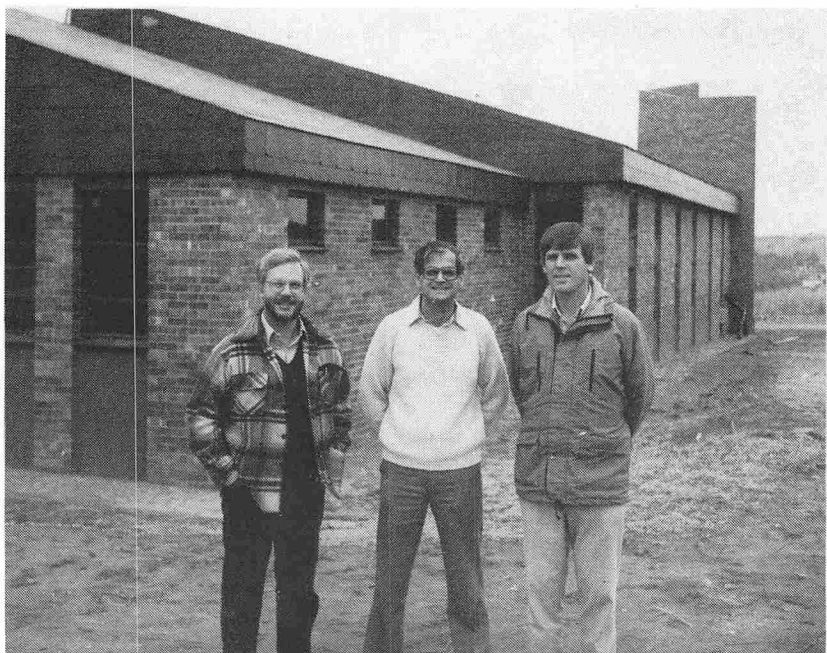


REFORMATION TODAY '82



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Jan van Rooyen, Patrick Palmer and Martin Holdt, with the new church building in the background, to which reference is made in *The Traveller's Diary*. Prof. Jan van Rooyen's article (see back inside cover) first appeared in the *Church Mouse*, the house journal of the Lynnwood Baptist Church, Pretoria.



Stuart Latimer, Charlotte, Michelle and Stuart junior

Editorial

The stirring account of the morning star of the reformation has been edited from the address given by Kingsley Coomber at the annual Carey family conference at Capel in Surrey. It was one of four biographies. John Newton by Tom Lutz, Thomas Boston by Malcolm Watts and Augustine by Austin Walker were the others. Peter Buss was hindered by illness, but we look forward to the fruit of his work on Philip and Matthew Henry next year. Eighteen churches were represented. The season was one of outstanding edification. The emphasis on a robust devotional life was excellent. There needs to be a thrust for reforming the Reformed — a greater insistence on practical godliness. Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) father of the pietist movement in the Lutheran Church, saw in his day that the most efficient way of promoting godliness was through conventicles. The confidence of pastors will be won if their people return with increased enthusiasm for the godly life and for perseverance in soul-winning.

The Traveller's diary reports the activity of conventicles (conferences) and includes a reference to Stuart Latimer's example of speaking to people naturally. We are sorry to embarrass him but not sorry that the incident recorded reminds us of the joy and privilege that is ours. Remember the words of those four lepers who said, 'We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves' (2 Kings 7:9).

The concluding section of the diary refers to South Africa. The appalling amount of misrule and disaster in some African countries should not be allowed to act as a rationalisation of abuse where this is experienced. On the back inside cover reference is made to the advice centre at the Lynnwood Baptist Church, a work supported by other churches including the Dutch Reformed Church. Those who have been abused by cruelty or injustice are assisted at the centre. There is legislation to protect individual rights, but all too often the people themselves are ignorant of it. For instance a black woman was savaged by an Alsatian dog while walking on a public pavement. She was offered £1 and scant sympathy from the

white owner though hospitalisation and much suffering followed. By appealing to the centre she eventually obtained £500 compensation from the owner. The police destroyed the offending animal which had been a menace in the neighbourhood.

However, most cases have to do with unfair dismissal and cheating on wages. When Christians inside any nation act consistently this is a thousand times more effective than stones coming from those who live in glass houses. Perhaps the advice centre may be a prototype for many others in the urban areas. Love in action is better than speeches.

International Baptist Conference

Scheduled for 18th-21st October at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, 130 Gerrard St. E., Toronto, the contributors are mostly from the U.S.A.: Don Carson, Bill Downing, Kenneth Good, Norman Street, John Reisinger and Canada: David Bugden, Bill Payne and Leigh Powell. France is represented by H. Blocher and F. Buhler, England: Herbert Carson and Erroll Hulse and J. Fevrier is from St. Lucia. Substantial progress is sought in the realm of Baptist origins but most attention is to be devoted to the authority of Scripture relative to life and practice. Worship is one example. Structured public worship is breaking down in many places. This is due to ignorance on just how much information is provided in Scripture to guide us. Our inherited patterns have been based on Scripture but any form is subject to deadness if not preserved by the living coals of the altar. Worship is a vertical activity. It is directed upward to God. The increasing trend has been toward man-centredness, to horizontalism, facing each other and preoccupation with ourselves. Of course fellowship together and adequate participation in that sense is an essential part of our lives but this should never be allowed to break down the majestic God centredness of our public worship. The reformation was a cleansing of the temple, a sweeping out of many human inventions. Are we not in need of another such cleansing?

Front Cover: *For a description of some of the needs of Spain see article, A Traveller's Diary.*

The Morning Star of the Reformation

by Kingsley Coomber

It is an old and true saying that nations sometimes know little or nothing about their greatest benefactors. If ever there was a man to whom this saying applied it is John Wycliffe, the forerunner of the Reformation in this country. To Wycliffe we, as Christians, owe an enormous debt. Yet Wycliffe is a man about whom most of us know little or nothing. In presenting material about this great man the words of the apostle Peter come to mind, 'I think that it is meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance of these things'. I would like to stir you up so that you never forget the man who justly has been called the morning star of the English Reformation.

In order that we can see where we are going we will follow this course:

1. *The religious conditions of England*
2. *A sketch of Wycliffe's life*
3. *Outstanding features in Wycliffe's ministry*
4. *Wycliffe the controversialist*
5. *A concluding lesson*

1. *The religious conditions of England*

I make no apology for starting here for it lies at the very foundation of our subject. Without this, it is impossible to form a correct estimate of the man.

John Wycliffe was born in the north of Yorkshire on the banks of the Tees in the year 1324 in the reign of Edward II. He died in 1384 in the reign of Richard II almost 600 years ago. You will remember that he was born at least 100 years before the inventing of the printing press and died about 100 years before the great German reformer, Martin Luther. The three centuries immediately preceding our English Reformation, in the middle of which Wycliffe lived, were probably the darkest period in English history. The church in this land was completely and entirely Roman Catholic. The Bishop of Rome was the spiritual head of the Church. Roman Catholicism reigned supreme from East Anglia to Wales, from Lands End to John o'Groats. Wherever you went everybody was a Roman Catholic. It is no exaggeration to say Christianity in England was buried under a mass of ignorance, superstition, priestcraft and immorality. Speaking about the mood of the church and people at that time, G. H. W. Parker, the author of 'The Morning Star of the Reformation', declares, 'The people loved church services, the sermons and homiletic teaching of the friars and devout clergy, they went in great numbers on pilgrimage to shrines such as those of Becket at Canterbury, they found popular and continuing entertainment in the religious mystery or miracle plays of the day'. People were completely and utterly bemused by the Roman Catholic Church. The contrast between Christianity of this period and the Christianity of the Apostolic age was stark. The apostles would not have recognised Christianity, so different was it from that which they initiated.

The difficulties which Wycliffe had to encounter were enormous. We must not overlook this fact. The man who could do the work he did, and leave a mark so profound as to affect succeeding generations, must have been no common man. He must have been the servant of Christ with rare graces and gifts and singularly filled with the Holy Spirit. We do well to keep him in remembrance.

2. *A sketch of Wycliffe's life*

Of Wycliffe's early life we know little. Concerning his education we can only surmise. He must have picked up his first rudiments perhaps at Eggleston Priory on the Tees, one of the few places of learning in Yorkshire in those days. We do know that he went to Oxford between 1335 and 1340 and that he profited so much by the instruction he received there that he obtained a very high reputation as one of the most learned men of his day. During this period he may have come to faith. Very little is known of his testimony or when the light of the glorious gospel shone upon his soul. He soon earned a reputation for great learning. From the age of 40 he was renowned at Oxford as a leading philosopher and theologian. He was second to none in his scholarship in Western Europe in which Oxford, for a period, had come to surpass Paris in its reputation and attainments. Wycliffe's contemporaries, even his opponents, did not doubt his brilliance. He was made master of Balliol College in 1361 and was afterwards connected with Queen's, Merton and Canterbury Halls. From that date for about 20 years until he retired to Lutterworth, Oxford seems to have been his headquarters although he was evidently often in London lecturing, preaching, writing, both for the learned and the unlearned. Debate and controversy seem to have been the diet of his life but we have no precise records and no systematic account of his life from the pen of any contemporary biographer. How did he first obtain his sound theological views? He may have learned from Archbishop Bradwardine who preceded him. Perhaps he was intimate with Fitzralph of Armagh. These were men competent in theology.

3. *Outstanding features in Wycliffe's ministry*

Three features predominate in this reformer's life and ministry. Undoubtedly the first is Scripture. His preaching and writing follow.

a. *The place of Scripture.* Wycliffe was the first person to translate the Bible into the English language and this enabled it to be understood by the people. The difficulty of this work is probably something of which we can form no conception in our present day. There were probably few, very few, who could help the translator in any way. In a day when we have books like Bagster's Analytical Aids and many books which teach us the different meanings of the Greek and Hebrew words, we must remember that Wycliffe had none of these helps. There was no printing and the whole book had to be laboriously written in manuscript form. Then copies could be made. The machinery and apparatus of our Bible societies and translators today remind us of the tremendous toil that Wycliffe must have gone through to translate the Bible into our own language. With God's help nothing is impossible. The work was completed and hundreds of copies were circulated. In spite of every effort to suppress the book, the

destruction of it by time, fire and unfavourable hands, no less than 170 copies were found preserved when it was reprinted at Oxford some 140 years ago. No doubt many more were in existence. The good that was done by the translation of the Bible will probably never be known until the last day. I do not hesitate to assert that it was the greatest thing that has ever happened in Britain.

Wycliffe valued the Bible above any other book and he was perhaps the first Englishman who maintained the sufficiency and supremacy of the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. In all his scholarly writings, notably where theological issues were under discussion, Wycliffe quoted extensively from the Scriptures. It seems that only gradually in the course of his university disputes did he come to fully appreciate the power of the Bible as the supreme authority for belief and life.

