to promote the magazine.

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