The importance of this great principle can never be overrated. It lies at the very foundation of Christianity. It is the backbone of every sound church in this country. The true Christian was intended by Christ to prove all things by the Word of God. In churches everything must come under the scrutiny of the Word of God. All ministers and teachers, all preaching, all doctrine and sermons, all writings, even opinions and practices, these must come under the scrutiny of the Word of God. We must prove everything by the Word of God. We must measure all by the measure of the Bible and compare all with the standards of the Bible. We must weigh everything in the balances of the Bible and examine all by the light of the Bible. We must test all in the crucible of the Bible. That which abides the fire of the Bible we must receive, hold, believe and obey. That which cannot abide the fire of the Bible must be rejected, refused, repudiated and cast away. This is the standard which Wycliffe raised in England. This is the flag which he nailed to the mast. It was the rallying cry that would be taken up in the Reformation. It must be our clarion call today. Nothing less will do in our man-centred age of sentiment and compromise.

b. *The place of preaching.* Wycliffe was one of the first, if not the first, Englishman to revive the primacy of preaching. The middle of the 14th century was noted for its many passion plays and mystery plays. Priests would go from village to village and they would perform a play. They would re-enact some miracle that had come through the Roman Catholic church or the life of some saint. After the play had finished, the people would go to the priest and buy indulgences. This was a means by which they could get forgiveness from God and time off in purgatory. Wycliffe was horrified at this practice and it was not long before he sent into the countryside what he called the poor priests. These poor priests would go from village to village and they would teach contrary to what the other priests had taught. They would preach the free gift of God which is eternal life, that which is bought without money and without price. There is no doubt that these preachers were one of the greatest benefits which Wycliffe conferred on his generation. These poor priests suffered much from persecution. It was not long before a law was passed in Parliament forbidding anybody to preach or teach without a licence. But that did not stop them. They

continued to preach. Thus Wycliffe sowed the seeds of thought among the people which were never entirely forgotten and, I believe, paved the way for the Reformation. If Wycliffe had never done anything else but this for England, I believe that this alone would entitle him to our deepest thankfulness.

The emphasis is gradually going back to impressing people by vision, by what they see. There is all this stress today on mime, and dance and drama. When the Pope came it was the great visual spectacles that made a feast for the television cameras, gorgeous robes, rich colours, special movements, symbolic gestures, none of which bring conviction of sin or repentance.

Wycliffe's method of countering stage and passion plays was to preach, to get at men not through their eyes but to their hearts through their ears.

c. *The place of writing.* As we have seen Wycliffe was an academic. He once confessed to Oxford as his greatest love. His academic ability enabled him to write clearly. Many papers, tracts and pamphlets flowed from his pen as was the case with Luther in a later time. This leads us to consider the controversies in which he was involved.

4. *Wycliffe, the controversialist*

Whenever you read anything of Wycliffe's life one thing stands out as true, he was always in the middle of controversy. He was a man who thought passionately about the authority of the Word of God and from an early period in his life as a new Christian he engaged in some of the most heated controversies of the day. There were four things that bothered Wycliffe.

The first was the position of the Roman Catholic Church. He was appalled at the way the Roman Catholic Church usurped the authority of Jesus Christ in dispensing salvation. Not by the purpose of church officials and clerics but by the purpose of God were people made believers and placed into the living body of Christ. Wycliffe therefore argued vehemently that pre-destination was the central doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ. His concern was to assert the authority of God.

This led into the second area of controversy, namely papal power. The popes, to a large extent, were very corrupt. You may have seen the programme on television, 'The Borgias'. This gives an insight into what the popes were like at a later period but it was no different in Wycliffe's time. The popes wielded enormous power and commanded great wealth. Wycliffe argued against them. He opposed their corruption. He spoke against their false claims. This of course got him into trouble with the Church of Rome. It was not long before he was summoned before a council to answer for his actions. The descriptions of these councils make interesting reading. One assembly was interrupted by a literal earthquake. It was evident over and over again that the Lord was protecting this reformer.

A third area of controversy in which Wycliffe was engaged concerned the doctrine of transubstantiation. Wycliffe was categorically opposed to the

idolatry encouraged by the practice in the mass. Above all he opposed the idea that the priest was given the task of making people eat Christ's literal body. Transubstantiation had been declared a dogma of faith at the 4th Lateran council in 1215 which stated plainly that in the priestly consecration of the elements the bread and the wine were transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ, that is that Christ's body and blood were truly and objectively created and there remained only the appearance of bread and wine. From such a doctrine sprang up the worship of the host in the mass. Wycliffe maintained that the elements of the bread and wine remained although after consecration they became in some sense the body and blood of Christ. It was clear what he rejected but his efforts to state more positively the doctrine of the eucharist were confused because he continued to argue in accepted scholastic terms. We can however appreciate his efforts and realise the great impetus he gave to theological thinking concerning the true nature of the Lord's Supper.

The fourth area of controversy was in the nature of the Church. We must remember that in the mid fourteenth century the nature of the Church was all-embracing. The Church had the right to decide what was true and what was false. The Church had the right to give and take away grace. Wycliffe argued that God's grace was available for every person and was mediated through Christ and not through the officialdom and machinery of the Church.

5. *A concluding lesson*

There are many valuable lessons we can draw from the life of this early reformer, but I will seize on one and trust it will be used to encourage the faint-hearted. Please note well the *astonishing power and influence which one man possesses if he comes forward boldly for Christ* and has the courage of his faith. One Moses, one Elijah, one John the Baptist, one Paul at Corinth, one Savonarola at Florence, one Luther in Germany, one Whitefield stepping out to proclaim the Gospel to the multitudes under the open skies. I believe that we want more boldness for the truth. The tendency is too great to sit still and wait for some committee to find something that will be acceptable to everyone. We are afraid that the Gospel will offend. Oh for brave preachers who are bold to preach the whole counsel of God! It is hard to imagine any of our clerical dignitaries in their fine robes saying anything that would cause sinners to tremble and respect the Word of God. Let us not despair for the Lord God of Wycliffe will surely raise up his men in this our hour of need.

The Role of the Husband

by David Kingdom

In thinking about the role of the husband we are not thinking about the role husbands may happen to play in some marriages today. In other words, we are not discussing his role as, for example, the executive husband or as an artisan husband. We are going to look at what the Bible teaches about the role of the husband in Christian marriage. That is, we are dealing with prescription not description, with what *God* says his role *ought* to be.

The key passage in understanding the role of the husband is Ephesians 5:21-33.

It is part of a section which deals with relationships: wives and husbands (5:21-33); children and fathers (6:1-4); slaves and masters (6:5-9). In each case the persons in subjection are treated first: wives (v. 22f.), children (6:1f.), slaves (6:5f.). What Paul says reminds us that God has appointed certain authority-structures within which we function as believers, within which we are to glorify God. We ignore these at our peril.

In Ephesians 5:21-6:8 we find three authority-structures:

1. Headship of husband over wife (5:21f.)
2. Authority of father over children (6:1f.)
3. Master over slaves or servants (6:5f.)

Then there are two others to which the *Christian* must submit:

4. Authority of the state (Rom. 13:1f.)
5. Authority of the elders (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17).

To teach that there are these God-ordained authority-structures is not popular in an age of lawlessness and anarchy, but we ought to bless God for his wisdom and goodness in ordaining these structures, for without them life becomes impossible. As a student once said to me during a visit I made to one of our more liberal and permissive universities in the sixties, 'The majority of students are crying out for some discipline but the Vice-chancellor is so afraid of provoking the Left that he will not act. The result is continual disturbances which makes study well-nigh impossible'.

We now come to what Paul says about the role of the husband.

1. *The Husband is the head of the wife*

There it is (in v. 23), and boldly as that. Such a statement is enough to send Women's Lib movement into a collective rage!

Some try to evade the force of Paul's statement by claiming that it is culturally conditioned, i.e. he was merely accepting the custom of his day whereby women were the chattels of their husbands. But what he says does not apply today in changed social conditions. Now we expect theologically liberal people to argue like that, but quite often one finds so-called Bible-believing Christians doing the same. This view of Paul's teaching will not stand up to serious examination, for he bases his statements upon a truth which never changes: 'the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church'. The force of what Paul says is to be appreciated. The lordship of Christ over his church is not culturally conditioned, chapter 1:19-23 makes clear. Especially should we weigh the statement of v. 22 that he is 'head over all things to the church'. His headship is an unchanging fact, completely unaffected by changed social conditions. He is as much head of the Church now as in the first century A.D.

Christ, then, is the head of the Church and the husband is the head of the wife. The latter headship is built upon the former and reflects it. And since the former continues to the end of time, the latter will do likewise. So the headship of the husband is based not upon social custom but on the divine, unchanging order ordained by God himself.

Elsewhere Paul brings the fact of the husband's headship in marriage before us, and again he bases it on a doctrinal foundation. Both in 1 Corinthians 11:7-12 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 he is dealing with the place of women in the Church. He points out that in the Church, no less than in marriage, they are under authority. So in public worship the woman is to have her head covered, in recognition of the fact that she is under authority (1 Cor. 11:3-5), whereas the man's head is not to be covered (v. 7). (It is not my purpose in this article to go into the question of the nature of the women's covering.)

The point I want to emphasise is this: Paul bases the practice he commands upon a doctrinal consideration.

The woman must show *visibly* that she is under authority because of the truth of verses 8, 9. The woman is from man; woman is for man (Gen. 2:21-23). The roles must not be reversed, otherwise God's Word is denied. The man is prior to the woman, though not independent of her (vv. 11, 12). What is true in marriage must not therefore be denied in the practice of the Church. If we turn to 1 Timothy 2:11-15 we find the same principle worked out in relation to a different subject. Here the issue is whether women should teach in the Church or, more precisely, whether in so doing they should exercise authority over a man. Paul forbids it. Why? For two reasons:

(1) It was Adam who was *first* created, *then* Eve. God made man to lead and to teach, woman to follow and submit.

(2) It was Eve who was deceived. She did not submit to her husband by asking his advice, but to Satan! She was the leader,

with disastrous results. She reversed the roles and dragged Adam down with her. Now she must submit to a *sinful* husband. We see how, in both passages, Paul grounds his teaching on the submissive role of women in the Church on the foundation principle, of doctrine.

So with the role of the husband in marriage – his headship is founded not just upon the order of creation but also on the order of redemption; he is head over the wife just as Christ is head over the Church. Therefore the husband's role is not arbitrary; it is ordained by God. To deny it is to fight against it, is to *sin* against God, is to work against his will and to despise his wisdom. The husband, for his part, is not to forsake his role. He is not to look upon his wife as if she were his mother. He is not to make his wife take the decisions. He is to be a *man* and take seriously his God-given responsibility to lead.

The wife, on the other hand, is to recognise his role as head; she is to submit (v. 22). The world implies respect, defence, a willingness to be led. She must never wear the trousers even when her husband is an unbeliever! (1 Peter 3:1-2). More unbelieving husbands would be influenced for good if Peter's teaching were to be applied.

The husband, then, is the head of the wife. His headship is by divine appointment. God has so ordained it. To quarrel with this is to quarrel not with Paul but with God.

But Paul does not stop with the assertion that the husband is head of the wife. He does not leave the nature of that headship unexplained, nor is the way it is to be worked out in practice left to our imagination. In this he is very wise. If husbands were left without specific instructions as to how they are to exercise their headship they could interpret their headship in terms of the exercise of an awful tyranny, with their wives being regarded as chattels or skivvies. Paul therefore spells out to husbands *how* they are to exercise their headship.

2. *The Husband's Exercise of Headship*

As the Christian husband exercises headship over his wife he must always keep before him certain vital principles which Paul brings before us. If he does not, his exercise of headship will become a tyranny or, by reaction, he will not exercise it at all, for having not succeeded with a reign of terror he will abdicate his responsibility for the sake of peace!

Let us see how Paul first makes a general point and then follows it up with two specific and particular injunctions. The general point is found in verse 23.

a. The headship of Christ over his church provides the pattern for the exercise of headship in marriage

The key word is 'as'. *As* Christ is over the church *so* is the husband over the wife. Paul here is not just asserting a fact, i.e. that Christ *is* head over the church, the husband *is* over the wife. He is saying something more and something far deeper. He is saying this: in just the way that Christ exercises his headship over the church, so are husbands to exercise headship over their wives. (That this interpretation is correct is confirmed by verse 25 'just as . . .' See also v. 29.) How then does Christ exercise his headship over his church? Is it through the exercise of tyranny? Is his regime hard and unfeeling? Does he treat us like dirt? We only have to ask the question to know the answer. 'Of course not. He is not that kind of Person!'

When he was here on earth, though he was Lord and Master over his disciples, how did he rule over them? There is a precious story in John 13 which shows us that *he ruled by serving*. Verse 3 emphasises his tremendous dignity. Yet what did he do? He washed their feet (v. 4ff). He did what one of them should have done for the rest *before* supper. He pressed home the lesson of his action in verses 12-15. This is how he ruled — by serving (cf Mark 10:45). He did not rule by lashing his sheep but by leading them (John 10:3-5). And though he is now exalted to his Father's right hand the way

in which he exercises his rule has not changed. He is still the same (Heb. 13:8), still touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15).

So here is the pattern for Christian husbands; it is in Christ the Servant who at the same time is the Head of the Church. His exercise of headship must give content to the way in which we, as husbands, exercise ours (cf the exercise of eldership 2 Pet. 5:1-4). He ruled by serving. He did not crack the whip! He stopped and washed dusty feet. When a husband patterns his exercise of headship on that of Christ then the wife finds it easy to submit. Her 'yoke' is easy! which is just the point our Lord makes in Matthew 11:29-30. If a husband keeps before him Christ the Head as his example then his headship is not a lording it over his wife, but a loving service to her.

b. The husband's headship is to be exercised in love towards his wife (vv. 25, 28, 33)

Again Paul counteracts any idea that headship consists in tyranny. Tyranny was never yet exercised in love, for love seeks not to crush, but to give. Paul gives specific content to the word 'love'. Here is the Pattern to be followed: 'As Christ loved . . . so you must.' Love is here defined as giving, giving to the point of death. You cannot love more than that.

The love of the husband, then, is to be patterned on the love of Christ for his bride, the Church. It is to be a continual self-giving directed to the development and well-being of his wife as a person. Just as Christ loved the Church with a specific end in view (vv. 26, 27), 'even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies' (v. 28). In the intimate bond of marriage, love of neighbour finds its profoundest expression in human life. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' as applied to Christian marriage means that 'husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself' (v. 28).

But the order is all important. 'He who loves himself loves his wife' is not true by

consequence, whereas 'he who loves his wife as himself' is, for his wife is 'his own flesh' (v. 29), so close and real is the union between them (v. 31).

As the husband loves his wife his exercise of headship is directed to her good, for love seeks not its own but the good of others. So his authority over his wife is power exercised in love; it is strength poured out in giving. And when this is the case, submission is easy for the yoke is easy and the burden is light.

c. The husband's headship is to be directed toward the nourishing and cherishing of his wife (v. 29)

Paul assumes that it is right for us to nourish and cherish our bodies. Basically this means that we must treat them properly by taking adequate food and not putting upon them demands that they were not meant to bear. To fulfil this end there must be an understanding of the body's role and needs. For example, we recognise that our bodies need rest when we say 'you can't burn the candle at both ends'.

Applying this now to the husband's role in marriage.

(1) The husband must understand his wife as a woman

He must not treat her as if she were a man, with a man's strength and outlook. She is a woman. God made her such. She is the weaker vessel or sex (1 Pet. 3:7). She can become over-burdened and harassed. She can get 'wrought up', especially at certain times such as pregnancy. So she must be treated with tenderness. She must be made to feel that she is appreciated. The husband must try to think himself into her position. (And a wife can help him to do so by explaining how she feels, and why.)

(2) The husband must direct his energies to cherishing his wife

To cherish means to lavish special care

upon — to give special attention to, with a view to increasing the well-being of, another person. For instance, a mother will lavish special care upon and cherish her sick child. Well, Paul says a husband should cherish his wife. To cherish a wife is a corrective to the danger of taking her for granted and is also a safeguard against resentment building up on her side. When a man cherishes his wife she will feel wanted; she will feel that she is more than a poorly-paid housekeeper! I say the husband must 'direct his energies' because it requires thought and planning to cherish a wife, eg to give her an unexpected treat, a break from the children for a little while, so that she can recharge her batteries as it were.

There is nothing automatic about cherishing a wife. It is something that has to be worked at, otherwise a situation builds up where the wife is not cherished and the husband is completely unaware of the fact.

Just as Christ the Head directs his energies now to the cherishing of the church, so also must the Christian husband direct his energies to the cherishing of his wife.

A final word to husbands reading this article: How are you exercising headship? Do you exercise tyranny or are you giving yourself in service? Are you exercising headship at all, or have you abdicated your responsibility, expecting your wife to shoulder it? Are you cherishing your wife, showing tenderness to her; do you seek to understand her, or has communication broken down? Do you *consciously* seek to make her feel appreciated and wanted? And, above all, are you building your marriage relationship upon Christ who, in his relationship with his church, has given us the pattern we are to copy through the power of the Holy Spirit?

'Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her' (v. 25).

When the Eldership breaks down

Many are the permutations and combinations in diversity of elderships functioning today. Diversity in eldership can be observed through church history. Maurice Redmill's study shows how some Baptist denominations have viewed the function of church government. The variety is instructive. That a high degree of flexibility be maintained is beneficial. Eldership will break down if a doctrinaire, text book attitude, is adopted. All elders must preach! asserts one. And they must share the preaching! adds another. In this way the lines are set for disaster. The scripture says nothing about elders preaching. The qualification is an aptitude to teach. Some of the best overseers never preach. In Spurgeon's case most of that work was given to him as the one evidently called and equipped for that function. The word translated, 'able to teach' (*didaktikon*) appears only twice in the pastoral epistles (1 Tim. 3:2 and 2 Tim 2:25). In the second instance the reference is firmly within the context of pastoral counselling which is on a one to one basis. In this respect we need to bear in mind the difficulty of refuting opponents or dealing with gainsayers. An elder who cannot refute opponents does not qualify.

James Henley Thornwell in his writings (vol. 4 p. 117ff.) shows that elder and preacher were not originally interchangeable terms in synagogue usage. Ruling and preaching are different endowments and by no means does it follow that because a man is gifted with one that he will automatically possess the other.

Eldership functions best where the principles of Romans 12:3-5 are in constant practice. The ideal is for the gifts of the Spirit to be recognised and when all the members are fulfilled in the functions and to the proportions of their abilities and available time. Pastoring involves comprehensive work. Happy is that church where there are those able, diligent and willing in caring and shepherding. That is something which by its very nature involves an aptitude to instruct from Scripture.

I have noticed that by far the majority of defections from elderships (that is the

breakdown or failure of individual shepherds) is due to inadequate care with 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 at the outset. The qualifications need to be scrupulously examined at the beginning. Often urgent need has dictated the appointment. Failure has ensued in not insisting on all the qualities specified. Sure enough in the heat of the battle, when the pressure arrives, when character is put through the fiery trial, the breakdown takes place precisely at the point where warning was voiced at an earlier stage. It was a warning bypassed because the need at the time of appointment was too pressing. Need does not in itself create ability. It is always healthy therefore to check on how the prospective elder is functioning now. Is he shepherding now? Appointment to official position will not mysteriously create ability or function. A period of training or testing is essential. Some do a fine work of caring for others for long periods without any office or official recognition.

A caution to balance these observations is desirable. We note that the Scriptures say an elder must be blameless, *not* sinless. Every man has many sins and defects. In the case of an elder, he must be a man who is prepared to put matters right and thus be without blame. He must possess, not a perfect testimony, but one of considerable quality so that he is respected by his fellow members. He must also have a good reputation among his neighbours, who although they may oppose and dislike his Gospel, nevertheless are constrained to say he is a good man. This caution is necessary because a minority may be inclined to fault finding on a hyper-critical scale. If they prevail the position could be one of no leadership. In any society anarchy will soon take over if there is no leadership. The churches are no exception. They alone wrestle mightily with the additional and most important realms of spiritual conflict, mortification of sin and preparation for heaven. Let us pray for the Lord of the harvest to raise up men who are capable both of reaping the harvest and preparing it for that great Day of Jesus Christ the chief shepherd.

What Baptist history teaches us about eldership

by Maurice Redmill

In giving some Baptist illustrations of eldership we begin with factors which influenced Baptists and then examine six areas.

1. Are pastors elders?
2. The setting aside of elders
3. How many elders in the local church?
4. Elders and preaching
5. Are there other functions of eldership besides preaching?
6. Should elders be supported financially?

Factors influencing Baptist eldership

The first and greatest influence was of course the Reformation. E. A. Payne says, 'Baptists are among the children of the Reformation. They came of that mighty movement which sought to restore the purity of the Church.'¹ Thus we find from the earliest days of Thomas Helwys and John Smyth that elders were part of the reformed church life amongst Baptists.

The second influence was that exerted by the several translations of the Bible during the sixteenth century. Tyndale's translation of 1526 gave 'senior or elder' for 'presbuteros' and not the word 'priest'. Coverdale in 1535 also translated 'presbuteros' as 'elder'. The Geneva Bible of 1560 was interesting for several reasons not least because the chapters are divided into verses so that concordances can be used and summaries of books and chapters are given. There are brief annotations of certain passages including this note on 1 Timothy 5 verse 17: 'There are two kinds of elders, the one attended upon the government only and looked to the manners of the congregation; the other did besides that attend upon preaching and prayer to and for the congregation.'² The Bishops' Bible of 1568 gives 'elder' for 'presbuteros' and the Italian Diodeti Bible of 1607 gives 'anziano' which a modern Italian dictionary defines as 'aged person, senior'. These translations helped the Bible-loving Christians to work out their doctrine of the Church, including elders, and the Geneva Bible in particular, which became the household Bible of English-speaking protestants, played no small part in shaping Baptist doctrine regarding eldership.

A third influence was the Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646. Almost all the subsequent Particular Baptist Confessions show the strong influence of the Westminster divines and this includes the statements on elders. Baptist thinking on eldership was further influenced by John Owen's classic 'The True Nature of a Gospel Church' (1689) in which chapter 4 is devoted to the officers of the church with further chapters on the duty of pastors, the office of teacher and the rule of the church by elders.

1. Are Pastors elders?

In 1606 John Smyth moved to Gainsborough, having separated from the Church of England, and, whilst he was there, wrote his 'Principles and

inferences concerning the visible Church'. He argued that the officers of a true visible Church are of two kinds: (i) Bishops, who in the New Testament are also called Elders or Presbyters, and, (ii) Deacons.³ He thus recognised the biblical view of including pastors amongst the elders and in his last Confession speaks of 'Some who are called pastors, teachers or elders, who administer in the Word and sacraments. . . .' The Particular Baptist Confession of 1677 likewise speaks of officers appointed by Christ in his Church as 'Bishops or Elders and Deacons' (article 8), and interchanges the names of 'bishops' and 'pastors' (article 11).⁴

With the so-called 'Orthodox Creed' of 1679 a three-fold ministry is suggested: Messengers, elders and deacons. The messengers were seen to be officers of the church at large whilst the elders and deacons were seen to be officers in the local church. However, for our present purposes it is significant that the Creed refers to 'the particular pastor or elder' and that the elder was recognised as the pastor of the local church.⁵ The biblical pattern of a two-fold ministry is reflected in the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 which takes over the Westminster Confession wording and refers to 'bishops or elders' and 'bishops or pastors' and the deacons.⁶

We have an illustration that pastors were regarded as elders from the seventeenth century in Nehemiah Coxe's preaching in 1681. Coxe published his 'Sermon preached at the Ordination of an Elder and Deacons', in which he recognised that the pastor was an elder.⁷ A century later the leading Baptist, Daniel Taylor, who died in 1798, wrote that, 'The ordinary officers of the church are (at least) bishops (sometimes called pastors and elders) and deacons.'⁸ Moving up to the nineteenth century C. H. Spurgeon records for us the situation at the New Park Street Church: 'As there were no elders at New Park Street, when I read and expounded the passages in the New Testament referring to elders, I used to say, "This is an order of Christian workers which appears to have dropped out of existence. In apostolic times, they had both deacons and elders, but somehow the church has departed from this early custom. We have one preaching elder — that is, the Pastor — and he is expected to perform all the duties of the eldership."' ⁹ Thus Spurgeon regarded the pastor as an elder.

Alexander MacLaren commenting in his 'Expositions of Scripture' on Acts 20:28 says, 'Of course a comparison with verse 17 shows that "elder" and "bishop" were two designations for one officer . . .'¹⁰ and his comment on Philippians 1 shows that he too regarded pastors as elders — 'We do not enter on the discussion of its two officers further than to note that the bishops are evidently identical with the elders . . . the one name (elder) coming from the Hebrew and designating the office on the side of dignity, the other (bishop) being of Greek origin and representing it in terms of function.'¹¹

The statement approved by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland issued in March 1948 on the Baptist doctrine of the Church slips back to the position of the Orthodox Creed in arguing for a three-fold ministry: 'A properly ordered Baptist church will have its duly appointed officers. These

will include the minister (or pastor), elders, deacons, Sunday School teachers and other church workers.¹² It is good to see the biblical pattern clearly stated in the Strict Baptist Affirmation of Faith 1966 which states: 'We believe that the ascended Lord bestows gifts upon men for the maintenance of His work on earth, and that the administration of local churches is to be by elders and deacons. Among the elders are those whom we call pastors. . . .'¹³

2. The Setting apart of elders

The practice of setting aside elders for ministry within the local church by Baptists has varied throughout the centuries. Most, however, have laid on hands and commended the elders to God and to the church. Smyth in his 'Principles and inferences concerning the visible Church', says the method of receiving officers into office is by election, approbation and ordination. By approbation he means examining the man concerned to see if he has gifts and qualifies for office and by ordination he means the laying on of hands, which signifies that the particular individual has been called to office, and to assure the man of the authority of the Lord of the Church to administer his office. The Confession of Thomas Helwys lays down that the election of church officers shall be 'with fasting, prayer and laying on of hands'.

The first Confession of the Particular Baptists in 1644 says that a church selects its own minister usually from within its own membership but before he can exercise his ministry he was to be examined and ordained by neighbouring elders.¹⁴ This reveals not only the essential unity amongst churches of like mind in those days but also the fact that one church often worshipped in several places throughout a district. The Standard Confession of the General Baptists issued in 1660 took Hebrews 6:1-2 as their guide and laid hands on not only their messengers, elders and deacons at their ordination, but also on all newly baptised believers. The Particular Baptist Confession of 1677 states that the bishop or elder is to be 'chosen therunto by the common suffrage of the Church itself and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer with imposition of hands of the eldership of the Church, if there be any before constituted therein'. The 1689 Confession follows the same wording here in its section nine of chapter 26 on the Church. In the seventeenth century we know that William Jeffrey planted a church in Pembury, Kent 'which he settled in good order, and ordained John Clare to be elder thereof'.¹⁵ This was in the 1720's and within a few years Jeffrey and his brother were responsible for planting over twenty churches in Kent. During the time when the Clarendon Code was in force Baptists met in houses and occasionally whole days were set aside for prayer. When a pastor or church officer had to be appointed this was always the case.

Charles Spurgeon worked out the appointment of elders in the church in this way. He consulted the existing officers of the church before recommending the election of new deacons or elders. He had already been on the outlook for men gifted for the work of eldership and names of such men were brought to the Church for election. Spurgeon condemned the worst method of setting aside elders: 'In my opinion, the very worst mode of selection is to print the names of

all the male members and then vote for a certain number by ballot. I know of one case in which a very old man was within two or three votes of being elected simply because his name began with A, and therefore was put at the top of the list of candidates.’¹⁶

The 1966 Affirmation brings together the purpose of eldership, the divine setting apart and recognition by the local church in a full and biblically based statement: ‘The appointment of elders (including pastors) and deacons, for office within the local Church, and of preachers and missionaries for evangelism is the responsibility of the local Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Lord’s ordination is recognised both by the experience of the inward conviction, and by the approval of the church observing the possession of those gifts and graces required by Scripture for the office concerned. The one so called should be set apart by the prayer of the whole Church.’¹⁷

3. How many elders in a local church?

Right from the earliest days of Baptist church life it was recognised that where necessary, and where gifted men were in the church, an individual church should have more than one elder. We ought to make it clear that most Baptists have accepted that the position of Thomas Helwys was the right and biblical one, namely that ‘the officers of every church or congregation are tied by office only to that particular congregation whereof they are chosen; and therefore they cannot challenge by office any authority in any other congregation whatsoever except they would have Apostleship’.¹⁸

Examples of more than one elder in a local Baptist church are plentiful in each of the four centuries of Baptist witness and we select a few by way of illustration: In Kent the Ashford Church had four elders caring for fifty members (1680) and we know that the two pastors of the Biddenden Church were imprisoned in 1660. Matthew Caffyn (1628-1714) was one amongst a number of elders in the Horsham Church in Sussex.¹⁹ At the end of the seventeenth century there was a Baptist Church in London which functioned as seven different congregations throughout the metropolis and this one church had several elders who travelled to visit the various congregations.²⁰ In the nineteenth century Alexander MacLaren, commenting on Philippians 1:1, says, ‘We note that there were several elders then in the Philippian church, and that their place in the salutation negatives the idea of hierarchical supremacy.’ Spurgeon with his large flock to care for, records, ‘My elders, usually about twenty-five in number, have been a great blessing to me; they are invaluable in looking after the spiritual interests of the church.’²¹ The 1966 Affirmation also recognises the plurality of elders within a local church when it begins the paragraph on appointing church officers with: ‘The appointment of elders (including pastors) and deacons, for office within the local church. . . .’

4. Elders and Preaching

There can be no room for disputing that from their origins Baptists have recognised the gift of preaching amongst the gifts of eldership. Buffard can state

boldly concerning the seventeenth century Baptist churches: 'Those who were duly appointed and ordained as elders to a church (whom we today should call ministers) administered the sacraments and preached the Word.'²² The 1677 Confession states 'The work of pastors being constantly to attend the Services of Christ, in His churches, in the Ministry of the Word, and Prayer, with watching for their souls . . . ' and the 1689 Confession says 'The work of pastors being constantly to attend the service of Christ, in His churches, in the ministry of the Word and Prayer . . . ' and talks about 'bishops or pastors of the churches to be instant in preaching the Word, by way of office. . . . ' John Smyth's last Confession asserts, 'That the preaching of the Word and the ministry of the sacraments, representeth the ministry of Christ in the Spirit,' and in the next article speaks of, 'pastors, teachers or elders who administer in the Word and sacraments. . . . '²³ We may also cite the call to the ministry of Samuel Ruston of Hamsterley, Durham. At a special service the church called him to the ministry 'to preach the word and baptise those who were proper subjects under the direction of the church. . . . '²⁴ It is clear from the quotation already given above from Spurgeon about, 'We have one preaching elder — that is the Pastor . . . ' that he firmly believed in the preaching office amongst gifts of eldership.

Although preaching plays a prominent and important part in Baptist eldership it is by no means the only function of elders.

5. Are there other functions of Eldership besides preaching?

Several different functions can be illustrated from Baptist practice throughout the years.

(i) *Defining and defending biblical doctrine.* The Orthodox Creed of 1679 was 'an essay to unite and confirm all true protestants in the fundamental articles of the Christian religion against the errors of Rome' and it was issued by fifty-five messengers, elders and brethren 'in the name of the many baptised Christians or congregations in the several counties of Bucks., Hertford, Bedford and Oxford'.²⁵ The 1689 Confession was first compiled by 'the elders and brethren of many congregations of Christians, baptised upon profession of their faith, in London and the country' in the year 1677. The preface to the 1966 Affirmation states: 'In the fear of God and in the bonds of Christian love, we assembled pastors and deacons of the Strict Baptist Denomination, solemnly avow our faith as set out. . . . '

(ii) *Leading public worship.* Describing Baptist worship in the eighteenth century, Payne mentions the lengthy extemporaneous prayers offered by deacons and elders as well as the preaching and observance of the Lord's Supper led by elders. In the early 1800's it became increasingly the pattern for an elder to lead the worship and the preaching elder to give the exposition of Scripture.

(iii) *The Ordinances.* The Broadmead Records of the Bristol Church for 1670 states that 'the elders forbore to break bread, that holy ordinance, till they had a pastor, whose proper work it is to administer the same'. This was probably due to acceptance of a three-fold ministry of minister — elders — deacons whereas

the Biblical pattern of a two-fold ministry is seen in the 1677 Confession when it states of the Lord's table 'The Lord Jesus hath in this ordinance appointed His ministers to pray . . . and to take and break the bread, to take the Cup. . . .' We note that previously in this Confession the ministers have also been defined as pastors, bishops or elders. The 1689 Confession has similar wording as the 1677 Confession regarding the ordinances and the elders administering them.

The Western Association of Baptist churches held an Assembly at Bristol in 1693 and agreed that only elders could administer baptism and the Lord's Supper.

(iv) *Setting apart Church Officers.* As the existing officers of the local church, elders were involved in the public recognition of God's calling to additional men to serve the church. Thus the 1677 Confession says that an elder called by God, fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit and chosen by the Church for ministry is to be 'solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer with imposition of hands of the eldership of the church . . .' and the 1689 Confession has identical wording here. The General Baptist Assembly of 1701 held that 'the ordination of Elders by Elders is of Divine institution' and the ordination of elders by the laying on of hands by the existing elders became widespread amongst Baptists in the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century some Baptists over-reacted against the Oxford Movement and the laying on of hands was omitted at the setting apart of elders and by about 1885 Ordination and Commissioning Services gave way to Welcome meetings.²⁶

(v) *Discipline.* The elders are responsible for the discipline of the church and at the same time are themselves under the discipline of the Word. One of the Articles of Agreement adopted by the Church at Amersham in 1675 makes provision for differences between elders and members to come to the church to be judged according to the Word of God.²⁷ Spurgeon's elders undertook systematic pastoral visitation of the flock and the interviewing of those applying for membership. The 1966 Affirmation lays down that 'in matters of personal offence members should first seek reconciliation with one another privately, if this fails the elders of the church should be consulted. . . .' Thus we can see that the task of pastoral counsel should be undertaken by the elders of the Church.

(vi) *Soul winning.* C. H. Spurgeon recalls how some of his elders were used of God to point men and women to Christ and says: 'one or two have made it their special work to "watch for souls" in our great congregation, and to seek to bring to immediate decision those who appeared to be impressed under the preaching of the Word. One brother has earned for himself the title of my hunting dog, for he is always ready to pick up the wounded birds.'²⁸

(vii) *Hospitality.* The 1689 Confession urges proper support of the elders so that they should not be embarrassed to extend hospitality.

6. Should elders be supported financially?

Yes — says the 1677 Confession: churches are not only 'To give them all due respect, but also to communicate to them of all their good things according to

their ability, so as they may have a comfortable supply, without being themselves entangled in secular affairs . . .’ for the Lord Jesus ‘hath ordained that they that preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel’.

Yes — says the 1689 Confession in the same wording.

Yes — says the Soham Church which supported Andrew Fuller in the 1700’s with a stipend of £13 per annum.²⁹

Yes — says the Kent Association of Baptist churches in 1781 when it was agreed to pay the removal expenses of pastors going to another church.³⁰

Yes — say the Baptist churches of the eighteenth century even though Robert Robinson of Cambridge became a farmer, Elisha Smith of Blockley entered the sick trade, and Ash of Pershore, Ryland of Northampton, Sutcliff of Olney and Gray of Chipping Norton, all opened schools. The attitude of these men and others like them who had to supplement their incomes is seen in William Carey. Carey was so busy with preaching in the churches that a friend chided him for neglecting his business, his shoemaking. ‘Neglecting my business!’ answered Carey, ‘My business, sir, is to extend the kingdom of Christ. I only make and mend shoes to help pay expenses.’³¹

Yes — says the 1966 Affirmation for elders are to be set apart for prayer and the study of the Word ‘and should, so far as is possible, be adequately maintained in material necessities, so as to be disentangled from the cares of a secular calling’.

¹ *The Fellowship of Believers* E. A. Payne, Carey Kingsgate, 1952, p. 20. ² It is worthy of note that most elderships are characterised in this way. ³ *A History of the English Baptists*, A. C. Underwood, Carey Kingsgate, 1947, p. 36. ⁴ Quoted in Payne, *Op cit.*, pp. 131-141. ⁵ *Op cit.*, p. 42. ⁶ *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, reprinted by W. L. Mills, p. 46. ⁷ Payne, *Op cit.*, p. 46. ⁸ Payne, *Op cit.*, p. 48. ⁹ *The Full Harvest*, C. H. Spurgeon, 1973, p. 74. ¹⁰ *Expositions of Scripture*, Alexander MacLaren, Acts vol II, p. 191. ¹¹ MacLaren, *Op cit.*, Philippians p. 202. ¹² Payne, *Op cit.*, p. 157. ¹³ *Strict Baptist Affirmation of Faith*, 1966, p. 24. ¹⁴ *Kent and Sussex Baptist Associations*, F. Buffard, 1963, p. 17. ¹⁵ Buffard, *Op cit.*, p. 15. ¹⁶ Spurgeon, *Op cit.*, p. 75. ¹⁷ Affirmation, *Op cit.*, p. 25. ¹⁸ Payne, *Op cit.*, p. 41; see also Underwood, p. 119. ¹⁹ Buffard, *Op cit.*, pp. 22 and 27. ²⁰ Payne, *Op cit.*, p. 26. ²¹ Spurgeon, *Op cit.*, p. 75. ²² Buffard, *Op cit.*, p. 13. ²³ Payne, *Op cit.*, pp. 40-41. ²⁴ Payne, *Op cit.*, p. 46. ²⁵ Underwood, *Op cit.*, p. 106. ²⁶ *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists*, Baptist Union Report, 1957, pp. 35 and 19. ²⁷ Payne, *Op cit.*, p. 101. ²⁸ Spurgeon, *Op cit.*, p. 76. ²⁹ Underwood, *Op cit.*, p. 163. ³⁰ Buffard, *Op cit.*, p. 47. ³¹ *William Carey*, S. Pearce Carey, Hodder and Stoughton, 1923, p. 53.

A Traveller's Diary

Notes on Spain, Texas, South Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Natal and Transvaal.

Spain

Following the car crash in September last the church at Cuckfield generously provided my wife and I with a two-week holiday on the island of Majorca. Although extremely popular as a tourist resort the island is still very beautiful and full of fascination. This enforced rest was refreshing in every way, not least spiritually. There is through the leadership of Pastor Ranero an excellent church and ministry in Palma, the capital city of the island. Through fellowship with him our longing to see a new reformation in Spain was strengthened. The last reformation was stifled in a gruesome manner by the Inquisition. Only recently has persecution from the Roman Catholic Church decreased in its rigours. Now, says Pastor Ranero, the problem of worldliness has quickly become even more of an obstacle than Roman superstition.

A young couple have been compelled to leave Spain after four years of missionary work there. This was due to the drying up of financial support in their sending church. The description of what was discovered reads as follows. Note that the writer emphasises that he is speaking in general terms. What he says has certainly been verified by others.

In my view, the need of good, healthy, doctrinal teaching is necessary everywhere in Spain. In the four years that we served there, we saw publications which were hard to believe. The liberalism and permissiveness of pastors, Christians and local churches is far from what is seen in the New Testament. In some cases the name Christian church is only a cover because they are merely social clubs. Subjects such as church discipline, tithing and authority of elders are untouchable. Of course I am speaking in general terms.

If I was going back to Spain, I would aim at the West or Central areas, not Madrid. The need is general but particularly in the West and centre there is still the citadel of the Catholic Church with hardly any work apparent. There is a need of Evangelical work in the North. The South is a large province having needs also but not the same as the rest. The best served area is the Mediterranean coast where there are more churches. Nevertheless there are still hundreds of small towns without a Gospel witness at all. I would seek work with

another couple, preferably with previous experience. It can be lonely and frustrating to work for months and even years without results.

Personally, I do not have a problem with the language. Spanish is my second mother tongue. I grew up in a bilingual province with Catalan as the first language. My wife took three years to become fluent. She studied a course from the Department of Education for two hours a day. I recommend prospective missionaries to study in their own country before leaving unless they are to live with others who will help with the language when they arrive on the field.

Unfortunately some have done damage, not only because they are Arminian but because they are extreme dispensationalists. During our four years, we met only one man who is Reformed in theology, doctrine and practice. He writes and runs a small printing shop. He told me that a Reformed work faces problems because of great ignorance and even opposition from those steeped in Arminian tradition. I know of one free grace pastor who left Spain because he was tired of being the target of everyone. He now labours in Guatemala. We met a few pastors who sympathise with the doctrines but difficulty and opposition causes them not to be bold about it or advance toward the bold proclamation and application of them.

What about fearless preaching of the truth in Spain's history? Truly the story of Spain's martyrs needs to be told. Mr. S. M. Houghton has kindly agreed to write an article for *Reformation Today* on the subject of the sixteenth century Reformation in Spain. We hope this will stir us up. We should be filled with concern for Europe as the neglected mission field of the world, especially, France, Spain and Italy. The cry for suitable exposition literature in Spanish is as great as ever. The efforts of Evangelical Press need to be supported and encouraged as much as possible. Besides some small children's books only two books are available in the E.P. list, E. F. Kevan's *What the Scriptures Teach*, and Brian Edward's biography of John Newton, *Through many dangers*. Surely much more can be done! Pray that the means will be provided. In most cases the blockage is due to lack of suitable talents in the country of need.



*Some members of the fellowship at Bay City.
In the foreground J. W. Baker, Robert Toney and Dr. Bob Maxey*

Bay City, Texas, and Greenville, South Carolina

Pastor J. W. Baker, formerly of Oxford, Mississippi, has now formed a church in Bay City. The unity and zeal of this assembly is a joy to see. While in Bay City we motored to a venue to meet Drew Garner of Houston who had with him Jim McDowell of California. Among the talented members at Bay City is Dr. Bob Maxey, a doctor who has built up an excellent library which he makes available to others. Here I suggested to him was an Evangelical library full of Puritan treasures like the one in London — not a library in the making but already made. 'J.W.' was the guest speaker at the Reformed Conference at Skogheim in South Africa last year.

My two-week visit to the States was initiated by an invitation by Pastor Stuart Latimer of the People's Church, Greenville, South Carolina. I was there in 1980 when Pastor Latimer showed me over the famous Bob Jones University, where he himself was once a tutor. The students do not flock in to hear him now which is a great pity, because a rich doctrinal ministry would go well with many of the positive things that are learned in that campus. Students from another school, namely, Firmin, do flock in. They ensure that question times at the meetings are vital and interesting. Pastor Latimer believes in hard work the rewards of which are to be observed in a thriving congregation recently moved to a magnificent new building. Happily this has not resulted in complacency, but only renewed evangelistic efforts. Between our work sessions we did have time to go to lunch. As naturally as breathing, Brother Stuart spoke to people on the way in, the girls serving behind the counter, two men (ex-students) at a table nearby, to the waitress serving coffee, to the

person at the cash-till, and to crown it all, to someone on the way out — no strain, no button-holing, just a gift of communication, unveiling and answering objections and issuing gracious invitations all round. If he had clapped his hands for silence and asked everyone to attend the evening meeting, I don't think anyone, not even the manager would be offended. It is the manner in which these things are done that is the telling factor. Think of the Samaritan woman who was so effective that she brought a whole crowd in no time to hear the Word of Life.

Included in the arrangements was an opportunity to speak to the school assembly where Stuart Junior and Michelle Latimer attend. Although fatigued I prepared carefully the evening before. It can be disastrous to think we can depend on an old fire. In Leviticus it says the priest had daily to remove old ashes from the altar and restoke the fire which had to be fed to keep burning. We can never depend on old material. A captive audience is entirely different to a voluntary one. I found speaking difficult and leaned heavily on the prior preparation.

Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois

On the way to Owensboro, Kentucky, where Ted Christman is pastor, I stopped at Atlanta to lunch with Thomas Talbot Ellis, a Presbyterian minister. He is a close friend of Iain Murray. I was later to hear him give a fine paper on Samuel Davies at the Banner Conference. The work at Owensboro has grown and instead of meeting in a school-room as we did last time (1980), this time it was a handsome new structure. How generously are these new churches furnished in the States, Canada and South Africa compared with Britain. I think of the struggling cause at Lancaster (mentioned in the last issue). It would be good if some of these identically



A group at Warsaw, Indiana. Larry McCall, Kim Cone, Ron Shinkle on the left, students of Grace College and Rollin Jump on the right

minded churches were matched up to be of mutual help, the resources the one helping the other. I came away from Owensboro impressed by the use being made of resources to reach out in evangelism, which includes constant radio work by Pastor Christman.

Yet another newly planted church which has suddenly blossomed and which is full of potential is at Warsaw, a town near Winona Lake. Nearby is Grace Seminary. The small new church at Warsaw went through an agonising period of decline and almost expired. The small nucleus persevered tenaciously and persuaded Larry McCall to come to the remnant as part-time pastor. The work has advanced and the church has experienced a new lease of life. This is a reminder that it is foolish to abandon or write off a church because of internal difficulties, depletion of numbers or because of lean and testing times. As long as the Prince of life and power is there there is hope. He delights in transforming situations for those who cry out to him and hold on in faith (Ps. 4 and Jer. 33:3).

Ministry at Edgewood (Tom Lutz), and Pendleton (Dennis Clark), both towns in Indiana, followed. At Edgewood a mistake was made of which I only learned later. The Sabbath afternoon meeting I mistook to be a teaching session rather than a normal service. The overhead projector was used in typical lecture fashion. I thought some to be a bit 'wide-eyed'. Later I discovered what had happened. With hindsight, the unexpected approach helped concentration which is not always the best after a sumptuous mid-day meal.

At Pendleton a new church building and a newly built home for the pastor provide helpful assets as outreach continues in that town.

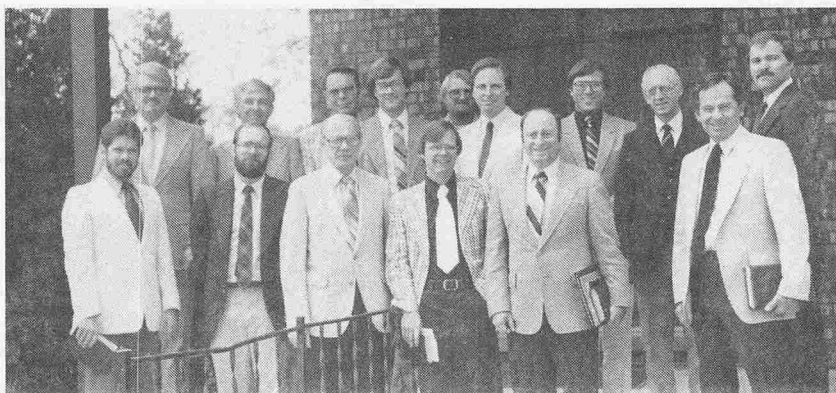
Chicago, Illinois, was the next stop. This

massively populated area in some ways is similar to the concentration of population round Birmingham as it spreads out with Chelmsley Wood on one side, and West Bromwich, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Dudley on the other. John Armstrong leads a Free Grace Baptist church at Wheaton, Chicago. A Whitefield Fellowship for ministers has been promoted from his church. Those who attend represent a wide range on the spectrum of evangelical belief.

For all the talk about the Bible as the only authority the visit of the Pope to Chicago a couple of years ago showed this fundamentalist fortress has weak foundations. Sentimental and traditional ideas are too easily assumed as Biblical. The presence therefore of a source and forum in which the emphasis is on the sovereignty of God in revival (as Whitefield's name suggests) is encouraging. My commitment was to present one biographical study (lessons from the life of A. W. Pink) and one doctrinal paper (the Biblical doctrine of apostasy).

Grand Rapids, Michigan

The annual Banner of Truth Conference took place at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, the city famed for its Publishing Houses such as Eerdmans, Zondervans, Bakers and Kregels. The conference provided a feast of edification not only by way of teaching but for fellowship with men from many parts of North America. Dr. Palmer Robertson gave two excellent studies on Psalm 80 and Randy Pizzino a stirring sermon on regeneration. To attempt a description of all the materials is not possible except to mention that the focus was on our ever-present and main need which is to preach in quickening fashion (opened up by Al Martin) and revival, Dick de Witt presenting the reality of Awakening from



The Whitefield Fellowship, Chicago. Readers will be interested to know that Dennis Hustedt, who has been mentioned in Reformation Today on account of his labours for 'Reformed Ministries International' is on the extreme left. Third from the left, is Richard Owen Roberts, the publisher of Boston's works (12 vols.) and the Cripple Gate Sermons (6 vols.). Pastor John Armstrong, organiser and secretary of the fellowship is on his left.

history with an easy to listen to style which I hope he retains as it is conducive to retentive hearing.

South Africa — Skogheim

There was a record attendance of over 200 at the eleventh Evangelical and Reformed Conference at Skogheim, Natal. Donald MacLeod of Edinburgh contributed the major spiritual meals. These were on the subject of the person and work of Christ. We were reminded that this should be our staple diet. The subject is often neglected. Too often we are not as well grounded as we should be. Most movingly did he present the nature of Christ's dereliction — his complete loneliness in the hours of his final ordeal.

Skogheim represents an unusual teaching occasion because it is a family conference, inter-denominational and multiracial, yet designs its materials for ministers. Clive Tyler with just reason made the assertion that Skogheim has become the most significant theological conference in South Africa. There is a happy effect in as much as the speakers, while not diluting their doctrine, endeavour to present their material in a popular way. This helps the non-ministers (there were many young people present) who nevertheless have to exercise all their powers of concentration. The exercise does them no harm! The apostle Peter called this 'the girding up of the mind' (KJV).

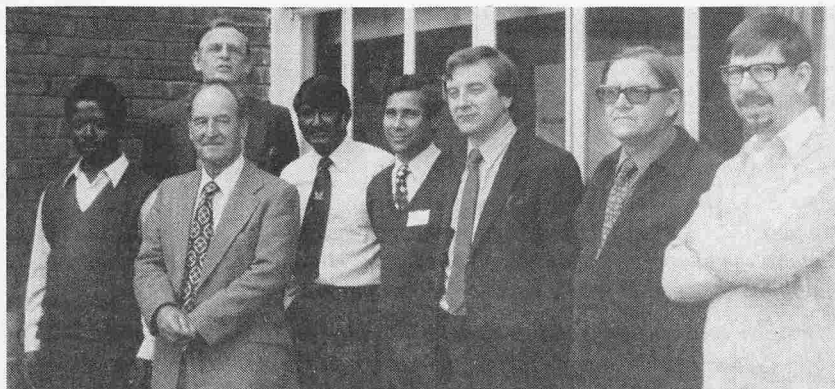
Ian and Bobbie Thomas of Westville have been outstanding in the role of organising secretaries. The work of sustaining 'togetherness' during the year, and a very real sense of anticipation combined with prayerful preparation is needed. This

demand initiative by a shepherdly spirit. Too often we allow rich materials to be missed by those who, with a little encouragement, could be there. We can all contribute in this way. Much esteemed is the help of George and Edith Stranex, Arthur and Daphne Merrington and Frank and Audrey Yarwood, to mention just a few, who have supported the work from its early days. An excellent paper was given by Jim van Zyl; *The Puritans on Despair and Doubt*. Such matters are deep, yet very practical and real. All our lives we wrestle with some Biblical themes. One address insisted that the free, full and unfettered offers of the Gospel in no way conflict with the doctrine of Divine sovereignty. Just a few were shocked and thought it might be Arminian! They could be helped by studying examples in print of preaching by Calvin, Flavel, Howe, Owen, Whitefield, M'Cheyne, Spurgeon and others. There were addresses by Clive Tyler on Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and John Newby on George Whitefield. These and the others are available on tape. (Address: Mr. Ian Thomas, 4 Portman Avenue, Westville 3630.)

Churches in Natal and Pretoria

John Wilton recently took up the pastorate of the Baptist Church in Margate. In an area starved of doctrine he has advertised boldly in the local paper: *expositions on Romans!* We have heard the saying of sheep who look up and are not fed. We are sure that providing they make sure to get to this green pasture that they will be!

Labouring in the rural parts of south Natal, a church made up mostly of Scandinavians, is Pastor Sven Brauteseth, a faithful subscriber to



A group at Skogheim from left to right: N. P. Mpayipeli, David Streater, George Stranex, Vic Lazarus, Robin Scullard, Donald MacLeod, Jim van Zyl and Clive Tyler

this magazine. (Brother Sven Brauteseth, we greet you!)

It was a joy to see the growth of the Baptist Church at Hillcrest. Pastor Anton Hoffman is quick to remind admiring observers that a good foundation was laid by his predecessors, Arthur Merrington, Jim van Zyl and John Leevors, who is now ministering in Hamilton in his home country of New Zealand. Anton has provided an example of enterprise and flexibility in instituting a church school for 'disciples' (learners) who are prepared to devote themselves in a practical way to reaching out to others. Scripture memory is included in their course of Bible training. There is no age limit. This is a fine example for other churches providing allowance is made for flexibility and adaptation.

In Pretoria fellowship was renewed with the Lynnwood Baptist Church which continues to enjoy a full congregation and many talents among the members. From Lynnwood a new work at Constantia Park has been planted. A handsome new building designed by David Cowan is now occupied. The leaders, Martin Holdt, Jan van Rooyen and Patrick Palmer are zealous to reach out into the rapidly growing area.

An exceptional time of rest was given to us in a four day visit to the Kruger National Park. Teeming with elephant, zebra, buffalo, buck, baboon, and giraffe, we also viewed rhino, hippo, cheetah, lion, hyena not to mention others as well as a profusion of bird life including a close-up of a marshall eagle. Without exception all these species were in magnificent shape. Only man rebels against his

creator resulting in disaster for which he then blames his God.

A visit to the Afrikaans Baptist Seminary at Kempton Park concluded this happy visit to the Republic.

The question constantly urged upon us is, what do you think of the political situation in South Africa? Whatever answer is attempted it will meet with disapproval by one side or the other. I will therefore press home this truth. Our first responsibility is to show the unity of Ephesians 4:1-6 with all believers irrespective of their race or colour. We must not allow the pressures of any regime whether it be Right wing or Communist to deter us from this unity. Surely all believers are under constraint to show great love, compassion, forbearance and forgiveness to each other under all circumstances. Sometimes this can be desperately demanding. However if this can be achieved it will bring great glory to Christ. The apostles did not advocate a political crusade. They did insist on loyalty to the brotherhood. Amos (5:10-15), Isaiah (58) and James stress practical social righteousness. If in genuine practical terms we serve those in need then our Redeemer is exalted (see editorial for a description of an example). It is reported that Non-White believers are greatly tempted to indulge in bitterness. Yet this is just as evil as some of the attitudes under which they have suffered greatly. It is difficult to comment on other countries the large majority of which do not enjoy the freedom of a few Western nations. Yet there is no room for complacency for the whole of Western civilisation is threatened with a moral collapse seen most of all in divorce and the disintegration of family life.

The contributor of this exposition, Paul Clarke, is an elder of the Reformed Baptist Church at Essex Fells, New Jersey. He has many years of experience in Bible translation work as well as missionary endeavour. Converted at the exceptionally young age of 10 he has just celebrated his 60th anniversary as a Christian.

The lucid exposition from Mr. Clarke leads to important conclusions. One is that the Council at Jerusalem was not intended as a model for synodical church government or anything remotely resembling it. Presbyterians appeal to this passage to support their system of Church government. Baptists too appeal to Acts 15 to support the idea of Associations. While we are not opposed to Associations, it is questionable whether Acts 15 sets a biblical pattern for them.

A positive construction is that a model is provided for consultation and commendation when the churches are faced with a major problem or controversy. It would however be impossible to repeat Acts 15 for a number of reasons. One is the multi-formity, multinational and 'multimillion' size and character of the body of Christ today. To think of Acts 15 as a pattern for regional conferences is viable, bearing in mind that the Scriptures and not the living apostolate now form our only infallible guide.

What really did happen at Jerusalem?

A careful examination of Acts 15:1-29

by Paul C. Clarke, New York

Different interpretations

The gathering at Jerusalem reported by Luke in Acts chapter 15 has often been referred to as 'the first general council of the church'. Thus it is considered that it was essentially the same in character, though not of course the same in size and scope, as the councils which later met at Nicea, Chalcedon, and other places. This is especially the view of those who hold that a *hierarchical* form of church government is that which is laid down in Scripture.

Others, while recognising the prestigious position enjoyed by the church at Jerusalem, insist that this church neither exercised nor claimed jurisdiction over the other churches. What they see rather in Acts 15 is a coming together of the elders of various churches, who, by mutual conference in the fear of the Lord and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reach a unanimous agreement on an important matter and then publish a decree which is binding upon all the churches represented there. This is the view of those who hold that a *presbyterian* form of church government is that which is, by this example, taught in the New Testament. Within such a view, the presbytery is not the combined eldership of a local congregation, but rather a group of representative elders from various churches forming a body which exercises rule over all those churches.

Still others would dispute this interpretation. What they see in the meeting at Jerusalem is simply a coming together of the elders of various local churches in

order to discuss a problem which affects all of them and to seek advice from one another about it. This gathering is not a council, nor a presbytery exercising authority of any kind over the represented churches. It is simply a coming together for mutual counsel on the biblical principle that 'in the multitude of counsellors there is safety' (Pr. 11:14). Thus the integrity and authority of each local body of overseers is maintained, but each benefits from the godly counsel of all the others. According to this understanding of Acts 15, in conjunction with other pertinent New Testament passages, the elders of each local church are appointed by the Holy Spirit to shepherd the flock of God under their care, and they are answerable to the exalted Head of the Church, and to him alone, for their exercise of that oversight. At one time this might safely have been called a *congregational* view of church government. However, the term 'congregational' has come to have such a strong connotation of democracy, rule by the people (*vox populi vox Dei*), that it is avoided in Reformed Baptist circles, where it is pointed out that Scripture enjoins *rule by elders* and not rule by congregation. With such widely divergent views of Acts 15 held by good and honest men, it would not be amiss for us to take a fresh look at this passage in an effort to discover what really did happen at Jerusalem on that historic occasion. This will require us first to go back further into history and retrace the spread of the gospel message after its beginnings at Jerusalem. I shall be quoting from the American Standard Version, but any reliable English translation would serve just as well because no fine distinctions regarding the original Greek text will be involved in our study.

The Gentile churches established

It can hardly be disputed that the church at Jerusalem was slow in carrying out her Lord's commission to bear witness to him 'unto the uttermost part of the earth'. It was Philip who first brought the gospel to Samaria, directly north of Jerusalem, and then to a Coptic proselyte somewhere near Gaza, southwest of Jerusalem. After that 'Philip was found at Azotus', a few miles up the Mediterranean coast from Gaza, and from there he proceeded northward along the coast, 'preaching the gospel in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea' (Acts 8:40). With good reason he was called 'Philip the evangelist'. It seems that he settled in Caesarea, for several years later we find him resident in that city (Acts 21:8). Philip's ministry at Caesarea was evidently confined to 'the circumcision', for later on it was Peter who brought the gospel to a group of God-fearing Gentiles there (Acts 10).

Breaking out of the narrow confines of Judaism was a slow and painful process for the members of the Jerusalem church, including the apostles themselves. Peter preached at Lydda and Joppa, cities well within the province of Judea. Caesarea, thirty-five miles up the coast from Joppa, being the political capital of Judea under the Romans, was predominantly a Gentile city. When Peter finally did preach to Gentiles at Caesarea, he was called to task for it by his brethren at Jerusalem. After he explained to them how he had gone to preach there under a specific divine command, they grudgingly assented to the evangelisation of Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18).

The persecution sparked by the martyrdom of Stephen gave decided impetus to the spread of the gospel. Driven out of Jerusalem, some carried the good news to the island of Cyprus, and others continued northward from Caesarea along the Mediterranean coast, preaching the gospel all along the way until they reached Antioch, a large and important Roman city. Until they reached Antioch, their witness was 'to none save only Jews' (Acts 11:19). Then a change took place. Did they now begin to preach the word to Gentiles or simply to Hellenised Jews, to 'Greeks' or to 'Grecians'? A textual problem in verse 20 makes the answer to this question uncertain.

What is certain, however, is that at Antioch there soon arose a strong church with a definitely broader outlook than that of the church at Jerusalem. Now the followers of Christ were seen to be something more than another Jewish sect: 'the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch' (v. 26). Meanwhile, the church at Jerusalem, hearing reports of the goings on at Antioch, sent Barnabas to investigate. Their choice of a delegate was a happy one: 'who, when he had come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad' (vv. 22-24). There is no evidence that the church at Jerusalem tried to exercise authority over the church at Antioch. Barnabas did not even return to Jerusalem to give a report on his mission. Instead, sensing that a man named Saul would be highly useful in this new situation, he proceeded to Tarsus, found Saul, and persuaded him to return with him to Antioch (vv. 25-26).

A few years earlier this Saul of Tarsus had been an active witness among the Grecian Jews (Hellenists) at Jerusalem. His boldness and his persuasive manner had made him a *persona non grata* in that centre of Judaism. To save his life, his brethren there spirited him out of the city and shipped him home to Tarsus (Acts 9:28-30). Arriving in his home city, he did not remain idle. There is evidence that churches were established in the region about Tarsus (Cilicia) through his labours (Acts 15:41; Gal. 1:21). Barnabas was aware of Saul's successful ministry among Grecian Jews and saw that this marked him as a likely man for work among the same class of people in the important city of Antioch.

A Gentile evangelistic centre

When Barnabas finally did return to Jerusalem, it was not to give a report concerning the work at Antioch. He went rather as a delegate of the latter church to carry relief from the brethren there for the needy saints at Jerusalem, and Saul went with him (Acts 11:29-30). With that mission accomplished, the two returned to the church which sent them (Acts 12:25). Antioch was clearly becoming the more important centre of evangelistic activity. The church at Antioch was the *sending* church. It should be no surprise, then, that when the Holy Spirit said to that church, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them' (13:2), it did not delay but acted and immediately sent the two off on what has since been called 'Paul's first missionary journey'. The brethren at Antioch did not refer the matter to the 'mother church' at Jerusalem as being a higher ecclesiastical authority, nor did they consult Jerusalem and other 'sister churches' so that they might all work in concert in

making such an important move. It may be said that the church at Antioch acted in complete independence from Jerusalem, but certainly in complete dependence on the Holy Spirit and in obedience to his command.

Chapters 13 and 14 of the Acts give us only a brief sketch of that momentous missionary journey and touch on just a few high points of it. Toward the end of chapter 14 we find 'the apostles Barnabas and Paul' (so named in v. 14) returning to Antioch and to the church which had committed them to the grace of God and sent them forth. They called that church together and rehearsed to that church 'all the things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles' (vv. 26-27). This report was evidently received with joy by the church. Thereafter the two missionaries again filled positions of usefulness just as they had done before the oversight of the local assembly, for 'they tarried no little time with the disciples' (v. 28).

Now we come to chapter 15.

Judaistic resistance

It was not a faction in the local church but men coming from outside who disturbed the peace and harmony of the church at Antioch. 'Certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved' (Acts 15:1). Their use of the second person plural is significant: 'Except ye . . . ye cannot . . .'. Perhaps the church had already received into its communion men who had not submitted to the Mosaic rite of circumcision. The visitors were scandalised by this and protested in no uncertain terms. The joy experienced by the believers over the report of the missionaries was dissipated. Not only was the tranquility of the Antioch assembly destroyed, but a pall of grave doubt was thrown over all that Barnabas and Paul had accomplished on their missionary journey. Now strident voices were saying in effect, 'Barnabas and Saul, you have misled those people. You have held back vital truth from them. You must return and tell all those believing Gentiles that the gospel you preached to them was incomplete. You must tell them that, in addition to their trusting the redemptive work of Christ, they must also, in order to be saved, submit to circumcision and all the Mosaic law-keeping which circumcision implies.'

Paul and Barnabas would do no such thing. They strongly resisted these interlopers; they 'had no small dissension and questioning with them' (v. 2a). It should be clearly noted that the dissension was not one which arose within the local congregation; it was introduced from the outside. It is very likely, however, that the Judaising visitors managed to bring some of the local brethren around to their point of view. These men had one powerful argument in their favour. Having come from Judea, they could and probably did claim apostolic authority for their doctrine. Therefore 'the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question' (v. 2b). About what question? Why, this whole matter concerning Gentile converts and circumcision; specifically, whether Paul and Barnabas or these 'certain men come down from Judea' were

preaching and teaching the true apostolic doctrine. Would the apostles and elders at Jerusalem agree with Paul and Barnabas, or would they side with the Judaisers?

Verse 3 gives the itinerary of the two great missionaries and their company as they journeyed to Jerusalem. They moved southward along the coast possibly as far as Caesarea, then turned inland and passed through Samaria, approaching Jerusalem from the north. This route seems to have been chosen to give the party opportunity to visit a good number of churches along the way. The journey was a triumphal march. All along the way the triumphs of the gospel were proclaimed, and the report of the missionaries was the cause of much joy among all the brethren.

If there was going to be a church council or a meeting of the presbytery at Jerusalem, delegates from the other churches would no doubt have joined the party from Antioch as it moved along the way to the Holy City; but there is absolutely no indication that anything like that happened. Furthermore, there is no indication that the other churches were informed concerning the dispute that had arisen. The airing of a dispute is never the cause of joy, but the missionaries, in giving their report, caused great joy unto all the brethren'.

The Jerusalem church consulted

The men from Antioch were not going to Jerusalem to attend a council meeting; they were going there to place one burning question before the leaders of the Jerusalem church: 'Do you really teach that Gentile believers must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved?' Should their answer prove to be affirmative, another question would surely follow: 'What is your basis for holding such a doctrine?' Verse 4 shows, however, that this explosive question was not immediately propounded. Perhaps the strategy of Paul and Barnabas was something like this: 'Let us tell the brethren at Jerusalem the same story of the triumphs of the gospel that we told in Phoenicia and Samaria. Let us see whether our report will produce the same joy here as it did in those other places.' So that is what they did. Coming to the apostles and elders and being received by them, 'they rehearsed all things that God had done with them'.

It is obvious that the effect of the missionaries' report was not the same in Jerusalem as it had been in Phoenicia and Samaria, for 'there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses' (v. 5). What must Paul and Barnabas have felt when they heard this? This then indeed was the doctrine of a strong element in the Jerusalem church, *but was it the doctrine of the apostles?* That question still needed to be answered. Therefore 'the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter' (v. 6).

Who were 'the elders' of verse 6? They could only be the elders of the church at Jerusalem. Other churches did not send representatives, and the brethren from Antioch were there simply as visitors and observers. They were observers who

were deeply concerned in the matter under discussion, but they were still only observers. The 'much questioning' of verse 7 was confined to the men of Jerusalem. One can easily imagine that the assembly was noisy and confused. Feelings ran high as opinions clashed and arguments flew back and forth.

The Apostles speak out

It was Simon Peter who at length managed to establish order in the assembly by his eloquent and convincing discourse recorded in verses 7b-11. Undoubtedly he spoke many more than the hundred-odd words reported by Luke in this written account, but the inspired historian has preserved for us the central core of Peter's message. 'Let us go back a bit into history,' said this apostle in effect. 'Have you forgotten about Cornelius and those other Gentiles at Caesarea? Don't you remember how God cleansed their hearts by faith, how the Holy Spirit fell on them just as he did on us at Pentecost, and how they were baptised? And now do you want to add something to what God has done? Do you want to impose conditions which God has not imposed? Do you want to put a heavy yoke on the shoulders of those people when God has not done that?'

How long Peter spoke we have no way of knowing, but the effect of his address was that 'all the multitude kept silence' (v. 12a). Until now Barnabas and Paul had kept silence, too, and we may assume that at this point they were invited to speak. Paul was a man of tremendous mental capacity, skilled in the use of logic and close reasoning, but he knew that no words of human wisdom could match in persuasive power the simple story of the grace of God. As each in turn spoke, Paul and Barnabas had the assiduous attention of their auditors. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the hearers were spellbound as 'they hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them' (v. 12).

Finally James rose to speak — James, the highly respected brother of our Lord, known to be a just man even as his father Joseph had been — James, the very man to whom the Judaisers pointed as the source of their doctrine and the authority for their contentions. What would he say? James began by speaking approvingly about what Peter had said, referring to him as 'Symeon', a variant form of his name Simon: 'Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name' (v. 14). Then James appealed to the Scriptures and quoted from Amos 9:11-12 to show that this calling of the Gentiles was foretold by the Old Testament prophets (vv. 15-18). After that he said: 'Wherefore my judgment is . . .'. I can imagine that at this juncture every eye was fixed on James and every ear strained to hear what he would say. 'My judgment is that we trouble not them that from among the Gentiles turn to God' (v. 19). Thus the matter was settled, and only a few details were added. 'Let us write unto the Gentile converts,' said James in effect, 'and caution them to abstain from moral evil and certain practices which would be particularly offensive to Jewish sensibilities, and there let the matter rest' (v. 20).

The church is agreed

This judgment of James received the approval, not only of all the apostles and elders, but of the entire Jerusalem church (v. 22). As James had recommended, an open letter was written and addressed to the Gentile brethren. In this document Barnabas and Paul were highly commended, and the Gentile believers were assured that the apostles and elders at Jerusalem were in hearty accord with the gospel which these two men preached (vv. 22-29). This letter did not carry the decrees of a council composed of representatives from various churches; it simply stated the conclusions of one church, the church at Jerusalem, on a very important matter. Paul and Barnabas were not signatories to it, but it was entrusted to their hands. Furthermore, Judas Barsabbas and Silas, 'chief men among the brethren' of the Jerusalem church, were sent along with Paul and Barnabas to bear oral witness to the validity of what was written in the letter.

Subsequent history shows that the decision of the apostles and elders did not permanently close the mouths of the Judaisers — at least not all of them — but it did deprive them of any basis for claiming apostolic authority for their teachings. Henceforth they could be dealt with as the heretics they really were.

Conclusion

By way of summary and conclusion, I would say that the best way to understand the significance of the gathering at Jerusalem described in Acts 15 is first to take note of what it was not. 1. It was not a council made up of representatives from many churches who had come together to hammer out decisions that would be binding on all the churches. 2. It was not a meeting of a presbytery composed of representative elders from the churches of a specific area. 3. It was not an association meeting called to discuss the mutual problems of the represented churches and to make nonbinding recommendations to one another. 4. It was not a special meeting arranged to settle a dispute between two churches.

What then was it? It was essentially a congregational meeting of a single church. Not only church leaders but a 'multitude' of the members were present (v. 12). The disputants in the controversy were all members of that one church. True, at least one other church was affected by the controversy because members of that one church had gone to that other church and troubled it with false and unscriptural teachings. In their open letter to the Gentile believers, the apostles and elders repudiated the doctrine of these men and stated clearly that they were unauthorised teachers (v. 24).

Those are the historical facts as recorded by Luke in Acts 15. Those who seek a biblical precedent for a church council, a presbytery, or even an association meeting should look for it elsewhere. It cannot be found in this passage.

LION Books – A review

A review by Sharon Hulse

Since Lion Publishing House first launched their *Handbook to the Bible* they have made significant inroads into the popular market. The great strengths of this Publishing House are imagination, artistic flair, top quality production, and a vision for storming the bastions of the secular market. (Lion are to be congratulated for having two of their books featured in the 1981 Boots Christmas Catalogue.) A variety of their books are to be seen not only in secular bookshops up and down the country, but also in department stores.

As an aid to study, *The Lion Handbook to the Bible* (680 pages, hardback, £9.95) cannot be equalled. There is a book by book guide which helpfully draws out the main themes. The charts giving an historical overview are particularly useful. Probably many readers already have a copy of this for aid in family study, but if not we would most warmly recommend it. For those who cannot run to the price of the full edition, Lion have produced a *Concise Lion Handbook* which contains the information provided by the *Lion Handbook* without the lavish colour photographs. (384 pages, gift edition £4.95. Jacketed paperback £2.95.)

Many whose 'fulltime' vocation does not involve study of scripture lack the time or will to spend long periods in study of the background to the Bible. Yet scripture was given in a particular context, and our understanding would often be enhanced if we appreciated the history, geography, philosophy etc. of the different periods involved. Lion Publishing House excel in presenting the relevant material in easily digestible form. Young people are likely to find the *Lion Encyclopaedia of the Bible* an attractive and clear way of finding reference material. The publishers again show perception to the different spending capacities of different sections of the market by providing a choice of formats. *The Lion Encyclopaedia of the Bible* (320 pages, hardback, £7.95) is also available in the concise edition (256 pages, gift edition £4.95, jacketed

paperback, £2.95). The ten sections of the hardback encyclopaedia are also available separately in paperbacks (each 32 pages, 95p). Titles include *Atlas of the Bible*, *Key Teaching and Events of the Bible*, and *Archaeology and the Bible*.

Two new reference works are also available in hardback or in paperback sections. *Introducing the Bible* (128 pages, hardback £5.95) is by Gerald Hughs and Stephen Travis. This aims to reconstruct the circumstances and possible attitude of the writers of the Bible. Thus the main events and teachings are described in the light of their cultural setting. The separate sections are: *The Birth of a Nation*, *The Growth of the Kingdom*, *The End of an Era*, *The Birth of Christianity* (each 32 pages, paperback, £1.25).

The World of the first Christians by Edwin Yamauchi concerns the beliefs and lifestyle of those in the first century AD to whom the New Testament was addressed: the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans. *The Jewish World, Myths and Cults*, *The Roman Empire*, *Roman Life and Beliefs* are again available in paperback (32 pages, £1.25).

We would highly recommend the *Lion Photoguide to the Bible* (288 pages, hardback, £6.95). This work includes nearly 200 colour photographs to accompany sections from the N.I.V. in roughly chronological order. With each photograph and Bible extract is a helpful relief location map and a paragraph of geographical explanation. This book would make an ideal gift because it is both enjoyable from an artistic point of view and helpful to Bible study. Other gift books, equally beautifully presented are *Mountain Songs* (hardback £4.75) which includes extracts from the first 18 Psalms, and *In the Beginning* (hardback £4.50) which combines the words of the Creation account with colour photography.

Information beautifully presented, but without a prophetic voice, without Biblical apologetics, without teeth characterise two recent publications, *What is Christianity?* and *The Story of Christianity*. These, despite their titles, fail to make clear what true Christianity actually is by implicitly accepting the great mass of what goes under the name of 'Christian'. It is not enough to state positively what Christianity is. When confronted with error, or even nominalism, we have to be prepared to state boldly what it is *not!* In the process some

may be offended. The authors of these two books seem to have received orders not to offend anyone.

What is Christianity? (Michael Green, 164 pp, Hardback £4.95). This is an attempt to relate the world today to the central truths of Christianity. The intention is excellent. We cannot duck out of our responsibility to face up to the problems of the Twentieth Century. Equally we have a responsibility to present the truth in a dynamic way.

Literature which fulfils these responsibilities is to be welcomed. However as we launch into the ocean of apologetics there are unseen rocks and currents. One can become so detailed that only those with a high tolerance level can cope. The opposite danger is to so simplify the gospel that it has no cutting power at all. One can be so 'objective', and God-centred in the presentation of the gospel that the reader is never confronted with *his* responsibility. The opposite danger is to become over subjective; the reader is told all about what it is like to be a Christian, and gets the impression that his destiny rests only on his choice made on the basis of his now informed opinion. Analysing the twenty-eight double page sections of this book leads to the inescapable conclusion that although many good and true things are said, the overall tendency is towards man-centredness and oversimplification.

The intended structure is given at the beginning: 'Christian belief in the Nuclear Age,' 'Jesus Christ founder of Christianity,' 'Where Jesus stepped in,' 'Followers of the Way,' 'A faith that makes all the difference.' However the main headings do not appear again in the book, and one has to fight to find any coherent direction. There is nothing inherently wrong with the 'magazine' type presentation, like a magazine, this is the 'catalogue' type glossy to be flipped through, but it could be started from the back as well as from the front.

More seriously the consistent emphasis on the freedom of man's choice is not accompanied by clear explanations of God's sovereignty in the world, in history, or in salvation. If the character of the God of Christianity is obscured, the rest, however well presented, is neutralised, for example in the summary of the Old Testament we have, 'He (God) determined to find at least one person who would trust him in the dark—obey him to the full. He

found Abraham' (p. 35). In the explanation of the Kingdom of God, we are told that this means 'instead of being dominated by selfishness, men would welcome God's rule in their lives' (p. 16). The way to enter is 'saying yes to God's offer to put within us a new life' (p. 17). When explaining adoption; 'You become a son of God when you welcome the Son of God into your life' (p. 18). When explaining the claims of Christianity, Jesus 'invites us to consider his claims, to face up to his challenge... and then make a free choice about following him' (p. 13). Of course we welcome popular presentations of the free offer of the gospel. But the gospel is the *power* of a sovereign God to change sinners who are powerless to 'say yes'. By totally avoiding this aspect of the gospel many popular presentations, such as *What is Christianity?* are tragically weakened. So here again we have attractively presented information, but not definition, and certainly no sound from the trumpet, which is essential if the dead are to be raised.

The Story of Christianity (Tim Dowley, Hardback, 64 pp, £3.95) professes to be a 'concise reliable overview' of Christianity. Any questioning unbeliever with a grasp of history would doubt the reliability of a work which skims over the darker side of church history. Atrocities such as the Crusades or the Inquisition are barely mentioned, but not separated from true Christianity. Any meaningful analysis of church history *must* distinguish the infallible truth of Christ's teaching from the all too fallible actions of those who profess Christianity. Here all who profess the name of Christianity (Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant) are accepted, while those who would have to be condemned (the Mormons, J.W.s, Spiritists, etc.) are quietly ignored. External unity is seen as the great achievement of the twentieth century—the Y.M.C.A. and S.C.M. being praised for having provided some of the greatest 'prophets of unity'. The book reads like one of the tourist brochures which entice visitors to Third World Countries, giving the superficial attractions, but failing to mention the grimmer realities of life.

Space forbids a more detailed analysis, but again it is sad to see a beautifully presented book, which will certainly have a wide readership, succumbing to the temptation to be so positive about everything that honest analysis disappears. □□□

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Grace in Judgment – a German experience

During our recent six-month stay in Germany, we talked with as many people as possible about the war years – the Hitler years of National Socialism, the war itself, the holocaust, the collapse, the partitioning of Germany, the fear, the death and the hunger. Not many would, or could, speak freely. Hardly any could say with clarity what lessons had been learned. Although many have lost their faith, there is not much bitterness evident any more. But one does observe deep feelings of guilt, fear, anxiety, hopelessness, despair: existence seeming to be without meaning.

One German author especially has made a great impression on us. He is Helmut Gollwitzer. The translated title of his book (first published in 1951 and subsequently reprinted several times) is, *And lead you where you do not want to go*.¹

As a young pastor, Gollwitzer became involved in the so-called Confessing Church, which protested against the 'official' church's identification and compromise with the Third Reich and its ideologies. He was, however, eventually drafted into Germany's armed forces and (ironically? – no, providentially!) captured by the Russians and sent to a Russian labour camp. He experienced immense suffering, but survived. He now lives in West Berlin, where he teaches systematic theology at the Free University.

Gollwitzer's book has riches and depths that are rare in today's world of superficiality. When Nazi Germany collapsed (and what a collapse it was!)

Gollwitzer had the remarkable insight to see that very collapse as a sign of God's grace . . . grace amidst the ruins, the death, the darkness, despair and utter chaos – *God's grace in judgment!* He exclaims: 'Where has Psalm 73 ever been so vividly fulfilled?' The German people had thought their world would never change – then it changed overnight. One verse stood out clearly in his mind: 'Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A person reaps what he sows . . .' (Gal. 6:7). Can one speak of *grace* in such a devastating judgment? *Wherein* was grace? Gollwitzer answers: 'In that a holy fear of the living God, who does not let himself be mocked, must have gripped the German people, if they were not totally blind; for they had been given an encounter with the living God; they experienced in their lifetime a proof that God is there!' But only a few – including Gollwitzer – have had the eyes to perceive this.

We go numb when we consider the implications of these things for us in South Africa. If we persist in our blindness with its accompanying selective morality and rationalisation of injustice, its arrogance and dehumanisation, then we, too, shall continue to see nothing, learn nothing, know nothing and understand nothing . . . and so perhaps condemn ourselves too to experience the judgment of the living God in time and history, as has happened elsewhere. If that happens, will we recognise it as grace?

¹ Helmut Gollwitzer, *Und führen, wonin du nicht willst* (Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus Mohn, 3rd ed. 1977, ISBN 3-579-0359-8). The reference in the title is to John 21:18.

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